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

TIKKUN

Closed Hearts, Closed Minds

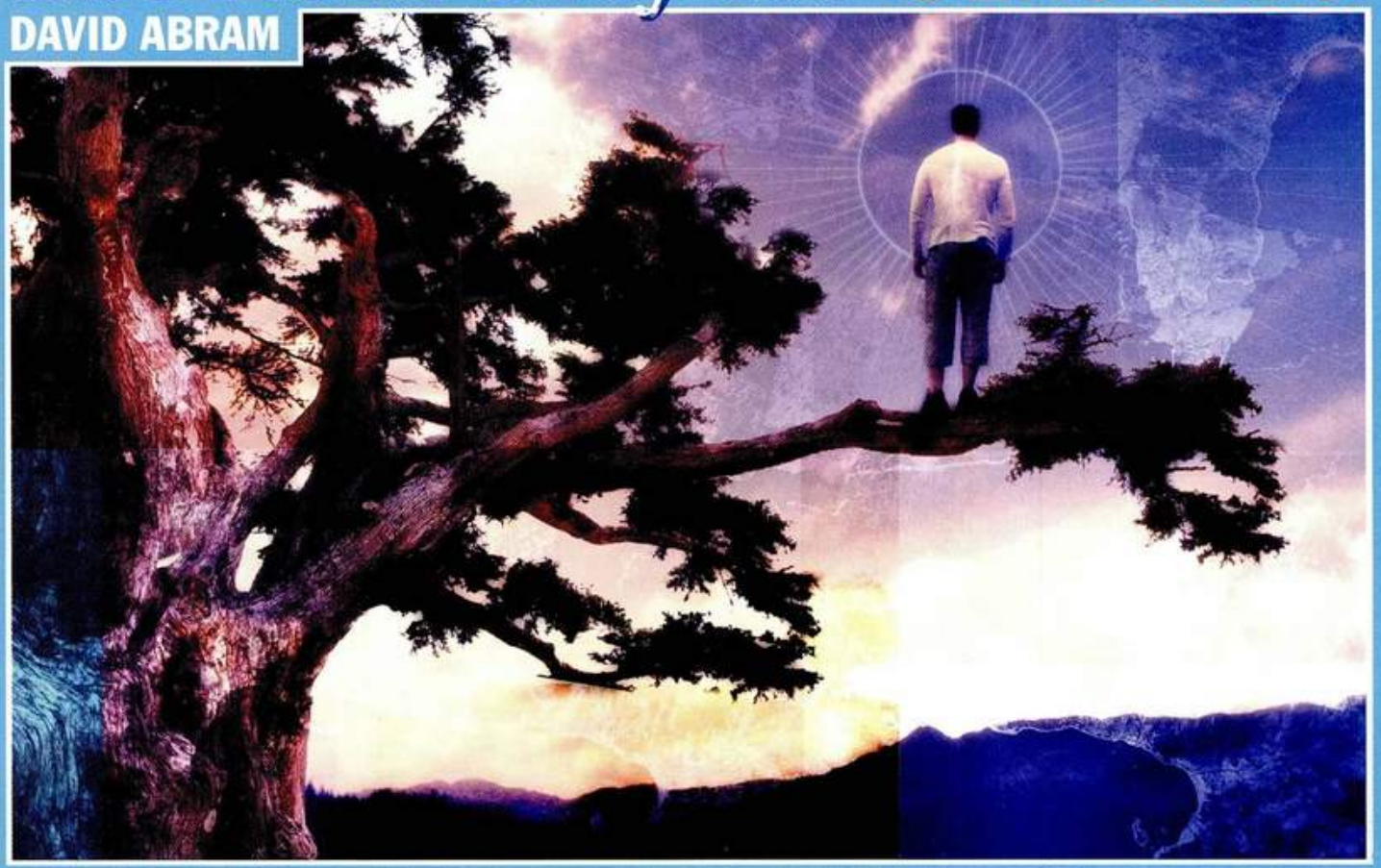
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For the sin

And he beats his chest for the sin
And he beats his chest for the desolation
And he thrums the string, it snaps at its prime
And he is still as the echo
And like it lies in wait
He shudders to the song for the Sabbath Bride.

You are sole as the shadow
You are false as the stream
You stray to all, all at your whim
You are sweet as the night
You are lithe as the lioness
You ooze like a river in the torrid wind.

And he burns like the heart
And he is smitten like the eye
Aflame, he lights the candle of the soul
And he is burdened as the back
And he is heavy as the wine
To the song of flesh and blood he reels.

You are sole as the shadow
You are false as the stream
You will light it all, all at your whim
You are shrouded as the night
You devour like the lioness
You lust like a river in the searing wind.

And he is beaten as the heart
And he recoils like the eye
Shackled like a beast, he is flogged with reins
And he bleeds like the back
And he wails like the wine
He is stretched across the altar's flames.

You hover like the shadow
Like the river you thirst
You will ravish it all, all that he is
You are naked as the night
You are ready as a lioness
You laugh like the faltering stream.

And he is hard as the heart
And he is piercing as the eye
He seeks atonement for the sin you sinned
And he is forgiving as the back
And he is poured out like wine
In stone her soul reflects him.

You are sole as the shadow
You ooze like the stream
You light it all, all that he is
You are ineffable as night
You are bereaved as the lioness
You languish like a river in the torrid wind.

—Yonatan Ratosh
Translation: Annie Kantar

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY VOLUME 18 NUMBER 5



2 **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

6 **PUBLISHER'S NOTES:** *Abbas Deserves the Support of American Jews.*

7 **EDITORIAL:** *Closed Hearts, Closed Minds.* Why aren't Americans more upset about false pretenses for war, tax cuts for the rich, slashed funding for social programs and education, and other regressive policies of the Bush administration?

13 **TIKKUN COMMUNITY:** *Notes from the Undergrad.* A report on the Tikkun Campus Network and the Teach-In to Congress from **Michaella Matt**.

FEATURES:

21 **Israel/Palestine**
What does the Palestinian Road Map look like? An interview with PA Minister of Planning **Nabeel Kassis** (21). **Yitzhak Frankenthal** urges support for Sharon's small steps toward peace in *An Open Letter to the Right Wing* (24), **Noah Efron** explores Israel's religious-secular divide in *Men in Black* (25), and **Yehezkel Landau** finds little solace in *Religious Responses to Atrocity* (28).



16 **Politics—Big and Small**
History may be rife with war and violence, but it is also full of moments of profound moral grace. **Jonathan Schell** explores the nonviolent movements that have altered the course of history in *Power and Cooperation* (16). The Democrats have not only fallen from grace, they've lost the hip-factor. **Danny Goldberg** explains how the Right is *OutFOXing the Left* (45). **Peter Gabel** *Communalizes the Neighborhood* around a campaign to save a local bookstore (47).

33 **Culture and Ecology**
In *The Eclipse of the Sensuous*, David Abram provides a new framework for understanding our humanity, grounded in nature, and challenges the philosophical concepts that too often dominate both the mainstream and "alternative" ways of thinking (33). **Barak Gale** introduces a Declaration of Interdependence in *Truths That Must Be Declared* (38), **Antonia Juhasz** gives us *Food for Thought* from the frontlines of the struggle against genetically-engineered food production (40), and **Paul Wapner** imagines an environmental politics infused with principles of *tikkun* (41).

61 **Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur**
Marsha Mirkin *Reinterprets the Binding of Isaac* in light of September 11, **Marge Piercy** offers a poem on *The birthday of the world* (63), and check out our **High Holiday Supplement** between pages 64 and 65!

ARTICLES:

32 **GODWRESTLING. Arthur Waskow** calls for some time to reflect—nationally—in *Free America, Free Time.*

51 **PERSONAL ESSAY.** *Tillie: On Her,* by Robin Goldfin.

53 **SPIRITUALITY. Kim Chernin** spins *Tales of the Goddess.*

57 **POETRY AND CULTURE. Walt Whitman** was a Jew?! No, but the Yiddish poets sure loved him. By **Julian Levinson**.

Opposite: "For the sin," by Yonatan Ratosh. Translation by Annie Kantar.

Front Cover: *Man on Tree Branch* by Mark Owen. Courtesy of Getty Images.



REVIEWS:

70 **John Steiner** on **Robert Fuller**'s *Somebodies and Nobodies: Overcoming the Abuse of Rank.*

71 **GLOBALIZATION. Roger S. Gottlieb** surveys the new world of globalization literature. **David Lindorff** reviews *Spiritual Perspectives on Globalization* by **Ira Rifkin** (74).

75 **Marlene Nadle** reviews *Women on War.*

78 **Elizabeth Rosner** on Richard Zimler's *Hunting Midnight.*

80 **Poetry Sikkum:** *Poets from Our Pages.*

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

Poetry Sikkum:
Poets from Our Pages

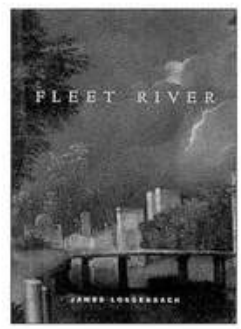
It's Time



Reginald Gibbons
Louisiana State University, 2002

The experience of time for Gibbons is personal, historical, mythological, and constantly pouring over and through us in a ceaseless current that carries within it a darkness against which we can sing, but can hardly redeem. Contrary to expectation, then, these new poems fight easy—particularly cynical or pessimistic—resolutions, moving instead "in the soft sweet/air in such a way as/To be fully itself, singular .../Alone now, alone, unafraid, at/the center of the universal hour."

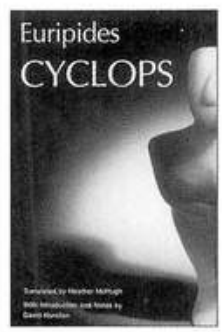
Fleet River



James Longenbach
University of Chicago, 2003

In the second collection of this noted poet-critic, body and soul struggle to inhabit memory through an allegorical journey along its banks and through its fluent twists and turns. The mystery of such haunted traveling takes the shape of lyric meditations on the nature of love, the possibilities of adequately knowing another, or returning to a still-living past populated by "the dead/Evaporating from the surface we breathe."

Cyclops



Euripides
Translated by Heather McHugh
Oxford University, 2001

The only Greek satyr play to survive intact, this short, witty capstone to a tragic cycle is riddled with subversive verbal action. The play (which recounts Odysseus' episode with the one-eyed monster) depicts the heroic encounter not as a mere adventurous display of wiles, but as a confrontation between "the man who carries within himself a sense of the cumulative value of human history," and a terrifying yet ultimately pathetic figure of monstrous self-gratification.

Rock Harbor



Carl Phillips
Farrar Straus Giroux, 2002

Over the course of the last ten years, Phillips has been inventing a new language for the contemporary lyric, at once elegant and fractured, erotic and abstract, emotional yet restrained, contemplative and searching. One instantly recognizes his modulated and finely tuned free verse line, with its meandering parentheses and doubled-back hesitations. Perhaps Phillips' greatest ambition is to continually push against the limits implied by his own impeccable technique, which is to say against the limits of poetic language itself.

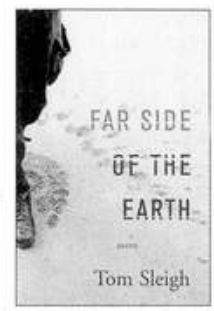
Colors Passing Through Us



Marge Piercy
Knopf, 2003

Resilient, humorous, scathing, sensuous—Piercy's new book of poems (her sixteenth), records her connection to the natural phenomenal world, the world of inequities between men and women (particularly in her own family), and a joyful sexuality that springs from her affection for the "Song of Songs." Complexities emerge in the rich cadences and figurative language, which deepen as her poems build a world, in part, by suggesting how difficult it is to respond to the one we live in day-by-day.

Far Side of the Earth



Tom Sleigh
Houghton-Mifflin, 2003

Tom Sleigh is one of the few poets writing whose visionary reach extends book by book with a deepening requisite technique. This fundamental strength has grown even stronger in this most recent collection, with the sequence "New York American Spell, 2001"—one of the few poems in recent memory to succeed at capturing the turmoil since 9/11 and answering the need for poetry to speak to collective experience, albeit in distinctively forged verbal means. As with the book as a whole, this particular poem presumes that one can only engage meaningfully with the present by exercising an historical as well as aesthetic imagination.

Sikkum: TIKKUN RECOMMENDS ...

Empire of Capital

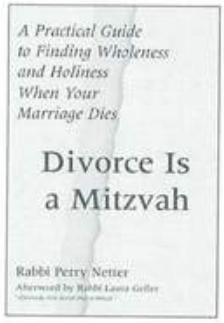
Ellen Wood
Verso, 2003



A short but compelling account of global imperialism—how it came to be, how it operates, and how its current phase differs from earlier times. Wood gives the larger historical framework in which we see how even the overt military interventionism of the Bush administration can be understood as an extension of the logic inherent in U.S. foreign policy, at least since World War II. Read this together with Peter Singer's *One World: The Ethics of Globalization* to get the best articulation of the secular Left's critique of global capital.

Divorce is a Mitzvah

Rabbi Perry Netter
Jewish Lights, 2002



In this practical guide to the process of divorce, Rabbi Netter demystifies the whole process, from how to decide when to leave, how to tell the kids, the appropriate place for anger, how to raise children together with your ex, and much more. Rabbi Laura Geller supplies some ideas on new Jewish divorce rituals. A book that might prevent some anguish for those facing difficult decisions as a relationship falters.

Blue Hour

Carolyn Forché
HarperCollins, 2003

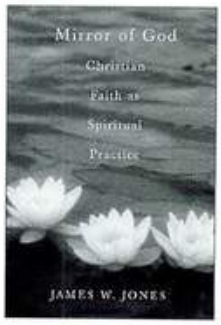


In her long-awaited new book of poems, Forché writes from a liminal space between day and night, life and death, true mind nature and the difficult embodied existence on earth. "On Earth" is the title of the impressive long poem included here that takes the form of a Gnostic abecedarian hymn and, like Whitman, wishes to represent, through an expansive and haunted catalog of images and clausal fragments, the beauty and tragedy of human consciousness threatened by human actions: "these are my contents / these paving stones this hymnal / these ruins are to the future what the past is to us."

Mirror of God

Christian Faith as Spiritual Practice

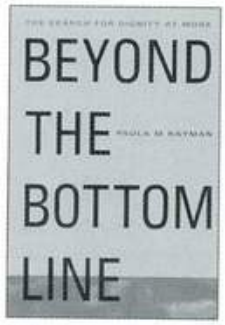
James W. Jones
Palgrave Macmillan, 2003



Spiritual practice can be a critique of contemporary culture. The form of Christian spiritual practice espoused by Jones challenges the notion that empirical science provides the only way to understand the universe and our place in it, and the notion that material goods can bring us lasting satisfaction. His spiritual practice challenges our self-centered attachments, forces us to confront the areas in which we remain ignorant and unconscious, and connects us to the cycle of death and rebirth, distancing ourselves from our attachments, and seeing our conflicts in light of a larger perspective.

Beyond the Bottom Line

Paula M. Rayman
St. Martin's Press, 2003



The great failure of the labor movement has been its inability to move beyond material demands to address workers' day-to-day experience. Paula Rayman points the way, showing that work must have a social purpose greater than making money for the corporations and their employees. The book is a carefully reasoned yet impassioned plea to move beyond the constraint of bottom-line thinking and to develop economic practices that respond to the common good. Dignity at work requires adequate livelihood, but it also requires a workplace that maximizes workers' self-respect and their ability to contribute to the well-being of the larger world.

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Controller
Valerie Bach
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2342 Shattuck Avenue, #1200
Berkeley, CA 94704
510-644-1200
fax: 510-644-1255

magazine@tikkun.org

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Letters to the Editor

Anti-Semitism: Take Three

To the Editor:

I recently read the May/June 2003 issue of TIKKUN and found several articles most disturbing—not necessarily for their factual content, but for what I subjectively perceived as anti-Semitic in tone and intention. First, I was appalled at the connection made between the treatment of animals and the Holocaust in Charles Patterson's article, "The Great Divide." To state that "The selective breeding of animals and plants prompted delegates to ask why such techniques could not be applied to human beings" begins to equate human beings with plants and animals. I am sure that you are aware of the recent PETA demonstrations involving images from the camps and the treatment of chickens. To make these comparisons is not just a syllogistic use of logic, but a direct diminution of the essential horrors of the Holocaust.



In Paul Buhle's article, "The Civil Liberties Crisis and the Threat of Too Much Democracy," I found his argument that there is a Jewish role in the think tanks around the White House tautological in its logic and anti-Semitic in its implications. I refer you to a recent book by Jerry Muller, *Mind and the Market,* wherein he discusses how anti-Semitism and anti-capitalism are linked. Because some of the more conservative political advisors are Jewish does not mean that these are "striking but essential Jewish connections, some positive, some terrifyingly negative." I am not a fan of Irving Kristol and other neoconservatives, but to combine their politics with their Jewishness is one of the bases of the most virulent and comprehensive kinds of anti-Semitism.

Making apologies and seeking some sympathy for the Polish actions at Jedwabne, as David Ost does in "Poles,

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Jews, and Post-Communist Insecurities," seems almost to be blaming the victims. When Ost states that "if only American Jews would do more to aid the unions' effort, they could help deprive anti-Semites of support by examining their own entrenched anti-Polish attitude," he is implying that we Jews should grant the Poles some leniency for their centuries-long anti-Semitism and their resultant slaughter of Jews in Jedwabne after the armistice was declared. If only the victims could be more forgiving, then anti-Semitism would be less evident.



It is admirable to purport to "mend, repair and transform the world," but it is a *shanda* to allow political positions to imply either guilt or moral laxness to Jews in particular. I hope that the themes and opinions in this issue of TIKKUN are an aberration in its essential content and purpose.

RONALD A. GOODMAN
Quincy, MA

Editor Responds:

There is a great risk in labeling every silly, inexact, or stupid use of the word Jewish as "anti-Semitic"—the risk that we are going to empty the term "anti-Semitism" of its real power to identify policies or people who are attempting to do serious damage to the Jewish people. We've already seen that excessive labeling of sexism or racism led to a major backlash against "political correctness" in the 1990s, and a similar backlash against the misuse of "anti-Semitism" may similarly open the door to re-legitimation of racist policies against Jews. So not so fast, Mr. Goodman. You may think that Charles Patterson's use of the Holocaust to raise moral concerns about the massive killing of animals is in bad taste or inappropriate, but to use it as an example of anti-Semitism in tone or intention is a bit over-heated. Paul Buhle's linking of neoconservatism to the Jewishness of many of the ideology's main proponents can be disputed—but it is a connection that many of the neocons make themselves (and their ideologies have primarily been developed in a magazine sponsored by the American Jewish Committee). The ideas of the neocons are, in the estimation of TIKKUN, a distortion of Jewish ideals, but nevertheless one that is often rooted in a reading of history shaped by Jewish experience. Jews have played an important role in the rise of capitalism and in shaping its current directions, and while we believe that these choices are not in the best interests of the Jews, they are often engaged in by Jews whose politics flow from their own understanding of Jewish self-interest. It's a huge stretch to claim that raising these issues is anti-Semitic.

Ost's claims are more complicated than the first two examples. They require a way of imagining oneself into the experience of people who hate (some Polish people, not all) and trying to understand how their hateful attitudes became popular among people who are not fundamentally evil (the majority of Poles). Taking this imaginative leap is critical if we are ever to empower ourselves to prevent future fascistic movements from gaining majority support. Yet I've noticed that many Jews have as much difficulty with this way of thinking as most people I've met in leftist circles—it's extremely difficult to get beyond our (often justified) moral critique to try to understand the psychology of the hateful and the legitimate needs that they manage to appeal to among ordinary people. Part of the goal of TIKKUN is to facilitate this kind of analysis, and that means taking risks, and sometimes printing analyses that will be judged to be too sympathetic to the haters (a critique we get all the time from Lefties when we try to understand the mass psychology of Americans and how they get lured into things like the invasion of Iraq, support for homophobes, racists or sexists, willingness to support death penalties and suspension of civil liberties, and many other contemporary distortions).

To the Editor:

In "Anti-Semitism on the Left and the Special Status of Israel" (May/June 2003), Joel Kovel asks if a faulty critique of anti-Semitism obscures the reality of Israel and thereby weakens the struggle against its human rights violations. I agree that the question merits analysis, but so does its mirror question: Can a faulty critique of Israel obscure the reality of anti-Semitism and thereby weaken the struggle against its racist ideology?

I agree with Rabbi Lerner when he deplores the fact that the Left fails to criticize the actions of Palestinian armed groups. It is not a body count (which community has had more people killed) that is decisive. Rather, it is a question of principle. As Amnesty International (with which I am actively involved here in Montréal) has said, "No matter how noble the cause, nothing justifies attacks against civilians."

However, I do not think that the Left's failure to criticize suicide bombings is explained by anti-Semitism. I think it is explained more by the Left's naiveté and incapacity to evolve. The Left naturally espouses national liberation movements, since such movements are a defining force of the Left. In addition, the Palestinian struggle is the "cause célèbre" of our era, as was the Spanish civil war in the 1930s.

But in my view, espousing a cause does not mean turning a blind eye to human rights violations perpetrated by the so-called defenders of this cause. Whereas in the 1970s few on the Left would have dared criticize actions by national liberation groups, today those

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criticisms are essential when national liberation-inspired acts of terror are clearly reprehensible.

I found Kovel's discussion of the ANC's struggle against apartheid in the context of the Israel/Palestine conflict a bit unfair. Yes, Israel's treatment of the Palestinians is totally unacceptable as was the apartheid regime's treatment of the black majority. Yes, the ANC did resort to armed struggle. However, what Kovel fails to mention is that the ANC aimed their actions against military or police targets; they never deliberately aimed to kill as many civilians as possible by suicide bombings in restaurants, bars and on buses. Had they resorted to such disgusting tactics, Mandela would probably still be in prison, because world opinion would not have been mobilized to help put an end to apartheid.



Israel does not deserve special status or greater outrage than other countries that violate international standards of human rights. The state of Israel is guilty of many violations, and these must be denounced vigorously, as should the human rights violations perpetrated by other states. The settlement policy of Israel is totally reprehensible, but so were the Arabization policies of Saddam Hussein against the Kurds and so are those of the Algerian government against its minorities. Slavery in Mauritania is a horrible relic of past times, and Sudan's human rights record is dismal. These are just a few examples that the Left should actively denounce as well. A more complete analysis of human rights violations in all countries of the world can be found in Amnesty International's annual report.

NORMAN KING
Montréal, Canada

To the Editor:

I appreciated the exchange of letters between Joel Kovel and Richard Landes ("Anti-Semitism Redux," July/August 2003). The question of whether to attribute "primary responsibility" to Israel or instead take a position that assigns "equal responsibility" to both parties in the Israel-Palestine conflict is crucial to our movement, even though many have suggested we need to "stop the blame game" entirely. However, I found Landes's response to Kovel quite unconvincing. Landes claims that Palestinians' belief that Israel is the primary source of the conflict serves as indication that they "have yet to begin examining the faults in their own culture" such as the treatment of women, homosexuals, religious minorities, etc. I think it quite reasonable to suggest that Arab cultures as a whole have not engaged in this sort of self-examination, just as Jewish communities in the United States and Israel have been tragically unable to engage in necessary self-reflection about the myriad ways in which our culture demeans Arabs.

While Kovel was making claims about structures of political power, Landes answered him with claims about culture. These two realms are deeply related and indeed generate each other, but Landes's analysis suffers from an inattention to how the political realm shapes the cultural. Clearly, to whatever extent imams preach "Death to Jews" on Palestinian television, and that anti-Jewish sentiment exists in the Arab world generally, it is utterly repugnant and a hindrance to our movements for peace and justice. Yet we must be honest with ourselves and have a sharp enough analysis to acknowledge that a rabbi preaching Torah's justification of the theft of Arab land and the killing of Arabs is a more significant social-political phenomenon for the simple reason that the greater political power of the Jewish state and its American sponsor grants Israeli Jews and their supporters more political ability to put their beliefs and "cultural" attitudes into practice in the real world than Palestinian and other Arabs have.

It is the same as claims in our own country of "reverse discrimination." We understand that any hatred that individual African Americans may have for whites in the United States is a very different phenomenon sociologically than the institutional-structural racism against Blacks built into U.S. society. The crucial difference is the overall political power that enables one party to dominate and oppress the other.

Likewise, the ill treatment in many Arab societies of women and various minorities that Landes finds so odious is certainly deserving of condemnation, yet this internal oppression is certainly not as determinative to the Israel-Palestine conflict as is the Israeli state's structural domination over Arabs. Landes writes that "We must not only criticize the Israelis for only treating their own people decently, we must criticize the Arabs for not even treating their own decently," yet it is difficult to understand why Landes would imply that engaging in the latter will somehow provide a balance or corrective to the former. These two acts of mistreatment, both against the Arab peoples, do not have equal relevance to the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis.

As we in the Tikkun Community begin to put into practice our wonderful and necessary Politics of Meaning with its sharp psychological insights and expansive spiritual focus, we mustn't in the process lose sight of the importance of the crucial consideration of differential political power. No amount of attention drawn to "moral deficiencies" on the part of Palestinians, or claims made about "equal causality" in the conflict, or an insistence on "balance" in our analysis can or should obviate the fact that on the most relevant and important level it is the Israelis who are the occupiers and Palestinians the occupied.

RICK CHARNES
Cambridge, MA

Freedom and Webocracy

To the Editor:

I was first introduced to your web site through Democracynow.org. I have read most of your articles and not only am I inspired by them, I am sharing it with others in my community because as a U.S. citizen in this country of "freedom" and the "American dream," I cannot ignore the double standard that the neocons in the Bush Administration have desperately sought since they took office.

I stand strongly against the U.S.-led war in Iraq and I believe that the conservatives are trying everything they can to take over Iraqi Oil in order to gain economic as well as political wealth.

I am outraged that the United States chose to ignore the Middle East crisis by avoiding a real peace agreement for the Palestinians and the Israelis.

Furthermore, I am ashamed that the United States is taking advantage of

being the strongest superpower in the world by undermining the UN and our closest allies and using the ineffective foreign policy of favoring countries which exempt U.S. citizens and soldiers alike from the International Criminal Court.

Thank you at Tikkun.org and all the contributors who keep the real agenda alive, which is to promote peace, fairness, and stability for all people around the world regardless of color, religion, or gender.

XAI LOR
Blaine, MN

Resolution for Middle East Peace

To the Editor:

I see your Resolution as ambiguous about the threat to Israel from Palestinians armed with heavy weapons on its doorstep. If Palestine were to devolve into a safe house for terrorists—which history indicates might well happen—what recourse would Israel have?

I have also seen nothing in depth from you that would enable readers to place the refugee problem in perspective. I'm hoping you will decide to explain the following to your readers:

(a) Conflict, not a demonic Israel, created the Palestinian refugee problem. Also, Palestinian Jews were uprooted from their homes in the Etzion bloc of villages during the same conflict that uprooted Palestinian Arabs from their homes elsewhere. Though the conflict uprooted more Arabs than Jews, this was because the Arab armies were less successful—not because they were more tender-hearted—than the Jewish army. The imbalance might have gone the other way without any policy change by either side.

(b) It is not enough to say that uprooted Arabs and their descendents could be resettled in the new Palestinian state. It is important to expose the deadly intent behind the Arab assertion of a "right of return"—to prevent Jews from having their own state. Your support for Israel as a Jewish-majority state will remain unconvincing until you denounce this bogus "right" with the vehemence that you denounce settlements in the Occupied Territories.

(c) Requiring Israel to take in outside Arabs would be a bill of attainder for Jews. International opinion has never supported the return of Sudetan Germans to the Czech Republic, or of East Prussian and Silesian Germans to Poland, or of Karelian Finns to Russia. All of the host countries have helped refugees on their soil make a new life there—rather than create further conflict by returning refugees to the countries they came from.

MELVIN STEINBERG

Editor Responds:

Our Resolution for Middle East Peace, which can be read and signed at www.tikkun.org, calls for a defense pact between Israel and the United States (and between Palestine and the United States) that would guarantee that if it were attacked the United States would have treaty obligations to defend it. Many Israeli generals have exhaustively shown that the notion that a Palestinian state would pose a special security threat because it would bring "heavy weapons to its doorstep" is unfounded—the nature of modern warfare is such that Israel would intervene militarily long before there could be a buildup of such weapons, and in any case, non-neighboring enemies can be just as much of a threat (as the SCUD attack in the first Gulf War demonstrated).

The claim that the "Right of Return" is merely a ploy to prevent Jews from having their own state is one of the many propagandistic canards that defies any understanding of the human beings involved. If you were pushed from your comfortable home and forced to live in unsanitary conditions with your children facing malnutrition, would it really take some desire to destroy the force that pushed you out to explain why you felt you had a right to return to your home? As you may know, the Tikkun Community does not proclaim a "Right of Return," and for that reason we get denounced by some on the Left. But we do understand the desire to return, do not see it as a mere ploy of hatred, and do believe that once a Palestinian state lives in peace with Israel—for a period of time sufficient to convince Israelis that they are facing a population genuinely willing to live in peace—there can be some arrangement that would allow between 15,000 and 25,000 Palestinians a year to return to Israel, assuming that they could demonstrate a serious and ongoing willingness to live in peace with their Israeli neighbors. A similar policy of return should be in place for Sudetan Germans, Karelian Finns, and for American Indians.

Navigating the Road Map

To the Editor:

I picked up my first ever issue of TIKKUN magazine today. I expected it to be a lopsided left-wing idealogue magazine of Sharon haters and Bush bashers. How refreshing to see multiple points of view from both the Left and Right. The intellectual freedom your approach engenders goes a long way toward appealing to truly open minds searching for truth. The world is filled with slanted opinions that accomplish little but spread propaganda and tear open old wounds instead of opening dialogue. Your courageous journalistic integrity provides an opportunity for readers to listen sympathetically to many sad stories from both Israeli and Palestinian perspectives and, on that basis, for us to exercise personal soul-searching and self-honesty.

To shed the cumbersome armor of propaganda is the first step to reconciliation. It is armor which we all wear and which we all need to lay down. That is the first step in the true Road Map to Peace.

RICHARD A. SWANEY
Central Point, OR

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Abbas Deserves the Support of American Jews

George Vradenburg

As this issue goes to press, Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel have each just met with President George W. Bush.

On behalf of TIKKUN, I had the opportunity to attend private meetings with Prime Minister Abbas and several of his cabinet ministers here in Washington. I was struck by the fragility of the Road Map process and the need for clear and unequivocal commitments to a peaceful and timely destination for the Road Map.

It is important to recall that President Bush articulated in July of 2002 a vision of two states living side-by-side, living in peace and security, by 2005. Now, a year later, in July of 2003, after just having met with Prime Ministers Abbas and Sharon, President Bush has expressed confidence that that goal remains "realistic."

I believe that assessment is at risk because of the hesitancy with which Sharon is approaching the Road Map.

Abbas totally embraces President Bush's vision of a two-state solution by 2005 and committed himself unhesitatingly in Aqaba to implement the Road Map in full to achieve that vision. He says that he "would not have dreamt that an American President would have articulated such a vision."

Abbas's motives are clear. The Palestinian people have seen the virtual destruction of the social and economic fabric of their lives as a result of the intifada. Peace and reconciliation is the only path to Palestinian national independence, economic prosperity, and social well-being.

Under his leadership, the Palestinian Authority has now taken concrete and substantial steps toward that vision. For example, the Palestinian Authority has negotiated a cease-fire with Hamas and others and reclaimed responsibility for security in Gaza and Bethlehem. As a result, the frequency of terrorist alerts inside Israel has dropped 90 percent in just a few weeks. And the Palestinian Authority has taken demonstrable action to reduce the level of "incitement" in Palestinian media. (In fact, Sharon has privately complimented Abbas for these actions.)

Abbas says he is prepared to begin negotiations right now to settle such key final status questions as the sovereignty of Jerusalem and the Palestinian Right of Return in order to meet the timetable set out by President Bush.

He is calling on Sharon to take reciprocal "bold steps" toward peace—specifically, the freezing of new settlement activity; bringing down the Israeli-constructed Wall snaking through the West Bank; the easing of checkpoints, housing demolitions, and IDF occupation of the West Bank; and arranging for the release of close to six-thousand political prisoners.

For his part, Sharon has accepted the Road Map, but only with a dozen qualifications and reservations. And, while acknowledging the legitimacy of a two-state solution, he has not embraced President Bush's timetable for the establishment of a Palestinian state. Far from the "bold steps" toward peace called for by Abbas, Sharon has released only a small fraction of the six-thousand prisoners and dismantled only 10 of over 160 West Bank roadblocks. Settlement activity continues, the Wall continues its winding path through the West Bank, and IDF home demolition and disruption of Palestinian daily life persists. Sharon appears unwilling to take any significant steps to relieve the pain of daily Palestinian life until the Palestinians have dismantled Hamas and other terrorist organizations. And he is unwilling to begin negotiations about the size or contours of a Palestinian state until all steps of the Road Map are completed.

This constrained, reservation-filled reading of the Road Map, together with the tentative and largely cosmetic steps toward its implementation, makes the strategy of the current Israeli government difficult to decipher.

Israel is no doubt right in insisting that the Palestinian Authority deliver security for Israeli citizens as a price for peace, but Israel must convince the Palestinians that they will get a real state in return—and that means an end to roadblocks, home demolition, IDF occupation, settlements, the Wall, etc., and a state with borders and economic and political coherence.

Sharon would no doubt resist a build-up of the military power of a Palestinian Authority headed by Arafat that would be sufficient to defeat Hamas militarily, lest that power be turned against Israel. If Hamas is to be weakened politically, rather than militarily, it must be done by increasing the

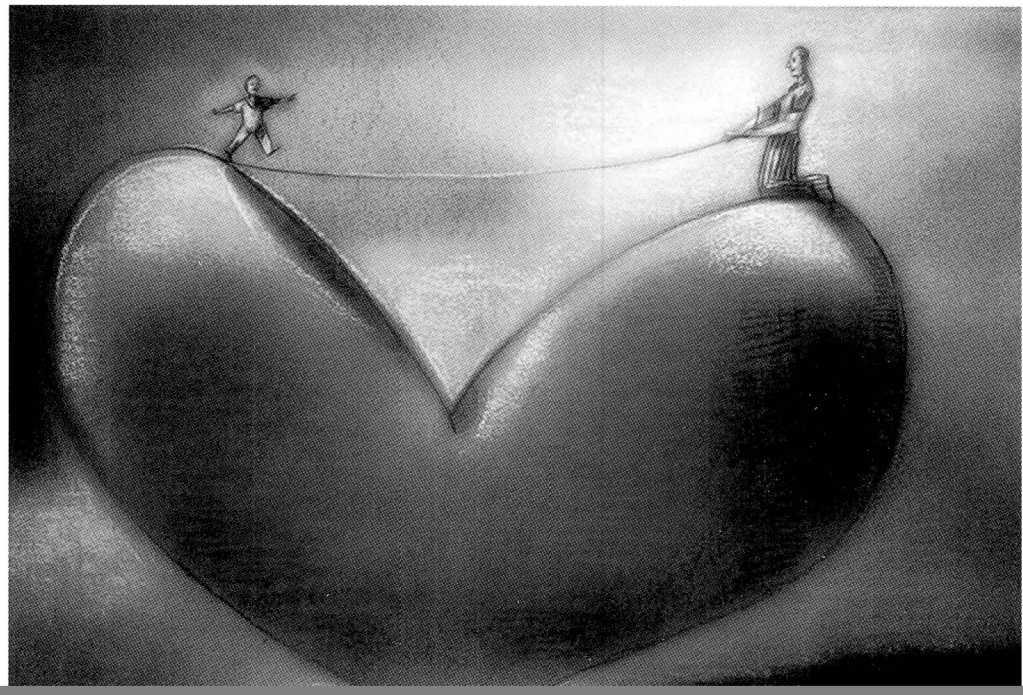
(continued on page 60)

George Vradenburg is co-publisher of TIKKUN.

EDITORIAL

Closed Hearts, Closed Minds

Michael Lerner



Not infrequently I hear people in academic or progressive circles making political analyses whose subtext is something like this: "Why are Americans so stupid? Can't they see that President Bush lied to them about Iraq and that his tax cuts have actually made things much worse, creating a huge budget deficit which will cause massive cutbacks in social services and will eventually impact their own retirement funds?"

We could, of course, respond at the level of these charges by saying, "No, people are not stupid. They know and are somewhat annoyed that they've been lied to by an administration determined to eli[illegible]

by the National Institute of Mental Health. Our organization, the Institute for Labor and Mental Health, ran occupational and family stress groups and interviewed over ten thousand middle-income American working people, and in the course of this study came to recognize that political attitudes were moving to the right in response to emotional and spiritual crises in their lives of which the Left was woefully ignorant. (You can read a more detailed account in my book *Surplus Powerlessness.*)

The first thing we discovered is this: Most people have bought into the ideology of the Meritocracy. They believe that America is a society where "you can make it if you really try," and hence they end up blaming themselves for not being "enough"—smart enough, clever enough, persistent enough, attractive enough, ruthless enough, charming enough, or _____ (fill in the blank when you tell your own self-blaming story). It is this personal failure that explains why they personally have not been more successful. These self-blaming stories are an integral part of the consciousness of most people in this society, no matter where they are in the class hierarchy (we even found college presidents engaged in self-blaming to explain why they weren't the Secretary of Education or in some other position of power). And because they blame themselves instead of feeling that they have the right to challenge the social order with its inequalities of power and wealth, they direct their anger against themselves, and feel terrible about themselves.

Ironically, the way that liberals and progressives fought for equal rights for minorities tended to increase this self-blaming for everyone else. While we at TIKKUN totally support the impulse behind affirmative action programs, the ways that they were fought for often unintentionally conveyed the following message: "You whites, or you men, have already had the benefits of a fair marketplace of employment in which you could make it if you really tried and were competent. But these others, the groups that we are now championing, didn't have the same fair opportunities that you did, so now we need to devise programs to compensate them for what they didn't get and you did." It would have been better if whites who objected to affirmative action had done so straightforwardly by saying: "Wait a second, we didn't have a 'fair' anything—we entered a class-structured marketplace which only rewarded some of us and left the rest of us, no matter how hard we worked or how smart we were, in unfulfilling jobs." But this class consciousness was absent, so instead of challenging the ideology of the Meritocracy, they ended up resenting affirmative action. Here is why: Many people felt that the assumption of the liberals was right, that they had had a fair chance, and that they had blown it. And that made them feel even worse about themselves, which caused them to resent the liberals and the Left though they couldn't consciously say quite why. But when they expressed their hesitation in the form of opposition to affirmative action, they were greeted by a barrage of "you're a sexist" or "you're a racist" that put them on the defensive, made them feel even worse about themselves, and simultaneously created a huge level of resentment against the leftists and liberals who were inflicting these accusations on them. What a relief it was for many of them when the Right began its backlash against "political correctness."

TIKKUN was right there, urging the Left to rethink the affirmative action issue in light of these dynamics. We too wanted equality, but we suggested that a better way to achieve it would be to challenge the entire framework of meritocracy. Rather than accept the criteria for merit that this society used—which usually derived from elevating the needs of corporations for a certain kind of worker into some kind of transcendent value for everyone—we said: You're measuring the wrong characteristics. Society needs a New Bottom Line of love and caring, ethical, spiritual, and ecological sensitivity, and awe and wonder at the grandeur of creation. Create institutions that value these characteristics, and use them as the criteria for definitions of efficiency, productivity, and rationality, and you will find that those talented in this way are more evenly distributed across class, sex and racial backgrounds. We currently reward people who can serve narrow technocratic enterprises, when we should be rewarding those who are best at developing a more loving, ecologically sane, spiritually aware, community-oriented world—for those who will build a saner society for us than the kinds of people who are currently getting into the elite colleges and being told that they have proven their merit.

But there was yet another dimension to what we discovered. People have a deep hunger for a different kind of world than the one we live in. Most people are not like those portrayed on television and the movies—ruthless self-seeking maximizers of their own advantage who don't care about anyone else. Instead, the picture is more complex. Most people have a kind of dual consciousness, two voices in their head. One is a voice that very much wishes for us to live in harmony and cooperate with others, and receive and give recognition to others. There is in most of us a deep yearning for a world based on love and caring, generosity, social justice and fairness, ecological harmony and peace. Most people wish to make a contribution to building this kind of world, and feel that their lives have meaning to the extent that they can do so, either on a personal or a communal level. They desire meaningful lives that transcend the dynamics of the competitive marketplace and connect them with a higher purpose.

But there is another voice inside almost everyone: a voice that speaks in the name of our parents and teachers and the larger society, which tells us that these desires are "unrealistic" because the world is actually structured in accord with a ruthless struggle for power and money, and that if we don't develop the skills and personality traits to succeed in

this struggle, we'll get screwed over by others who are ruthlessly pursuing their own self-interest. Cooperation and love, they are taught, are beautiful ideals best left to the church, synagogue, or mosque, but in the real world we will encounter people driven by self-seeking needs and we had better do the same.

In this struggle, the voice of liberal politicians is often perceived as a voice in favor of the technocratic reality of the capitalist marketplace, with its insistence on criteria of merit and values judged according to material well-being. When President Clinton and Vice President Gore advocated for more money for education, it was combined with new testing that would insure that students were in fact learning the skills that would make "us" successful in the international marketplace of the future. There was never a suggestion that there was anything missing in the criteria of success. What Clinton had in mind was simply this: We are richer than everyone else, and in order to stay that way, we need to make sure that our students have the appropriate skills. Similarly, the Democrats' passionate defense of globalization was largely along these lines. They wanted to set the terms of trade to generate the greatest economic benefits for the United States, and we could only do that by participating in the particular international trade agreements that we've created through the World Trade Organization.

What could provide a sense of meaning and purpose to life if it could end so senselessly for people at the height of their careers and success?

No wonder, then, that people who don't feel that they are going to be particularly successful in this kind of struggle of all against all sometimes feel uncomfortable with the message that the meaning of their lives will be measured by how much wealth, power, or fame they are able to accumulate. There is for most people, and has been for a long time, a crisis of meaning in their lives—and this leads them to be particularly open to two major avenues that the Right has tended to champion: religious fundamentalism and chauvinistic nationalism.

The good part of what religious and nationalist communities have to offer is that they provide an alternative system of values to the capitalist market. Your value as a member of our community, people are told, is not dependent on whether you've made a lot of money or achieved fame. You are valued not because of what you've accomplished, but because of Who You Are as a being.

This is a good message. Many people who are attracted to a right-wing framework are attracted because of something good in them, not something bad. The problem arises when many of these religious and nationalist communities take a second and more destructive step of devaluing those who are not part of the community. "You are valuable because you are saved as a Christian (substitute here any other religion), but those who are not Christians are not saved, and they in fact are causing a problem for our world." Or "We value you as an American, but foreigners, including the immigrants or non-citizens among us, are a danger and a threat."

It is this experience of demeaning the Other that has led many people to rebel against religious or national communities and become strident liberals or lefties. The liberal and leftist critiques are usually correct—these communities' intolerance does often have very hurtful effects. But what the Left fails to understand are the rational core of needs that are not being addressed in the larger society but which are addressed, albeit in distorted form, in these communities of meaning. Instead, the lefties position themselves as though there is no higher framework of meaning beyond fighting for everyone's "rights" as individuals. Of course we at TIKKUN support all those struggles, but we've also discovered that the struggle for rights is not sufficient to provide a transcendent meaning to life. As these struggles get translated into the "realistic" language of the courts and the legislative arena, they are articulated primarily in terms of the individual fulfillment that each person desires for herself or himself. This unconsciously reinforces a picture of the world as an aggregation of isolated individuals in competition with each other for goods and protected from each other by "rights."

Perhaps the moment when the shallowness of a "rights" orientation toward the world, and its implicit individualism, becomes most striking is when dealing with death. It is certainly true that 9/11 raised huge fears in the American public, and much of that fear concerned the lack of predictability, stability, and continuity that some people have allowed themselves to believe could be temporarily achieved through immersion in the consumer culture and the struggle for success in American life. Most of us have had to deal with destruction of this myth when we've faced death as individuals. But now, after 9/11, the entire society had to face it as a whole. What could provide a sense of meaning and purpose to life if it could end so senselessly for people at the height of their careers and success?

Without all the standard paraphernalia, with crisis facing us, there was for many a momentary opening of the heart in the weeks immediately after the tragedy. For a moment there was an unfreezing, as people were moved by the kindness and generosity shown by firemen and policemen, by strangers pouring out into the streets to help in any way they could, by spontaneous gatherings to mourn and talk and work through what it all meant. With the heart momentarily unfrozen, new ideas emerged, and there was for a short time even some consideration about changing our

relationship to the rest of the world, examining what we might have done that would provoke such anger, and exploring how to live in the face of death and uncertainty.

But as my friend Peter Gabel points out, that spiritual/psychological/political space had no container and no recognized leadership to give it voice. So there was no way for people to publicly articulate to each other that there was something profoundly right about the idealism that was surging forth into public space. And into the vacuum of self-doubt stepped the ideologues of the Right with a program to make sense of everything by pushing it back into the container of "the evil Other" that must be combated, and by reviving American nationalism and the security it promised through its ability to militarily dominate and reshape the world in our image. America would be the source of transcendent value, and all that each of us had to do was give President Bush a blank check to proceed. We could then be part of a new "We" that this nationalism engendered.

Yet no matter how powerful the ideas, when the heart is closed, the mind will be closed as well.

My point here is *not* to put people down for following this path, but to say to those who want an alternative to this: We need to provide another framework of meaning and purpose for life that does not require either a belief in other-worldly compensations or in domination and control over other peoples.

That framework, a liberatory framework of meaning, has already been part of the spiritual traditions of the world, and whereas those spiritual traditions have often been co-opted into frameworks of domination and demeaning of others, they can today be renewed in undistorted ways. In *Spirit Matters*, I talk about this as an "emancipatory spirituality," or a spirituality which insists on the value of every human being, rejects demeaning of the Other, affirms the unity of all human beings and the centrality of social justice, peace, and ecological responsibility, and affirms a life of pleasure.

"Pleasure," the neocons may scoff. "That is the whole problem with all of you on the Left. Your whole philosophy is just a flimsy excuse for the narcissism that has led you to evade community and seek endless individual satisfactions with no sense of social responsibility or family values." But the inclusion of pleasure in a vision of emancipatory spirituality was already anticipated by John Stuart Mill in his recognition of distinctive human pleasures. So even if some segments of previous counter-cultures have sought to turn the demand for a pleasure-enhancing society into an excuse for maximizing sexual conquest, drug abuse, and other forms of self-indulgent narcissism, the intention of the demand for pleasure is actually a demand for a different kind of society.

In fact, the great spiritual-religious wisdom traditions of the world have all taught some variant of this message: The deepest human pleasures come from living in a world based on justice, peace, love, generosity, kindness, and celebration of the universe and service to the ultimate moral law of the universe (whether learned through revelation or through reason). Life's meaning can emerge from being part of a community aimed at healing the pain and cruelty that has been passed down from generation to generation in the psychic structures, and embedded also in the social and economic arrangements, of class societies, so that we can in fact have a world based on love and caring.

The desire to build such a world is a constant theme in the collective unconscious of the human race. If the forces of *thanatos*, of hurtfulness and cruelty, are temporarily in ascendancy, it is only because most people have despaired about the possibility of building the world they really want. That's why the most important political task is to affirm the highest values of a vision that gets labeled "utopian," but is in fact the only path out of the self-destruction of the human race that is currently taking place as national conflicts divert our attention from the increasingly destructive environmental consequences of the globalization of capital.

It is recognizing the hunger for a different kind of world that explains the underlying dynamic that fuels the development described by Jonathan Schell in this issue of Tikkun. Schell notes, counter to all the voices of cynical realism, that in fact a new kind of power has been growing in the past few hundred years, manifesting in nonviolent struggles, and that those nonviolent struggles have actually been tremendously effective in changing the nature of the world we live in. Schell does his best to avoid labeling this power "spiritual"—fearful, perhaps, that he will be identified with the anti-political and anti-intellectual themes that sometimes emerge in contemporary spiritual movements. Yet the ontological ground for the success of nonviolent movements is, I believe, the underlying hunger for a world based on mutual recognition, caring, love, and generosity.

It would be a huge advance in contemporary politics if some progressive force could overcome its antipathy to the language of spirit and begin to talk unashamedly about the need to build a world based on mutual trust, mutual caring, cooperation, generosity, ecological responsibility, awe and wonder at the grandeur of creation, and recognition of the preciousness of every human being. Such a movement could begin to unthaw frozen consciousness.

Yet no matter how powerful the ideas, when the heart is closed, the mind will be closed as well.

This is where the power of art, religious symbols, a spirituality separated from the demeaning of the Other, and music become potentially liberating. It is in their ability to unfreeze the heart that these become central to the possibility of a new kind of liberation movement.

But what most unfreezes the heart are deeds of solidarity and caring, when people are willing to take risks for each other and for their ideals. This was what was so moving about the early days of the Civil Rights movement, when blacks and whites, who could have lived their lives without involving themselves in the lives of people whose rights were being denied in Mississippi and Louisiana and Alabama and Georgia and other southern states, began to risk (and in some cases lose) their own lives for the sake of helping others. Similarly, students risked being thrown out of college or university for the sake of defending the rights of others. I remember witnessing and being deeply moved by an example of this during the Free Speech movement. After seven leaders were suspended for engaging in a disruptive sit-in at the UC Berkeley administration building, hundreds of other students showed up at the dean's office and turned in their registration cards, demanding to be suspended since they had participated in the same demonstration. These kinds of acts of solidarity broke through the manipulated consciousness that had taught us that nothing but self-interest governed the behavior of others, and that we should therefore avoid taking risks for our ideals. Watching people willing to care for each other in such a deep way broke through hardened hearts and from there it became temporarily possible to open our minds as well.



We need some variant of this kind of activity to break through the consciousness of the current moment—not a mechanical re-enacting of the 1960s, or the 1930s, or of any past upsurge of the spirit of hope—but rather a new variant that addresses the current levels of people's despair and mutual distrust.

I offer one possible first step: Let's create a united fund to build housing for the homeless in the United States, to rebuild homes on the West Bank and Gaza, as well as homes that U.S. bombing unintentionally destroyed in Iraq. Let's do it by asking every Democrat, every liberal, every progressive, and every spiritual person to take all of their tax refunds from this and every subsequent round of tax rebates and put it into a joint building-for-the-homeless fund. Let's make that the badge of honor for anyone associated with our social movement—that they have given the entirety of their refund to a community purpose, to a single United Fund for a Caring Society. That act, if taken by millions of people, would do far more to break through narrow, frozen consciousness than any political campaign or demonstration. (They are also important. But to really reach and influence public consciousness, they will need to stop repeating the slogans of the past and begin to talk explicitly in a language that affirms love—breaking through old expectations and Left/Right dichotomies, and insisting that a progressive politics can also be a spiritually grounded politics).

To apply this thinking in another sphere, let's consider Israel/Palestine. In this issue's Publisher's Column, George Vradenburg puts forward an analysis of the contemporary situation with which I agree. Recent reports that the Bush administration might consider some reduction in loan guarantees to Israel if Israel continues to build its destructive wall through the middle of the West Bank should be applauded (go to www.tikkun.org to follow this issue and find suggested letters to send to media and elected representatives to support this move—unless by the time you read this Bush has already backed down under AIPAC pressure). We consistently call for Israel to take unilateral steps to end the Occupation, or at least to negotiate on the "fair to both sides" basis articulated in our Resolution for Middle East Peace.

But there is something more that Abbas could do even within the constraints of his own relative powerlessness: He could articulate a moral critique (not just a pragmatic one) of the acts of Palestinian violence against Israeli civilians and he could explain to his own people why it is morally wrong to attack civilians. He need not apologize for the necessity of struggle against the Occupation, but he could call for a day of mourning by Palestinians for those Israeli civilians who have been killed by terror attacks, and he could make a personal visit to the Wall and publicly ask forgiveness of the Israeli people for those actions—say in the period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. That action would open so many hearts, and from there it would be far easier to get our very rational arguments against the Occupation actually heard, because when the heart opens, the mind opens too.

Yes, of course I know that it really should be the other way around—that it should be Sharon asking the Palestinians for forgiveness on behalf of the Israeli people, just as it should be Bush asking the Iraqis and Afghanis for forgiveness. But I'm not talking about what "should" be (from the standpoint of the political imbalance of power). I'm talking about how we, who are committed to peace, could act to circumvent the powerful and reach ordinary people whose hearts have been closed and who therefore will not listen to our arguments, no matter how persuasive. We could do our part by creating public gatherings between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to atone in the name of the Jewish people and the American people for the sins that we have perpetrated against Palestinians (a very different tone than the demonstrations planned for September 25-29). If this were coordinated so that we could point to the atonement activities of Abbas and he could point to our public atonement, our discussions could break through to a level not easily attained through rational discourse alone.

Or yet another example: We could create two-week retreats or summer camps for people who share our values and who would commit the time each year to living in a context in which we all try to fully embody our highest ideals—a kind of Burning Man for social activists. The idea is already there in the Jewish holiday of Sukkot (celebrated this year October 10-17), during which religious Jews are supposed to live in flimsy huts modeled after those supposedly used in the forty years that Jews wandered in the desert after the exodus from Egypt. The idea is to detach from our false vision that material reality is solid and can give us security. We dwell in the sukkah to understand that there can be no permanence, that life cannot be solidified, and that our eternity and meaning comes from being part of an ongoing community seeking to build a world of justice, peace, generosity and kindness. If millions of people were to begin to create these kinds of gatherings each summer in different parts of the country, in which the evanescence of life, far from being mourned, was celebrated as a unique opportunity to bring healing and transformation to the world, and if a part of these gatherings was devoted to acts of social significance (planning campaigns of social healing, feeding the hungry, building housing for the homeless, planning demonstrations and strategies for the coming year), they could become the staging ground for a rebirth of communities of hope. The intent would not be to replace activities like antiwar demonstrations and working on political campaigns, but to connect them to a different level of involvement.

The willingness to keep our eyes on the prize and hold on—that generates hope. We can help each other hold onto the vision of what the world ought to be. Let me give you a personal example. Hundreds of you were willing to take off from work in the middle of the week in June to come to Tikkun's Teach-in to Congress on Middle East Peace. When people looked around at the conference and saw that it wasn't the typical leftie crew of D.C. locals, but rather a group of serious and sensible people from every part of the country, they felt felt less alone, and hence more willing to act on their own highest values.

I read your emails, and learn that some people are inviting friends over to see our video about the Tikkun Community, some are starting study groups around *Healing Israel/Palestine*, some are creating local Tikkun Communities, some are visiting Congressional and other public officials and getting them to think about supporting our Resolution for Middle East Peace (which you can sign and distribute online by going to www.tikkun.org/community/resolution). These things make me feel connected and excited that I'm not alone, that you are really there, wanting the same kind of loving and just world that I want, and it makes me feel strong and happy. This is how movements work—step-by-step, building a path that can only be built by you and me and your friends and mine working together, not losing sight, not losing faith in each other, and affirming the world of love and generosity that we are in the process of building. We must help each other keep our hearts open. ❑

Is Bush Standing Up to Ariel Sharon?



PHOTOGRAPH BY MENAHEM KAHANAH / AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

We who want peace and reconciliation between Israel and Palestine have a difficult task ahead—to support each step toward enforcement of the Road Map on the one hand, while simultaneously making it clear that the Road Map can only work if it leads to Israel's full and complete withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza.

So, we cheer on the Bush administration when it takes some relatively clear steps to get Ariel Sharon to not totally undermine the spirit and substance of the Road Map. We are pleased when the Bush administration floats a trial balloon that it might reduce the amount of support for loan guarantees to Israel proportionate toP the amount that it is spending on the Wall currently being constructed. The Wall, of course, is an overt attempt by Sharon to continue his strategy of talking endlessly while creating "facts on the ground" that further incorporate major sections of the West Bank into Israel. Halting that project is certainly a good thing. Similarly, it would be good if the administration were to demand that Israel release all of the Palestinian prisoners except those convicted of terrorist activities by a jury of ordinary Israeli citizens. Most have never had a chance to defend themselves in open court before a jury and they are being held against every international standard of human rights. Israel has made a big deal of releasing a few hundred of them at the same time that it has been arresting more people, again without trial or legal safeguards of any sort. Similarly, it would be a good thing for Israel to release Palestinian funds, dismantle more roadblocks, and lift the sieges of many villages and

(continued on page 60)

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Notes from the Undergrad

Michaella Matt



Tikkun Commmunity members from California meet with Senator Diane Feinstein's staff.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SHAYA BENYAMIN

I first encountered Tikkun my freshman year at Brown University. I was on the main lawn with an Israel advocacy student group petitioning for the support of Israel in the name of the democratic values it upholds. I prided myself in enlightening fellow students about the integrity of the Israeli government that many tend to overlook. I had lived in Jerusalem for four years, and although I felt that Israel should probably not be in the Territories, supporting Israel was my duty. I had seen a poster advertising the formation of the Tikkun Campus Network and, perhaps as a manifestation of my subconscious qualms about the petition, I mentioned something about it to the advocacy group.

"We can't endorse something like that," I was told. "Tikkun will be protesting against us when they come to campus."

Tikkun coming to campus turned out to be five students meeting in a snack bar, arguing amongst ourselves about almost everything, but finding refreshing room for growth in the idea of a safe space for dialogue and a renewed belief in peace. Every Tikkun meeting felt healing and rejuvenating. My peers struggled with the same philosophical, moral, and practical questions that I did, and we felt comfortable suspending judgment and leaving our questions without definitive answers. We were not united by a plan or a political party, but by our willingness to take the risk of optimism.

When Palestinian negotiator Michael Tarazi spoke at Brown, we learned together how to listen to a speech with the objective of learning, rather than of opposing and criticizing. We learned how to refrain from anticipating and categorizing opinions as Palestinian, Israeli, Jewish, or Muslim, but rather as other perspectives—hopefully different than our own—from which we could learn. We have brought Jews and Muslims together on campus for hookah nights and falafel dinners, trying to create a microcosm of what we want to happen in the Middle East.

Fueling my involvement in Tikkun this past year was the belief that opinions can change. I lived in Israel, I was scared to ride on buses, I believed incursions into the West Bank were crucial for Israel's safety, and I did not trust Palestinians as partners for peace. But my views changed as I read more, as I realized I had never met a Palestinian, as I saw movies, learned the history of South Africa, Ireland, Canada and other ethnic conflicts, asked questions, and as I listened. The more I allowed the flexibility of my own viewpoint, the more I believed others could change. In my neuroscience studies this is called neuroplasticity, or the constant changing of our neural maps as we have different experiences. In my own meditation practice, I discovered the similar possibility of breaking out of habitual thinking patterns and exploring the greater oneness of which we are all part.

And so although it was my political interest that drew me to the Tikkun Conference, I soon learned that my interests in psychology, spirituality and community were essentially interconnected with politics. I went on my own and felt somewhat awkward when I joined the crowd of 500 the first day for the opening speeches, wondering why I hadn't brought someone else along. But seconds later, the whole room was embracing, singing, and dancing to songs of peace led by Michael Lerner, Deepak Chopra, and Cornel West. The awkwardness disintegrated and I realized we would not only preach about how to get along in peace, but live it here and now, without delay.

My inner rebel against groupthink began to recede as Rabbi Michael Lerner spoke directly to a place inside of me that mourned our lack of interconnectedness. Lerner showed how our individual and collective suffering is ultimately rooted in our inability to see the ways that we are fundamentally interdependent and all part of one universal reality. As a result we feel separate and estranged from each other and unable to recognize in others the very same desires for a world based on generosity and kindness that

Michaella Matt is a sophomore at Brown University where she is studying Neuroscience, Religious Studies, and International Relations. She was born in Berkeley, California and lived in Jerusalem for four years when she was in high school.

motivate each of us. He helped me understand the battle inside my own (and everyone else's) mind, between the cynical intellectual who analyzes the world "realistically," and the hopeful dreamer who believes that values like love and compassion can transform the world. This inner conflict shapes our interpretation of the world and its possibilities—and we tend to re-enforce in each other a psychological and political climate that either flows toward fear and suspicion or toward hope and love. When we choose to see the world through the prism of trust and compassion, our definitions of concepts like "security" and "peace" begin to shift. Each decision we make affects the flow of energy in those around us and out in the world. The Tikkun Community is not about convincing everyone that our opinion is correct, but rather about cultivating confidence in our own and in others' voices of hope and "practical utopianism."

We are all part of a movement whose goal is to heal, in which there is healthy room for dissent.

Nonetheless, I began a list in the margins of my notebook of things people said at the conference that bothered me. I jotted down that having one ideology to apply to varied situations is simplistic and that it is useless to still be against the war in Iraq. I wrote in Hebrew, just in case I'd be sitting next to a nosy, argumentative, ideological Tikkunian. But towards the end of his speech, Rabbi Lerner affirmed that all we have on this planet are conflicted, screwed-up people, so Tikkun has the right to be screwed-up too. This concession made it easier for people like me to drop their defenses, realize there is no one to be against, and understand we are all part of a movement whose goal is to heal, in which there is healthy room for dissent.

Next, Deepak Chopra, a critical figure in shaping my own academic interest in the dialogue between neuroscience and Eastern medicine, explained effortlessly how the latest scientific discoveries provide a basis for a political vision based on interconnectedness. The essential nature of the material world is not material, but rather energy, a singularity of infinite intelligence, in which subject and object only interdependently co-arise. Furthermore, in eighth dimensional hyperspace, the strength of correlation between two events does not weaken as they draw further apart. Therefore there is a level of existence where everything is inseparably one, meaning that love is the ultimate truth in the heart of creation. Science need not be an abstract accumulation of discoveries, but rather a framework for truth that has relevance to how I relate with people and how I theorize about the world. Later in the conference, Congressman Dennis Kucinich would explain the political relevance of neuroplasticity, and a conference attendee would tell me about his upcoming project to use the latest neurobiology research to cultivate peace within peacemakers themselves. My interest in neuroscience could have an impact on social activism and peace building.

A night of speeches by spiritual leaders revealed that my own spiritual self-transformation is an integral part of my political activism. My first year in college had left me religiously schizophrenic—feeling Jewish around Christians, Buddhist next to Jews, an atheist compared to the religious, and religious among the agnostics. Yet this night spoke to the soul that is the starting point of any spiritual quest, hardly ever offending or alienating me. Rabbi Arthur Waskow shared with us two names of God that blissfully nestled in my mind, and are now often the objects of my personal meditation. The Hebrew letters of God's biblical name, YHVH, make the sound of breathing, meaning the real name of God is a breath, belonging to animals and humans alike. At the burning bush, God is *"eheyeh asher eheyeh,"* or "I will be who I will be" or "who I am becoming."

Author Neale Donald Walsch emphasized that before I can make a difference I must come to believe that it is not all of us but me alone that the world depends on. He revealed the absurdity in our belief that God needs something from us that he is unable to get on his own! The man who has had personal conversations with God then shared that if God could talk to us, here is what he would say: "You've got me all wrong. I love you. I love you! Nothing you do could ever stop me from loving you. There's one thing you can do. Love yourself, love others." Walsch started crying on stage and said that we would be crying too if we knew how close we were.

Amidst my spiritual fulfillment and my political optimism, my realist voice would pipe up at times and wonder if we were just a group of lucky Americans with no understanding of the real rules and values that govern the Middle East. My years in Israel exposed me to a very harsh reality that often conflicts with American ideas. It was Yitzhak Frankenthal who spoke to these concerns. Frankenthal is an Israeli who, after losing his son in a suicide bombing, started an organization that unites Israeli and Palestinian parents who have lost children during the Intifada. He has transformed his anger into compassion, hope, and love. The Israelis (including the refusenik Yaniv Itzkowitz) and others from the Middle East who attended the conference demonstrated that Tikkun does not only represent American ideas; rather it shares a mature, non-reactionary, and balanced perspective that is latent in human consciousness.

The college students at the conference had our first chance to bond over a joint dinner. What a revelation that the work I was doing at Brown was but one part of the larger mosaic of peacemaking happening on college campuses, which was only one branch of the Tikkun community. That night a spark was created between us, filling the empty space inside that my disillusioned generation feels

when we hear about our parents uniting against the narrow-minded injustice of their times. Yet our activism is not a clichéd attempt at reliving the past. It is a vision that transcends previous currents of rebellion and anger and strives for our own ideals by means of our generation's unique capability for listening and compassion.

In the evenings, we gathered to dance to the beautiful and energizing music of Rabbi David Schneyer. After days of spectacular speeches, we had a chance to communicate to each other through rhythm, song, dance, heart, and body. A spontaneous jam session evolved with guitars, violins, drums, joyful voices and carefree dancing. In a circle on the Hyatt Regency Hotel basement-level floor, we sang Simon and Garfunkel, Israeli songs like "Od Yavo Shalom," Sufi chants, and wordless niggunim. As the hours passed by we tapped into a timeless, safe space of deep connection and joy.

After the music of the last night, the next generation of peacemakers took a night tour of the monuments of the beautiful capital city, singing and exchanging ideas about the conflict, about the movement, about the future. We all got excited by the prospects of joint camping trips to bond and brainstorm or road trips to build more Tikkun campus groups around the country. Here I was, a person who despises artificial attempts at forging a community, feeling supported and inspired in a group of people who connected on so many levels. Our only explanation was that Tikkun happens to draw the kind of eccentric, motivated, open-minded people that can get along effortlessly and work together magically.

On the third day of the conference, we all walked with an encouraging feeling of community to the Congress and Senate buildings to propose to our representatives the *Tikkun Resolution for Peace in the Middle East*. I presented the Resolution to the Rhode Island Representatives. Congressman Patrick Kennedy's assistant said that they realize the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the most important issue affecting American hatred abroad and therefore it is critical to solve. Senator Jack Reed's assistant agreed that the Tikkun plan made an important point in calling for a peace process that is not initially dependent upon an absolute cessation of violence, so that extremists do not have the opportunity to sabotage progress. Then I met Senator Lincoln Chaffee himself, who asked me about my own personal opinions and experiences, and agreed with the overall effort and balanced viewpoint. Rhode Islanders, our representatives are well-chosen!

From the representatives' questions and responses I could tell that they cared, quite logically, for what their constituents wanted. It was exciting, as a college sophomore, to carry my Tikkun binder, my notes, and my unprecedented rush of adrenaline through the halls of our government buildings, speaking about something I cared about deeply and believed in passionately. I experienced an individual sense of tremendous accomplishment that was but one ripple in the ocean of Tikkunians on Capitol Hill.



Rep. Dennis Kucinich (seated at left) addresses the Tikkun Community Teach-In to Congress, June 3rd. Seated next to him are refusenik Yaniv Itzkovitz and Marianne Williamson.

In the Teach-In to Congress and at the evening banquet, we heard several more Congressmen and Senators respond to the Tikkun Resolution. Hearing Congressman Dennis Kucinich and others support the Resolution so enthusiastically, I had the feeling that we were simply invincible. The combination of all of our pure intentions and the confident optimism with which we carried ourselves seemed to have exponential effects all around us. Furthermore, knowing that there were people in my government who articulated the values of the Tikkun Community challenged the feelings of hopelessness and uselessness we easily ascribe to our leadership figures. What occurred that powerful day laid the groundwork for all future attempts to patiently remind ourselves and each other that it is safe to work towards a compassionate and just world.

One of the most striking metaphors for Tikkun in my mind is a picture of my university, of America, or of our world, in which I see little pockets of people genuinely listening to each other, cultivating compassion, understanding differences, and working eagerly and tolerantly towards their highest vision. All it takes is two or three people to be inspired by one aspect of the Tikkun Community, such as the balanced view towards the conflict, the emphasis on believing in peace, or the focus on spiritual and psychological truths. People frustrated by the conflict come together to create a safe space to truly listen, learn, and cultivate compassion and dialogue. As the pockets grow and multiply, more and more people are united on a higher vibration. There is already a strong, passionate and compassionate community of 5,000 diversely opinionated people who are united by a commitment to the means as much as the ends and by a belief in the possibility of our planet realizing its highest moral potential. ❑

PHOTOGRAPH BY CURT HAMILTON

Power and Cooperation

Jonathan Schell

Following is a version of a speech given at the Tikkun Community Teach-In to Congress, June, 2003.

Nothing is more important than what we as American citizens do at this absolutely critical moment. By going back into history I hope to shed some light on what I think the fundamental choice is. I happen to live six blocks from where the World Trade Center once stood. I don't say that in order to claim any special right to speak because I don't think it gives me any right. I happen to believe that it's a human entitlement, and even a responsibility, to think and reflect and act concerning events that happen far away and of which one has no direct personal experience. I say it because I want you to know that I'd be the last person to underestimate the sheer horror of what happened on September 11, or to underestimate the gravity of the danger that terrorism poses to the United States and to the world.

It was an infernal experience, and it was one that lasted far beyond the day on which it occurred, far beyond the weeks or even months after. You may recall the subterranean fires that burned on, filling the air with a kind of acrid smoke and an unmentionable odor all its own. That became a symbol in my mind of the profound disorder that had been created and unleashed in the world.

At the same time, I must say that I think our country has gone drastically off-track in its response to the crisis that began on that day. The crisis goes even deeper than anything that concerns only the United States. I believe there are moments in history when what is being decided goes far beyond the matters being discussed in the debates of the time—when the direction is being set for decades to come and sometimes even for as much as a century to come. If we look back at the twentieth century, most historians agree that the definitive moment was August of 1914, when the world plunged into the First World War, setting the century's course in the direction of an extreme violence of which people had no historical experience or knowledge. And the aftershocks were greater than the initial shock.

The century's first decade resembled its last decade in many respects, because both were periods of economic growth, globalization, and spreading liberalism. But at a stroke, the First World War reversed all of those tendencies, ushering in an era of depression, contraction of global trade, and repression. On the eve of the war there were two hundred divisions ready to go into battle in Europe, and when the war broke out, as the historian John Keegan says, "the submerged warrior society sprang armed through the surface of the peaceful landscape." That warrior society never went back to its barracks in the twenty-first century because in Germany and Russia, the suffering and the humiliation and the incalculable social disorganization caused by the war created conditions that made possible the rise of mass totalitarian movements. The seventy-five-year Bolshevik terror, which Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn called the "Red Wheel," rolled out of the trenches of World War I, as did its jagged counterpart, the Nazi swastika. The aggression and antagonism of these two regimes led directly to the Second World War. Political philosopher Hannah Arendt said of the period during and between the two world wars: "Nothing which was being done, no matter how stupid, no matter how many people knew and foretold the consequences, could be undone or prevented. Every event had the finality of a Last Judgment—a judgment that was passed neither by God nor by the Devil, but looked rather like the expression of some irredeemably stupid fatality."

Of course, in 1914 there were many Great Powers, as they were called in those days—five or six of them. They hadn't invented Superpowers yet. The preponderance of military force was distributed among those powers, and therefore the decision that tipped the whole world into that First World War was made by several powers.

Today, you can see that our situation is far different. The United States is the only Superpower in a unipolar world, and the military spending of the United States equals at least that of a dozen of the other top military spending nations in the world. The military force that once was distributed among several powers has now in a sense been withdrawn from them and concentrated in a single place—the arsenals of the United States. Of course, there are other countries in the world that have power which they are abusing, that have moral responsibilities and decisions to

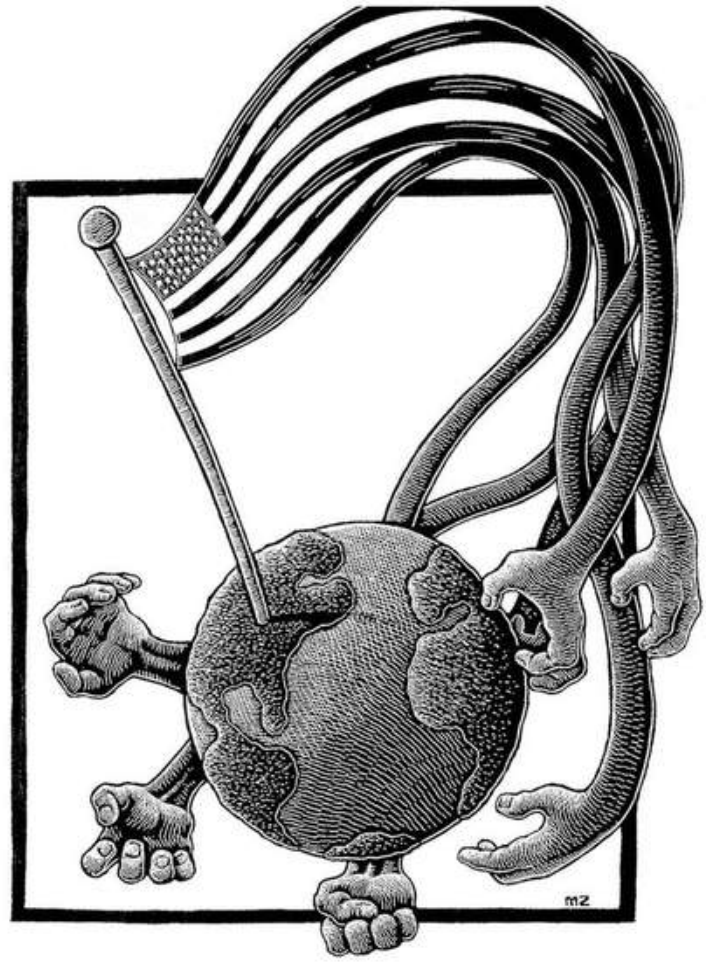
Jonathan Schell is the peace and disarmament correspondent for the Nation *magazine. He is the author of many books, including most recently,* The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People *(Metropolitan), on which this talk draws.*

make. But when it comes to the very critical decision that we face for the twenty-first century, which is whether we are going to go back down the road of violence—as a country, first, and as a world in general—then we have to recognize that we bear an exceptional responsibility because of the tremendous power that is in American hands. I say this not to be hyperbolic about American malfeasance or virtue or responsibilities; rather, it's a realistic fact in view of the military force at our disposal.

This freakish situation is something quite new in the history of the world. And I regret to say that I think we have taken the wrong path. Our current administration has adopted a policy that relies upon force more nakedly, more explicitly, and more ambitiously than any administration in American history. We seem to have developed what properly, and again without exaggeration, can be called an imperial path. The United States, with its invasion and occupation of Iraq, has almost formally set out to reinvent imperialism for the twenty-first century. You only have to pick up the newspaper to see this. General McKiernan, who runs the military forces in Baghdad, came out after all the looting and disorder and said, "We have absolute power here." We haven't heard those words since King Louis XVI was overthrown during the French Revolution. One proconsul was put in there, General Garner, and he couldn't handle it so they yanked him out and put in Paul Bremer. He then decided, in an unfathomably reckless move, to cut off the pensions and payments to the entire former Iraqi Army. If that's not a way to make people angry at you, I don't know what is. And the result: almost every day this week there have been American casualties or British casualties in Iraq amidst a rising tide of nationalism.

This move toward imperialism is bound to fail for historical reasons, but in failing it can exact a terrible cost both in our country and around the world. Empire, among political systems, is the embodiment of force. It violates equity on a global scale. No supporter of freedom can support it. It's especially contrary to the founding principles of the United States.

Historically speaking, imperialism has rested on three foundations: the military, the economy, and politics. But the United States only enjoys unequivocal superiority in one of these areas: the military. It's true that we have tremendous economic power, but in this realm there are several equals or near-equals—the European Union, Japan, and increasingly China—none of whom is likely to bend easily to America's will. But more important is our political weakness, because in the contemporary world military force no longer translates easily into political rule, as we're now seeing in Iraq. "Covenants without swords are but words," Thomas Hobbes said centuries ago. But since then the world has learned that swords without covenants are but empty bloodshed. If you look back in history you see that an imperial power like Rome was able to convert military victories into political



Empire, among political systems, is the embodiment of force. It violates equity on a global scale.

power, but the United States cannot do so today. In the political arena, the lesson of the anti-colonial rebellions, which occurred everywhere in the world and were successful, is that winning military victories may sometimes be easy, but building political institutions is hard. The United States today is mistrusted and disliked in many parts of the world, and if we embark on a plan of imperial domination it is our fate to be disliked still more. Can cruise missiles build nations? Does power flow from the barrel of a gun or a B-2 Bomber? Can the world be ruled from 35,000 feet?

Modern peoples have the will to resist and the means to do so. Imperialism without politics is a naïve imperialism. In our times force can win a battle or two, but politics is destiny. Can a nation that began its life in rebellion against the greatest empire of its time, namely the British, become an even greater empire? It can. But not if it wishes to remain a republic. Secretary of State John Quincy Adams defined the choice with precision in advising the United States not to go abroad "in search of monsters to destroy, but be the well wishers for the freedom and independence of all." He added that should the United States embark on

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARIO ZUCCA

the path of dominating others, "fundamental maxims over policy would insensibly change from liberty to force. She might become the dictatress of the world. She would no longer be the ruler of her own spirit." Our government would do well to reflect upon his words.

"Violence," Hannah Arendt said paradoxically, "can destroy power." The United States appears to be moving quickly down this path. Does our government imagine that the peoples of the world, having overthrown the great territorial empires of the twentieth century, are ready to bend the knee to an American overlord? Do they imagine that allies are willing to become subordinates? Have they forgotten that people hate to be dominated by force? History is packed with surprises, some of them appalling. The leaders of the totalitarian Soviet empire somehow had the good sense to yield up their power without unleashing the tremendous violence that was at their fingertips. But could it be the destiny of the American republic, unable to resist the allure of an imperial delusion, to flare out in a blaze of pointless mass destruction?

Cooperative power. It's the kind of power that we generate when we work together in concert, peacefully, for common causes.

That sounds very extreme—but we are living in the age of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. It is a truly outlandish situation. For one thing, we are still threatening our friend and ally, Russia, with mutual annihilation, and they are doing the same to us. It may not be the most dangerous situation of the nuclear age, but it's surely the craziest. At the same time the United States is revving up its nuclear arsenal and refastening its nuclear strategy to retarget its weapons at other countries all around the world, including Libya, Syria, China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea, according to the Bush administration's *Nuclear Posture Review*.

Yet at the same time that we not only possess but develop new weapons and strategies, we are seeking to forbid other nations from getting into the weapons of mass destruction business. Not only do we keep the weapons, but we threaten to use them *first* against other countries who try to obtain them. This is the apogee of hypocrisy. But hypocrisy is the least of it; more important is that this policy is entirely unworkable. The President has one thing right—weapons of mass destruction are the greatest threat of the twenty-first century, just as they were of the twentieth. But if we don't find a workable policy to deal with this threat we are in deep trouble.

Let's reflect for a moment on how well the current policy has been working.

We had a war in Iraq in order to get rid of the weapons of mass destruction that have turned out not to be there. But the fact that they are not there is not the most important point—even if they turn out to be there, this policy is not viable. According to the President's rule book, the other two countries in the "axis of evil" (Iran and North Korea) were supposed to learn from the war against Iraq that if they got into the weapons of mass destruction business, the United States would impose a regime change on them, too. But what lesson did they actually learn? That they should build up their weapons of mass destruction. Why? Because that's the only chance they have of *deterring* the United States from attacking them. So North Korea has started building its arsenal and there's very little, or nothing, that the United States can do about it.

This North Korean policy is one that the United States should understand perfectly well because it is one that we have taught the world. In every single action, in every single policy and statement in a half a century of the nuclear age, the lesson we have taught the world is this: If you want to be safe from nuclear weapons, get nuclear weapons. That's the lesson of nuclear deterrence, and it has been the central strategy of the United States since the beginning of the Cold War.

By heading down this path, we not only fail to deal with the problem of weapons of mass destruction, we actually make the problem worse. We are heading towards a kind of nuclear anarchy, as proliferation runs unchecked (chemical and biological weapons are not going to stay in the bottle either). Our current policy strengthens the possibility that nuclear weapons will be used by or against us, or by other countries such as India and Pakistan against one another. It is entirely unacceptable. We must not hand our children a world of nuclear anarchy. We must find another path. We must move the twenty-first century away from the path of force that the twentieth took in 1914.

The Path to Peace

There is a solid foundation for a practical, realistic, and achievable path away from this unacceptable destination and towards peace. We in the United States have hugely overestimated the usefulness of force and hugely underestimated the usefulness of forms of action that do not employ violence. There is a power in this world that overmatches violence. Even as we were moving down the road of ever more extreme violence in the twentieth century, at the same time quietly, and less noticed, but no less dramatic, new forms of action were developing that hold tremendous promise for our future and that we should turn to as we ask ourselves how to proceed.

Quite frankly, I don't have a good word for this power. We use the word "nonviolence," but it's a negative word. Gandhi said that nonviolent action was the most positive, active, and energetic force in the world. Why should we have to refer to it in negative terms? Gandhi was very aware

of this problem, so he held a contest back in 1905 to rename it. He said it was not passive resistance. It's not passive at all. What to call it? The winner of that contest turned out to be Gandhi, himself, and he called it *Satyagraha*, which translates into English as "soul force" or "truth force." Unfortunately that phrase hasn't really caught on. Vaclav Havel called it "living in truth" when he launched his campaign of disobedience and constructive action against the Soviet overlord. That's a slightly better phrase but still quite remote in sound and suggestion from the political world in which it had such great effect.

In the book I recently wrote, *The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence and the Will of the People*, I call it "cooperative power." It's a rather colorless phrase, but one that's useful for me and that I distinguish from coercive power. Cooperative power. It's the kind of power that we generate when we work together in concert, peacefully, for common causes—as distinct from coercive power which we use against one another.

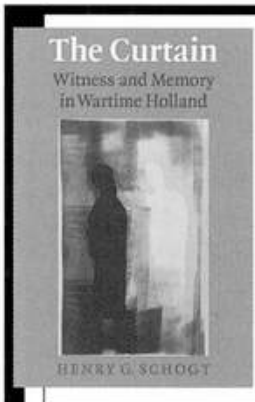
Let me offer a couple of examples of cooperative power. The first and most astonishing was the fall of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was a tremendous totalitarian state and empire. It had nuclear weapons, the Red Army, the KGB, all sorts of other agencies—they'd taken over every aspect of civil life. There has rarely been a state that has had more of the instruments of power in its hands. And in a world in which people believe that violence is the final arbiter in human affairs, who could imagine that the Soviet Union would no longer be with us today? Who would have thought that in 1989–1990 it would just evaporate like the morning dew? I remember the astonishment I felt when I saw the Berlin Wall coming down. The whole thing just melted away like a bad dream.

We need to reflect on that. One of those who did even before the fact was, of course, Vaclav Havel: "We introduced a new model of behavior. Don't get involved in diffuse, general, ideological polemics with the center, to whom numerous concrete causes are always being sacrificed. Fight only for those concrete causes, and fight for them unswervingly to the end." He went on to say that by "living within the lie"—which is what he contrasted "living in truth" to—"individuals confirm the system, fulfill the system, make the system, are the system." So a line of conflict was, in effect, drawn down the center of each person who was invited in the countless decisions of daily life to choose between living in truth and living in the lie. Living in truth—directly doing in your immediate surroundings what you think needs doing, saying what you think is true and needs saying, acting the way you think people should act, is a form of protest, Havel admitted, against living in the lie. So those who tried to live in truth were indeed in opposition, but that was neither all they were, nor was it the main characteristic of who they were. Because before living in truth was a protest, he said, it was an affirmation: "Individuals can be alienated from themselves only because there is something in them to alienate. The terrain of this violation is their essential existence." In other words, if the state's commands are a violation deserving of protest, then the deepest reason is that they disrupt this essential existence, this essential human integrity.

Those words might perhaps sound personal or philosophical or spiritual in a way that seems disconnected from politics, but in fact, Havel understood that this living in truth, this kind of nonviolent action, guided from within, by millions of ordinary people—in Czechoslovakia, in Poland, eventually in Russia—was actually at the center of the struggle over political power itself. Very few people understood this in 1978 when he was writing about it. "Under the orderly surface of the life of lies," he said,

> there slumbers the hidden sphere of life in its real aims, of its hidden openness to truth. The singular, explosive, incalculable political power of living within the truth resides in the fact that living openly within the truth has an ally, invisible to be sure, but omnipresent: this hidden sphere. It is from this sphere that life lived openly in truth grows; it is to this sphere that it speaks, and in it that it finds its understanding. This is where the potential for communication exists.

Who was listening at the time? Who had guessed that on the basis of this—which seemed to most people to be naïve,



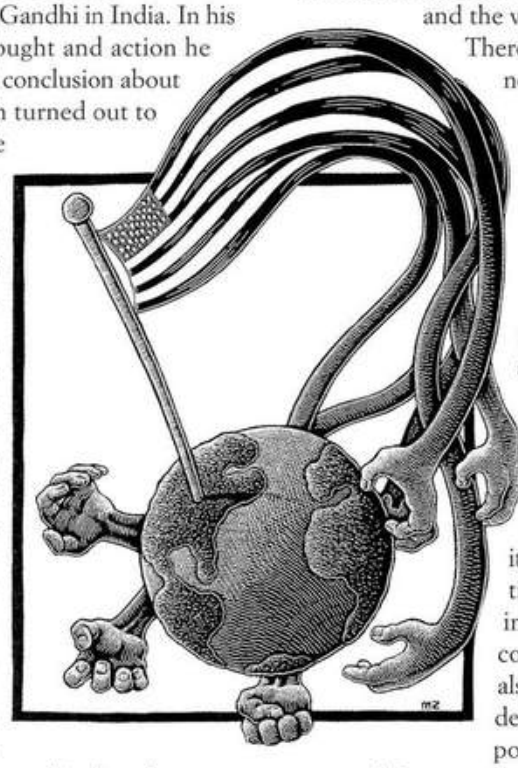
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utopian, marginal, perhaps edifying, but not of any real-world consequence—who could imagine that here was the key to the downfall of the mighty Soviet Union?

Another example was, of course, Gandhi in India. In his many writings and in his life of thought and action he came early on to a very fundamental conclusion about the nature of political power, which turned out to hold true for the century in which he lived. He realized that not only *should* governments depend on the consent and the cooperation of the governed, but in actual fact they *did* so depend. And this held true not only for democratic governments, where you can vote the rascals out, but even for totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, as was later demonstrated in the Soviet Union. He saw that if the public, if enough people who were receiving the commands of the government, simply refused—a very tough thing to do because you could lose your life, your job, your social connections, etc.—then the government would be left barking orders into empty air and its power would come to an end. He called this non-cooperation. But he realized at the same time that in addition to non-cooperation there had to be a positive program. It wasn't enough just to withdraw your cooperation—you had to immediately set about building up the structures of politics, of social work, of education, etc., to help your own people and just bypass the authorities.



The amazing fact about this sort of action, in India and in the Soviet Union, was that when people engaged in it, they developed political power. This happened with the Solidarity movement in Poland during the "self-limiting revolution." Their idea was they'd take care of society, and let the Communist Party handle government and foreign affairs in order to keep the Soviet center happy. It turned out, however, that by engaging in this massive campaign of positive action in their society they willy-nilly developed political power. I remember the day it fell into their hands in 1989, when they got all the votes in the first free elections in Poland—they were amazed. Some of them seemed almost chagrined and astonished: "Us taking positions in the government? We're in charge now?" They weren't ready for it. Even they were surprised by what they had accomplished.

I mention this because we're not dealing with a marginal fact of history. This is not some side influence of a few good and noble people whom we should admire, but who didn't have much effect on the course of history. In actual fact, every single one of the empires that was standing at the beginning of the twentieth century had fallen by the end. It was not only the British and the Soviet empires; all the empires fell. We're dealing with a very fundamental fact of human history. There are some verdicts of history that stand and the verdict against empire is one of them. There is something in this world that does not love an empire. And that's why it's a supreme folly for the United States to head down that path at this moment in history.

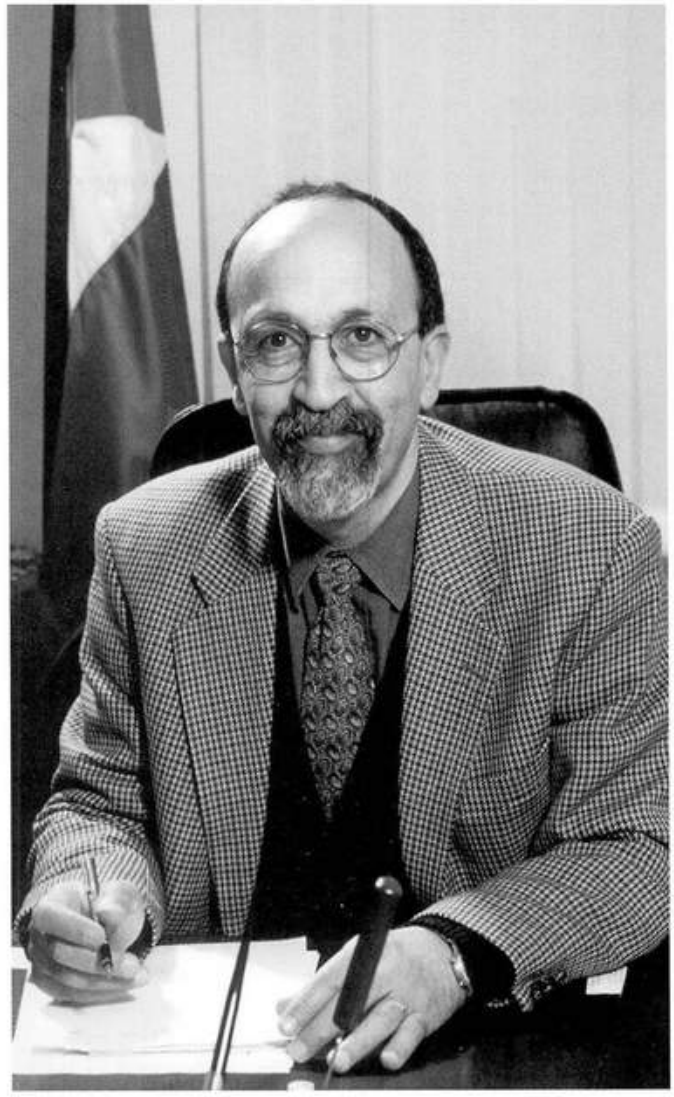
In conclusion, I'll quote from a passage of *The Unconquerable World:*

"Whether one calls this power cooperative power or something else, it is this that with the steady widening and deepening of the democratic spirit has over and over bent the great powers to its will. Its point of origin is the heart and mind of each ordinary person. It grows out of social work as well as political activity. In the absence of popular participation, it simply disappears. Its cheap instrument is direct action, both non-cooperative and constructive, but it is also the wellspring of the people's will in democratic nations. It is not an all-purpose mean with which any end can be pursued. It cannot be projected, for its strength declines in proportion to the distance from its source. It is a local plant rooted in home soil. It is therefore mighty on the defensive, feeble on the offensive and toxic to territorial empires, all of which in our time have died. It can be spiritual in inspiration, but doesn't have to be. Its watchwords are love and freedom.

Yet it is not just an ideal, but a real force in the world. In revolution, it is decisive. Under the name of the will of the people it has dissolved the foundations first of the monarch and aristocracy and then of totalitarianism. As opinion, it has stood in judgment over democratically elected governments. As rebellious hearts and minds it has broken the strength of great powers engaged in a superannuated imperialism. As love of country, it has fueled the universally successful movements for self-determination. Gone awry, it has fueled ethnic and national war and totalitarian rule, which soon suffocate it, though only temporarily. It now must be brought to bear on the choice between survival and annihilation. It is powerful because it sets people in motion and fixes before their eyes what they are ready to live and die for. It is dangerous for the same reason. Whether combined with violence, as in people's wars, sustained by a constitution, as in democracy, or standing alone, as in Satyagraha or living truth, it is becoming the final arbiter of the public affairs of our time, and the political bedrock of our unconquerable world." ❑

INTERVIEW

A CONVERSATION WITH Nabeel Kassis



Nabeel Kassis is the Palestinian Authority's Minister of Planning. He is a native of Ramallah, where he has lived and worked most of his life. He was trained as a theoretical nuclear physicist and taught in the field for many years at universities in Europe and the Middle East (including Birzeit University near Jerusalem), but more recently he has played a critical role in peace negotiations between Palestine and Israel. In July he traveled to Washington to meet with senior Cabinet officials and members of Congress to discuss the role of the United States in bringing peace to Israel/Palestine. TIKKUN *spoke with him during his visit.*

TIKKUN: Although we support the Road Map, we are very critical of two aspects: 1. Its incentive to violence (those on both sides who oppose a two-state solution can destroy the peace process with acts of violence); and 2. Its failure to specify an outcome beyond the declaration that there should be a Palestinian state and an Israeli state. This way Ariel Sharon can appear to support the peace process, though his vision for a Palestinian state is in less than 50 percent of the West Bank.

NABEEL KASSIS: These are important issues you raise. But the reality is that the Road Map is on the agenda right now, and through it the United States has promised to play an important role in bringing a just peace, and we want to take that at face value. If we Palestinians were asked to chart a path from where we are now to the end of the Occupation and to independence and statehood, we might well have taken a different road from that of the Road Map. But if this one will take us to that destination, we will support it. Of course, we are quite apprehensive, but we hope that the commitment by President Bush will mean something real.

You are right that extremists on both sides can use aspects of the Road Map to undermine the process, but that depends on how much faith and how much commitment each side has to the outcome. And there have been some good developments inside Palestine that have led to a truce that we hope will turn into a permanent cease-fire. But that depends in part on whether Israel takes steps to encourage the persistence of this cease-fire.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF NABEEL KASSIS

If the outcome is what Sharon envisions—40 percent of the 22 percent of the land that is the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem—it will not be acceptable.

As to the end goal, the Road Map says at the outset that it is based on UN Resolution 242, the progress made so far [at Taba], and the Saudi Initiative. The Saudi Initiative calls for an end to Occupation and a return to the pre-1967 borders. This is the only way to have a solution. If there are some border adjustments made on a reciprocal basis that could be in the interest of both parties, these would have to be negotiated. The Road Map wouldn't have been accepted by us had this anticipated outcome not been clearly stated both in UN Resolution 242 and in the Saudi Initiative. If the outcome is what Sharon envisions—40 percent of the 22 percent of the land that is the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem—it will not be acceptable.

TIKKUN: What made it possible for Hamas and others who favor the elimination of Israel to join the current cease-fire?

QASSIS: What made sense was to abandon the idea of eliminating Israel, and Abu Mazen and others in our leadership met with Hamas and convinced them of the value of the cease-fire. Hamas is, after all, a political party—true it has a militant faction, but it is ultimately a political party, and this position is the only one which made sense. After all, there is global support for the Road Map both inside Palestine and in the rest of the world, so Hamas and Islamic Jihad would lose their political credibility if they did not also agree to give it a chance. There is a unanimity not only in the Arab world, but all around the world about what should be the outcome of this process, so all of the factions inside the Palestinian fold really had to give it a chance to work.

There is global support for the Road Map both inside Palestine and in the rest of the world, so Hamas and Islamic Jihad would lose their political credibility if they did not also agree to give it a chance.

Now, of course, there may be among these factions some people who believe that this cease-fire is a test that will inevitably fail. But the stance of the Palestinian Authority is that we must show them that this is a test that will succeed. But it will depend on what Israel does. If Israel takes the necessary steps, we can win the argument with Hamas and others by showing that there is a real willingness on the Israeli side to move forward. But this process will certainly fail if Israel takes the attitude that only the Palestinians have to deliver, while Israel can continue its harsh measures. These must stop: the road blocks, the sieges around the Palestinian cities, detaining Palestinians without charges, the destruction of the infrastructure of Palestine, the targeted assassinations, etc. If we can show the Palestinian people that Israel is acting in good faith, the opposition to this Road Map will dramatically weaken.

TIKKUN: The Sharon government argues that it is precisely its harsh measures which led Hamas to agree to the cease-fire and to recognize that nothing will be achieved through violence.

QASSIS: You are telling me that Sharon is basically saying "violence works." Well, we in the Palestinian Authority reject that position. All the measures of the Occupation, including the assassinations, the grabbing of territory, the erection of settlements, the holding of prisoners without charges or trial, none of this has succeeded in reducing the resolve of the Palestinian people to end the Occupation. What we are trying to do is end violence and enter a path committed to dialogue. What we were able to present to Hamas, when we convinced them to participate in the cease-fire, were signs of seriousness that some process might begin which could lead to the end of the Occupation—including the stand of the Arab states supporting the Saudi proposal, the participation of the Quartet in advancing the Road Map, and the statement of President Bush calling for the creation of a Palestinian state.

TIKKUN: We at TIKKUN have called for the Palestinian people to make a unilateral and principled [not just tactical] commitment to non-violence, just as we've called on Israel to make a unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank. We believe that if the Palestinian movement were perceived as a non-violent movement, that perception would dramatically enhance its ability to receive public support both in Israel and the United States—just as the non-violence of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. dramatically increased the support for the movements that held to those ideals.

QASSIS: Well, the period between 1967 and 1988 was a period of this sort, almost.

TIKKUN: But there was never a principled commitment to non-violence, just a de facto reality. Very few people in this world would perceive Arafat or even Abu Mazen [Mahmoud Abbas] as the Palestinian equivalents of Gandhi, King, or even Nelson Mandela.

QASSIS: Maybe not. But what counts here is peace-making, and if you look at President Arafat, he has responded to every peace overture, and in many cases has initiated those overtures. Peace-making doesn't have to be only by the way of Gandhi, King, or Mandela—everyone has to find his own way. It depends on circumstances and who you are dealing with.

TIKKUN: If the cease-fire doesn't hold, TIKKUN's *Resolution for Middle East Peace* calls for the introduction of an international force to separate and protect each side from the other.

QASSIS: That could make sense as long as the separation you talk about is one that is on the 1967 border. You don't want to have an international force in the middle of the West Bank surrounding and protecting the Israeli settlements.

TIKKUN: What is your attitude toward settlements? Our *Resolution* calls for an international fund to provide compensation for refugees but also help resettle Israeli settlers back into the pre-1967 borders of Israel. We don't, however, demand that all Israelis move back—we hold that Jews should be allowed to live there if they become Palestinian citizens, give up their Israeli citizenship, and agree to abide by Palestinian laws and face legal proceedings in Palestinian courts. It's not reasonable to ask for every Jew to leave the West Bank.

QASSIS: People should not be excluded from Palestine based on their religious or ethnic background, so I'm fine with having any Jews who want to live in Palestine do so.

There will be one body of law for everyone—not two laws, one for Palestinians and one for Israelis, as is currently the case in the Israeli-occupied territories. But they can't live in settlements, because they are the product of an illegal occupation and their construction was done in violation of international law. The settlement by an occupying power of its citizens in the territory of the occupied is illegal according to the Geneva Convention (whether those settlers be Jews or Christians or even Muslims). We can't treat as an unalterable reality the presence of hundreds of thousands of people who are there to perpetuate an occupation when the whole point of the negotiations is to end the Occupation. But settlements will be a subject for final outcome negotiations, and so we will negotiate them as part of the negotiations. But we don't have to say what the outcome of those negotiations will be; we won't negotiate it here today.

Settlements will be a subject for final outcome negotiations.

TIKKUN: The Tikkun Community is calling for an end to the Occupation. But there are some Palestinians and their supporters in the United States who say that we must also support the Right of Return or else they won't support us.

QASSIS: Every Palestinian refugee everywhere in the world will have a position on this question, sometimes expressed in strong words, sometimes in not so strong words. We've accepted the idea of negotiating this issue, on the basis of UN Resolution 194 and Arab initiatives. Israel may not agree with our position, and that is why we will have to negotiate and see what is accomplishable, but we certainly have the responsibility to make the case for return of the refugees. Palestinians have the right to make this demand, and raise it as part of the negotiations, but nobody has the right to disrupt a peace settlement once the negotiations come to a conclusion.

But until those negotiations start, the most important thing people in the United States can do is support the American effort to push the Road Map forward. The parties have to be encouraged. One should not put issues on the table now that would more appropriately be negotiated later. One should not demand that the Palestinians change our initial negotiating stance when Israel has agreed to discuss these issues as part of the negotiations themselves. We should take this step-by-step, following the course as it has been charted. And we should try to discourage those who oppose this process. I'm not saying that this process is guaranteed to lead us to where we want to go. There are reasons to be skeptical. But this is an opportunity that should not be missed—and it should be allowed to run its full course with as much support as we can muster to make it work.

Meanwhile, we will also have to confront the issue of the economic recovery of Palestine from the devastating impact of the Occupation. The first step is to rebuild much of the infrastructure of the Palestinian state, which has been destroyed by the occupying forces. Next we have to get support to build an independent economy sufficient to provide jobs for Palestinians so that we don't have to depend on Palestinian workers working in Israel, so that our state doesn't become a dormitory for Palestinians working in Israel.

TIKKUN: Are there any steps that you think Mahmoud Abbas could take to reassure the Israeli population that a Palestinian state would not simply be step one in a two-step process designed to destroy Israel?

QASSIS: It is more likely that Israel will be using the Road Map to consolidate its hold on parts of the West Bank than that we will be trying to struggle against Israel. The Palestinian people have unequivocally accepted the existence of the State of Israel. We did that before Oslo, and we continue to stand by our acceptance of Israel. What is missing is the willingness of Israel to accept a Palestinian state.

We have accepted the two states, and we have accepted that we should try to address Israel's reasonable security demands. If Israel's concerns are security, we can deal with them. But if Israel thinks that it can get security by taking away Palestinian territory or by transferring some Palestinians to third countries, we will not accept that. ❑

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An Open Letter to the Right Wing

Yitzhak Frankenthal

My dear brothers and sisters,

Finally, Prime Minister Sharon has acknowledged what we have been promulgating for many years. The Occupation cannot continue. Another nation cannot be controlled. The Occupation has ruined the economy. Therefore, we must compromise on parts of our beloved land, for our own future and for the sake of our children.

I will not ask you today why Rabin was assassinated. I will not ask you why it had to take some of you so long to realize that occupation corrupts. I will not ask why you continued to build settlements and destroy the economy, and why you could not see that your dreams were destroying the fabric of Israeli society. I will not ask you how you dared speak against the supporters of peace, who with tears in their eyes watched how you would not be dissuaded from your distorted belief that you could control another nation.

I will, however, ask you today—will you support Prime Minister Sharon? Would you be willing to support a generous peace agreement with the Palestinian people, since this could provide a viable platform for reconciliation between the two peoples? Or will you lend a hand to Palestinian terrorists who will try to crush this new hope with terror attacks designed to squash any sign of a peaceful solution, in violation of the Palestinian leadership's policy?

I will not ask you to explain why I had to lose my son, who was killed by Palestinian fighters who were fighting for the freedom that their nation was denied by the Occupation, which now even Prime Minister Sharon admits to be wrong. I will not ask you to explain to the free, enlightened world how as intelligent people with a Jewish heritage that teaches respect for human beings and as part of a nation that has suffered 2,000 years of exile, you can now treat the Palestinians the way you do. I will not ask you to explain to our children why we wasted resources that should have gone to education, and instead, because of tunnel vision and a nationalistic messianic world view, allowed an entire generation of wonderful kids to grow up with the misguided notion that another nation could be controlled with force.

I will ask you not to oppose Prime Minister Sharon in his efforts to bring peace. I will ask you to push him to reach generous peace terms with the Palestinian population, which has suffered from the Occupation for nearly forty years. I will ask you to tell your religious leaders and ours, those rabbis from the Territories, "Take care of your own families and stop misguiding us." I will ask you to think how three years after we have withdrawn from Lebanon, the Galilee is peaceful and quiet, although the greatest security experts in the country scared us into thinking that the minute we withdrew, the entire Galilee would be on fire. I will ask you to think about the use of maintaining settlements in the Gaza Strip, which will evidently be relocated in any peace agreement. Why not relocate Netzarim and all the other Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip right now? Why wait for more deaths and disasters? I call on you to give up your dreams of the historic land of Israel and to dismantle settlements, which are a magnet for terror. I call on you to withdraw from the Golan Heights in order to enable peace with Syria and Lebanon.

I will not demand vengeance for the blood of my son and that of other victims who were sacrificed for the sake of your dreams, but I will ask you to search your souls and ask yourselves how long you intend to keep this going and for what? How long will you carry on the delusion that one nation can control another? How long will you let Uzi Landau, Reuven Rivlin, Effie Eitam, Avigdor Lieberman and other such false prophets of the Occupation lead you on? How long will you let warmongers sabotage the possibility of making peace?

I call on you to realize that I love the people of Israel much more than you who want to realize messianic dreams at the expense of our children and at the expense of Israeli and Palestinian civilians. I call on you to start talking openly about reconciliation between us and the Palestinian people. I call on you to stop pushing our children and yours to their graves as an offering, only to make your impossible dreams come true. I call on you to exercise responsibility in the name of Jews in Israel and in the Diaspora, who are now suffering and will continue to suffer from anti-Semitism because of your actions, and to support Sharon's efforts to make peace. I call on you to stop any protest against progress in the peace process.

Finally, I wish to tell you that I do not expect you to love or embrace me. I embrace you. I love you, my brothers and sisters, despite your hard-headedness. May everything I have asked of you become a reality.

—Yitzhak Frankenthal, father of Arik,
who was killed because there is no peace. ❑

Yitzhak Frankenthal is the founder of Parents' Circle in Israel, which has united hundreds of Israeli and Palestinian bereaved parents committed to promoting reconciliation, peace, and democracy.

ISRAEL

Men in Black

The Politics of Jewish Identity in Israel

Noah Efron



It is an odd fact of Israeli politics, and one worth pondering, that almost one in three votes cast in this year's election went to either a religious party, or a party devoted to fighting the religious. Viewed from afar, all politics in Israel seem to concern the brutish conflict between Jews and Palestinians. Up close, there is another conflict that is almost as absorbing, and perhaps more intractable—this one between less and more religious Jews. In the end, the two conflicts are linked.

The January elections now seem like ancient history, but their most important results have yet to be seriously considered. The most successful political campaign of the last election was that of a party called *Shinui* (Change). Shinui won 15 seats in the Knesset, two and a half times its showing in the 1999 election, making it both the fastest growing party in Israeli politics and the third biggest party in the Knesset, just behind the Labor Party which received 19 seats. The enormity of this achievement is still more impressive when one considers that Shinui offered voters no real political platform. The party did not take a clear stand about negotiating or not negotiating with Arafat, enhancing or dismantling settlements in the occupied territories, or initiating or scrapping welfare programs. Campaign pamphlets offered bromides about the party situating itself "between the destructiveness of the Right and the defeatism of the Left," but such statements were not translated into position papers or policy initiatives.

Down my block, the party hung a two-story high banner off the roof of the apartment building that houses a storefront BMW dealership (a showroom big enough to hold two sedans and a desk) reading, "Shinui: The Party of the Secular and Middle Class." The allusion to the middle class refers to the party's vague commitment to laissez-faire economics that would lower the tax burden of salaried workers. The crucial term on the banner (and the key to Shinui's electoral success) was "secular." Shinui is a one-issue party, dedicated to fighting "religious coercion" and "usurious exploitation of the State's coffers for religious purposes" by the ultra-Orthodox. This message resonated more with voters than any other during the election campaign.

I accompanied the party's leader, an avuncular journalist named Joseph (Tommy) Lapid, on a midnight barnstorm of Tel Aviv bars and dance clubs a week and a half before the election. In one smoky room after another, drunk Gen-Xers rose to clap Lapid on the back and scream over pounding techno music, "*Kol ha-Kavod*, Tommy!" (Way to go, Tommy!). These were Lapid's hard-core constituents—secular young men and women who serve in the army, and are saving up to buy a flat and a plasma screen high-density television. "*Zayen otam*, Tommy," (Fuck them, Tommy), one of them yelled, encouraging Lapid to give the ultra-Orthodox hell. To many secular Israelis, especially the young, Lapid is a hero, their Martin Luther King, Jr., and his dream is their dream: that someday on the arid hills of Judea, the sons of former rabbis and the sons of former radicals will cruise bars together on shabbes.

That the ultra-Orthodox (or *haredim*, as they are known here) should emerge as the most potent electoral issue of the campaign, amidst war, occupation, intifada, corruption, and poverty, may be puzzling to those who do not follow the minutia of Israeli politics. It is hard to see at first why this issue matters more than so many other pressing issues. Yet Israelis—arguably the world's leading producers,

Noah Efron's Real Jews: Secular, Ultra-Orthodox and the Struggle for Jewish Identity in Israel *was published in May by Basic Books. He teaches history and philosophy at Bar Ilan University and lives in Tel Aviv with his wife, daughter, and son.*

ILLUSTRATION BY LEELA CORMAN

consumers, and exporters of *sturm und drang*—can hardly be accused of political frivolity. So how did the ultra-Orthodox end up at the top of our woeful tally of political concerns? The answer is complicated, but worth considering because it highlights a crucial, and often overlooked, aspect of Israeli politics and identity.

Shinui's criticism of the ultra-Orthodox is that they are freeloaders, weaseling out of army service and living off the dole, and that they are aggressive, missionizing, Taliban-style fundamentalists who force religious observance on the secular majority. There is something to each of these claims. Ultra-Orthodox men affiliated with a yeshivah, a talmudic academy, receive an automatic deferral from army service. A great many ultra-Orthodox men opt to continue their studies, living off specially allocated stipends and government child allowances rather than working. Ultra-Orthodox rabbis also maintain a near monopoly on the provision of religious services, officiating by force of law at weddings, funerals, and other ceremonies. Secular Israelis are understandably resentful.

Still, the enormity of the passions that the ultra-Orthodox inspire is not explained by the impact that this small segment of society (roughly 10 percent) has on the country as a whole. Shinui voters hold the ultra-Orthodox responsible for the entire inventory of Israel's problems, as though if they fought instead of studied, Israel's brutish war with the Palestinians would disappear, and if they worked instead of studied, the economy would be healthy. This is untrue; there are too few ultra-Orthodox for them to have such great influence. The economic impact of the ultra-Orthodox is difficult to tabulate accurately, but my own research has shown that it is less extreme than popularly imagined. The state expenditure per child on ultra-Orthodox schools, for example, seems to be somewhat less than the per capita outlay for secular kids. Objective statistics are difficult to find or produce, but there is good reason to conclude that the outrage with which many seculars regard haredim is immoderate, far surpassing what can be explained by the objective political and economic facts.

The reasons for this surplus hatred are complicated. Many Israelis find the ultra-Orthodox distasteful and primitive, and feel that they tarnish the progressive image of Jews. When I asked Tommy Lapid why he disliked the ultra-Orthodox, he thumped his fleshy fist on the table as he told me, "They say that *they* are the real Jews. *I am the real Jew.* If Moses were around today, or Maimonides, they would recognize *me* as the true Jew, not the ultra-Orthodox." Such statements suggest that though the fight against the ultra-Orthodox is a fight over budgets and civic responsibility, it is also—perhaps even more so—a fight over identity.

This fight over identity is growing in both its viciousness and its significance. The ultra-Orthodox are routinely portrayed as leeches, Shylocks, and rapists in plays, books, movies, television shows, and newspapers. A recent play at the acclaimed Cameri theater charted an ultra-Orthodox plot to overthrow Israel and instigate a nuclear world war. Celebrated artists, politicians, and industrialists are on record comparing the ultra-Orthodox to vermin, on the one hand, and Nazis on the other. A friend and colleague at Tel Aviv University confided to me her fear that the ultra-Orthodox will one day have the power and the will to herd the rest of us into concentration camps.

Some of this extreme rhetoric can be linked to the growth of ultra-Orthodox political power over the past generation. In May, for example, a haredi, Uri Lupoliansky, was elected mayor of Jerusalem for the first time. *Ma'ariv* reported it the following morning under the banner headline: "The Ultra-Orthodox are Celebrating: Jerusalem is in our Hands." The faux-quotation echoes the famous pronouncement of General Motta Gur after his paratroopers had conquered the Old City in June, 1967: "The Temple Mount is in our hands." The association was not just an idiosyncratic brainstorm of *Ma'ariv*'s headline editor. Watching the news clips of haredim gyrating in circle dances while hoarsely shouting *niggunim* to celebrate Lupoliansky's victory, I also could not chase from my mind the image of ruddy young paratroopers crying at the Western Wall thirty-five years earlier. Lupoliansky's election produced for many here a sense of despair and loss, and seemed somehow to undo or delegitimate that epochal moment in June, 1967, when Jerusalem was "reunited." Mugging, a friend said that May, 2003, will be remembered as the day that Jerusalem fell to our enemies, just as surely as June, 1967, is remembered as the day it was liberated from our enemies. There is a certain zero-summitude to this reaction—an assumption that every advance for the ultra-Orthodox is somehow a failure for the rest of us.

The reason for this, in my opinion, has little to do with the ultra-Orthodox themselves, and much more to do with the rest of us here, and with what Rabbi Michael Lerner has called, "the crisis of meaning in the lives or Israelis, a meaning that was once filled by a Zionist ideology that today has few real proponents among secular people, except among right-wingers." This crisis, as Lerner writes, mirrors the crisis of meaning experienced by Americans, Europeans, and others who embrace the "ethos of selfishness and materialism spread by globalizing capital," and who have grown doubtful that society can offer any "transcendent purpose beyond self-fulfillment and material success." The success of this ethos in Israel may be even more disorienting than elsewhere because of the power of the communal ethos it is quickly displacing. Yaron Ezrahi, in his book *Rubber Bullets*, recently chronicled the disintegration of this communalism. Ezrahi believes that we're better off without it, because, as he sees it, the communal ethic was so powerful and omnipresent that it utterly squelched individuality. Whether or not this is true, its disappearance has left a void in the lives of many of us (and one that Ezrahi himself

seems not to recognize). The amalgam of institutions and dispositions that were the source of Israeli pride and identity a generation ago—the kibbutz as just society, the IDF as moral citizen's army, the ethos of material modesty that had prime ministers and Nobel laureates living in cramped two-room apartments, and so on—is now largely discredited. Kibbutzim are privatizing, the IDF is embattled, and Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu could recently be seen on CNBC proudly insisting that "Israel is the most capitalist country on earth" now that he has broken the unions. Many Israelis wonder what remains of the heroic country they learned about in grade school.

Against this background, three new reasons emerge for the growing resentment and vilification of the ultra-Orthodox. First, the ultra-Orthodox have what we feel we are missing, a life shaped by a transcendental ideal that produces a strong sense of community and shared endeavor. (The same might be said, *mutatis mutandis*, for modern-orthodox settlers.) Because this ideal—strict service to God, which translates into great fealty to sometimes clueless rabbis—strikes most secular Israelis as laughably primitive, the ultra-Orthodox are at once the objects of both our envy and scorn, which is an incendiary mix.

Lapid's appeal is that he offers disdain for the ultra-Orthodox as a virtue, a principle, and an ideology.

A second reason we resent the ultra-Orthodox is that this resentment is useful. Hating the ultra-Orthodox provides, temporarily at least, a new identity to replace the now defunct communal Zionist identity. Tommy Lapid electrified voters, especially young ones. I have followed Israeli politics closely for twenty-five years, and not since Menachem Begin has a politician and a party fostered such enthusiasm. Lapid's appeal, I think, is that he offers up disdain for the ultra-Orthodox as a *virtue*, a principle, and an ideology. In Shinui's worldview, fighting the rabbis is a revolutionary, almost a utopian, act—one that confers *meaning*.

A third reason is that battling the ultra-Orthodox allows us to divert our attention from the real problems we face. If the ultra-Orthodox provide a ready explanation for why so much in the country seems wrong—why there are so many poor and unemployed, why politicians seem corrupt, why the world sees us as primitives, and so forth—then we need not look further than them, to ourselves, to untangle the mess we are in. It is in this sense that the conflict with the ultra-Orthodox is linked to, and indeed in a way facilitates, the conflict with the Palestinians, by misattributing a good portion of its costs and miseries.

It is for all these reasons together that the symbolic importance of the ultra-Orthodox has steadily increased over the past decades. As secular Israeli identity becomes enervated, incoherent, and perplexed, as we grow tired and unstrung by self-doubt, hating the ultra-Orthodox offers odd comfort. In Paris Café society we may be viewed as petty tyrants but, say what you will, at least we are not like *them*, the primitive Yiddish *schnorrers* in black robes and fur hats. In the European capitol Brussels we may be pariahs, but in the ultra-Orthodox capitol Bnai Brak we are far more Voltaire than Vilna Gaon. It is in this way that the ultra-Orthodox play a crucial role in the construction of the identities of the rest of us here in Israel. They are the Jew we are not, the Jew we surpassed, and they play this role with the greatest effectiveness when they are portrayed as debauched and corrupt hypocrites. Hating the ultra-Orthodox is thus flattering, and seemingly confers the virtues of integrity and humanity upon those who engage in it. This is how the charge to "fuck them, Tommy" can come to be a statement of high political principle, and it explains in part the extraordinary success of Shinui in the last election. It is how the most pressing issue in the last election became not the conflict with the Palestinians, but the conflict with the ultra-Orthodox.

But if all this is true, then Shinui's victory—rather than reflecting the robustness of secular identity, as Lapid himself has claimed—actually offers bleak testimony to the weariness of the secular, Zionist vision, and to the shattered confidence of many secular Israelis in the worth of their own ideals and dreams. And if it is true, then the current hatred of haredim in Israel is a political fact of the first importance, and a worrisome one at that. Three of its principal components—rage, tattered identity, and willful refusal to face the real problems here—make a noxious and unstable mix, and it is this mix that has left Israeli politics today more inconsistent, ill-conceived, and unpredictable than at any point in the country's history. More than 70 percent of Israelis polled support "significant territorial compromise" to the Palestinians, roughly the same percentage of Israelis who believe that Ariel Sharon's performance as prime minister is good to excellent even though he has foresworn return of most of the territories. Israelis tell pollsters that they desire at once the establishment of a Palestinian state *and* a decisive reoccupation of the Gaza Strip. Observers on the Left and the Right are bewildered by the quixotic incoherence of Israeli policy and especially public opinion. This incoherence—and the rage and confusion of identity that stand behind it—diminish still further whatever slight chance there is of rekindling effective negotiations with the Palestinians.

It is a commonplace for popes and presidents to call for "healing" to begin in the Holy Land, as a first step towards ending the conflict between Palestinians and Israeli Jews. Sadly, Israel's *other* war, between the mostly secular and very religious, gives further, forlorn witness to how much there is to mend. ❑

Religious Responses to Atrocity

Yehezkel Landau

This summer, I went back home to Jerusalem for a two-month visit. I have lived in the Holy City for twenty-five years, working in interfaith education and Jewish-Arab peacemaking. When I arrived on June 9, the Aqaba Summit that brought together Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas, and President George Bush had just taken place. The day after I landed, Israeli attack helicopters almost assassinated Hamas leader Abdulazziz Rantisi. And on the following day, Hamas retaliated through a suicide bombing on the number 14 Egged (public) bus, filling our TV screens with the all-too-familiar scene of carnage in downtown Jerusalem. It has been a demoralizing last three years. The slaughter of innocents and the political impasse have engendered crippling despair on both sides.

My previous visit to Jerusalem was equally distressing. Last November I came back on a break from my teaching duties to be with my wife and teenage son and to celebrate the Chanukah festival with them. On the second day of that visit, I recall still experiencing jet lag when I was awakened by a friend's phone call. "I just wanted to make sure you're all right," he said. "I heard on the radio that a bus had exploded near your home, on Mexico Street." It was 7:20 in the morning, and I knew that my son's school bus had just passed through our neighborhood of Kiryat Menachem. So my first thoughts were on him and his bus. I turned on the TV, and I felt a mixture of relief and horror as I saw the gruesome aftermath of the terror attack. The bus targeted was not a school bus, but rather the number 20 Egged bus. The suicide bomber had detonated his explosives as the bus was taking on passengers at a Mexico Street bus stop.

The bus, which follows the route between my neighborhood in southwest Jerusalem and the city center, was crowded with school children and adults going to work. The bombing claimed the lives of eleven Jews from the adjacent neighborhood of Ir Ganim, ranging in age from eight to sixty-seven, including a mother and son, and a grandmother and grandson.

The Hamas movement claimed responsibility for the bombing, which was carried out by twenty-two-year-old Na'el Abu Hilayel from the village of El-Khader, next to Bethlehem. The military response by the Israeli government was to send troops back into Bethlehem, from which they had withdrawn under the "Bethlehem first" redeployment agreement of the previous August. The political response was to declare that agreement "null and void."

We see the political responses to violence every day. What about religious responses to this kind of atrocity? As a religious educator, I am particularly interested in how people find spiritual meaning in life events, including tragic ones. In the days following the attack, I visited the Mexico Street bus stop several times, watching it become an improvised shrine commemorating the victims. Newspaper photos of the dead were posted, along with handwritten notes by teenagers to their murdered friends. There were memorial candles lit by passersby, wreaths placed on the seats of the bus stop by the European Union and different embassies, and signs posted all around the bus stop conveying a range of messages. As of this writing, the bus stop remains a shrine, with photos of the victims, prayer books and Psalters, and hand-written poems dedicated to the eleven human beings whose lives were so cruelly cut short.

What caught my eye and imagination last November, however, were the signs posted on and around the bus stop, most of which conveyed messages combining religion and politics. Whether professionally designed or hand written on paper and cardboard, these signs drew on stories and precepts within Jewish tradition to communicate their message about Israel's political crisis.

First it should be said that there were no humanistic or universalistic expressions visible around the bus stop, although they are represented in Jewish tradition and Israeli society, as I indicate toward the end of this article. The heinous act of indiscriminate slaughter perpetrated there elicited partisan statements that were meant to reassure Jews that they are in the right and that God is on their side. Sadly, there were no attempts to communicate a healing alternative to the cruel war of attrition being waged by both sides. In the face of raw pain evoked by terror attacks, it takes profound sensitivity and a lot of courage to confront the simplistic ideology of "it's us or them." The wisdom of Judaism offers such transformative remedies to the rampant spiritual pathology, but those teachings are, for the most part, suppressed by fear and ethnocentrism.

Yehezkel Landau is Faculty Associate in Interfaith Relations at Hartford Seminary. He is the former director of the Oz veShalom-Netivot Shalom religious peace movement in Israel and co-founded the Open House peace center in Ramle.



Still, there were some spiritually consoling and even uplifting sentiments expressed around the bus stop. For example, while the Chabad-Lubavitch Hasidic movement did post signs calling on fellow Jews to unite in order to "win," it also implored neighborhood residents to let the light of Chanukah prevail over the darkness. For the Festival of Lights, from November 29 through December 7, a huge chanukiah was erected near the bus stop by Chabad. At sundown for the eight days of the festival, the kindling of the gas-fueled lights and the subdued singing of holiday songs became a ceremony bringing the grieving neighborhood together. This was one act of religious piety that did not convey anger, but deepened communal solidarity. One sign posted inside the bus stop was especially touching for me as an observant Jew. It asked anyone who wished to add a memorial candle to the scores of flickering testimonials to observe the Sabbath by not lighting a fire on the holy day. It was signed "the grieving residents."

In a similar vein, a moving appeal was posted on the neighborhood bus stops by the Ashkenazi rabbi of Kiryat Menachem/Ir Ganim, Rabbi Yisrael Yaakov Weissfish. He is a pious and learned man who has served the community for forty years. In a thoughtful and lengthy statement, printed and posted within a day of the atrocity, Rabbi Weissfish asserted that, in Judaism, there is no such thing as a random event without Divine purpose behind it. In all his years as the neighborhood rabbi, he wrote, there had never been such a violent attack in Kiryat Menachem/Ir Ganim, and he attributed this to acts of holiness by the residents. Conversely, now that the neighborhood had experienced such a painful attack, the residents should do whatever they could to grow closer to God, by repenting with a broken heart, by committing themselves more fervently to the study of Torah, which is the source of life and the bulwark against death, and by observing the precepts concerning modesty and generosity, for "charity saves one from death." The rabbi's statement reflects the apolitical (non-Zionist) stance characteristic of many strictly observant and pious Jews, for whom the spiritual welfare of the community transcends partisan ideologies.

This message urging readers to turn inward toward God was almost drowned out, however, by messages of anger and hate. The most brutal of these were some very simplistic stickers affixed to the bus stop which said, in Hebrew and English, "No Arabs, No Terror." (Those stickers are still there.) Aside from this chauvinistic fantasy of a country rid of its Arab population, most of the messages reacting to the bus bombing were more sophisticated in their mixture of religious tradition and politics. But all used religion to channel anger against Arabs and to support the claims of Israeli Jews. One hand-lettered sign, for example, said, "O People of Israel! This will not end until we cry out a great cry [to God]!!! And only then, God will hear and answer us." The acronym for "with the help of Heaven" appeared at the top and bottom. "God will hear" in Hebrew is "Yishma-El." Here the two words were hyphenated, signifying a wordplay on the name of Ishmael, Abraham's first son and Isaac's half-brother. The Genesis story of Ishmael and Hagar's expulsion from the household was conjured up as a precedent by a two-word addendum at the lower right of this sign: "The exile of Ishmael!" Evidently the sign maker believed this is how God will respond to our outcry. This is a more sophisticated way of conveying the "No Arabs, No Terror" scenario.

Most of the signs went beyond simple expressions of hatred to provide an explanation for their anti-Arab sentiment, either by asserting the Jewish claim to the whole Land of Israel, the threat posed by the Arabs to Jews, or the price in lives exacted by political negotiations. For example, the sign with the largest lettering, professionally produced for a variety of occasions and venues, said in Hebrew, "The entire Land of Israel is ours because God gave it to us." Underneath these giant blue letters was the proof text: part of the first entry in the famous Bible commentary by Rashi, the foremost Jewish interpreter of Scripture, who lived in the Middle Ages. Rashi's comment on Genesis 1:1 tries to explain why the Bible begins with Genesis. Why not Exodus, in which the Children of Israel have the Torah's precepts revealed to them, beginning with the Passover laws? Rashi asserts that the Creator, who brought the universe into being as described in the first chapters of Genesis, has determined where the Jews and all other peoples on earth shall live. The sign affixed to trees next to the bus stop quoted Rashi: "Thus, should the nations of the world say to Israel: 'You are thieves! For you have taken by force the lands of the seven peoples,' they (Israel) shall say to them: 'All the earth belongs to the Holy One, Blessed be He. He created it and gave it to whomever He saw fit. It was His will to give it to them, and it was His will to take it from them and give it to us.'"

Every educated Jew recognizes this passage. But educated Jews also know that there is no single Jewish position on anything philosophical, and there are even arguments over practical legal precepts. When one interpretation of

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MAC McGILL

Torah is granted unequivocal status as the only truth, serious educational, and ultimately political, problems arise. As Bar-Ilan University Bible scholar Uriel Simon has written, "Israeli schoolchildren, today, are being overzealously fed on Rashi's commentary to Genesis 1:1. When this interpretation is applied to the demands of the present, it is taken to mean that the promise of the Land of Israel, within the borders mentioned in the Covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15:18), is a pledge of absolute Divine validity. No moral consideration can stand against it, and any Arab national rights have no weight against it."

Professor Simon observes that there are other Bible commentators, including Ramban (Nachmanides), who dispute Rashi's interpretation. Ramban, says Simon, believes that the whole book of Genesis "is intended to teach us the principle that our hold on the land is conditional on our obedience to the word of God." After the Creation story, there is a series of expulsions from different territories, sanctioned by God, for misbehavior: Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden, Cain the murderer becomes a wanderer, and the Children of Israel end up in Egypt because of their forefathers' sins. This alternative reading, asserts Simon, seeks to preempt the self-righteous notion that God will bless the Jewish people unconditionally, so long as they conquer and settle the Holy Land, without concern for justice or fairness towards others.

An exclusivist Jewish claim to Divine favor, as conveyed by that giant sign with the Rashi text, mirrors the claim by Hamas to a Divine dispensation favoring Muslims and applying to all of historic Palestine. In either case, a self-centered theology of land and history can easily bring about oppressive behavior, condoned by a double standard that denies another people the same national and religious rights claimed for one's own people. And while we Israelis are rightly demanding from the Palestinians that they stop anti-Israel incitement in their mosques and schools, we need to examine critically the ideological messages we are feeding our own school children, especially in the state-sponsored religious schools.

Other signs produced in printing shops were affixed to bus stops and fences throughout Kiryat Menachem last November. All had a religious message and most had the three-letter heading in Hebrew letters which stands for the Aramaic expression, "with the help of Heaven". One said, "The way to true peace: If someone comes to kill you, thwart him by killing him first!" (This was signed, "The Headquarters for Saving the People and the Land," with a phone number outside Jerusalem). That well-known rabbinic statement conveying the right and duty of self-defense appears three times in the Babylonian Talmud. It is a central precept in normative Jewish ethics. On this sign it paradoxically became not just a normative response to imminent threat, but also a prescriptive requirement for national security and, ironically, genuine peacemaking. The problem is in applying such a sweeping imperative. How does one discern a mortal enemy from an ideological foe whose needs might be accommodated in a compromise arrangement? If the whole Palestinian people is seen as an existential threat to Israel, then racist and even genocidal impulses may be given free rein and justified "religiously." In order to "preempt" violence on the part of Palestinians, some Jews may feel justified in using violence first, even when no real threat is imminent.

Such a danger was demonstrated in 1994, when Barukh Goldstein, identified with Meir Kahane's Kach movement, massacred 29 Muslims inside the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron/Al-Halil, which is part of the Makhpelah shrine holy to both Jews and Muslims. It was also a day holy to both faith communities: a Ramadan Friday for the Muslims and Purim for the Jews. Since Purim and the Sabbath before it resound with the message "Blot out the memory of Amalek!," Goldstein very likely projected onto these pious Palestinians the demonic image of Amalek, the archetypal enemy of the Jewish people. Goldstein's perverse desecration of holy time and place exemplified the murderous outer limit of such demonic projections onto our political foes and the consequent mystification of the conflict. Moreover, such pogrom-like behavior may be evoked in fringe elements of the population—I witnessed such an incident, described below—so long as religious leaders fail in their public duty to interpret Jewish tradition and its ethical norms properly. Another sign quoted the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, as saying (already several years ago, before the outbreak of the latest terror-war), "Political negotiations are the cause of the bloodshed." A similar statement, again from the "Headquarters for Saving the People and the Land," read: "Political Negotiations = A Security BOOM," with the word "BOOM" printed in fiery red within a yellow-colored animated explosion.

This survey of responses to the bus bombing reflects at least part of the religious spectrum among Israeli Jews today. Each written statement is a window on a whole worldview that translates religious beliefs into communal norms and practices. Each is also a way of coping with a deeply painful and threatening reality, a reality which could easily lead to despair if one did not have some system of transcendent meaning. For Jews, the spiritual path of least resistance is to label our political foes "enemies of God" deserving Divine retribution. The Palestinians, in this worldview, become the latest incarnations of Egyptian taskmasters, Babylonian soldiers, and Roman torturers. In this mental system, the metaphysical consolation for present pain is the messianic dream that will reverse the sorry fortunes of the Jews in one fell swoop. But such an unrealistic approach to real-world challenges does not do justice to the pragmatism at the heart of the Zionist revolution, or to the Torah as a Tree of Life with practical guidelines for protecting and consecrating human existence. Jewish educators today, in Israel and the Diaspora, are faced with a tremendous historic responsibility:



the crisis in which we are immersed demands that they extract from three and a half millennia of Jewish teachings the *halakhah lema'aseh* (concrete norms) that can help us transform our victim mentality, with its perceived monopoly on righteousness and holiness, into an inclusive worldview which enables us to consecrate the Holy Land together with our Muslim and Christian neighbors. Without this spiritual resourcefulness, we are condemned to continue the no-win war that will exact more and more needless casualties and imperil the future of Israel as a Jewish state worthy of such a designation.

To illustrate the dangers of inaction, of letting the political inertia go unchecked, I will describe a very troubling episode that occurred following the November 2002 bus bombing. For a small minority of Kiryat Menachem residents, writing statements or posting signs was not enough. A militant group of male teenagers and young adults, some holding the views of the now-outlawed Kach movement, needed a more tangible outlet for their anger and frustration. This they found in the presence of an Arab-owned bakery on the periphery of the neighborhood. The owner of the Taboun Al-Arz (*Ha-Erez* in Hebrew, the cedar tree) is Midhat Abu-Sa'en, a genial Palestinian from the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Beit Hanina. He and his two brothers also own the Lebanese restaurant down the hill from Kiryat Menachem in picturesque Ein Karem.

The two businesses reflect the aspiration of these Palestinians to make a living by serving the Jewish community, since the vast majority of their customers are Jews. They are strong believers in peaceful coexistence, and I have had numerous conversations with them on the subject. Consequently it was yet another painful shock, in the aftermath of the November atrocity, to learn that their bakery had come under attack from a violent mob of Jewish rowdies. Scores of youths threw stones at the bakery, breaking the glass cases inside, while shouting curses and threats. Midhat told me two days later that he had feared for his life and had thought of his children suffering the loss of their father.

Fortunately, the Israeli police intervened to keep the mob away from the bakery. Police officers maintained their presence for several nights, as the rowdies kept returning to taunt the Arabs inside. I came a few times during that week to see what was happening and to demonstrate solidarity with my Palestinian friends. On one evening I tried to speak to the leaders of the mob, at least two of whom wore *kippot* (skullcaps), as I do. I insisted that these Arabs were not our enemy and that, if the municipality had issued them a license to run their business, they were certainly not a security threat. They were simply trying to support their families, and according to Jewish tradition (I cited the Rambam, Maimonides) we owed that to them. My arguments fell on deaf ears, for they retorted with all kinds of dehumanizing slogans about Arabs, and I found myself being cursed and threatened by these hateful youths. My Jewishness, and even my credentials as a long-term neighborhood resident, were called into question. I could share their anger over the incessant terror attacks, but I vehemently rejected their racist and hateful attitudes.

In the adjacent neighborhood of Kiryat Hayovel, an Arab university student was stabbed on the street shortly after the Mexico Street bus bombing, so the danger of violent retribution against Arabs by hotheaded Jews was very real. In the end the police arrested a few of the rowdies threatening the bakery, and that ended the immediate threat of physical assault. But the bakery's sales declined by 70 percent in the week after the bus bombing, and it took a few months for normal business to resume.

In the months following last November's atrocity and its aftermath, my heart has broken many times as I confronted the deeply painful reality of my fellow Israelis, including my Jerusalem neighbors, being overwhelmed by fear, anger, and grief. Children throughout Israel have been traumatized, parents are anxious about their children's safety, and even frightened dogs were taking Valium prescribed by veterinarians. But in this hot summer of 2003, there are signs of hope that were not there last November. A new prime minister heads a new Palestinian cabinet. American and British troops occupy a post-Saddam Iraq, creating a new geopolitical reality throughout the Middle East. Whether the current negotiations will be more successful than previous rounds of diplomacy is anybody's guess.

I remain very worried about the conditioned attitudes and feelings reflected in the messages I have examined here. They reflect the self-absorbed "victim script" that pervades Israeli society, and much of the Jewish world generally. The abuses of Israeli power, especially since 1967, are rarely acknowledged. And the distortion of Jewish values that is the inevitable outcome of a prolonged occupation of another people is also ignored. These denials lead to ongoing human rights abuses against Palestinians (in the name of "security") and a betrayal of authentic Torah Judaism. In Israel there are prophetic voices offering an alternative understanding of Jewish tradition and what it calls us to be. For example, the Oz VeShalom-Netivot Shalom religious Zionist peace movement, the Meimad Party led by Rabbi Michael Melchior, and Rabbis for Human Rights are all struggling hard, with limited resources or access to the media, against the tide of chauvinistic pseudo-Judaism. In the United States there are also courageous Jewish voices conveying their outrage over what is being done in the name of Jewish survival or security, and their inclusive compassion for both Israelis and Palestinians. The Tikkun Community and Brit Tzedek v'Shalom are among the most visible of these American organizations, with a national base of

(continued on page 44)

Free America, Free Time

Arthur Waskow

For the last two years, we have been witnessing a breathtaking leap in the centralization of top-down power in the United States and in the world.

Within the United States, two enormous tax breaks for the super-rich handed more power to those who were already dominant. Attacks on schools, health care, and the environment, on the states and cities, on civil liberties, privacy, and labor unions, and on openness of governmental decisions, have weakened the ability of grassroots communities to oppose the will of entrenched power.

In the world at large, the effort to shape a "new American century" (read "global U.S. empire") has joined the threat of the U.S. war machine to the growing power of global corporations. The "war on terrorism" is perfectly structured to feed the very terrorism it attacks, and thus to create permanent war at home as well as overseas.

Even worse, the imperial/corporate amalgam treats the earth as it treats human beings: with contempt and exploitation that damage the very fabric of life on this planet.

This top-down imperialism is the worst threat to democracy since at least the McKinley era. Possibly since the demand of the slave states in the 1850s to control the future of America. And possibly the worst threat ever. For sure, George II and his Congress have behaved much worse than George III and his Parliament.

No more than Rome can we be both a Republic and an Empire, no more than Athens can we be both a plutocracy and a democracy, no more than ancient Israel can we be both slaves to Pharaoh and a free people in touch with the God Who is always Becoming.

There are three levels at which we can respond. First, we can try through elections to topple the Bush administration and its acquiescent Congress. But even if Bush and his closest allies lose, and even more strongly if they win, America needs deeper change. Clintonism paved the way for Bush, both at home and overseas. Some Clinton redux may give us a moment to catch our breath, but no more. Like the colonists in 1776, like the Populists and Progressives at the turn of the twentieth century, like the Israelites who fled Egypt to stand at Sinai, like the Jews and Christians who challenged Rome, like Muhammad who challenged the power elite of Mecca, and like Gautama who challenged the palace—like them all, we need to create new forms of politics, community, and culture.

In 1774, the American colonists went beyond their dutiful critique of King George; they called for an economic break with the British Empire. "Raise sheep," they said, "so as to free ourselves from British wool." In 1775, they issued a "Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking up Arms."

So at a second level of change, we need to declare the causes and necessity of nonviolent action against specific aspects of this new imperial amalgam—the tax breaks for the rich, the swollen military budget, Exxon-Mobil and Ford.

Third, we must uncover what pressures have scrunched us into this tight and narrow Place. Our economy and culture do not "allow" for time to reflect. Only to react. Individuals face intense pressure for compulsory overtime or for compulsive overwork, and no time for family, self-reflection, grassroots politics, or spirit. Society as a whole sees no choice but the swift resort to war, to Hyper-action; our society never pauses to reflect as Christians do (or used to do) for Lent, Muslims for Ramadan, Jews for the High Holy Days.

What if we as a whole society had paused after 9/11 to reflect on what had brought us to that disaster, why indeed some human beings hate America, and how best both to bring terrorists to justice and end the noxious swamp of despair and deprivation that breeds terrorists?

A movement has begun to resist the tightening of time for individuals in America. (See the Web sites www.shalomctr.org/FreeOurTime/ and www.TimeDay.org for how to join this effort.) But we must also demand reflective time for ourselves as a society.

Suppose all our communities, religious congregations, PTA's, labor unions and professional associations were to make the days from Thursday, September 11 through Sunday, September 14, into a Season for Reflection and Renewal? In 2002, the Bush administration used the anniversary of 9/11 to whip up spurious patriotism for a causeless, meaningless, useless war against Iraq. In 2003, let us make it a time for Muslims, Jews, and Christians to gather in each others' holy places so that all the troubled families of Abraham, now so endangered and frightened by inter-religious violence, can speak their lives to each other, and listen.

From such a grassroots hearing could come new grassroots empowerment, to challenge and transform the newest version of top-down pyramidal power. ❑

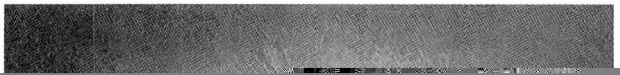
Rabbi Waskow is director of The Shalom Center (www.shalomctr.org), author of Godwrestling – Round 2, *and co-author of* A Time for Every Purpose Under Heaven.

ENVIRONMENT

The Eclipse of the Sensuous

David Abram





mathematical relations that had their source beyond the sensuous world, but also the essential character of such

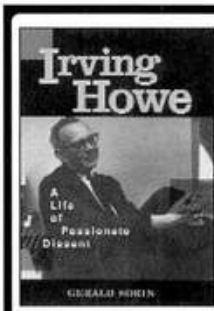
of a host of abstract and increasingly otherworldly dimensions disclosed to us by those sciences.

One such realm powerfully impacting our lives today is the super-small dimension revealed by high energy physics: the subatomic world of protons and neutrons, of gluons and mesons and the elf-like quarks of which they are composed—and perhaps, underneath all these, the vibrating one-dimensional loops, or superstrings, that give rise to all such particles and their manifold interactions. Although very few of us have any clear apprehension of the subatomic world, or of the inscrutable particles that comprise it, we are continually assured by the physics community that this arcane realm is the ultimate source, or fundament, of all that we *do* apprehend. According to most contemporary physicists, the visible, tangible world glimpsed by our unaided senses is not at all fundamental, but is wholly structured by events unfolding at scales far beneath the threshold of our everyday awareness.

And yet physicists are not the only band of scientists inviting us to look askance at the world that we directly experience. According to a majority of researchers in the neurosciences, the perceptual world that envelops us—the world of rustling oak leaves, and bulldozers, and children racing through the spray of a loosened fire hydrant on a sweltering afternoon—is largely an illusion. Here, too, we must learn to recognize, underneath the apparent world, a more primary dimension: the realm of rapidly firing neurons, and neurotransmitters washing across synapses, of neural networks that overlap with other neural nets, an ever-shifting complex of interweaving neural patterns that continually generates—out of the endless array of photons cascading through our retinas and the sound waves splashing against our eardrums and the gradients of chemical molecules wafting past our nasal ganglia—the more-or-less coherent appearance of the surrounding world that we experience at any moment. Although we have absolutely no intuitive awareness of these events unfolding within the brain, our colleagues in the neurological sciences claim that such events provide the hidden infrastructure of all our perceptions. They insist that this unseen realm of synaptic interactions must be carefully studied and understood if we wish to truly understand just why the surrounding world appears to us as it does.

Meanwhile, in another set of laboratories, another group of intrepid researchers—molecular biologists tinkering with processes unfolding deep within the nuclei of our cells—have precipitated a growing cultural suspicion that the real and unifying truth of things, at least for organic entities like us, is to be found in the complexly coded structure of our chromosomes. Since the discovery of the double helix, molecular biology has become the dominant field within the life sciences, with a majority of its practitioners attempting to isolate the specific sequences of DNA that compose particular genes, and to discern the manner in which these genes are transcribed, by diverse chemical reactions, to generate the host of proteins that compose both the living tissues of any organism and the manifold enzymes that catalyze its metabolism. In giant, massively funded science initiatives, researchers race to fill gaps in the emerging map of the human genome, while others puzzle out the intricate epigenetic pathways whereby networks of genes interact to give rise to particular proclivities, dispositions, and behaviors. Numerous high-profit corporations devoted to the burgeoning technology of genetic manipulation are busy isolating or synthesizing the genes that ostensibly "code" for desirable traits, eagerly transplanting them into various plants and animals in order to increase, presumably for human benefit, the productive yield of these organisms. Anyone even glancingly aware of these activities begins to suspect that the microscopic world of gene sequences and genetic interactions somehow determines our lives and our experiences. The ultimate source of our personality—of our habits, our appetites, our yearnings, and our decisions—would seem to be thoroughly hidden away from our ordinary awareness, carefully tucked within the nuclei of our cells.

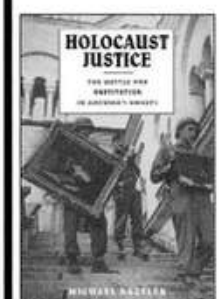
We are often assured that such scientific worlds are entirely continuous with one another—that the subatomic world of protons and quarks is nested within the molecular world that makes up our DNA, that the DNA in turn codes, among other things, for the neuronal patterns that



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weave our experience. In truth, however, these worlds do not so easily cohere, for the arcane language that enfolds each of these dimensions is largely closed to the others. Many of those who speak the language of the brain sciences believe that their discipline holds the key to all that we experience, yet an analogous conviction may be found among many who speak the very different discourse of molecular biology and the genome, as do those other experts who traffic in the lingo of particle physics. It may be useful to assume that there are multiple keys to the hidden truth of the world, each key unlocking its own realm; yet the precise relation between these unseen realms—or the precise way to understand the relation between these realities—remains mysterious.

• • •

One of the most unnerving jolts to human experience occurred at the dawn of the modern era, when Nicolaus Copernicus offered a wealth of evidence for his theory—later verified by Galileo—that the fiery Sun, rather than the Earth, lay at the center of the visible universe. What a dizzying disclosure! The revelation that our Earth revolves around the Sun, rather than the other way around, ran entirely contrary to the evidence of the unaided senses, and it precipitated a profound schism between the sensing body and the reflective, thinking intellect. Suddenly, even the most obvious testimony of our senses, which daily reveal the slow course of the sun arcing across the sky and the stable earth beneath our feet, had been dramatically undermined. Henceforth a new, modern distrust of the senses, and of the apparent world revealed by the senses, began to spread throughout Europe. It is illuminating to realize that Descartes' audacious philosophical move, cleanly severing the thinking mind from the body—bifurcating reality into two, independent orders: thinking substance, or mind; and extended substance, or matter—was largely prompted by this new and very disturbing state of affairs. For in order to maintain the Copernican worldview, the thinking mind had to hold itself entirely aloof, and apart, from the sensing body.

Whether or not Descartes' ploy was ultimately justified, his conceptual unshackling of the cogitating mind from the body's world freed the modern intellect to explore not only the super-small realms of cells, atoms, and quarks, but also the ultra-vast spaces of star clusters and galaxies. In the last century we learned from our astronomers that the countless galaxies revealed by their powerful telescopes appear to be moving away from one another, and many of us have accepted, intellectually, the strange proposition that the universe is expanding. We've come to believe, quite matter-of-factly, in such logic-twisting phenomena as "black holes," and in the rather confounding notion that, when looking up at a particular star in the night sky, we are in truth looking backward in time many thousands, or even millions, of years. Today, several of our most interesting and visionary astrophysicists and cosmologists suggest that this expanding universe is in truth only one of an uncountable plenitude of actually existing universes …

An Outrageous Proliferation of Worlds

Thus, vying for our attention today are a host of divergent and weirdly discontinuous worlds. There is the almost impossibly small world of gluons and mesons and quarks, but also the infinitely vast cosmological field strewn with uncountable galaxies. We may be drawn to penetrate the electrochemical reality of neuronal interactions that presumably structures our psychological life, or perhaps to ponder and participate in the complexly coded universe of genetic transcription that lies at the root of all our proclivities and propensities, ostensibly determining the bulk of our behavior. Our desire may be stirred, today, not only by the religious heavens that many believe will supersede this world, or by the mathematical heaven of pure number and proportion toward which so many reasoning intellects still aspire, but also by the digital heaven of cyberspace—that steadily spreading labyrinth wherein we may daily divest ourselves of our bodies and their cumbersome constraints in order to dialog with other disembodied persons who've logged on in other places, or perhaps to try on other, virtual bodies in order to explore other, wholly virtual, spaces.

This proliferation of worlds—this multiplication of realities both religious and secular, super-small and ultra-vast, collective and solitary—is not likely to slow down in the coming decades. The accelerating pace of technological development seems to ensure that the proliferation of realms will continue to snowball. What *is* unclear, however, is whether the human mind can maintain its coherence while engaged in such a plural and discontinuous array, or disarray, of cognitive worlds. And if so, how?

Today, many persons rely on a kind of Alice in Wonderland strategy, taking one kind of cookie to shrink themselves down, another to make them grow larger—popping one kind of pill to deal with the mass of digital information they must navigate at their desk jobs, another to deal with their cranky children at home, and still another to withstand the daily onslaught of sadness and hype to which they subject themselves whenever they turn on the News:

> "Astro-physicists are scrambling to account for the evidence, published this week in *Science*, that the universe is several billion years younger than had been assumed. Meanwhile, a contestant on *Survivor* has come down with a nose-bleed …" "Government and industry leaders attending the landmark Earth Summit in Johannesburg today announced that efforts to slow global warming and other effects of pollution are woefully misguided: 'Of course technology is warming the planet,' said the CEO of Hubrizyne, 'but crucial advances in genetics now enable us to modify most species to fit the new planetary conditions!'" "Mothers! Are your children getting the most they can out of their sleep? Researchers have shown that

children under the age of ten have more difficulty sleeping than they used to! Try SedaKind™, a newly patented sedative for children, now available in five flavors!" "… An earthquake in the Caucasus has left several thousand people dead—but first, a message about your hair…."



And so we tumble from one world to another, and from there to yet another, with no real translation between them: we slide straight from the horror of emaciated refugees running from the latest spate of ethnic cleansing to a bright and sparkly commercial for toothpaste. Turning off the television, we may practice tai chi for twenty minutes, tuning ourselves to the Tao, then step online in order to buy stocks in a gene-tech firm whose patented process for inducing Mad-Cow Disease in laboratory mice promises huge short-term returns.

The discontinuity—indeed, the sheer incommensurability—between many of the experiential worlds through which we careen on any given day, or which intersect the periphery of our awareness as we go about our business, entails a spreading fragmentation within our selves, like a crack steadily spreading through a china platter. We become increasingly multiple, without any clear way of translating between the divergent selves engendered by these different realms; we seek to draw our coherence from whatever world we happen to be engaged by at any moment. Or else we become numb, ensuring that no encounter moves us more than any other encounter, that no phenomenon impinges upon us more than any other, maintaining our coherence at the cost of our sensitivity and vitality.

How, then, can we find a way to move, to navigate between worlds without increasingly forfeiting our integrity, without consigning our minds and our lives ever more deeply to a kind of discombobulant confusion? School children fatally shoot their classmates without realizing there's anything wrong with an action they see played out a thousand times on the screen; parents, unnerved by such violence among the young, choose to raise their children in a strict fundamentalist manner, although the technological world that surrounds them confounds any literal belief in a transcendent creator. South of the equator, indigenous tribal communities lacking any notion of private property are abruptly plunged into the thick of modernity by the arrival of a television in their midst, or by the distribution of huge sums of money offered by corporations wanting to mine or develop their ancestral lands.… Such stark instances, for which there exist no maps to help negotiate between discontinuous realities, mirror a disarray that is becoming ever more familiar to each of us.

When it does not immediately threaten our way of life, the proliferation of experiential worlds can also, of course, be deliciously exhilarating—a wild ride that regularly spurs us into an alert and improvisational responsiveness akin, perhaps, to that known by white-water kayakers, or by jazz musicians. Can it be, then, that we should accept and adapt ourselves to this ongoing state of dispossession and estrangement? Is it possible that such ceaseless realignment must now become our home—that it is time to welcome the steady slippage from one world into another, from one set of landmarks into another strangely different set, and from thence into yet another, exchanging horizons and atmospheres like we now change our clothes—becoming aficionados of the discontinuous and the fragmentary?

It is a tempting dream, but an impossible one. For in the complete absence of any compass—without a dependable way of balancing between realms—the exhilaration of steadily sailing from one wave-tossed medium into another cannot help but exhaust itself, giving way, in the end, to desperation, or to a numbed-out detachment void of all feeling.

Yet how, then, are we to find some equilibrium as we skid from realm to realm? How to orient ourselves within this deepening proliferation of cognitive worlds? Perhaps by paying attention to the patterns that play across these different zones, seeking subtle correlations, sniffing the air for familiar scents, striving to discern—hidden within this exploding matrix—the faint traces of a forgotten coherence. Perhaps by listening more closely we might glean certain clues to the way these diverse worlds conjoin. For indeed certain rhythms *do* seem to echo between these worlds, particular textures and tastes tug at the fringes of our awareness, reminding us of something …

Only by such a process of attention can we start to discern the curious commonalities that are shared among these discontinuous dimensions. Only through such careful noticing are we brought to suspect that there is a specific space from whence all these common patterns were drawn—that among this wild profusion of worlds there is one particular world that has left its trace upon all the others. A unique province, indeed, that remains the secret source, and ground, of all these other realms.

A Common Source?

Yet how could this be? These worlds seem too incompossible, too incongruous, for them to be rooted in a common source. And how wierdly complex that source-world would have to be! If all these alien styles sprout out of the same land, how mysterious and downright *magic* would be that place!

(continued on page 65)

The Eclipse of the Sensuous

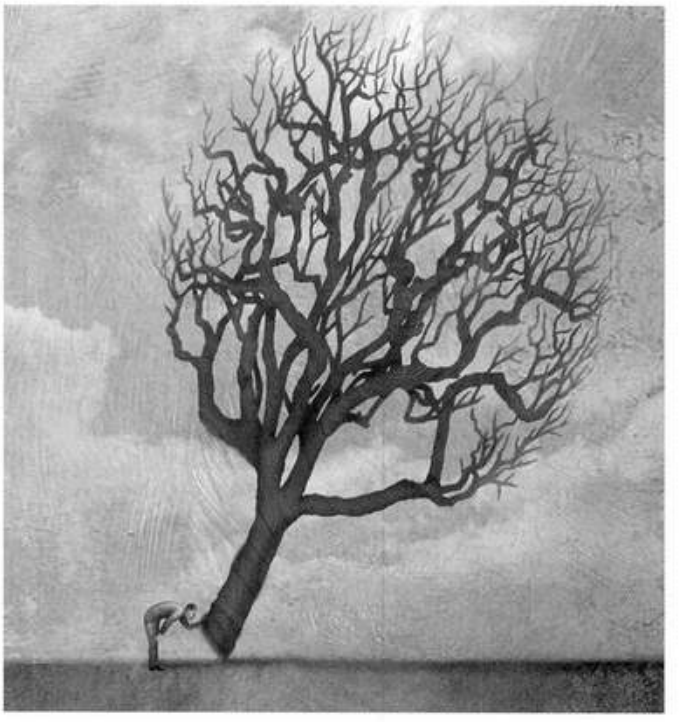
(continued from page 37)

And yet what a boon it would be to discover a specific scape that lies at the heart of all these others. For if there is such a secret world among all these—if there is a specific realm that provides the soil and support for all these others—then that primordial zone would somehow contain, hidden within its fertile topology, a gateway onto each of these other landscapes. And by making our home in that curious zone, we would have ready access to all these other realities—and could venture into them at will, exploring their lineaments and becoming acquainted with their denizens without, however, forfeiting all sense of orientation. We'd know that any world we explore remains rooted in that most mysterious realm where we daily reside, and so we could wander off into any of these other spaces without thereby losing our bearings; it would suffice simply to step back over a single threshold to find again our common ground.

But wouldn't it be common knowledge, by now, if there were a unique world that somehow opened directly onto all these others? Surely it would be a truth taught to us by our parents and professors as we gradually grew up into this dizzying situation! So we would expect … unless the one realm that impossibly joins all the others is the very realm that, traditionally, has been the most disparaged and despised; unless it is a zone that our religions all prefer to avoid, a dimension that our sciences all habitually overlook and forget. If this most remarkable world has conventionally been seen as the most derivative, drab, and problem-ridden of all the worlds, then perhaps our inability to notice this realm (and our reluctance to acknowledge its unruly magic) can be more readily understood.

Raindrops and Lettuce Leaves

The taken-for-granted world of which I speak is none other than the sensorial terrain of tastes and textures and ever-shifting shadows in which we find ourselves bodily immersed. Long derided by our religious traditions as a fallen and sinful dimension, continually marginalized by scientific discourse as a secondary, derivative, and hence ultimately inconsequential zone—how shall we characterize the sensuous world? It is the inexhaustible field of our most direct or unmediated experience, the very realm in which you now sit or recline, feeling the weight of your limbs as they settle down within the chair, or the stony bulk of the ground as it presses up against your flesh. It is the domain of smells wafting in from the kitchen, this place of rippling and raucous sounds, and of colors, too: the smudged white surface of the ceiling overhead, or the rumpled gray of the



clouds gathering outside the window, their shadows gliding slowly across the road and the bending grasses.

This, in other words, is the body's world—that elemental terrain of contact wherein your tongue searches out a stray piece of lettuce stuck between your teeth, a fleshly zone animated by the thrumming ache within your skull and the claustrophobic feel of the shoes around your feet. Yet the sensuous world is animated by so much more than your own body; it is steadily fed by the body of the apple-tree, too, and by the old oak with its roots stretching deep into the soil, and the swollen bodies of the clouds overhead, and the warm, asphalt skin of the street, and the humming life of the refrigerator in the next room. This living, carnal field seems to breathe with your own moods, yet it's influenced, as well, by the rhythm of the rain now starting to pound upon the roof, and by the dark scent of newly drenched leaves and grass that drifts through the house when you swing open the front door. Shall we step out under those pelting drops to rescue the morning newspaper? Or perhaps that's too timid for a hot day—haven't we done enough reading? Why not toss this magazine into the corner, pry off our shoes and charge out under the trees to stomp and splash in the gathering puddles?

Why not, indeed? Lets do it! Since this—THIS!—is the very world we most need to remember: this undulating earth that we inhabit with our animal bodies! This place of thirst and of cool water, this realm where we nurse our most palpable wounds, where we wince at our mistakes, and wipe our tears, and sleepily make love in the old orchard while bird-pecked apples loll on the grass all around us—this world pulsing with our blood and the sap of pinon pines and junipers, awake with the staring eyes of owls and sleepy with the sighs of alley cats: this is the world in which we most deeply live.

Sadly, it is also the world we have most thoroughly forsaken.

Of course, we have not entirely lost touch with this place, where the moon slides in and out of the clouds, and the trees send down their thirsty roots, our nostrils flaring at the moistness of the night breeze. Our flesh calls us back to this earthly place whenever we are injured or sick, whenever we need to wash the dishes by hand, or clean out the overflowing roof gutters, or simply to empty our bladders and bowels on the toilet. Whenever we stumble and scrape our knees, when one of our tools breaks or one of our technologies breaks down, we must turn our attentions, if only for a moment, to the bothersome constraints of the gravity-laden earth that grips our bodies. Yet we'll linger only as long as we must; we know well that this messy world, with its stains and pockmarks and pimples, is not our destined kingdom. As soon as we've bandaged our knee, or repaired the dishwasher, or wiped our ass, we turn our attentions back toward those other, more compelling worlds. We turn back toward our laptop screen, or to the next page of the latest book on how to survive in the digital economy, or toward the churning sounds of a favorite audio disk pulsing out of our headphones; we dial our colleague on the cellular to ask if she can join us at next week's conference on the newest gene-splicing techniques; or perhaps we plunge our attention back into our meditations on the transcendental unity hidden behind the apparent world. It never occurs to us that the most profound unity may reside in the very thick of the experienced world itself, in the shifting web of interdependent relationships that ceaselessly draws the disparate presences of the sensuous cosmos, ourselves included, into subtle communion with one another.

The enveloping earth—this richly variant world alive with the swaying limbs of trees and the raucous honking of geese—is the very context in which the human body took its current form. Our senses, that is, have coevolved with the diverse textures, shapes, and sounds of the earthly sensuous: our eyes have evolved in subtle interaction with other eyes, and our ears are attuned by their very structure to the howling of wolves and the thrumming of crickets. Whether floating, for eons, as the single-celled entities that were our earliest biotic ancestors, or swimming in huge schools through the depths of the oceans, whether crawling upon the land as thick-skinned amphibians, or racing beneath the grasses as small mammals, or later swinging from branch to branch as long-tailed primates, our bodies have continually shaped themselves in delicate reciprocity with the manifold forms of the animate earth. Our nervous systems are thoroughly informed by the particular gravity of this sphere, by the way the sun's light filters down through the earth's sky, and by the cyclical tug of the earth's moon. In a very palpable sense we are fashioned of this earth, our attentive bodies coevolved in rich and intimate rapport with the other bodies—animals, plants, mountains, rivers—that compose the shifting flesh of this breathing world.

Hence it is this animate, more-than-human terrain that has lent us our particular proclivities and gifts, our specific styles of behavior. The structure of our senses, our modes of perception, our unique habits of thought and contemplation, have all been formed by the mysterious character of the earthly cosmos in which we evolved. The sensuous earth thus provides the inescapable template for our experience of every other world we devise or discover. Whether we are plugging ourselves into cyberspace or simply synapsing ourselves to the page of a new novel, whether we are mathematically exploring the submicroscopic realm of vibrating, ten-dimensional strings or pondering the ultra-vast tissue of galaxies revealed by a new generation of radio-telescopes, we cannot help but interpret whatever we glimpse of these worlds *according to predilections derived from the one world in which we uninterruptedly live*—this bodily place, this palpable earth where we still breathe and burp and make love. Our intuitions regarding the lineaments of Heaven are inevitably shaped by those sensuous experiences that seem to correspond with such a place of equanimity and ease (luminous clouds drifting in the celestial blue, or a ray of sunlight that suddenly pours through a rent in those clouds and spills itself across a green hillside) and hence our religious heavens inevitably borrow their imagined structure from the evocative structures of this earthly cosmos. The way we envision the workings of DNA and the complex interactions between genes is similarly influenced by our encounter with the way things unfold at the scale of our most direct, unmediated experience of the sensuous earth around us. How could it be otherwise? It is our age-old encounter with the world at this scale that has provided the very eyes by which we peer through all our microscopes and telescopes, and that has fashioned the complex hands that now design our computer models.

Our comprehension of neural structures within the brain is deeply limited by the fact that the human nervous system did not evolve in order to analyze itself. The human brain evolved as a consequence of our bodily engagement with our earthly surroundings, and hence this brain has a natural proclivity to help us orient in relation to those dynamic surroundings. Whenever we attempt to focus the brain back upon itself, or upon any other hidden dimension—whether subatomic or galactic—it cannot help but bring those predispositions to bear, anticipating gravity, ground, and sky where they are not necessarily to be found, interpreting data according to the elemental constraints common to our two-legged species, yielding an image of things profoundly informed by our animal body and its accustomed habitat.

There is much to be gleaned from our investigations into other scales and dimensions, yet we consistently err by assuming our studies provide an objective assessment of

the way those other realms really are in themselves. In order to convince ourselves of the rigor and rightness of our investigations, we consistently ignore, or overlook, the embodied nature of all our thoughts and our theories; we repress our carnal presence and proceed as though—in both our scientific and our spiritual endeavors—we were pure, disembodied minds, unconstrained by our animal form, and by our carnal and perceptual entwinement with the animate earth.



Thus do our sciences, like our religions, perpetuate the age-old disparagement of sensorial reality. The experienced earth lends something of its atmosphere to every world that we can conceive, and hence haunts these other worlds like a phantom. Each of the diverse and wierdly divergent worlds that cacaphonously claim our attention in this era—whether scientific or sacred, virtual or psychedelic, submicroscopic or meta-cosmological—is haunted by the animate earth. Of course most of our professors, priests, and scientists prefer not to confront such a vague presence that threatens, out on the very edge of our awareness, to disrupt all our certainties. Still, even the most confident scientists must sometimes find themselves wondering, late at night, how we can have gleaned such marvelous insights into the hidden structure of the universe while the most evident and apparent world that materially surrounds us seems to be choking and retching, its equilibrium dashed and its myriad plants and animals tumbling into extinction as a result of our human obliviousness. Can we really trust all our brilliant discoveries regarding the unseen causes that move the cosmos, when our own local cosmos is disintegrating all around us as a result of our collective inattention? Indeed, is it not likely that everything we think we know about *other* worlds has been distorted by our refusal to notice our thorough embedment in *this* world—by our refusal to discern the utter entanglement of our senses and our sentience within this breathing lattice of intertwined lives and living elements that we call earth?

Ethics and Otherness

Of course, the fragmentation and loss of coherence that we experience in our individual lives echoes a profound discombobulation within the larger community. In the absence of a common or broadly shared world, ethical instincts—including the mutual respect and restraint that hold a community together—steadily lose their grip, and indeed ethics, itself, comes to seem a largely arbitrary matter. When each of us expends so much energy and time engaged in worlds not shared by our neighbors (or even by other members of our own family), when we continually direct our individual attention to dimensions hidden above, behind, or beneath the shared world to which our senses give us access, it should come as little surprise that the *common* sense is impoverished, along with any clear instinct for the common good.

And yet an ethical compass—a feeling for what is right (or at least decent), and perhaps more important, for what is wrong—is especially crucial in such an era as this, when our technological engagement in other dimensions gives individuals a far greater power to manipulate experience, to violate others' lives and privacy, to inflict large-scale terror, and even to eradicate whole aspects of the real. Yet how is a genuinely ethical sensibility instilled and encouraged? How is an ethical sense (or, more simply, a good heart) born? Real ethics is not primarily a set of abstract principles; it is not, first, a set of rules (or "commandments") that can be memorized and then applied in appropriate situations. Ethics, first and foremost, is a feeling in the bones, a sense that there's something amiss when one sees a neighbor kicking his dog, that there's something wrong about hastening to one's work past a stranger who has tripped and fallen, her grocery bags torn, with their pears, cabbage heads, and a busted bottle of olive oil strewn along the sidewalk. Yet from whence comes the instinct to stop and help? The odd impulse to intervene with some teenagers stomping on an anthill, or simply to refrain from taking advantage of another's bad luck—where do these impulses come from?

It seems unlikely that the ethical impulse can be learned primarily from the pages of a book (not even from a text as deeply instructive as the Torah, or the Christian Bible, or the Koran). Still less can it be learned from the screen of a computer. For while these media readily engage the thinking mind, they cannot engage the whole of the thinking body (this reflective and sentient organism with its muscles and limbs) in the way that any face-to-face encounter, in the flesh, engages the whole body. It is in the flesh and blood world of our bodily actions and engagements that ethics has its real bearing. It is here, in this irreducibly ambiguous and uncertain land where we live with the whole of our beings—with our hands and our feet and our faces, with our bellies as well as our brains—that we are most vulnerable, most affected by the kindness of others, or by their neglect and disrespect. It is here, in this mortal world, that we are most susceptible to violence.

Of course we can strive to be basically responsible when engaged in those other, less palpable realms—for instance, when we are responding to a mountain of email, or cruising the internet, we can certainly try to respect electronic perspectives that are different from our own, or to refrain from

violating the confidences and privacy of other participants. Similarly, we can attempt to be ethical in our experimental research with gene splicing and proteomics, or in our applications of nanotechnology, or in our electronic explorations of other planets. Yet unless we are already striving to act appropriately in our everyday, face-to-face interactions with the beings immediately around us, at the very scale in which we corporeally live—unless we are grappling with the difficult ambiguity of interacting with other bodily persons and presences without doing violence to those others—then we have no reason to trust that our more abstract, virtual engagements are genuinely ethical or good-hearted at all. For it is only in this palpable, earthly world that we are fully vulnerable to the consequences of our decisions and acts.



In those less sensorial dimensions (whether religious, scientific, or technologically mediated) we often find ourselves interacting with certain ideal presences that have been richly envisioned by our religious traditions, or with various provisional entities hypothesized by our fellow scientists, or with virtual beings invented and programmed for our entertainment. In such abstract, transcendent, or virtual worlds, in other words, we commonly encounter phenomena that may or may not be our own creation—we find ourselves interacting, there, with the manifold artifacts, interpretations, and projections of our own, richly imaginative species. But in the more immediate, palpable world to which our animal senses give us access, we encounter not only human creations but other *creative* entities—other persons as unfathomable as ourselves, and other earthborn entities whose sensations and experiences are even more unfathomable and mysterious. It is only here, in the earthly world of our carnal engagements, that we continually come into contact with beings (persons, deer, hawks) whom we can be certain are not primarily our own fabrications, but are really *other*—other centers of experience richly different from our own.

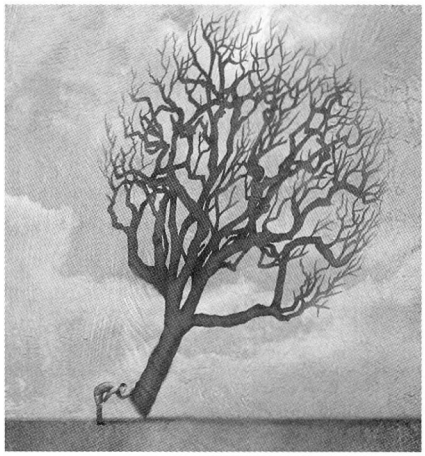
It is thus in the sensuous world that we most readily find ourselves confronted by what is genuinely, and indubitably, *other* than ourselves. It is only in this bodily terrain that we continually find ourselves in relation to other active agencies that are clearly not of our own making, to a world whose elemental lineaments we can be sure we did not devise. It is only here that we know we are in contact with what really exceeds us. And hence it is here, first and foremost, that ethical action really matters.

And so it is here, in the body's world, that an ethical sensibility is first engendered in any person. The seeds of compassion are sown in the palpable field of our childhood encounters with other sensitive and sentient bodies, in this ambiguous land where we gradually learn—through our pleasures and painful wounds, and through the howls and tears of others—to give space to those other bodies, discovering in their cries and expressive gestures a range of sensations strangely akin to our own, and so slowly coming to feel a kind of spontaneous, somatic empathy with other beings, and with our commonly inhabited world. It is this early, felt layer of solidarity with other bodies, and with the bodily earth, that provides fertile soil necessary for any more mature sense of ethics; it is this nonverbal, corporeal ability *to feel something of what others feel* that, given the right circumstances, can later grow and blossom into a compassionate life.

The child's somatic solidarity with others is inevitably a tentative and tenuous phenomenon, a layer of experience that emerges only when a child is free to engage, with the whole of her or his muscled and sensitive organism, in the animate world that immediately surrounds her. This quietly empathic layer of experience can arise, that is, only when the child is free to explore, at her own pace, this terrain of scents, shapes, and textures inhabited by other sensuous and sentient forms (by trees and insects and rain and houses), and so to discover, gradually, how to resonate with the other palpable presences that surround. It can arise only when the child is not deflected from such spontaneous, sensory explorations by being forced to engage, all too quickly, in the far more abstract and disembodied dimensions that beckon through the screen of a television or a computer.

How much violence has been done, in the latter half of the twentieth century, by planting our children in front of a screen! How many imaginations have been immobilized, how much sensorial curiosity and intercorporeal affinity has been stunted by our easy substitution of the television, with its eye-catching enticements, for the palpable presence of another person ready to accompany us on adventurous explorations of our mysterious locale?! The screen of the computer, too, requires us to immobilize our gaze, and to place our other senses, along with our muscles, out of play. It isolates and engages only a narrow slice of a child's sensorium, inviting her to set aside the full-bodied world that she shares with the fiery sun and the swooping birds. We should be profoundly skeptical about every exhortation by so-called experts to bring our children "on-line" as rapidly as possible in order to ensure their readiness and eventual competitiveness in the new "information economy." There is, of course, nothing wrong with the computer, nor with the many realms now so rapidly being opened for us by the astonishing capability of our computers—as long as we

bring to these new realms the sensorial curiosity, creativity, restraint and ethical savvy that can only grow out of our full-bodied encounter with others in the thick of the earthly sensuous. But if we plug our kids into the computer as soon as they are able to walk, we short-circuit the very process by which they could acquire such creativity and such restraint.



Drinking the Rain

There can be little hope of renewing a collective sense of the ethical without beginning to acknowledge and honor the forgotten primacy of the one reality that we all have in common. Yet the only world that we humans all have in common is the same world that we share with the other animals and the plants: this terrestrial realm of wind and water and sky, shivering with seeds and warmed by the sun. Hence, it seems unlikely that we will locate a lasting ethic without rediscovering our solidarity with all these other shapes of sentience, without remembering ourselves to the swallows and the meandering rivers.

We are understandably fascinated by the rich promise of our technologies, and deliciously dazzled by the new experiential realms opened to us by the genius of the digital revolution. Yet our enthrallment with our own creations is steadily fragmenting our communities and our selves; our uncritical participation with technology risks eclipsing the one realm that alone can provide the guidance for all our technological engagements. Indeed, only one realm is sufficiently wild, outrageous, and complex enough to teach us the use and misuse of our own creations.

Only by remembering ourselves to the sensuous earth, and rediscovering this place afresh, do we have a chance of integrating the multiple and divergent worlds that currently vie for our participation. Only by rooting ourselves here, and recovering our ageless solidarity with this breathing world—drinking the rain, feeling the fur on our flesh, and listening close to the wind as it whirls through the city streets—only thus do we have a chance of learning to balance, and navigate, among the proliferating worlds that now claim our attention at the outset of a new millennium.

There are many, many other worlds, yes, but they are all hidden within this one. And so to neglect this humble, imperfect, and infinitely mysterious world is to recklessly endanger all the others. ❑

Walt Whitman Among the Yiddish Poets *(from p. 58)*

naught—it has been destroyed by the forces of capitalism, hauntingly embodied in the image of a "giddy-faced gold miner from California / With thinning, yellowish skin and deeply-sunken eyes." This is, then, a nightmarish inversion of Whitman's America: the bright lights of Broadway cannot quite conceal the "hordes of pale-faced children."

In the second stanza, Whitman is joined by two additional American prophets, John Brown and Abraham Lincoln, who similarly discover a world overcome by violence. These two additional figures reveal Ludwig's conviction that the promise of America is inextricably linked to the fate of African Americans. Brown's attempt to free the slaves at Harper's Ferry and Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation are implicitly put forth as moments when the true America, the radically egalitarian America of Whitman's vision, came into view. Ludwig's sensitivity to the struggles of African Americans was common amongst the Yiddish writers in

principle of order and wholeness, a foundation for hope.

The traditional Jewish teaching about redemption suggests that one day a messianic "King" will come and heal the world. Here, Ludwig inverts this teaching in two senses. First, he presents us with a queen, not a king; and, second, he suggests that the source of healing is already amongst us, grounded in the natural world. The implication is that poetry itself has the power to alter our vision, to reveal at once the decay beneath the glitter of modern life, and to express the vision of wholeness that survives intact.

It should be noted that the title of the poem in the original is given in Latin characters, presenting a striking contrast with the Hebrew characters of the main body of the poem. Also the poem's epigraph—"What do you see Walt Whitman?"—is given in English. By blending languages and alphabets in this way, Ludwig draws attention to the idea that his poem participates in multiple traditions. The Whitmanian

Truths That Must Be Declared

Barak Gale

I grew up in a family strongly rooted in the beginnings of the State of Israel. My mother's family escaped from Russia to Palestine at the turn of the last century, after my great grandfather was brutally stabbed to death in his home. My father, an American GI, joined the Hagganah and helped with the secret greeting and absorption of post-Holocaust refugees coming to Palestine in dilapidated boats. The talmudic principle of *pikuach nefesh*—saving human lives above all else—was well ingrained in my Jewish identity, even though I didn't know any name for it. Of course, this principle is only authentic when we cherish every human life, because every human life has a *nefesh*, a soul, that is made in G-d's image.

A few years ago I was attending a breakfast/talk with Senator Boxer in Washington, D.C., where I happened to meet Lula Bishop, an African American woman who lives at a housing project called Midway Village in Daly City, CA. Lula told me that many residents, including herself, are suffering from a host of diseases, ranging from mysterious rashes and nosebleeds to infertility, memory loss, and cancer. The housing project was constructed next to a Superfund site in 1976, and the ground beneath the village was found to be laden with compounds called "toxic polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons" which have been linked to cancer and other maladies. A federal health study recently revealed the horrifying evidence that almost all of the residents have chromosome abnormalities.

Lula's story is not unique in our country, especially among the poor and people of color. How are we answering the call of *pikuach nefesh* in Lula's case? How is our government cleaning up toxic Superfund sites like the one at Midway Village? On July 1, 2002, the *New York Times* reported that our president now expects citizens to pay for these toxic cleanups; he refuses to reauthorize the tax on polluting industries that had been funding such cleanups previously. In cases such as Midway Village, our government is refusing the Torah's commandment that "You shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor" (Lev. 19:16).

The Bush administration has taken many other actions that will directly impact human health, including allowing increased discharges from factories and sewage plants, mine waste to be dumped into rivers, and nuclear waste to be dumped where it was deemed to be dangerous by the Department of Energy. But these actions, as egregious as they are, are only a part of this government's assault on creation.

We are witnessing today a systematic dismantling of thirty years of environmental protections, as well as abandoned promises to mitigate the scourge of global warming. Meanwhile every life support system on the planet is in decline. We know today that human survival and earth survival are inextricably interdependent. This connection is expressed in the Hebrew words for human (*adam*) and earth (*adamah*). The passage of *Tanna d Bei Eliyahu Rabbah 2* tells us:

> The whole world of humans, animals, fish, and birds all depend on one another. All drink the earth's water, breathe the earth's air, and find their food in what was created on the earth. All share the same destiny.

The notion of interdependence is not a peripheral issue in Judaism, but rather quite central as demonstrated by our central declaration of faith—the Sh'ma: "Listen, Israel, Adonai our God, Adonai is one." A paraphrasing of the theme of oneness is found in the words of Maimonidies: "The entire universe is but one entity." But the second paragraph of the Sh'ma takes interdependence to another level, the realm of human action and consequence. If we serve G-d, we are told, we will be rewarded with timely rain and harvest. However, if we serve other gods (such as our own pride or arrogance), we will be punished with drought, famine, expulsion. This cause and effect often does not play out in our daily lives, but we believe that ultimately an accounting takes place.

I find myself amazed by the prophetic character of this prayer. We have polluted our air, water, and land, knowing full well the implications for human health. We have logged almost all our ancient forests, even though we know the consequences for endangered species and ruined watersheds. We have failed to improve fuel efficiency standards even though we know our greenhouse gas emissions are causing radical changes in global climate. Can anyone question that we have dishonored rather than served our Creator? The second paragraph of the Sh'ma is part of Judaism's sacred liturgy, but we mumble or omit it altogether from our service because we are uncomfortable with the notion of reward and punishment.

It's not that we completely ignore such truths as these—the sacredness of life; the interdependence of human beings, the earth, and all living creatures; the ongoing assault on cre-

Dr. Barak Gale is an optometrist in Seattle, WA, a member of Congregation Eitz Or, and a long time activist with the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life. He is a volunteer coordinator for the Declaration of Interdependence [www.interdependence.us].

ation by our public officials; all these truths are declared in pieces, here and there. Sometimes a religious institution adopts a resolution on, say, an ethical energy policy, or advocates for a particular bill. But the bill passes from the Congressional agenda, the news is pushed to the back pages, and local legislators may not feel the heat to be responsible. In response, in February, 2002, a major campaign was launched by the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life and the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Working Group. Over 1,200 clergy signed on to a letter to the Senators calling for an ethical energy policy based on energy conservation, improved fuel efficiency standards, and investment in renewable sources of energy. Despite this unprecedented support of faith leaders, the Administration and Congress did not change course. It was a major disappointment for those of us involved.

It is against this backdrop that a small interfaith group in Seattle has developed a Declaration of Interdependence that goes a step further than an interfaith open letter, documenting our government's unrelenting and pervasive assault on creation and calling upon our country to be a good steward of the earth we share. The original Declaration of Independence served as an inspiration and model by articulating "self evident" truths and listing the crimes of King George of England. However, the underlying premise of this Declaration is that most people want to do what is ethical and right, and that bearing witness to the interdependence of all creation and to the interdependence of our actions and consequences will help individuals move towards understanding and wise action.

Some may worry that such a Declaration will be divisive or polarizing, antagonizing those who prefer a politics without faith. Others may not want to bring the Declaration forward out of fear of offending someone in their congregation or community. But if we do not bring our religious convictions to bear, if we do not tell the truth of what is happening, then we are also responsible. In the Talmud (shabbat 54b) we read:

> Rav and Rabbi Hanina, Rabbi Yohanan and Rabbi Habiba taught the following: Whenever people can stop a member of their household from committing a sin and they do not, then they are held accountable for the sins of their household; if they can stop their fellow citizens from committing a sin, but do not, then they are held accountable for the sins of their fellow citizens; if the whole world, then they are held accountable for the sins of the world.

The exciting news is that clergy and lay leaders across the nation are taking a stand, and signing on to the Declaration. As of May 5, 270 individuals (mostly clergy and lay leaders) have signed on. The signatories include seven bishops (Episcopal, Methodist, and Apostolic Catholic) and three organizations (two Presbyterian).

Rabbi Gershon Winkler tells this Chelm story:

> Once upon a time, the village council called a meeting to discuss the problem of a treacherous road up and around a steep hill to neighboring villages. Travelers would frequently lose their balance and fall off the cliff. After a long night of weighing and assessing, of pondering and proposing, of debating and berating, of arguing and vetoing, the council finally reached a solution. They would build a hospital at the bottom of the hill!



ILLUSTRATION BY MICHELLE WHITE

We can either continue building more and more hospitals—finding cures for illnesses caused by human-initiated environmental injustice, relocating millions of people from their ancestral homelands, "managing" global warming by building colossal dikes—or we can call for prevention measures at the top of the hill.

The wonderful part of all this is to know, deep inside, that our action can make a big difference. This, of course, was evidenced in a dramatic and troubling way in the election of 2000.

Maimonides, the great rabbi/philosopher/scientist of the twelfth century, taught that the entire world can be viewed as a scale, equally balanced between the forces of good and the forces of evil (both of which are found in each of us, not "them" and "us"). Our very next action, then, can tip the scale in the direction of merit. What better reason to get involved?

To sign the Declaration and to help volunteer, see www.interdependence.us. Please ask your minister or rabbi to consider signing on as well. ❑

ENVIRONMENT

Food for Thought

Antonia Juhasz

For three days in June, the Bush administration, the State of California and the City of Sacramento collectively spent millions of dollars pitching genetically engineered foods and industrial agricultural methods to some of the world's poorest nations at the Ministerial Conference and Expo on Agricultural Science and Technology, June 23–25.

No agreements were negotiated, nor did this U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) event have an official purpose. Rather, it was an opportunity for U.S. biotech and agribusiness corporations to pitch their wares and for the Bush administration to apply pressure to agriculture ministers just three months before the fifth World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial in Cancún, Mexico. The Cancún ministerial is poised to become the third failed WTO ministerial in a row due in large part to disagreements over agricultural trade rules.

Success in Cancún is at least partially dependent upon the Bush administration convincing the world that genetically engineered (GE) products are not only safe but also necessary to solve global hunger. If Sacramento is any guide, the Bush administration is poised to fail.

On Sunday, June 22, the day before the ministerial began, thousands of protestors filled the streets of Sacramento in colorful and vocal opposition to GE products, corporate control of the food supply, and the industrialized agriculture model. They demanded real solutions to hunger that address the distribution, cost and control of food and that focus on small, locally owned, biologically diverse, and sustainable farms.

The sentiment in Sacramento is consistent with polls in both the United States and Europe that show that over 90 percent of the public want GE foods to be labeled so they can choose to avoid them. In fact, the Sacramento conference took place less than a month after the Bush administration announced that it would launch a WTO challenge against the European Union's (EU) five-year moratorium on GE products. The EU invoked the moratorium under intense public concern about the health and environmental risks of GE products.

Antonia Juhasz is a project director at the International Forum on Globalization in San Francisco. She is the author of Does Globalization Help the Poor? *as well as dozens of publications and articles on globalization.*

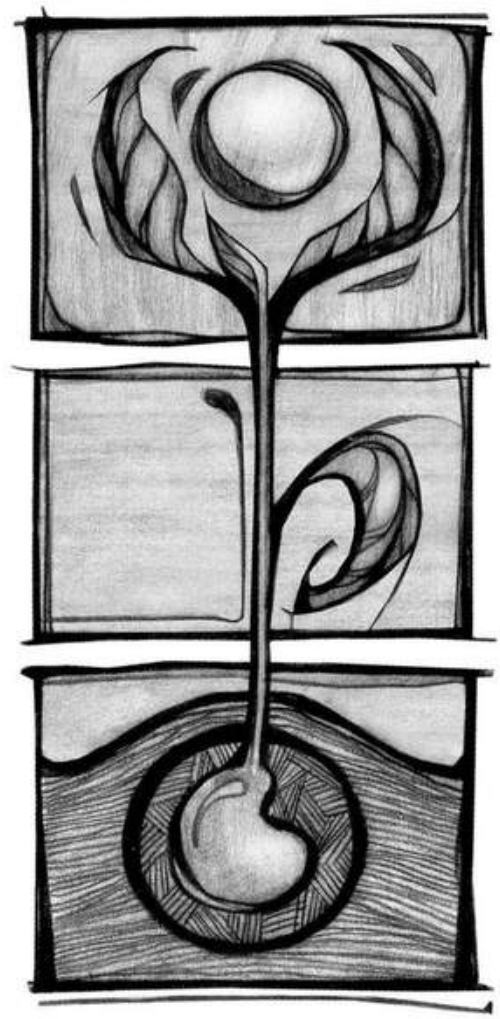


ILLUSTRATION BY MICHELLE WHITE

Scientists, government regulators and consumer advocates around the world argue that we simply do not know enough about the impact of GE products on our environment and our health. It is a technology that is being promoted without either adequate research or regulation for one simple reason: it is yielding enormous profits for a handful of powerful corporations. Dr. Suzanne Wuerthele, a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency toxicologist, has said that "the bottom line in my view is that we are confronted with the most powerful technology the world has ever known, and it is being rapidly deployed with almost no thought whatsoever to its consequences."

The Bush administration's argument that GE products will solve world hunger by increasing food yields was also rejected in Sacramento. The response was unfaltering and universal: the world has never grown as much food per capita as it is growing today. The problem is not food production, but distribution and cost. In fact, according to the United Nations, increases in food production in the last thirty-five years have outpaced the world's population growth by about 16 percent. As the World Health Organization explains, "The problem is that food is neither produced nor distributed equitably. All too frequently, the poor in fertile developing countries stand by watching with empty hands—and empty stomachs—while ample harvest

(continued on page 46)

ENVIRONMENT

Tikkun Environmentalism

Towards a New Realism

Paul Wapner

When we read about the countless deaths taking place every day in Iraq, Liberia, Israel/Palestine, Chechnya, and other war-torn regions, why should we focus on environmental issues? The fate of the earth's water, air, land, and species may be pressing, we tell ourselves, but aren't these second-order problems compared to the more urgent demands of armed conflict, terrorism and civil unrest? If we have limited time and energy, shouldn't we be focusing on what the administration likes to call "security issues"?

Certainly we must work to prevent war, bring peace to conflict-ravaged societies and denounce all forms of terrorism. But, do these kinds of challenges exhaust the threats to real security? What about the 8,000 children (yes, 8,000!) who died *yesterday* because they lacked access to safe drinking water? What about the thousands who die each day from respiratory diseases associated with indoor and outdoor air pollution? How do these people unacknowledged in the news fit into our thinking? Or, what about the sixty or so species (not just individual creatures but *whole* species) that disappeared yesterday from the face of the earth, due largely to human activities? Is there room in our security thinking for these living entities? Every day we chip away at the life-support systems of the earth. Isn't that a matter of global security?

For most of us, it is difficult to see these things as security threats because, firstly, we hardly know that they are happening. We don't embed journalists at the frontlines of environmental degradation, nor in the poorest parts of the world. And, even if we did, it is unclear that they could see what, in fact, is going on. Environmental harm occurs not through dramatic acts of ecosystem dismemberment—although projects like China's Three Gorges Dam don't help things—but through the innumerable, everyday practices that have become part of contemporary life. In an age of increasing commercialization, widespread belief in infinite economic growth, and tighter linkages between individual activity and



the global economy, people are finding it harder and harder to work, support families and participate in social activities without fueling the engines of environmental degradation. Through the innumerable small acts of everyday life, we slowly but steadily degrade the quality of the earth's air, water, soil and diversity of species.

The cumulative effect of such "business as usual" is deadly: a number of whole biophysical systems, from the ozone layer to many ocean fisheries, have buckled under from the constant pressure. Given this, it is not far-fetched to see environmental degradation as a type of slow-motion war. Like conventional war, environmental degradation consists of infiltrations, interventions, and penetrations that, together, constitute a steady attack on the earth's ecosystem. We are now on a permanent war footing with our own planet in which climate change, ozone depletion, water contamination, massive extinction of species, over-fishing, and all the rest are everyday instances of collateral damage.

Unfortunately, we find little help these days for turning things around. The Bush administration is quite comfortable with permanent war and business as usual. By under-funding pro-environment agencies, refusing to enforce environmental regulations, and launching an outright assault on domestic environmental laws and international obligations, the current administration is implicitly removing the few obstacles that have previously frustrated the troops. Its "shock and awe" earth-war strategy instead ensures that the business of business remains business—not environmental well-being.

The pro-environment troops, on the other hand, face weak morale and diminishing support. As the Bush administration steps up its war on terrorism, the American public increasingly has gone along with Bush's war on the environment. According to a March 2003 Gallup poll, fewer people identify themselves as environmentalists than they did just a year ago and more of them support the government's handling of environmental issues. At the same time, the United Nations, the European Union, and countries of the global South have all failed to provide environmental leadership of late. They had a chance to do so at the World Summit on

Paul Wapner is associate professor and director of the global environmental policy program at American University. His most recent publication is Principled World Politics: The Challenge of Normative International Relations *(Roman and Littlefield).*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOSH NEUFELD



Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg last summer, where the United States took a relatively unimposing stance. For all their efforts, however, the Summit produced few tangible results—it was big on hortatory promises and small on actual commitments. A key problem, of course, is that the world is distracted. In the post-9/11 age, the powerful have circumscribed the meaning of "real" security, so much so that anything outside of military or terrorist threats cannot be taken seriously.

How do we move forward in such a situation? How can we re-focus world attention, crack the narrow parameters defining security, and reactivate the momentum toward global environmental protection? The movement dedicated to *tikkun olam* provides essential light in these dark times.

Tikkun olam means to heal, repair and transform the world. It comes out of the Judeo-Christian prophetic tradition, which refuses to accept the way things are and insists on making the world a more just, peaceful and humane place. These days, the *tikkun* perspective, as embodied in this magazine and elsewhere, entails resisting the selfishness, materialism, and egotism that have come to mark contemporary Western societies and cultivating a greater capacity for generosity, compassion, cooperation, and a sense of awe at the grandeur of the world. It calls on us to see each other and the nonhuman realm not as means to fulfill our self-interested ends, but as ends in themselves. The *tikkun* perspective, in short, advances a progressive politics informed by sustained reflection on the spiritual dimensions of our lives.

Translating a spiritual consciousness into politics has always been a challenge for the Left. Spirituality is traditionally articulated in a religious context and we know that religions have historically been used to fan hatred, exclusion, and violence when brought explicitly into the political arena. In response to this history, the Left has drawn a sharp divide between religion and politics. The separation of church and state in the United States has been one of the Left's most important political victories and remains a critical part of liberal society.

One result of the separation, however, is that the Left has come to understand religion and spirituality as personal matters best left to the private realm. Meanwhile, the Right has capitalized on people's widespread religious sentiment. The result of these different orientations, according to environmentalist David Orr, has not benefited the Left because, while the Left has been using spirituality to get in touch with its inner child, the Right has been using it to get in touch with middle America. The Right knows that people yearn for a sense of meaning in their lives and politics. The Left needs to appeal to that sense of meaning as well. The language of *tikkun olam* offers a way to communicate these deep spiritual and moral concerns, particularly in the area of environmentalism, without upsetting the hard-won victories that protect public power from being co-opted by particular religious traditions.

The *tikkun* perspective draws strength and inspiration from the so-called wisdom traditions. At the same time, however, it recognizes that many religious traditions are or have been patriarchal, hierarchical, exclusionary, and overly judgmental toward each other and the secular world. Many are also anti-ecological. Back in the 1960s, historian Lynn White criticized the Judeo-Christian tradition for its extreme anthropocentrism, pointing to, among other things, the scriptural message that God gave dominion to humans over the natural world. (In Genesis 1:27 God tells Adam and Eve to "Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it"). Even as people dedicated to *tikkun olam* work to infuse the Left with a spiritual sensibility, we have the obligation to interrogate our own religious heritages and re-interpret texts and ideologies in ways that are more responsible to contemporary environmental challenges. We must help them find, in other words, their ecological relevance—whether this entails emphasizing some parts of tradition rather than others or telling new stories about our communal past and our relationship to the divine or other-than-human world.

Injecting a *tikkun* perspective into environmental politics is harder than introducing it into other issue areas. This is because, in its usual rationalist fashion, the Left has tended to use a technical or mechanical approach to environmentalism. Many environmentalists see the earth as a set of so-called sources and sinks for human activity. They worry that we will overuse the sources because of our voracious appetites and growing numbers, and overload the sinks with the amount of pollution we generate. The key, so conventional environmentalists argue, is to use resources more efficiently and reduce the amount of waste we produce. The language of environmentalism thus becomes a language of inputs/outputs, resource conservation, industrial metabolism, steady-state economies, system failure and so on.

This language and the concerns it addresses are, of course, critical to environmental protection. We need this kind of analysis to understand the magnitude and much of the nature of the problems we face. This language, however, directs us only to a narrow set of concerns and avoids the deeper meaning of environmental degradation. It focuses solely on saving our skin, particularly in ways that are best left to technicians, engineers, and systems analysts. As such, it limits our ability to turn things around. Such language implicitly plays into existing power structures and ideologies by suggesting that environmental protection is only a matter of technical reform, not holistic transformation.

One of the reasons we're at war with nature is that we think we need to rob the earth of its resources and demand that it absorb our waste. Indeed, wars take place largely because people want to extract concessions and impose conditions on others. Contemporary ideologies support a war-like orientation toward the earth by encouraging us to

compete against each other for resources, care little about how our waste affects others, and see the earth as simply raw material to satisfy our needs and desires.

What happens, however, when we adopt a *tikkun* perspective? We start to ask deeper questions about the challenges we face and relate efforts to protect the earth to broader, spiritual concerns. A *tikkun* perspective calls on us, for example, to ask ourselves who we are as humans and how we wish to relate to the more-than-human world. This type of reflection invariably expands the scope of who and what count as deserving security and inspires us to see security in general less as a matter of protecting ourselves and fellow nationals from military or terrorist threats and more about the overall well-being of humanity and the earth as a whole. In adopting such an orientation, then, we don't dismiss conventional environmentalist concerns about saving our skin but simply stretch our flesh to envelope more of the earth and sensitize ourselves to the more fundamental dimensions of environmental protection.

Instead of seeking ways to dominate the earth, a tikkun *perspective teaches that we didn't make the earth but found ourselves living with it.*

When we begin to go deeper into what our world means, we find that the earth is not simply a set of resources and sinks; it is not, as Aristotle suggested, a dead rock on which we live. Rather, it is a living being with which we are fundamentally connected. Some call it Gaia, after the Greek goddess of the earth, to signify how the various inanimate and animate parts of the planet constitute a swirling dynamic that makes life possible. Others conceive of it simply as a constantly changing open ecosystem with intricate, interdependent parts. Still others see it as a divinely created whole of which each part assumes meaning. Whatever the specifics of such orientations, a *tikkun* sensibility recognizes that the earth includes the more-than-human. As a result, instead of seeking ways to dominate the earth, a *tikkun* perspective teaches that we didn't make the earth, but found ourselves living with it. The earth is not the backdrop for our lives, but is part and parcel with them. Seeing the earth in this way enables a different language for environmentalism and a more meaningful sense of security. Rather than efficiency, system failure and the like, a *tikkun* sense of things prods us to talk in terms of care, awe, appreciation, sacredness and love. The earth is not something we use but something we share our lives with—something we nurture, have fun with, are stunned by, respond to, empathize with, find nourishment from, and, in turn, nourish.

A *tikkun* perspective also reminds us that even as we learn to cultivate greater respect for the nonhuman world, we must not forget the human one. People mistreat each other all the time when it comes to interacting with nature and dealing with environmental hazards. In 1987, the United Church of Christ released a study finding that the number one indicator of where toxic waste dumps and incinerators are located is the skin color of the local community. This study—undertaken not coincidentally by a religious organization—initiated the environmental justice movement. It got people to start seeing that environmental harm is not something we all experience equally but is disproportionately encountered by the poor, politically weak, and otherwise disadvantaged.

This pattern is replicated, of course, throughout the world. The wealthiest and most powerful have the ability to displace environmental problems. Did you ever wonder why, for example, the wealthiest neighborhoods in New York, London, Paris and elsewhere—where people consume huge amounts of resources and generate much waste—look so good? This is not because such residents are ecological stewards but because they have the means to transport environmental threats outside their communities.

One sees this internationally with the toxic waste trade which, despite a multilateral treaty that attempts to outlaw the practice, shifts the burden of disposing toxic waste from those in the global North who mainly produce it to those in the global South. Similar forms of displacements take place when wealthy countries like Japan protect their forests by placing them off-limits to logging and importing wood from abroad, and when countries like the United States protect their coral reefs while importing live rock and coral from other countries to satiate consumer demand. Power dynamics, in other words, allow only some to enjoy environmental health.

When thousands of children die each day because they lack access to safe drinking water, when thousands of children and adults die daily from respiratory diseases associated with air pollution, a deep part of ourselves is disturbed and moved to action. There is no question that many of these deaths are preventable. We know how to provide clean water to communities and how to cut down on air pollution, especially in the developing world where the majority of these deaths take place. The investment for doing so would cost a fraction of the war effort just undertaken to topple the Hussein regime, and an even smaller fraction of the world's military budgets. The problem is that the people involved are seen as marginal or the issues themselves are understood not as proper security matters. A *tikkun* perspective argues against such viewpoints.

Environmental injustice is not simply a matter of mistreating our brothers and sisters with whom we share the planet. It also involves the way we treat future generations. Future generations don't vote, pay taxes, voice their opinions. As such, they represent the perfect people to exploit. Today, we use nuclear technologies that generate waste with half-lives of thousands of years. We have no clue how to



neutralize this waste. We store it in various containers which will themselves degrade before the nuclear material itself. This is our gift to future generations. Likewise, many of the ways we use land lead to species extinction. Roughly a third of existing species will be gone in our lifetime. As a result, we will leave future generations a world that is much less diverse and thus rob them of the ability to benefit materially from species diversity and the pleasures of experiencing the earth's panoply of life-forms.

Will such efforts make a difference? Does a politically engaged *tikkun* perspective really hold out hope for changing course? It is easy to be cynical. Environmentalists as a whole are a rather marginal lot and everyday are growing more so. Furthermore, many people have yet to subscribe to even mainstream environmentalism; it would seem idealistic to expect them to embrace the broader and deeper aspects offered by a *tikkun* sensibility. Indeed, casual reflection about the prospects of a *tikkun*-oriented environmentalism should sober us up and inspire us to get "realistic" about our politics and hopes for the environment.

But what does it mean today to be realistic? Is it realistic to expect everything to be okay while we systematically undermine the earth's ecosystems? Is it realistic to believe that we can live happily and healthfully when thousands die each day because they lack access to safe drinking water or are vulnerable to life-threatening diseases associated with air, water and land pollution? Are we being realistic when we continue to burn excessive amounts of fossil fuel knowing that our actions will raise sea levels, threaten agriculture, and create more intense weather patterns associated with climate change? Does realism entail resigning ourselves to increased cancers due to ozone depletion and the release of toxic substances into our air, water and soil? Does it include seeing the end of ocean fisheries, scarcer fresh water, and impoverished biological diversity? Are we really being realistic to believe we can continue on our merry way in the face of such dangers? Such belief is, by almost any measure, idealistic.

A *tikkun* perspective, in contrast, provides a realistic assessment of where we are and where we are going and a sufficiently deep analysis to appreciate the full set of stakes at risk in environmental degradation. Furthermore, it identifies not simply the material dimensions of the environmental crisis but the spiritual ones as well. As such, it promises to marshal the full range of human capacities needed to address the profound environmental challenges of the day. *Tikkun,* in other words, provides a new realism—one that is able to stare reality in the face and, instead of running away, being satisfied with superficial understanding, or simply enlisting in the perpetuation of the status quo, demands meaningful change. It makes it a moral obligation to "get real." ❑

Religious Responses to Atrocity *(cont. from page 31)*

support. There are also local initiatives, in synagogues and chavurot, offering American Jews a spiritual/political home that honors their humanistic convictions as faithful Jews.

All of these voices need to be heard, loudly and continuously, by Israeli Jews. Most Jews in Israel are inured by the daily dose of bloodshed and threats to the moral price paid by their leaders' political shortsightedness. We desperately need a spiritual counterweight to the misguided "realpolitik" that threatens the soul of the Jewish state from within. While most of us are quick to blame the Palestinians, especially the extremist Muslims in their ranks, few Jews, in Israel or elsewhere, are ready to look into the moral mirror. We all need to acknowledge, in pain and remorse, the injustice we have inflicted on this other nation, from 1948 until today. Sadly, the collective denial is compounded by the contempt that many Jews in Israel harbor toward their Arab neighbors. This widespread racism corrupts us, and it prevents us from perceiving the common humanity, as well as the deep spiritual and cultural affinities, linking these Abrahamic sibling peoples.

Unless the deep cultural and spiritual dimensions of the conflict are addressed, any peace plan, "road map," or framework for compromise is doomed to failure, just as the Oslo Accords failed. Genuine healing and reconciliation between these traumatized national communities requires an interreligious and cross-cultural process touching the core of our identities. Many of us need the conflict, at least unconsciously, for our own sense of who we are in the world. In order to redefine ourselves, not as victims or warriors but as partners in consecrating the Holy Land, we need visionary spiritual leadership. Jews, Christians, and Muslims need to develop, together, an inclusive understanding of holiness that applies not only to Jerusalem, Hebron, and Nazareth, but also to Sarajevo, New York, Johannesburg, and Melbourne.

The rise of religious extremism in all faith communities should be enough to convince anyone committed to Middle East peace that a diplomatic paradigm which is rationalist and utilitarian, addressing only military and economic issues, will never work. In practical terms, "Track II" discussions among religious leaders and educators need to parallel the "Track I" negotiations between governments. Inclusive "Abrahamic" approaches to transcendent questions of meaning, value, and national purpose need to be articulated through the mass media by credible religious authorities. Only then can we move on to negotiating practical compromises that accommodate the conflicting claims over Jerusalem/Al-Quds, Hebron/Al-Halil, the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif and other holy sites. And only then can our souls be liberated from the dread, the anguish, and the hatred which contaminate our spiritualities and constrict our human potential as children of the one God, each reflecting the Divine image in a unique way. ❑

POLITICS

OutFOXing the Left

Danny Goldberg

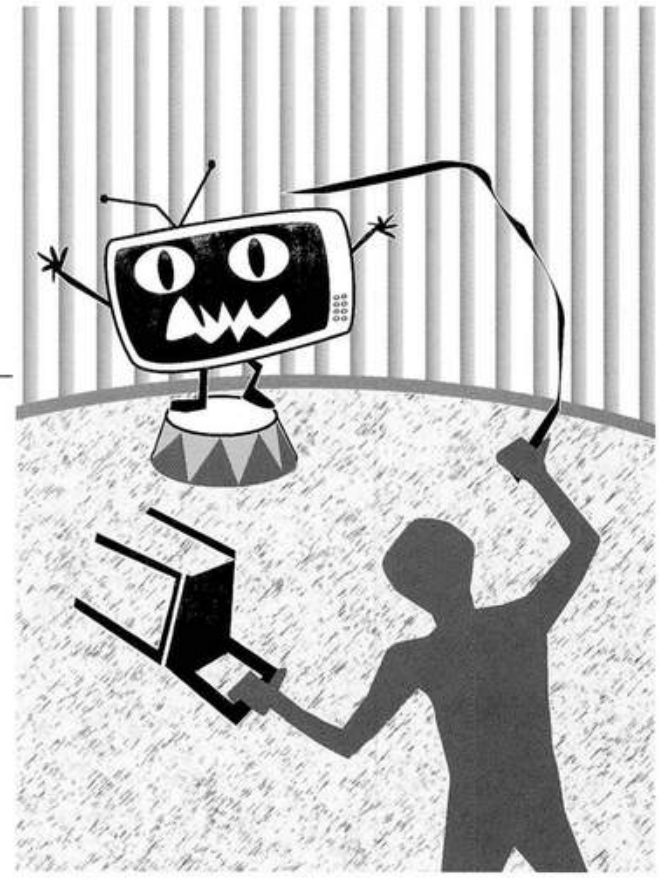


ILLUSTRATION BY SANDRA O'BRIEN

It seems impossible to have a conversation about progressive or Democratic political hopes without someone lamenting the corrosive influence of Fox News. This response is a cop-out in my opinion. The problem of expressing and actualizing progressive ideas long predates the existence of Fox News, and was even, during the Reagan era, one of the precipitating factors in the creation of TIKKUN magazine. Fox News is far more complicated and entertaining than its detractors realize. Progressives would do well to learn how to use some of its engaging cultural tools in service of a different philosophy.

I recently did an interview with Fox News' John Kasich to plug my book, *Dispatches from the Culture Wars: How the Left Lost Teen Spirit*. Kasich was a Newt Gingrich protégé (he was in the House of Representatives for eighteen years and was made Chairman of the House Budget Committee after the Republicans took over in 1994). Not only did he vote with Gingrich on the big issues, he even voted to prohibit needle exchange and medical marijuana in Washington D.C.—even while he publicly affected hipness by mentioning his enthusiasm for the Grateful Dead. That he was able to schmooze with me about what it was like to have worked with Neil Young or what I thought of the new Radiohead album doesn't change his politics, but I wish there was a single Democratic congressperson or liberal pundit who even knew who Radiohead was.

My other experiences with Fox News were fairly lively as well. I walked in with trepidation to Fox headquarters in New York for an in-studio interview with Bill O'Reilly and was greeted by an effusive John Gibson who recalled an interaction we had in a Seventies rock and roll context. Geraldo Rivera, who palled around with John Lennon, was amiable in the green room as he prepared to do an interview with O'Reilly about the latest tabloid murder. O'Reilly himself refrained from sneering or insulting me, and only got pissed off when I referred to Republicans as "your guys." In high dudgeon he interjected, "Mr. Goldberg, you obviously don't watch the show. We are independent. I just criticized Bush today about the environment."

Danny Goldberg is CEO of Artemis Records, is a former co-publisher of TIKKUN *and is the author of the book* Dispatches From The Culture Wars: How The Left Lost Teen Spirit.

I don't want to sugarcoat Fox News. A lot of what they do, as writer-actress-comedienne Janeane Garofalo says, panders to the "dumb and mean" constituencies in American politics. Garofalo, who has fearlessly challenged Bush's foreign policy, tells of appearing on a Fox show only to be introduced by a host whose first words to her on air were, "Saddam Hussein must love you!" This kind of debasement of legitimate criticism and questioning, whether vicious attacks on the Dixie Chicks or Tom Daschle, or, in Ann Coulter's case, fifty years of liberals, is disgusting, and the mobs it arouses are capable of doing great harm.

But I have Republican relatives who are neither dumb nor mean, and they are charmed by the entertaining, accessible style of the Fox News team. They like that it isn't as pompous or predictable as the other networks. I don't for one minute think that Fox News is "fair and balanced," but many of its viewers think it is, which is why O'Reilly, the most successful of all Fox News personalities, is so intent on maintaining an "independent" image.

David Frum, the former Bush speechwriter who takes credit for the phrase "axis of evil," has been appearing on various talk shows (including a Tim Russert show with me), gleefully claiming that there is tension between "NPR liberals" (who he describes as anti-war and pro civil liberties) supposedly epitomized by Howard Dean, and "economic liberals" whose union-supported champion is Richard Gephardt. According to Frum's formulation, working class "economic liberals" are uncomfortable with popular anti-war rhetoric, free speech, etc.

This is a mostly false dichotomy. Of course there are as many clashes within the potential Democratic coalition as

there are within the Republican electorate (I imagine, for example, that Jerry Falwell and P.J. O'Rourke don't agree about everything), but working class people are precisely who make artists like Eminem and shows like *Friends* popular. They are also overwhelmingly likely to be the people whose friends and relatives are in danger of being killed or wounded in Iraq for a purpose which gets more obscure every day.

Republican strategists pretend that they would love to run against Howard Dean, but in fact the candidate they would really like to run against is Joe Lieberman. They are trying to scare Democrats into believing that Dean is another George McGovern, because in fact they would prefer an opponent like Mondale, Dukakis, Gore, and now Lieberman, who will leave no political footprints. But George McGovern spawned a mailing list that animated progressive public interest groups for the next decade, and countless political professionals, including the young Bill Clinton, got their start in politics in a campaign based on idealism. McGovern's biggest mistakes were not ideological, but professional and tactical (losing control of his convention to the point that his acceptance speech wasn't on until two in the morning; selecting a running mate who resigned the next week after it was revealed he'd received electro-shock treatment for depression, etc.); and of course McGovern's campaign was bedeviled by illegal dirty tricks that were among the reasons Nixon was forced to resign two years later.

Conservatives understand the importance of political footprints. The modern conservative movement was born in the unsuccessful but passionate Barry Goldwater campaign of 1964.

It is beyond the control of most of us whether or not George W. Bush self-destructs or cleverly repositions himself; whether Howard Dean rises to the occasion or gets stuck as a candidate whose only emotional tone is anger; whether John Kerry or Dennis Kucinich or Richard Gephardt find some political poetry to accompany their earnest, boring prose.

But whatever happens in the national campaign this next year, it's vital for progressives to remember things were much worse in the past. McCarthyism and blacklisting make what happened to Bill Maher and the Dixie Chicks look like a day at the beach. J. Edgar Hoover's odious excesses make John Ashcroft look like a paragon of civil liberties.

The answer, as Eleanor Roosevelt said, is to light candles instead of cursing the darkness. Jesse Jackson, Ralph Nader, and Gloria Steinem didn't become famous and influential because of corporate media support. They developed powerful grassroots followings who supported their idealism and gave them currency with the media. Many candles have been lit in recent months in the independent book publishing world, which has produced six figure sales for such anomalies as Scott Ritter, Noam Chomsky, Gore Vidal, Aaron McGruder, David Rees (*Get Your War On*), and Joel Andrea (*Addicted to War*). And don't forget the 800 pound gorilla *Stupid White Men*, notable not just for its sales of over one million hardbacks (more than Rudy Giuliani), but for the fact that Moore and his wife, Kathleen Glynn, marketed the book with absolutely no help from Harper Collins who, after September 11, didn't even want to publish it. Moore's book was a bestseller for weeks with no major reviews and no ads. Only then was he invited on *60 Minutes* and featured in *People Magazine*.

Of course not every cartoonist will sell like David Rees. Not every comic will get ovations like Janeane Garofalo. Not every singer-songwriter will develop passionate followings like Conor Oberst. Not every progressive will have Michael Moore's gift for entertainment. But they can at least do their cultural home work as diligently as John Kasich. ❑

FOOD FOR THOUGHT *(continued from page 40)*

and bumper crops are exported for hard cash." It is the rules of institutions like the WTO that force countries to produce food for export, rather than for hungry families. This is why in 1997, 78 percent of all malnourished children under five in the developing world lived in countries with food surpluses (United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization).

The Sacramento ministerial was a success for the advocates of healthy, sustainable, and accessible food. The EU ministers all boycotted the conference, and even the U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick, who was scheduled to give an opening presentation, failed to attend. The public came out by the thousands to protest, the agriculture ministers sought alternative venues and materials, and the media did more questioning than reporting of Bush administration positions. Even the generally conservative *Sacramento Bee* editorial board argued that "the Bush administration's Department of Agriculture is holding a meeting about what the world's wealthiest country feels comfortable discussing—namely, some technologies that can increase food production. A conference focusing on the real obstacles to helping poor countries would make the weather hotter inside the conference center than out."

The real test, however, will come at the WTO Ministerial in Cancún and at the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) negotiations in Miami in November. The Bush administration plans to use these ministerials to create legally binding agreements that force governments to eliminate barriers to GE products and implement the industrial agriculture model while simultaneously allowing U.S. multinational agribusiness corporations to maintain billions of dollars in government subsidies and protections. We must ensure that these plans are not fulfilled. The success of uniting developed and developing country critics of GE products and industrial agriculture in Sacramento must continue. The tide is turning; now it's time for a tsunami. ❑

ACTIVISM

Communalizing the Neighborhood

Peter Gabel



TIKKUN Associate Editor Peter Gabel (right) organizes local kids to save Cover to Cover bookstore in San Francisco.

PHOTOGRAPH BY KIM KOMENICH / SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

One of our biggest challenges in building a new radical spiritual politics ("radical" meaning opposition to the totality of the inertia of the System) is distinguishing what we call the politics of meaning from normal liberal/progressive politics. One way that I've tried to express this is to take a liberal/progressive issue that we support, like universal health care, and restate the meaning of the issue in PoM terms. For example, to say that we support universal health care means we support caring about each other's health rather than insuring each other's bodies. It is the subjective element, or the intersubjective element, that is central to the politics of meaning, whereas in normal liberal/progressive discourse, the subjective element is only implicit—a love that dare not speak its name.

I accidentally threw myself into the middle of a neighborhood struggle to save a local bookstore in a way that illustrates this difference. Cover to Cover is a twenty-odd-year-old independent bookseller in Noe Valley, one of San Francisco's most progressive neighborhoods. Once a working class village just south of the Castro district, Noe Valley became a bubbling haven for 60s radicals until the early 80s, when its main drag, 24th Street, gave way to what became known as "the street of babies." This outpouring of children, eventually including my own (Sam, in 1995), reflected a kind of transfer of hope to the next generation in the face of the rise of Ronald Reagan and the collective flight—or perhaps I should say the reciprocal ebbing away—of what we then called the Left, as we began to doubt en masse that the genie of passion and love that had been let out of the bottle could lead us to the Promised Land. That period was partly succeeded by the rise of nearby Silicon Valley, the upsurge of yahooligan capitalism that had a distinctly liberal flavor, mixing memory and desire in a mysterious new concoction ushered in by the computer that some call dot.communism. Today's Noe Valley is an ongoing melange of all of the above—and still a fundamentally hopeful enclave, though pocked with a Starbucks and a Tully's and nineteen nail parlors and expensive dress shops. The communitarian spirit still haunts this decidedly mixed landscape, but at the time of Cover to Cover's collapse, no one could have known exactly how much.

On June 10th, I walked into Cover to Cover only to see Tracy Wynne, one of two beloved booksellers who run the store, slumped over the cash register crying. It was no surprise to me that she and her cohort, Mark Ezarik, had finally decided to close their landmark-of-our-common-past store. The shelves had become barer by the week in the prior months; special orders for books were slow to come in; the store's famous children's section had become quieter and quieter as the giggles of our kids crawling through the book hut had ebbed away—a sign to all of us that the life-force was leaving yet another Noe Valley landmark (a local and loved small grocery, Mikeytom, had just lost its lease—perhaps to be replaced, as Cover to Cover might also be, by that mean Dr. Seuss character, The Gap, or perhaps by the book version, the ominous Borders, when it's no borders that we long for).

I said to Tracy, "How much do you need?" She said "$200,000." For some reason—perhaps my sense that the spirit of community remained silently stronger all around us than the spirit of resignation—I said, "I think we can raise that."

Thus began my politics of meaning "Campaign to Save Cover to Cover." One could have looked at the store's situation, cursed the spread of chain stores and Amazon on-line

Peter Gabel is a professor of law and director of the Institute for Spirituality and Politics at New College of California. He is also the Associate Editor of TIKKUN.

discount "houses," and cried out for legislation to constrain the market's destruction of the local, and global, neighborhood. But that approach tends to abstract the issue about which we "liberal/progressives" are upset (personally, I eschew the liberal/progressive label, preferring the old and uncompromising "radical" but with a spiritual and loving topspin). Within this framework, we imagine that some abstract "we" should go to "the State" to do something to regulate the systematic destruction of independent bookstores by more "efficient" chains and discount sellers from Amazon to Costco. While I have no objection to the liberal/progressive impulse or even its explicit demand—I'm all for government regulation of the market as one moment of making manifest the Unity of all Being—I would emphasize that this way of thinking cannot actually reform society unless there is a "we" to make such reform possible. All the hand-wringing and cries of "Why?" in the world will not stop monoculture from destroying the cultures of the world until and unless a real "we" emerges to overwhelm the legacy of mutual fear that the competitive market institutionalizes. If everyone's out for themselves, "they" are going to pay less and buy from Amazon, and "we," who don't exist yet, won't be able to stop them. The market is just a mechanism of collective flight, the means by which we flee each other and pop Zoloft in the solitude of our constitutionally unsearchable houses—until we address the subjective element, the intersubjective longing for social connection, common meaning, and purpose. Spiritual politics is always and only a subjective politics aimed at imbuing so-called objective reality with transcendent and loving human meaning and energy.

My spirited whim, based on a spiritual belief that the community was out there and might want to emerge if given the opportunity, was turning into a responsibility not to fail.

So I went home, little me all by myself, and started a listserv on yahoogroups.com called savecovertocover. By the time you read this, the store will have been saved (I know I'm giving away the ending, but please don't stop reading until I get through what was "politics of meaning" about the campaign); but you can probably still subscribe if you wish by emailing to savecovertocover-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. I then drafted my initial letter to what I hoped was the community in waiting, laying out the contours of the Campaign to Save Cover to Cover. Not for a second did I think, "Now what would a politics of meaning approach to this look like?" I just tried to tap into my own subjective longing for the bookstore to survive, for the neighborhood to battle for its redemption and resist the spread of the collective illness that was taking the life of Cover to Cover, and to express that longing in a more or less spontaneous and fun strategy.

This "strategy" had two key elements: one was to find forty people in Noe Valley who would agree to loan $5,000 in exchange not for interest, but for a permanent 25 percent discount on all Cover to Cover books. That would raise the $200,000 needed to pay off the store's accumulated debt (roughly half the problem) and to restock the store's inventory with sufficient book volume to resuscitate and elevate book sales. I decided to call this group "The Magnificent 40," purposely recalling Yul Brynner's *Magnificent 7*, the Western in which, as I vaguely recalled, seven roughriders overwhelmed odds of some sort to win a glorious victory. The second element was to try to get 1000 neighbors who could not afford or did not wish to join the Magnificent 40 to pledge to buy one book per month (meaning one hardcover, or $25 worth). In the letter (remember I had no one to send it to yet), I emphasized how this effort might well help transform our neighborhood into a community, as well as the justified esteem that folks who joined either of these groups could and would receive for their respective parts in saving the store. I then spoke to Tracy and Mark about giving the Magnificent 40 some non-legal advisory role in Cover to Cover's ongoing operation, which they agreed to, and suggested that we gather together on special occasions to take pleasure in the store's resurrection and success, adding that some of us might fall in love or at least become friends.

When I finished a draft, I took a version that could fit on one page to Mark and Tracy, who had the brilliant idea of going to Kinko's and blowing it up into a gigantic poster that could go in the store window, right next to their very sad gigantic letter about having reluctantly decided to close the operation. I say this idea was brilliant because the blown-up version of the letter caused passersby to stop and create a spontaneous public rustle on the street. Soon I was getting calls or e-mails from people saying they wanted to help, and two personal friends agreed right away to join me as the first Magnificent 40 members. The next day, I put up an ironing board on 24th Street in front of the local Bell Market with scrawled "Save Cover to Cover" signs and pledge sheets for the one-book-per-month plan. Within about two hours, I had my first fifty signatures.

The Fear of Hope

The minute I started to succeed, even a little bit, I started to get anxious, and Tracy in particular began to feel extremely unsettled. Having just resigned herself to the tragedy of the store's closing after having spent so long scrambling to prevent it, Tracy was scared of daring to hope that this Campaign could conceivably succeed. My anxiety was that I suddenly felt I *had* to succeed—my spirited whim, based on a spiritual belief that the community was out there

and might want to emerge if given the opportunity, was turning into a responsibility not to fail. The fear of hope is, in my view, the single greatest social-psychological barrier to transforming the world and accounts for the prevalence of cynicism as our society's main collective defense mechanism. Hope requires the opening up of desire and vulnerability. As long as we are closed up in our isolated routines, we may be dissatisfied, but we are not in danger of the rejection and pain that haunts our memory, which is in truth the memory of a long intergenerational legacy of rejection and hurt that each of us lives out in our respective unique and personal ways.

I decided to deal with my own fear of hope by treating the campaign as a "light" venture, analogous in my mind to the process of leavening bread. Instead of thinking, "Okay, now I've got to accomplish these five really heavy and even impossible seeming goals (raise $200,000?!)," I decided to try to maximize the spontaneity and fun of the whole project and see if the "we" wanted to emerge, while allowing for it not to succeed if the bread just didn't want to rise, or if I/we didn't come up with the alchemy needed for it to do so. Alchemy is important, even central, to spiritual politics—by finding one's own sense of playful hope and casting it out toward others, we give the hope and longing already pooled up in the community a chance to emerge. This collective hope then transforms into a collective confidence that we can in fact do something that taken all at once as a heavy "goal" can seem daunting or even impossible.

A politics of meaning must gently pluck the invisible string linking self and other to help our waiting loving energy resonate from heart to heart.

Both metaphor and innocence play a role in this process. The truth is that although no one can imagine quickly raising $200,000 with the only economic return being a book discount, it was equally clear that there were at least 40 folks in the neighborhood who could afford a long-term (six-year, in our plan) $5,000 loan in exchange for overcoming isolation, community, and saving something linked to knowledge, hope, learning, and the development of the next generation. In this sense, the bookstore is not a business in the marketplace so much as an innocent metaphor of the world we want to live in. By calling these prospective donor-lenders the Magnificent 40, I allowed us (I'm one of us) to gain a bit of recognition for which we are all starved in an anonymous society, but in a playful way—and to do so for being generous and idealistic rather than self-interested. The use of the ironing board in front of Bell at the very center of 24th Street, personned each weekend by parents and often their kids, has innocent associations to traditional, communal neighborhood campaigns of all kinds, and has made it inviting for neighbors to sign up for the book-per-month pledge.

Although finding 1,000 people to make a $25-per-month commitment might at first seem daunting, by turning the effort to find these 1,000 heroes and heroines into an effort to give people a way to be valued for becoming part of something larger than themselves, and through an ingenuous method of making contact with them, the effort itself has become a pleasure. It's fun to stop people on the street and to watch your child explain how buying a book a month will save the local bookstore; the joy is infectious; the passerby can see the partial list of signatures on the page you're currently filling; everybody wants to read a hardcover-per-month anyway. Still another touch of both metaphor and innocence was inspired by the local newspaper story that appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle* about our campaign. While the photographer for the story was taking the picture, I tried to think of something that would make the kids genuinely smile so I began "organizing" them during the photograph to hold a lemonade sale for the store; the caption in the paper under the photograph showed me addressing the kids and explained that I was organizing a lemonade sale. So of course we had to actually do it: thus, Lemon-Aid was born, a conscious metaphorical association to Willie Nelson's Farm-Aid that got some of the children out earning $30.86 for the store one Sunday afternoon (at a garage sale of used books held by The Phoenix, the other local bookstore and supposedly Cover-to-Cover's main competitor, with Phoenix owner Kate Kanaley serving as mistress of ceremonies and proving that markets can be cooperative and loving rather than individualistic, competitive, and driven by self-interest … and incidentally, Kate has joined the Magnificent 40).

What is important about metaphor and innocence is that they allow people's hope for idealistic connection and community to be spoken to spontaneously, non-rationally, and by indirection. I don't think anyone who has been part of this campaign has felt that they were being organized and hustled or guilt-tripped by rational arguments that are always suspect to the extent that they do not touch the listener's heart: the core truth of the post-modern critique of the idea of totality and "seriousness" is that reason divorced from the spirit is indeterminate and that the Devil can and will always cite Scripture for his or her purpose. The "goal of this campaign" has been to see if the bread will rise, if the energy will spread, if we can make Lemon-Aid out of $200,000 of debt. To succeed, a politics of meaning must gently pluck the invisible string linking self and other to help our waiting loving energy resonate from heart to heart in a way that allows a "we" to emerge. Sometimes, as in the case of the Sixties, this resonance can overwhelm the denial of desire that separates us and keeps us locked in our spiritually impoverished cubicles; this resonance from heart to

heart is what *moves* in a movement and can at certain creative historical moments sweep across the entire globe.

Fear Strikes Back?

As of today, July 21st, we have 42 of the 40 Magnificent pledges needed, and 688 of the 1000 book-per-monthers. But we always made fulfillment of the pledges contingent upon the Magnificent 40's approval of a new and plausible business plan. That plan has now been drafted by Paula Foley, the new business partner who emerged from the process of the campaign to help strengthen the bookstore's financial management, marketing, and business acumen. Paula's emergence has itself been a beautiful expression of the campaign, as she is a woman with some business expertise who had "lost" some money in the store out of past devotion and has now, in the transfigured environment of the campaign, converted that lost sum into an equity position as the new business partner in the new Cover to Cover. And her talents are genuinely needed to supplement/complement Mark and Tracy's historical role and legendary talents as book buyers and sellers. As of today, the plan is being reviewed by the Magnificent 40, and of course it has had to address why the new store will succeed when the old one failed. This is, so to speak, the capitalist moment.

Spiritual politics aims to generate connection and foster an opening of the heart. The longing for community that exists in each of us exists in all of us.

My experience has been that in spiritual/political efforts, big face-to-face meetings, unsoftened by food and music, inevitably pose a challenge to the hope that unites the group. In the context of this capitalist moment, this means that lawyers, accountants, and people with business experience may "ask the hard questions"—meaning technical/legal/business/accuracy-of-ratio-of-sales-to-inventory type questions that presuppose not the utopian momentum of our supportive movement, but the harsh realities of the alienated market taken as inevitable future. These questions may suddenly introduce an element of terror into the hearts of the innocent majority of Magnificent 40 members who have thrown themselves into the venture as a loan of love, instinctively trusting that the momentum giving rise to the store's salvation will carry over to the store's future cultural and economic success. We still live in a world in which people are taught to suspect their generous impulses, to feel that going with hope may well be foolish, and my concern is that the lawyers, accountants, and businesspeople will accidentally fuse their reasonable concerns—which we all agree must be addressed (the post-resurrection reality will at least in part reflect conventional capitalist market patterns)—with the group's own doubt about itself, its fear of success, its fear that going with the hopeful, generous impulse will lead to disappointment, rejection, and loss (of money, of community). I'm just a little worried (scared to death) that the well-meaning, rational minority will inadvertently scare away the majority who are ready to—who actively want to and even can't wait to—place their $5000 wager on hope alone.

To minimize the likelihood of this happening, we *will* have wine and cheese, and I may get up the courage to play the Dixie Chicks' "The Promise of Love" on the guitar while people are milling around beforehand. But I've also sent the business plan in advance to each of the 40 by e-mail, individually, with one copy available at the store for the community as a whole to be able to review. My hope is that this will allow the airing of all rational concerns, critiques, questions about the legality of the offering ("is this a 'public debt offering' requiring extensive risk warnings under the State Corporations Code?") to be processed and responded to in a non-threatening way. And this way all of the good ideas can be incorporated into a revision before the group gets together in a single face-to-face meeting at the store's new, better (more street traffic), and less expensive location a week from next Thursday. We will have a serious discussion at this event, but with the first round of questioning having been completed and incorporated into a revised plan, it's more likely that the event will be celebratory and exciting, a moment to declare victory, write checks, and fall in love (or at least take one more step toward believing that we are really a We).

This is really the point of the whole venture. The distinctive aspect of spiritual politics is that every action, objective, local initiative, or legislative reform must generate connection and reflect an intuitive strategy or way of thinking that fosters the opening up of the heart and the realization of the soul's ideals by taking into account the precise degree of fear shaping the background conditions. This requires having confidence in your knowledge of something invisible—call it the intersubjective energy field, or just reality's pulse—that inevitably in this world carries within it the conflict between hope and fear that is what we are seeking in each instance to transcend. Against us is the inherited mistrust of the Other that is the hallmark not just of today's capitalist culture but of the accumulated pain of prior generations that we ourselves are predestined to internalize and, in part, live out. In our favor is the simple, deep truth that the longing for community that exists in each of us exists in all of us, however cautious we each are about revealing it. The politics of meaning means remembering to employ everything that can help remind us of that simple spiritual truth—like making sure that parents like me in the Magnificent 40 remember to bring their beautiful kids to be part of the meeting/gathering, so that our dynamic is more likely to express the loving impulse that we so want them to learn. ❑

PERSONAL ESSAY

Tillie: On Her

Robin Goldfin

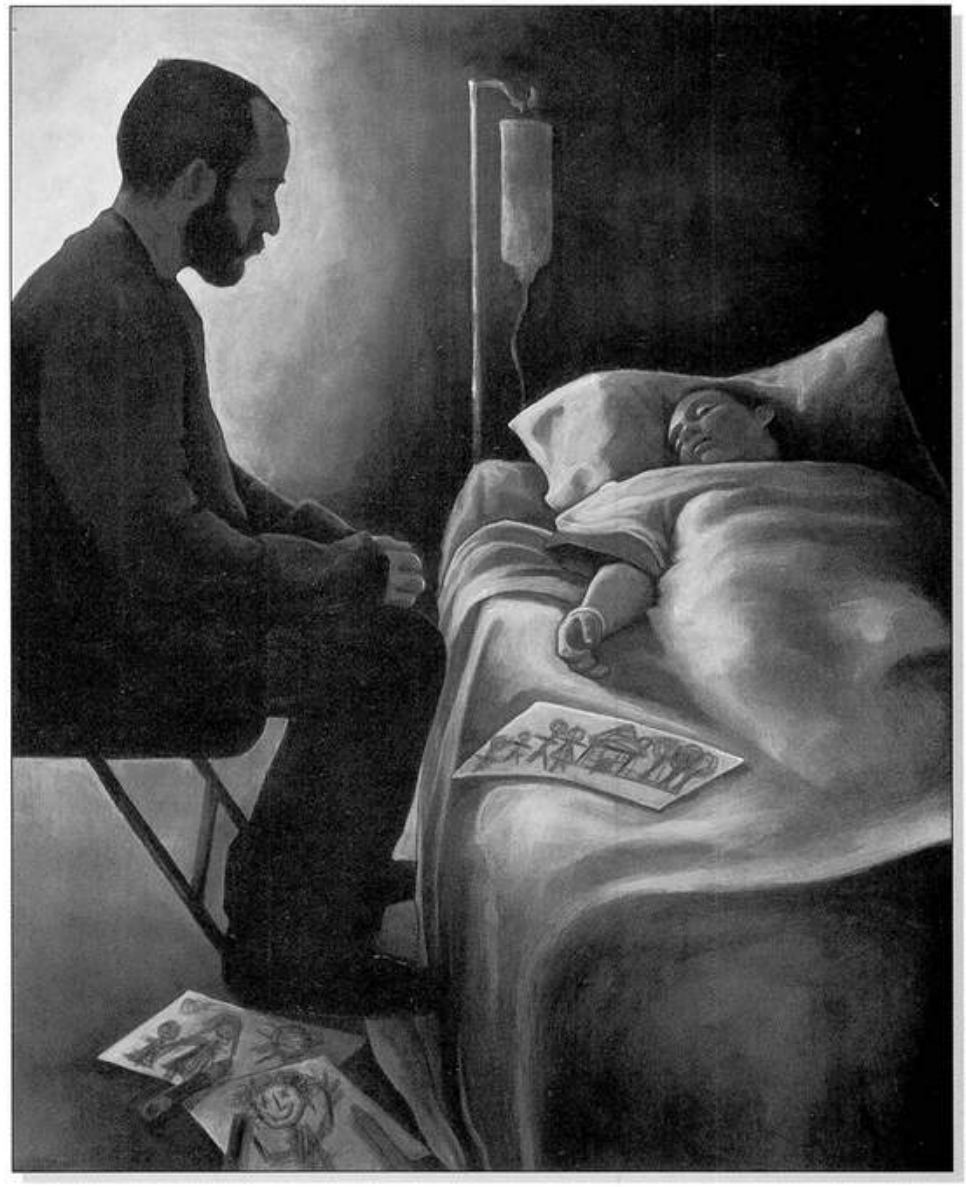


ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS DENNIS

For my brothers and sister,
for my father, and for Dolly

Her story is more interesting than mine, but I have been warned not to tell it. Not to lose myself in the details of her life so much that I abandon my own; not to focus more on her childhood at the expense of my own; not to approach her with sympathy instead of through our own history. And yet I can't help but feel that to learn about her is to learn about myself: we were once one body.

In the archives of the Jewish Family and Children's Services Agency in Philadelphia there is a file of social workers' reports about seventy-five pages thick. This file is sealed, closed to me as it was to her. Except once, for her fiftieth birthday she went to learn the names of her birth parents: Anna Glickman and John Perry. Anna was Jewish, John a Roman Catholic.

John had abandoned the family in 1937 when the baby was one year old. The Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children was called in because the children—Tillie and her brother Maurice, older by fifteen months—were being neglected. Tillie (or Delores—they use both names in the records) was found on the street. Anna Glickman gave no resistance to the children being taken away. The reports, strong language for those days, called her "a person of very low character." Miss Glickman's only request was that the children go to a Jewish home, so they were handed over to the Agency for Jewish Children and put in foster care, in separate homes.

As they grew, Maurice learned English, Tillie spoke only Yiddish. When they were brought to visit with one another, they could not communicate, except in the language of children. Maurice would try to taunt young Tillie, but she stood up to him. He would try to take away her toy and she would smack him. Even back then my mother wouldn't be pushed around.

I know these things because I've asked, because a kind social worker bent the rules and retrieved the files, reading to me from them over the phone after my mother's death. Not all, not everything, not nearly enough. Little things that wouldn't mean anything to anyone except six of us. The details of our mother's history, typed in triplicate.

Maurice was soon adopted by a couple who wanted a boy and after that he and his sister were forbidden to see one another. He was starting a new life. Little Tillie remained in foster care. But the story, as my uncle tells it, is that they lived in the same neighborhood, and one day they

Robin Goldfin is a playwright, dancer, and a teacher at NYU. "Tillie: On Her" is the first of three stories he has written about his mother. robin.goldfin@nyu.edu

stopped on opposite sides of the street. Tillie crossed over because she recognized him, without remembering who he was. Then they remembered, and after this they would meet secretly in the schoolyard.

And then not so secretly: "Tillie stands for hours under the Micklin house door waiting for Morrie," the reports say, over and over. She found out where he lived and would go to see him. She liked her foster family, but they would hit her, and one day she'd had enough. She went to her brother's house and instead of waiting under the door, she knocked on it, this bright faced, dark-haired little eight-year-old girl and said to his parents, "Take me, too."

The certificate of adoption is dated 1946. The war had just ended. When asked why she wanted to go and live with the Micklins, the young girl replied simply that she wanted to be with her brother. At the age of ten years old, Tillie/Dolores became Dollyann Micklin, the daughter of Ethel and Albert.

Fifty years later, in the summer of 1996, my mother injures her back lifting a heavy plant in the house. It never heals and by the fall she is bedridden. She hates doctors and has refused to see one since my last brother was born over thirty years before. But the pain is relentless and she finally gives in. She sees a sports medicine specialist who takes x-rays while making her hold heavy sandbags, only making her pain worse. He recommends physical therapy; my mother goes back to bed. Until the pain gets so bad that she walks the halls at night, banging on the walls, moaning. All from a pulled muscle?

I tell a therapist this story. She replies "If your father wants her to live, he'll get your mother to a hospital."

My father brings her hot chocolate in bed but refuses to take her to the hospital. He is going to make her well. Finally, my brothers get together and override both their parents. They call the ambulance and as the attendants are carrying her out of the house they knock over a statue of a great headless woman my mother has in the foyer. She takes it for an omen.

That first night we have to leave her there, but the next day I remember something: I was five years old and had to have my tonsils out—back then it was a bigger operation—and my mother wouldn't leave me. She stayed all night with me in the hospital. I woke up to see her in the bed next to mine, sleeping on a bare mattress. She got up and fed me chocolate ice cream.

Now she is in the hospital and I won't leave her. I go up to the nurse and ask: "If I told you I wanted to stay the night with her, would you fight me?" She thinks for a moment, goes away, comes back. "I wouldn't fight you at all," she replies, and that night and every night for the next three weeks, my mother's six children take shifts and she is never alone. It takes the doctors almost three weeks to find the tumor in her breast and the path it has taken to her bones because every test they take comes up negative. My mother is so good at hiding things, she has somehow managed to hide even her cancer from the doctors and the most sophisticated of instruments. Finally diagnosed, she leaves the hospital and beyond all expectation lives another two years.

But now I have to pause and ask what I am doing here. Trying to tell you her story, I've pieced together a beginning and then jumped straight to the end. I've left out almost everything that mattered: her fierce devotion to her children and family; her warmth and love and generosity; her ability to take care of us but difficulty in taking care of herself; her living life.

When I had that kind social worker on the phone, trying to keep her on as long as I could so I could hear more about my mother's childhood, I would ask questions. Finally, she asked me one.

"Your mother was basically a happy person, wasn't she?"

"Oh, yes," I lied. And then regretted it. But you don't tell strangers the truth. Sometimes you don't even tell yourself.

My mother was unhappy, particularly in her later years, but I couldn't tell you why. At best I can make guesses. Most likely, she knew she was ill. And as she didn't believe in doctors, she didn't believe in therapy, didn't want to go back to those early childhood memories or talk to strangers. Often she would tell me that she talked to me when she was alone in her kitchen and I was ninety miles away. But I never heard these conversations, so I can't tell you her story—not the way a story needs to be told—from the inside.

When my mother fell ill, I bought her a journal so she could write things down. It remains blank. Before she died, she told me "Don't ever write down anything you don't want anyone else to know." So I don't know her thoughts or her secrets, and even if I did they are not mine to tell. Perhaps all I can tell you this:

That first night I spent thirty-six hours at the hospital with her and when I finally left for my brother's house to get some sleep, I lay down on the bed, heavy with tiredness, unable to sleep, my head literally swirling, and I had a kind of vision. More a sensation, really. Lying there against the bed, I felt that my body was my mother's body. I couldn't tell the difference between us—I was her body, she was mine. It was not unpleasant.

"Do you think it means I'm finally separating?" I asked the therapist.

"Oh, it's much too early for that," she replied.

The things we pay people to tell us.

But eventually I told my mother, and she alone understood. "That's right, Robbie" she said, "we're on the same track." As if it were a fact, nothing out of the ordinary to be a man, forty years old and still be in your mother's body, of your mother's body. Nothing out of the ordinary to be a forty year old man and still be your mother's body. ❑

SPIRITUALITY

Tales of the Goddess

Kim Chernin



ILLUSTRATION BY LEELA CORMAN

I. Rapture

Many years ago, in my early twenties, I was studying in Dublin. One day, feeling despondent, anguished, unbearably tired, I put aside my books and went out for a ride. I ended up at a famous private estate, was allowed entry into the grounds and began walking. All of a sudden I felt like a small girl, with little hands and legs. My entire body shook with delight as if I had just fallen into it for the first time. I jumped a fallen tree, climbed a rock, leaped down again, ran on. There was a flock of sheep grazing joyfully upon a grass so vibrant I could scarcely believe it was a material substance. Then I noticed the gray stones scattered about here and there in the field, vibrating with the same kind of intensity. "They're alive," I gasped. Nature, which I'd always imagined a brute dead stuff, had a kind of vivid life to it.

I soon reached the estate's highest point. There was something uncanny in the place, bringing out something uncanny in me. I did not want to think that stones were alive. I did not want the logical categories through which I ordered the world to break down and desert me. I was addicted to what I then called rationality—to the world view most of the men of that time thought most plausible. Humans had consciousness and spirit and feelings. Trees and stones and sheep did not! The light flooding down from the sky became a shimmering veil of blue light. And then the whole valley became one great wave of light. My idea that the sky was a sky and the tree a tree, separate and distinguishable from each other, was questionable. Was it possible everything I had ever been told about the universe was simply an assumption, a style of perception, rather than the Truth?

It was too late to flee from the place. I, the rationalist, was in the grip of extreme emotion. I could fight it off, run away, or surrender and find out what it was asking of me.

I found myself before an immense tree. The bottom had been split almost in two by lightning and in the charred, concave base a brilliant green and yellow lichen grew. I stared at the tree, a natural altar, and meanwhile my body was doing something peculiar. I noticed it, thought I should resist it, did it anyway. There I was, on the ground in front of the tree. Tears streaming down my face. I, raised in a family of Jewish Marxist atheists, down on my knees, worshiping?

I knew nothing yet about a Hebrew Goddess or the way She had been worshiped during biblical times with the burning of incense before leafy trees on the high places. Most Jewish women don't know that the Goddess has a historical presence in Jewish culture, that traces of her can be found in the Bible itself, and that she has a name: Shechina. We are a people of the book, inclined to regard the rational,

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Kim Chernin is the author of the celebrated memoir In My Mother's House, *now available with new material in its twentieth anniversary edition from MacAdam/Cage.* *©2003 Kim Chernin.*

scholarly, learned, and traditional as more authoritative than the emotional, spontaneous, mystical teachings that come to us from less authorized sources. We are a people historically defined by our opposition to Canaanite nature worshippers, therefore not likely to think of nature as a teacher. Nevertheless, as Jewish women we have a privileged access to the Goddess precisely because she belongs to our archaic cultural history. (For more information, read Rafael Patai's revolutionary work *The Hebrew Goddess*, or my own *Reinventing Eve*, where I discuss the transformative power of women's inner experience.) Like all great soul figures she tends to speak to us directly once we learn to recognize her mysterious signs and beckonings.

In retrospect, this event was the first step in a process I now call an initiation to the Goddess. The awakening of this type of intuition is the Goddess talking to us, calling us back out of our exile from her. Of course, I had no idea that any such initiation was occurring at the time. It wasn't until ten years later, when a similar event occurred, that I realized I was being beckoned to a new way of being. I was living on a kibbutz at the time, and one afternoon was perched in an abandoned guard tower when I saw a bird sweep out over the landscape. I watched it soaring and wheeling against the darkening sky. Then, a remarkable shift. For a brief instant the world was suspended in a perfect balance. In everything there was an equal light and darkness. In the grass below me, in the purple mountains, in the piercing blue of the Mediterranean, in the taut wings of the bird. A stillness, a universe held in balance, its opposites contained and reconciled, its diverse nature held by a singularity, an inalienable oneness. I could no longer use reason to ward off the power of rapture. That would have been like being forced to choose between day and night, light and darkness, the known and the unknown, as if only one of these polar opposites were real.

A few days later I was in my room after a day of strenuous labor in the orchards. Lying in bed, I heard a voice say, "For it is possible to rise by joy through those same stages of initiation suffering required." I sat up fast. "Voices? Now I'm hearing voices?" The undying skeptic in me immediately on the attack. But this time instead of mocking and dismissing the voice, why not listen to it? It had named what until then had been nameless. "For it is possible to rise by joy through those same stages of initiation...." From the moment I had knelt down before the burnt-out tree I had been involved in a process of initiation.

From the moment I had knelt down before the burnt-out tree I had been involved in a process of initiation.

My Goddess, in her visible form, didn't show up for many years and then she burst in, dark-haired and dancing. It required reading, scholarship, conversation, and yet more intuition before I grasped her profoundly Jewish nature. There are, however, traces of her; a kind of disappearing footprint in these mysterious events, as if she was trying, through trees and waterfalls and birds in flight, to get me to acknowledge the spiritual nature of her material creation.

II. The Goddess-Activist

One day, observing the tiny, blue, star-shaped flower that grew from a weed out of the cracked earth on the path behind the kibbutz, I wondered why people categorized some plants as desirable and some as weeds—everything I looked at seemed to have, in that moment, the same quality of majestic beauty. It must have been that day I first noticed the exquisite purple color of cow dung drying on the path. It too, although it embarrassed me to think it, seemed to hold the same quality of a revealed divinity, a sense that the deepest possible meaning and presence were woven into the humblest, most insignificant bits of matter.

If my experiences on the kibbutz shattered the idea of the divine as male and unknowable, if it called into question the idea of spirit as an elusive essence that hovered unattainably outside of human reach, then it was time to give up these traditional ideas and place myself at risk in a new relationship to the universe. Cow dung and weeds, apple trees and black goats, the Arab boys wandering after their flocks in the dry river valley, the hawks soaring overhead, all told the same story of a divinity embedded in the human body, rising from the earth, falling from the sky, weaving together perceiving and being in a linked participation that gave order, meaning, and direction to life.

Through my own intensely felt and deepening relationship to the universe, I began to overcome all sense of separation between what I looked at and what I became in the process of looking. It was part of the initiation. The Goddess was making a claim on me that I had to respect, even though the nature of the claim remained for a long while highly mysterious. In time it became possible to piece together a portrait of this unifying process that has its most profound impact through the resolution of every imaginable sort of division—the self within itself, the self set apart from the body, the self in opposition to the other, the self in alienation from the natural world.

The overcoming of self-division is, by definition, inner work. In the beginning it appears to be a process of intense self-absorption that turns its back on the social world. This call to turn inward marks the initial stages of the initiation process, as if the goddess we have to discover can only be found in the mute, archetypal regions of the self before she can be perceived in history, texts, or the natural world. When activist movements scorn this inward turning, or imagine it in narcissistic opposition to a political world view, they are most likely not able to comprehend its pro-

foundly radical nature. Followed far and faithfully enough, the inward turning is complemented by a turning outward, through a process that seeks above all to restore balance where one-sidedness has prevailed.

It is within this Goddess-world that the heart of activism is born, for it calls up powerful maternal instincts of compassion and protection. Barriers fall down; the world in its suffering and need flows into the individual, who responds to it with immediate concern, seeking ways to heal and comfort it. As a woman keeping company with a goddess, one becomes aware of an unmistakable power of self-renewal.

This wounded, weary, damaged, burdened self, so full of bleakness and despair, is brought back to life. By the most natural extension of this possibility one sees how the wounded, weary, burdened world is likewise capable of renewal. Out of the intense self-absorption, mystical brooding, and inward turning of initiation, a powerful urge arises to tend the world—a world, after all, in which a divine being has offered herself to direct experience. Who wouldn't want to participate in such a world? Who wouldn't want to serve it? One looks around for comrades, sister-warriors, fellow-seekers. Out of the complex muddle of doubts and questions and indecisions that has been one's life, a single question now arises: What does the world need? What does it need? How can I care for it? From this identification with a mother goddess, which is the goal of the initiation, there comes an ever-ready attentiveness to what is needed, a willingness, indeed a longing, to meet that need.

Deborah Kory, an articulate young activist who has walked this path in her own development, described it eloquently in the January/February 2003 issue of TIKKUN. It makes no difference whether the goddess is named or the process of awakening is thought of as an initiation. All the fundamental features of it are here.

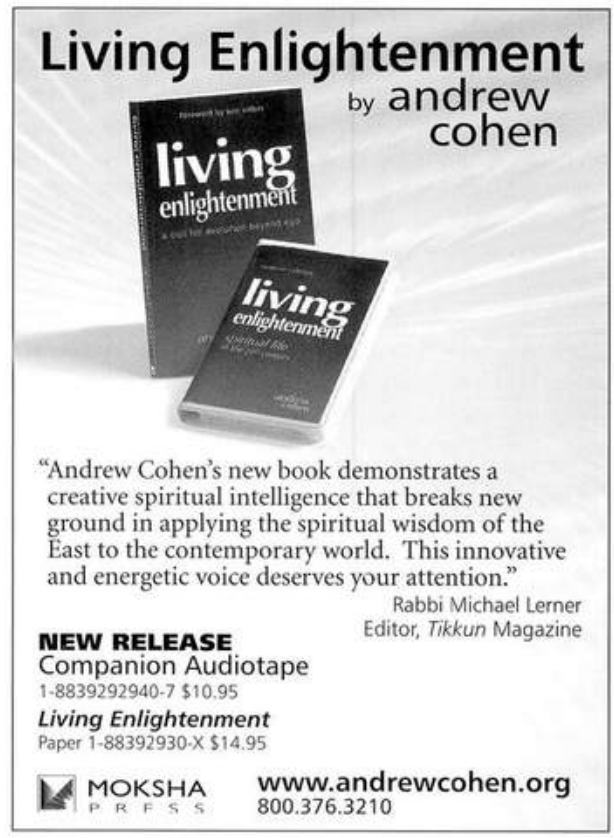
> What I learned at fourteen … changed the course of my life—that our voracious appetite for animals and animal products was starving the rest of the world and destroying the ecology of the planet. The revelation that eating certain things, using certain products, leaving the lights on, driving cars, flushing the toilet, disposing of everything as if there were unlimited space actually impacts the natural order—that I really was connected to the world in some cosmic way—cracked my head wide open and affirmed something deep in me that yearned for more meaning and connection. It gave me a sense of my own physical weight on the earth and that what I do in this life actually matters. Perhaps part of the reason that the environmental movement has had such an impact on my generation is that it derives from a sense of the sacred, a cherishing and marveling at creation that reminds us of our own mortality, of that linear march from birth to death, but also of the circularity of nature, its graceful insistence on birth and rebirth.

Another face of this same maternal impulse to care for the world is visible in The Women in Black. This silent gathering has been an act of extreme courage wherever the movement has arisen. It places itself, as witness, before a regime that wishes its behavior to remain hidden, secret, undiscussed, and without testament. In their silent vigil the women draw the eyes of the world to circumstances the world would prefer to turn from and disown. These women need never say a word about the Goddess, but she is there wherever they gather, in the full power of her capacity to care, to make the angels tremble, to walk beside those who are broken-hearted, to follow her children into exile, to be present when they suffer.

Goddess activism. It is the fiercely compassionate activism of the mother lion protecting her cubs.

III. A Yom Kippur Tale

One evening, a week or so after I arrived in Israel in 1971, I went down from our kibbutz to visit a small village of Moroccan Jews in the valley below us. My friends and I had driven down in the late afternoon, parked our truck discreetly out of sight, knowing that we should not be driving. It was the evening of Yom Kippur. Most of us had eaten a small meal in the dining room and would not eat again until nightfall of the next day. When we reached the village on foot the others went ahead, walking in a purposeful stride toward the synagogue. I came along more slowly. The village interested me. It reminded me of the small town



in Russia where my mother was born. The same dusty streets, dilapidated houses, dogs and chickens wandering in and out. A sense, too, of something ancient and enduring that had managed to survive the poverty and dirt.

I lost track of my companions. The village girls, who had not gone to temple on the holiest night of the year, came to walk with me. At first there were only a few of them. We walked on, the little girls trailing after me. Soon we were joined by others, who came running toward us, delighted by this opportunity for diversion. I provided plenty. There I was, in a long, brightly colored dress, wearing a shawl my mother had brought back from the Soviet Union. I was unable to speak a word to them. My only Hebrew was the absurd phrase that I could not speak Hebrew. This set them off into wild laughter; after all, there I was, speaking it.

The Goddess was fully present long before I learned to name her.

They tried again and again, chattering at me, pointing to themselves, pointing to the kibbutz on the mountain, running around me in circles. I would listen intently to what they were saying, hesitate for a moment when they had finished talking. Then, as they waited with great anticipation, standing up on their tiptoes, their eyes wide, mouths open, sucking in their breath, I said it again: I could not speak Hebrew.

Eventually they must have decided that I was not playing a game. They began to look at me with serious compassion. Finally, overcoming their shyness, they drew close and took charge of me. They crowded around me, grabbed my skirt; they went on chattering at me in Hebrew and kept right on laughing when I couldn't chatter back. Then I had an inspiration. I knelt down in the dust. I put my arms around them and told them my name. That much at least I had learned in Hebrew class. "Ani Kim," I whispered. "I am Kim."

It exhausted my eloquence, but they no longer cared. They grabbed me by the hand, pushed each other aside, threw their arms around my neck, kissed me, dragged me to my feet. I had a fleeting thought about my companions in the synagogue. Would I have learned more about God if I had joined them there? Perhaps, but certainly not about the Goddess. I heard, as we walked on together about the village, echoing from the white-washed buildings and the dirt streets, at nightfall in this ancient homeland that did not cherish its girls, "Keem, Keem, Keem, Keem." My name had become an incantation.

I wondered if I would ever see the girls again, with their wise, dark eyes. I kept telling myself it was no commonplace event, wandering about in the dusty streets while my companions sat indoors, the women excluded from the service upstairs behind the screen in the synagogue.

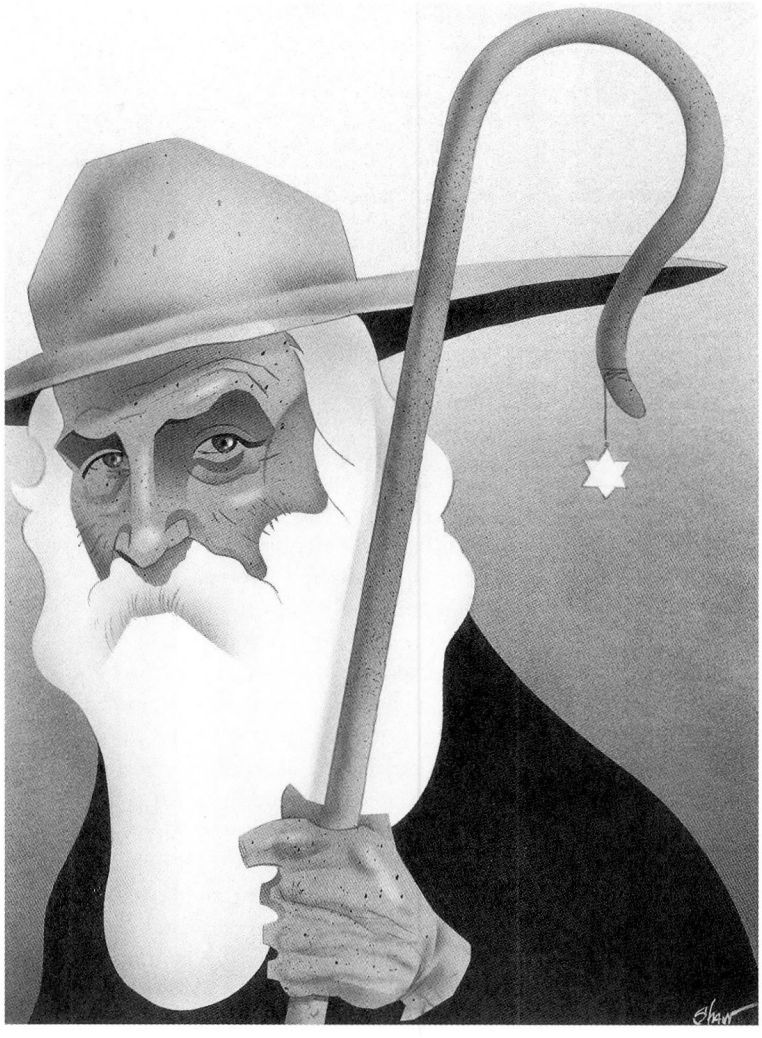
Through the doorway of a crumbling house I saw an old woman, wrapped in a fraying shawl. She had just crouched down to place cow dung on a fire. She beckoned me in when she saw me looking, hobbled over on bare feet, drew me inside. The little room was filled with smoke; it smelled of too many lives and too much poverty. I drew back when she placed a cup of mint tea in my hand. The little girls, who had trooped in behind me, were watching my face apprehensively, afraid I might refuse this hospitality. I wanted to. There were circles of grease floating in the pale green liquid; the glass was smudged, but I knew, nevertheless, I was going to drink it. The old lady watched me as I sipped. Sweet, hot, fresh as the night sky. I had to wonder whether wine sipped from a ceremonial goblet on Shabbat was any more holy than this smudged glass offered, from the fullness of poverty, to a stranger.

I held the glass between my hands when I had finished, bowed my head over it to thank the old woman, pressed the glass to my chest. I don't know where this gesture came from, but it came. It pleased her; she came up close to me, took me by the elbow, shook me lightly. Then she began to talk and chatter with the same urgency the little girls had shown when they began to love me. She pointed to her heart, to each of her breasts, and then drew me to the threshold and pointed to the mountains, just then taking on a purple shadow. I strained toward her with all of my attention, but I could not figure out what she was trying to say. Finally she gave up, took me by the shoulders, drew me down, fixed me with a penetrating gaze, released me.

A short time later I caught sight of my companions from the kibbutz, winding back toward the truck parked on the outskirts of the village. It was dark by then; the moon was not yet up. The girls came along with me, looking pleased with themselves, very secretive. They wouldn't let me join my companions a few streets ahead. They pressed close against me, led me on a route of their own so that I arrived at the truck a good while before the others. And then, in twos and threes, they took off, waving goodbye to me. A tall girl remained with me, holding my hand until everyone else had climbed into the truck. Then she pressed my hand against her heart, whispered my name to me in a meaningful way, and said: "You don forghet uz...."

The Goddess was with us that night, even if the little girls knew nothing of her. She was there when the small fire was kindled from cow droppings by an old crone stooping over the flames. It was She who helped me put the dirty glass of tea to my lips. I had no need to think of her as an objective reality hidden somewhere in the universe keeping an eye on the world as God is said to do. She was fully present long before I learned to name her. Already then, she had risen from the dark soil, to lend a more than ordinary significance to my encounter with the girls. In darkness she had been born to my imagination. I had touched the hem of her long skirts. I had tasted her in the cup of tea, looked into her eyes, failed to understand her. ❑

Walt Whitman Among the Yiddish Poets



Julian Levinson

When Jewish writers from Eastern Europe began composing poems in their native Yiddish during the late nineteenth century, they were confronted by a difficult challenge, unique, perhaps, in the history of modern literature: they were writing in a language that had been spoken for a thousand years, but had almost never been shaped into formal verse. Unlike English writers raised on Shakespeare, Italians raised on Dante, or Germans raised on Goethe, Yiddish writers did not have the luxury of a towering figure or set of canonical classics to use as a model for their own work. Previous generations of Jews had, to be sure, composed Biblical commentaries, homilies, and prayers in Yiddish (the genre of *tekhines*—the prayers of early modern Jewish women—being a case in point), but these sorts of writings did not

off the ornamentation of Old-World forms and opened the door to free verse and to a democratic poetry of the here-and-now. He asserted that the purpose of the poetic imagination was not to dwell in legend, myth, or romance, but "to give ultimate vivification to facts, to science, and to common lives, endowing them with the glows and glories and final illustriousness which belong to every real thing, and to real things only" (from "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads"). He developed a style of poetry aimed at celebrating the energies of everyday life, asserting that individuals are organically linked to each other and to the natural world. These ideas are expressed in what are perhaps Whitman's most famous lines: "I celebrate myself, and sing myself / And what I assume, you shall assume / For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you."

For many in the mainstream American literary establishment, Whitman had gone too far. In lines that read "not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile" or "the scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer," many perceived a dangerous assault on poetry and social decorum. By contrast, when immigrant Yiddish writers such as Morris Rosenfeld and I. J. Schwartz encountered Whitman in the years around 1900, they discovered a solution to their personal quest for identity. For these writers, Whitman's defiant poetry provided a language with which to understand and express their ambiguous position between the stability of tradition and the openness of the future.

In Whitman, a generation of Yiddish poets saw nothing less than an heir to the prophetic traditions of Judaism and the embodiment of the hopes for a utopian future. These poets, it must be remembered, emerged out of a highly politicized milieu, where socialism was the word of the hour. Whitman's example suggested to them that it was possible to embrace America without sacrificing their vision for the future of humanity. In one illuminating passage, the first translator of Whitman into Yiddish, the revolutionary anarchist Yoysef Bovshover, described the American Bard in an 1899 essay as "a strong defender of true freedom … a Moses of free thought" (*"a shtarker farteydiker fun varer frayheyt … a moyshe rabenu fun frayen denken"*). Bovshover's striking analogy between Whitman and Moses (whom he calls according to the traditional formula "Moyshe rabenu"—"Moses, Our Teacher") represents modern, revolutionary thought as a new kind of revelation. The analogy suggests that just as Moses led Jews of ancient times to their first land of freedom, so too will Whitman lead modern Jews to a new land of freedom, a land premised on enlightened human thought rather than divine intervention. Similarly, in L. Miller's introduction to his book of Yiddish translations of Whitman, published in 1940, he tells his readers that Whitman created "a healthy and robust lyric form, which puts forth the promise of socialistic poetry" (*"a gezunte un kreftike lirik, vos trogt in zikh dem onzog af sotsialitisher poezye"*).

The most sustained Whitman-inspired Yiddish poem is I. J. Schwartz' book-length epic *Kentucky*, serialized in the radical journal *Di Tsukunft* (The Future) from 1918 to 1922. Adapting Whitman's images of an untrammeled American countryside, the book traces the history of an immigrant Jewish peddler named Joshua, who makes his way from New York City to Kentucky. Along the way he encounters a host of characters unknown to Yiddish readers: white and black southern farmers, ministers, small-town business owners. Even as it celebrates America's natural beauty, Schwartz' work demonstrates again and again how American industry has risen on the backs of laborers and threatens the vitality of the people.

For contemporary American readers, who may have first encountered Whitman in English 101, the Yiddish version of Whitman may come as something of a surprise. Our tendency is more commonly to associate Whitman with American patriotism and rugged individualism—not with some imminent socialist revolution. The point, however, is not necessarily to argue over Whitman's "true" message—as he himself famously put it, "Do I contradict myself? Very well, I contradict myself"—but rather to recognize that poets (like all of us) adapt the languages they discover to shape and express their view of the world. No literary tradition is fixed and settled for all time—as W.H. Auden wrote in his elegy for W.B. Yeats, "the words of a dead man are modified in the guts of the living."

The poem that follows, entitled "Symposium" and written in 1923, is presented in English translation for the first time. Its author was a great follower of Whitman's, a lesser-known Yiddish poet named Reuben Ludwig (1895–1926). Born in a shtetl near Kiev, he arrived in New York at the age of twelve with his mother and two sisters, joining a father who had immigrated some years before. In his new country, Ludwig quickly fell in love with American literature, and his first published poem was written in English for the socialist periodical *The New York Call*. It was when he adapted the cadence and imagery of Walt Whitman to the Yiddish language, however, that he discovered his own voice as a poet. Ludwig associated with a group of writers known as "The Introspectionists" (*Di Inzikhistn*), but he was, in the words of one critic, "perhaps the most American of the Yiddish poets in America." At an early age Ludwig contracted tuberculosis, and he spent the better part of his life moving from one state to another, searching for an ideal climate in which to recover. He lived in New Mexico, Arizona, and California, and he brought the landscape of the American Southwest into Yiddish poetry for the first time.

"Symposium" is a poem that imagines Walt Whitman's return from the grave to the America he loved. Whitman revisits the countryside, the cities, and the people, and he finds everywhere decay and suffering. The America he dreamed of and prophesied to the world has come to

(continued on page 69)

Symposium

"What do you see Walt Whitman?"

I see open roads stretching from New Orleans to the

Symposium

"What do you see, Walt Whitman?"

I see open roads stretching from New Orleans to the

Is Bush Standing Up to Ariel Sharon?

(continued from page 12)

towns that are still effectively cut off from each other.

Yet at this pace, winning some small part of each of these demands—not an end to illegal imprisonment but only the release of less than 10 percent of those being illegally held; not dismantling the Wall, but maybe discontinuing its construction (or maybe not even that); not shutting down all the roadblocks but only dismantling a few of them—Ariel Sharon and his successors could keep the Occupation going for the next twenty years, while American administrations hail progress toward peace.

This is why it is so important to keep our eyes on the prize: a full reconciliation. Happy as we are that the president is taking some small steps—in defiance of the many members of Congress in both parties who are doing all they can to reassure AIPAC that they will support every act of Ariel Sharon-style obstructionism—we still need a much bolder and more forceful approach that clearly articulates where this whole project is going.

So, on the one hand, we need to communicate to publicly elected officials and the media that we support the president when he pushes for implementation of the Road Map in a more serious way than Israel is prepared to do; but we must simultaneously ask them to keep the broader picture in mind and to articulate a destination for the Road Map that will be just and compassionate to both peoples. Our Resolution for Middle East Peace defines these elements, which is why we are continuing to circulate it and bring it to the attention of our congressional representatives.

Some people have asked if the Resolution for Middle East Peace is still relevant. Our answer: more so than ever. It would be a terrible error to focus our energies at this juncture on one or another aspect of the struggle (funds for resettling settlers, discontinuing construction of the Wall, seeking divestment from corporations directly involved in aiding the Occupation like Caterpillar, etc.), unless these activities are explicitly and clearly linked to the larger goal of a just peace settlement for both peoples defined in our Resolution. Our special task is to be that voice that insists on keeping the world's attention on the big picture and not getting all our energies sidetracked into the cat-and-mouse game that currently fascinates the American media.

We can do this by at once supporting the Road Map, and simultaneously insisting on the importance of immediately starting the "final settlement" negotiations, under the aegis of the United States, and with a clear commitment to the kind of vision articulated in our Resolution. ❑

Can the Progressives Get It Together in 2004?

We are calling for all the various progressive organizations to work together to develop a joint strategy that will preclude the marginalization of our ideas in 2004. We've already seen the mildly centrist Democratic candidate Howard Dean get labeled by U.S. Senator Joe Lieberman as an extreme left-winger. If this discourse continues, the pressure for candidates to abandon their progressive base will be immense. (Democratic Party centrist reasoning: "the Left will be with us no matter who we nominate because they want to oust Bush, so let's pander to our right.") What we need is a Progressive United Front in 2004, rather than allowing our voices to get so divided from each other that they get ignored. To do that, we are appealing to the leaders of the peace movement, civil rights movement, women's movement, environmental movement, and all others who have been struggling for peace and justice to unite and work out a plausible strategy for the coming year. We want your help in inviting groups like MoveOn.com, True Majority, Win Without War, and other peace coalitions to provide leadership in this direction. ❑

Abbas Deserves the Support of American Jews

(continued from page 6)

popularity and strength of Abbas.

If so, this is a time for the Israeli government to persuade the Palestinians that their future is better off with Abbas than with Hamas. How better to do that than to take clear steps to improve the daily life of the Palestinian people for every clear step that Abbas takes to improve the daily life of Israelis?

Abbas is taking actions to reduce violence and improve the daily life of Israelis: why is Sharon unwilling to reciprocate with actions to improve the daily life of Palestinians? At the very least, why not stop settlement activity and further construction of the Wall as a clear signal of readiness to take further steps when and if the Palestinians take further steps to dismantle terrorist networks?

What is Ariel Sharon up to?

Is he taking minimalist steps simply to maintain his relationship with President Bush?

Does he harbor the goal of allowing Abbas to fail, crushing Arafat, and governing the Palestinians perhaps through an autonomous but not fully sovereign Palestinian Authority?

Does Sharon want a "one-state" solution fulfilling settlers' dreams of a Greater Israel?

This goal would be, in my view, an error of historic proportions for Israel and for the Jewish people, putting at risk the dream of a Jewish state living side-by-side in peace and security with its Arab neighbors. Now is the time for "bold steps" toward peace, not hesitancy and ambiguity.

In his private meetings with Jewish leaders in Washington, Abbas urged American Jews to "work with one heart" toward peace and reconciliation between Palestine and Israel. American Jews should respond to that call, even if Sharon will not. ❑

ROSH HASHANAH

Reinterpreting the Binding of Isaac

A Response to September 11

Marsha Mirkin

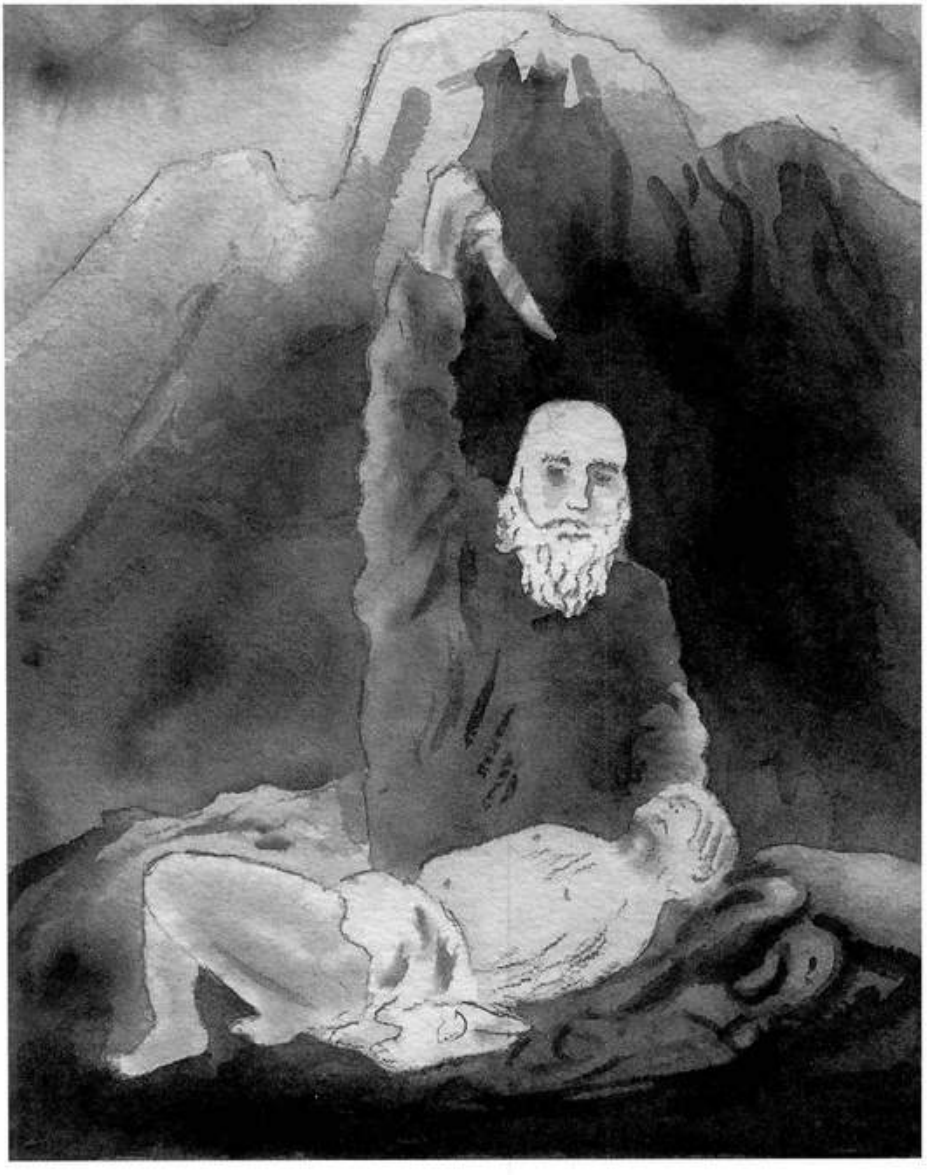


ILLUSTRATION BY TIM DAVIS

This year, as every year, Jews will gather during the high Holy Days to ask God for forgiveness and pray for the strength to turn from what has been hurtful and uncompassionate. In the midst of this profoundly intense and intimate moment, a Torah reader will once again chant one of the most terrifying Bible portions of the Jewish tradition, the Binding of Isaac, known as the Akeda.

The traditional understanding of this text teaches that God told Abraham to bind his son Isaac and sacrifice him to God as a burnt offering. Without hesitation, Abraham obeyed; then, at the last moment, right before the blade struck Isaac, an angel intervened to save Isaac's life. The story ends with God praising and rewarding Abraham for his act of faith. Every year, we struggle with this text, but particularly now, in our post-September 11 world, we need to ask ourselves whether Judaism can base one of its central stories on compliance with a demand for human sacrifice to God. Can there ever be a time when we are justified in an attempt to kill an innocent human being because we believe such killing is an order from God? For those of us searching for a politics of meaning, how can this story fit in and even support our framework?

What I have to offer is not a comforting alternative, but it is one that can be hopeful. I propose that this is a story of what happens when, in spite of God, man attempts to kill another human being in the name of faith. This is our story, the story of a world of human beings who in an effort to honor God have sought to destroy what is most valuable and holy to God. And, it is a story of God as the teacher of alternative visions. Perhaps if we see ourselves in this human story, we can recommit ourselves to ending the fragmentation, the divisiveness, and the horror we see around us.

We need to ask ourselves whether Judaism can base one of its central stories on compliance with a demand for human sacrifice to God.

Several years ago, TIKKUN editor Rabbi Michael Lerner proposed, in his book *Jewish Renewal*, that Abraham was able to bind and even attempt to kill his son because he was reenacting the abuse imposed on him when he was a child. In this version, the tendency to reenact upon others the pain inflicted upon us, known as repetition compulsion, rendered Abraham unable to distinguish between the true voice of God and the voice of the false gods of his youth, between a voice of care and voices of abuse. When Abraham mistakes

Marsha Mirkin, Ph.D. is a clinical psychologist and Resident Scholar at the Brandeis University Women's Studies Research Center. An author and workshop leader, she is completing a book on psychological understandings of biblical women.

the gods of his childhood for the true God, he is capable of killing Isaac. The power in the story, as developed by Lerner, is that Abraham is finally able to break that repetition compulsion, break the chain of pain so that it does not continue through the generations. We thus learn from Abraham that we are capable of changing ourselves and our world.

While the explanation offered by Lerner is critical to understanding both our cruelty and our capacity to change behavior, the Akeda goes beyond that. This story offers a challenge to patriarchal culture as a whole. Within a patriarchal culture, action is often valued over empathy. "Don't just sit there, do something!" is held to be a truism at the expense of "don't just do something, sit there." In a patriarchal culture, when God speaks, man acts rather than remaining still in order to hear what is probably a multi-layered message. When Abraham lifts up his knife, the religion developed in Torah is still in its infancy, and its values are just beginning to develop. Will we be a people of action at the expense of empathy, or a people who value listening and compassion? If the latter is the case, then God has to teach a traditional man in a patriarchal society to go against everything he has learned about maleness and open himself to true empathic listening. And this teaching becomes one of our central stories, a story that is replayed and thus emphasized each year during our High Holy Day service.

Will we be a people of action at the expense of empathy, or a people who value listening and compassion?

The Akeda begins when we find out that God is planning to test Abraham. God tells Abraham, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go for/to yourself to Mount Moriah..." Moriah is interpreted by Everett Fox as the Mountain of Seeing and by Rabbi Alan Ullman as the Mountain of Teaching. What will be seen and taught at this mountain and by whom? Why is Abraham taking this test for his own benefit?

It is an understatement to say that Abraham was a man of faith. Three religions would call Abraham their forefather. His compassion enabled him to argue with God against destroying the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah; his hospitality was unparalleled. Yet the same single-mindedness and commitment to God that made Abraham a great visionary would also be his potential downfall. Abraham believed that when he thought he was doing God's will, he could and should sacrifice his relationship with his wife and children. The Hebrew God, however, did not want that sacrifice. This religion, still in its infancy, could not bear that dichotomy between God and family. By serving one, we serve the other. By betraying one, we betray the other. Before the story ends, God will teach his beloved this important lesson, and because of Abraham's very human limitations, learning will be very painful.

We see the first indication of Abraham's difficulty in empathically connecting with his family when his wife, Sarai (whose name was later changed to Sarah), was infertile. Avram (who later became Abraham) does not intercede by praying for his agonized, childless wife. Years later, Isaac, the survivor of the terror, will pray for his wife Rebecca's fertility. Avram could not offer that comfort to Sarai. Avram had not yet learned the lesson of compassion that Isaac learned so early and so hard.

When we meet Avram for the first time, God tells him to leave his father's home and journey to the Promised Land. Avram and Sarai readily obey. Soon after, famine strikes and they must travel to Egypt to find food. En route, Avram asks Sarai to pass as his sister so that if Pharaoh wants to take the beautiful Sarai for a wife, he won't first kill Avram. Perhaps Avram believed that he had to stay alive in order to carry out the covenant with God, and in his single-minded loyalty to God he was not able to envision the safety and security of his wife. We don't hear Sarai protest. Perhaps Sarai even agrees to this act in order to preserve the covenant, or perhaps she is silenced by her incredulity upon hearing her husband's willingness to hand her over to the Egyptian monarch. Avram's attempt to protect his covenant with God (to stay alive in order to create a people) comes at a terrible cost to his wife. Sarai is indeed taken by Pharaoh and saved only by divine intervention. Yet, even when Avram and Sarai are finally reunited through the compassion of a God who did not demand her sacrifice, Avram expresses no sorrow for his choice, nor any gratitude for God's intervention.

Even worse, years later, when there is no famine, Abraham travels to the realm of Abimelech and again passes Sarah off as his sister to avoid being killed. Why does he need to travel at such great risk to Sarah when there is no famine? How did he miss God's lesson the first time? We don't know. We do know that, once again, God intervenes to help Sarah. I can only imagine the Eternal One shaking that Eternal head and muttering "Abraham, Abraham, what are you doing? Why are you again behaving this way toward your beloved Sarah? Didn't you learn anything when I saved her from Pharaoh?" But God remains silent.

In yet another incident, Sarai tries to obtain a son in spite of her infertility. She suggests that Avram marry her handmaid, Hagar, who could bear a son to Avram that Sarai would then claim as her own. Yet, when Hagar's pregnancy causes problems for Sarai, perhaps heightening her insecurity about her own infertility, and she tries to discuss her distress with Avram, his sole reply is that she should do whatever she wants to with Hagar! It may never have

occurred to him that both Sarai and Hagar might be yearning for his consolation, for just a bit of the compassion that he so capably shows to strangers.

Years after the birth of Hagar's son, Ishmael, Sarah finally has a son, Isaac. At his weaning party, Sarah sees Ishmael playing, and she jealously realizes that she does not want this young man to share Isaac's inheritance. She tells Abraham to expel Hagar and Ishmael, and a grieved Abraham hears God say in response "Shma Bkola," listen "in" her voice. Abraham, more used to obedience than compassion, understands these words to mean that God wants him to obey Sarah and get rid of his other wife and son. It never dawns on him that perhaps God wants Abraham to truly "hear her voice"—to go deeper than her callous words so he can hear the pain in Sarah's voice and respond to her insecurity and jealousy with loving compassion. Instead, Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael into a lonely and dangerous wilderness, believing he is following God's will. When covenant and family were again juxtaposed, Abraham again chose covenant over family, and God again had to intercede in order to save Ishmael's life.

The birthday of the world

On the birthday of the world
I begin to contemplate
what I have done and left
undone, but this year
not so much rebuilding

of my perennially damaged
psyche, shoring up eroding
friendships, digging out
stumps of old resentments
that refuse to rot on their own.

No, this year I want to call
myself to task for what
I have done and not done
for peace. How much have
I dared in opposition?

How much have I put
on the line for freedom?
For mine and others?
As these freedoms are pared,
sliced and diced, where

have I spoken out? Who
have I tried to move? In
this holy season, I stand
self-convicted of sloth
in a time when lies choke

the mind and rhetoric
bends reason to slithering
boa constrictors. Here
I stand before the gates
opening, the fire dazzling

my eyes and as I approach
what judges me, I judge
myself. Give me weapons
of minute destruction. Let
my words turn into sparks.

—Marge Piercy

The Hagar/Ishmael story is the key to an alternative understanding of the Akeda. Once Abraham was willing to turn out one of his sons based on what he believed was God's will, then God had to find a new way to instruct Abraham. God couldn't continue to intercede silently, because Abraham simply wasn't learning the lesson. After all, God had already interceded with Pharaoh, and again with Abimelech, yet Abraham was still willing to sacrifice Hagar, his wife, and his son Ishmael who would have died in the wilderness had God not intervened yet again. Abraham had to learn to stop the action long enough to find a way of loving God without sacrificing his family.

Abraham had to go to Har Moriah, the Mountain of Teaching/Seeing, to learn the lesson that hadn't gotten through in all the years that God had tried a gentler approach. And he had to do it to/for himself, so that he could understand God more fully, so that he could hold both family and God as a oneness within him. But first God gives Abraham one more chance to show that he doesn't need to learn this lesson at such great cost, with so much pain. God says to Abraham "Take your son, your only son, the one you love, Isaac" (Gen. 22:2). With this language, God reminds Abraham that he has already lost a son, a son whom he loved, and that there is only one left. God is reminding Abraham how much Abraham loves this remaining son. God is giving Abraham (who knows how to argue with God when it comes to protecting the people of Sodom and Gomorrah) every opening to object to this trip to the mountain.

God goes even further than reminding Abraham of his commitment to Isaac. God gives a very ambiguous command as to what Abraham is required to do on that mountaintop. "Get thee into the land of Moriah/Teaching/Seeing and raise him/offer him as an *olah*," God tells Abraham. But what does *olah* mean? The root of the word indicates *olah* can mean a burnt offering, a raising up, and an offering-up. In modern Hebrew, *olah* means immigrant to Israel! The challenge is to try to understand to which meaning God wants us to respond. Perhaps God wants Isaac to be raised up to the covenant, just as we try to raise our children

to find meaning in a relationship with God. Perhaps God wants Abraham to offer Isaac up to God, as Hannah would later offer her son Samuel, so that Isaac is provided with the opportunity to have a personal connection with the Eternal. Or perhaps God wants a human burnt offering, or at least the affirmation that Abraham is willing to provide his son as a burnt offering.

From all the possibilities placed before him, the one that faithful Abraham hears is that he has to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering. So he takes his son, and the wood, and the flint, and he ties his son to the altar atop the Mountain of Teaching. And he raises the knife that would pierce our hearts forever. Then, just as that knife is about to find its target in the terrified Isaac, an angel calls Abraham's name, twice. And a miracle of learning happens—Abraham pauses.

God's voice has not ordered him to stop. Abraham up until this moment is obediently and without question carrying out what he understands to be God's words. But when a voice calls his name, he pauses. And it is that pause from blind obedience that saves him and his child. For in the moment of the pause, Abraham can finally hear the angel tell him "Lay not thy hand upon the lad neither do anything to him."

It is terrifying to discover how hard it is for us to learn and to change our ways. But this story also provides some hope and some comfort.

The angel continues speaking, saying, "For now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou has not withheld thy son, thy only son from me." In sermon after sermon, we have been told that the angel is supporting Abraham's decision to sacrifice. But we must look at these words again. It is only when Abraham is willing to learn to shift from blind obedience to hearing God's multi-layered voice, it is only when he pauses in the action, that he is told not to kill his child. Had Abraham killed Isaac, the covenant would have ended and Abraham would have withheld his son from God. By stopping, by hearing the voice, by putting down his knife, he is able to raise his son up to God, not as a sacrifice, but as a human being who would commit to carrying on the covenant. Abraham is finally able to love both God and family by stopping to listen rather than acting in blind obedience.

After the angel speaks, Abraham looks up and sees a ram caught in a thicket. He had always assumed that God would provide a lamb, the son of the ram. But he was mistaken. As Rabbi Alan Ullman points out, it is the ram, the father of the lamb, that is caught up in the brush; it is the father, not the son, who must become unbound. On Mount Moriah, the Mount of Teaching/Seeing, Abraham has to sacrifice those parts of himself that blocked compassion, that had become so single-minded that he could not see the larger picture, that separated rather than united his love of family and his love of God. This is the unbinding of Abraham. And Abraham did unbind and sacrifice the ram, and named the mountain "God will See," knowing that God's vision is much more complete than his own, and that God will see for all times. And God, who knew that Abraham finally learned the lesson of hearing and pausing to consider, blessed Abraham for not withholding his son, for allowing this son to continue to have children who will continue to have children, and for allowing the covenant to continue.

But even when people learn important lessons after long periods of time, these lessons come at a cost. Isaac had been terrified—he had been tied up; he saw his father hold a knife meant to slaughter him. Isaac would never be the same. He left the mountain without his father, and, as far as we know, had no direct contact with Abraham until he and Ishmael buried their father many years later. Isaac would be so traumatized that he would need someone else to find a wife for him, and that woman, Rebecca, would have to be the sole instrumental one in the family. Yet, tragic and terrifying life experiences can also teach us compassion, and Isaac was able to love, be comforted by, and show compassion to his wife in a way unparalleled by either his father or his son Jacob.

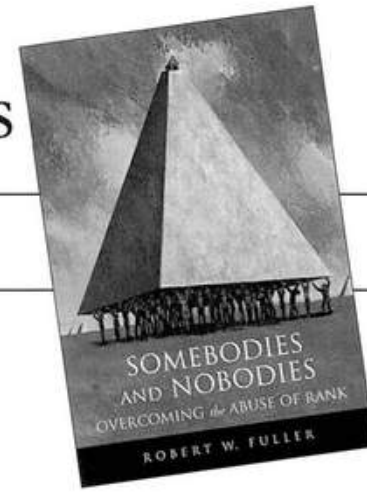
And Abraham, the faithful one who learned about stopping the action and truly listening to another's voice, Abraham also suffered. He no longer had a relationship with either son. Sarah died before he could see her again, before he could share what he learned and make amends. God doesn't guarantee that we'll have a free ride after we learn and do *teshuvah* (turning). But this teshuvah can lead to a movement from pain to new possibilities for connection. Abraham does remarry after Sarah's death, and our Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 61:4) tells us that he remarried his former wife Hagar. They had many children, and when those children went on their way, they left with gifts from Abraham. The future offers hope and possibility, but they come at a high price.

The story of the Akeda remains terrifying. It is terrifying to think what we can do to each other, believing that we are doing what God wants from us. It is terrifying to discover how hard it is for us to learn and to change our ways. But this story also provides some hope and some comfort. If we can pause from our action long enough to listen to the voices of those we love, and even entertain the voices of unknown angels, we can discover how we are bound and we can learn from that how to be more compassionate and supportive human beings. With the capacity to learn at the Mountain of Teaching, to see at the Mountain of Seeing, we can do our part in the search for meaning and the move toward greater compassion and less fragmentation. ❑

BOOK REVIEW

Somebodies and Nobodies

How We Abuse Each Other



John Steiner

- *Somebodies and Nobodies: Overcoming the Abuse of Rank* by Robert W. Fuller. New Society Publishers, 2003.

When Bob Fuller was in grade school, he couldn't understand why a young classmate of his was made to stand out in the hall as punishment for coming to school with dirty fingernails. It was only in hindsight that he realized that she was perceived as "white trash" by a middle class teacher. Bob, the son of a man who invented the solar cell and a boy already on the college track himself, would never have been forced into such silent humiliation.

Years later, he found himself in a hallway of another sort, making phone calls from telephone booths to people whose secretaries put him on hold. Shortly before that, when he had been the president of Oberlin College, those same secretaries had been trying to call him, hoping to win an appointment with this young thirty-three-year-old college president for their bosses. Now, without a title, without a role, without rank (he was beginning to invent citizen diplomacy, but had no way to talk about it yet), ex-president Fuller too had become a nobody.

Neither he nor his young elementary school friend were treated the way all religions, in one form or another, enjoin their followers to behave. But why? Fuller explores this phenomenon in his new book, *Somebodies and Nobodies: Overcoming the Abuse of Rank*, which is essentially a manual for implementing the golden rule.

One of Fuller's most surprising points—and one that Jesus understood well—is that it is actually useful to be a nobody, at least for a time. To withdraw from glitz and glamour, from role and identity, from security and success and inhabit the land without rank or expectations is useful. In the fields of winter a new seed, temporarily dormant, can come to make use of the water and warmth that follows. Such a seedbed is a *sine qua non* for creativity and change. Whether via a time-out or a sabbatical, whether prepared for or suffered through, being a nobody allows us to become better somebodies the next time around.

In the tradition of two of America's greatest social commentators, Alexis de Tocqueville and Thorstein Veblen, Fuller points out that we are all somebodies and nobodies, that dignity is non-negotiable. We have all treated those of lesser station badly by pulling rank, and we all have suffered indignities from bullies and higher ups. Perhaps it is only by examining how rank and power is abused that we may finally come to learn how to treat each other well.

Perhaps it is only by examining how rank and power is abused that we may finally come to learn how to treat each other well.

I remember breaking the rules at a resort by driving my car right up to my room, when it was clear that golf carts were the accepted transportation from parking lot to abode. I was in a hurry (I was on vacation!), so I used my rank as "the customer" to intimidate a bellhop and stop him from trying to tell me what I should do.

We all act like this in one way or another. In fact, *Somebodies and Nobodies* is full of examples of rank abuse in the workplace, in families, in education, in health care, and in foreign policy. A professor appropriates the research of a junior assistant. A doctor demeans a nurse. Wives are beaten; children are abused and bullied. The financial scandals of the dot.com boom and the priest scandals in the Catholic Church come to mind.

It is going to take a new movement to stop individuals, groups, and nations from abusing their power and privilege and treating others badly. To the nobodies of the world—to the poor and dispossessed, to patients struggling for a true bill of rights, to students fighting to have more control over their own education, to the elderly seeking more dignity—Bob Fuller offers what all nascent

(continued on page 79)

John Steiner is a networker and activist living in Boulder, Colorado. He can be reached at steiner_king@earthlink.net. Rober Fuller: bfuller@igc.org.

Is There an Alternative?

Roger S. Gottlieb

- *Power Politics*, by Arundhati Roy. South End Press, 2001.
- *Globalism: The New Market Ideology,* by Manfred B. Steger. Rowman and Littlefield, 2001.
- *There is an Alternative: Subsistence and Worldwide Resistance to Corporate Globalization*, edited by Vernonia Bennholdt-Thomsen, Nicholas Faraclas, and Claudia Von Werlhof. Zed Books, 2001.
- *Globalization and Resistance: Transnational Dimensions of Social Movements*, edited by Jackie Smith and Hank Johnston. Rowman and Littlefield, 2002.
- *Another World is Possible: Popular Alternatives to Globalization at the World Social Forum*, edited by William F. Fisher and Thomas Ponniah. Zed Books, 2003.
- *Alternatives to Economic Globalization: A Better World is Possible,* by the International Forum on Globalization. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2002.
- *Mindfulness in the Marketplace: Compassionate Reponses to Consumerism*, edited by Allan Hunt Badiner. Parallax Press, 2002.
- *Sustainable Planet: Solutions for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Juliet B. Schor and Betsy Taylor. Beacon Press, 2002.

The single most important question of our time is whether there are alternatives to globalization. If there are not, then whatever happens regarding immediate questions (about war with Iraq, Democratic or Republican control of the Senate, or AIDS in Africa), we are all headed for increasing global economic inequality, a more polluted environment, eroded communities, democracies overridden by "market forces," and more widespread addictive consumerist techno-culture (where people aren't starving, that is). This depressing prospect is all the more daunting because globalization is a complex phenomenon, showing different faces in different parts of the globe and embodying an unprecedented combination of economic, political, and cultural dimensions. Along with figuring out whether there is an alternative to globalization, many of us still need to figure out what the damn thing is—and these eight books can help us do both.

As they all make clear, the central features of globalization are: the reduction of human beings to consumers; the displacement of local or even national political authority by transnational economic and political institutions (mammoth multinationals, the World Bank, NAFTA, the World Trade Organization, etc.); and the treatment of nature as one large commodity—a trend best exemplified by the genetic engineering of new life forms and the privatization of essential community resources such as water. But this bare description leaves out the details of how globalization works, what's wrong with it, and whether something else—and hopefully something better—is possible.

An excellent place to begin is *Power Politics,* clearly and engagingly (if depressingly) written by prize-winning Indian novelist Arundhati Roy. Mainly focused on the application of global power to India, Roy describes the process by which national and state governments in India pay U.S.-based multinationals for power plants and dam development. Describing the full absurdity of the process, the book teaches us how, step-by-step, the disasters of globalization unfold.

In one case, representatives of Enron (yes, *that* Enron) contracted with the state of Maharastra to build power plants, and Maharastra agreed to pay hundreds of millions of dollars in return. Because the resulting facilities produced electricity at two to seven times the rate of previously existing Indian plants, a new state government attempted to break the disastrous agreement. Pressure was applied by the U.S. ambassador (who soon retired from government "service" to become an Enron director) and a new contract was signed which was even more expensive. Millions of dollars in bribes to local officials secured the contract, threats from U.S and other global institutions solidified Enron's position, and Enron made billions in profits. As Roy summarizes: "In business circles, the Enron contract is called 'the sweetheart deal.' A euphemism for rape without redress.... Here's to the 'free market.'"

The detailed local stories in *Power Politics* can be put in context by the

Roger S. Gottlieb's last two books are Joining Hands: Politics and Religion Together for Social Change *and* A Spirituality of Resistance: Finding a Peaceful Heart and Protecting the Earth. *He is professor of philosophy at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. Gottlieb@wpi.edu.*

drier, more theoretical account in Manfred Steger's *Globalism: The New Market Ideology*. Globalism is the set of ideas which justify globalization, such as "globalization is inevitable," "nobody is in charge of globalization," and "globalization benefits everyone." Steger deftly summarizes the broad critical trends which debunk globalism. Two important points emerge: first, a great deal of economic data indicates that much of globalization is an economic disaster. While a small number of countries benefit, in most cases average standards of living decline even if gross national products rise, tens of millions of refugees from economic "development" are dislocated by the commodification of agriculture, and absolutely fundamental ecological resources (forests, rivers, wetlands, mangrove swamps, water resources) are polluted and depleted. This leads to his second point, which is that justifications for globalization turn out to be essentially ideological—that is, they are often pseudo-rational defenses of a system which benefits the few at the expense of the many. Whenever someone casually tells you that "critics of globalization are empty-headed ex-hippies," or "free trade creates prosperity," hand them a copy of this book.

But is another kind of world possible? Or must we resign ourselves to the triumph of multinationals and their associated institutions? The remaining books under consideration explore this question and offer alternatives to the current model of global economic dominance. Beginning with the anthology entitled *There is an Alternative: Subsistence and Worldwide Resistance*, we learn about Nayakrishi Andolan, a collective of seriously organic farmers (no chemical pesticides, no inorganic fertilizer, highly organized preservation of seed varieties) in, of all places, Bangladesh. This collective does not comprise a few dozen westernized middle class types, but sixty *thousand* peasants. The food produced by the collective is aimed at local consumption, and the participants make a conscious effort to avoid integration into the impersonal, multinational-dominated world market.

There is an Alternative contains many comparable examples: indigenous communities in Guatemala creating their own village-based subsistence economies as a way of liberating themselves from colonial subjection via wage labor; groups of immigrant women creating communal gardens in Germany; rural and urban poor from Africa, Latin America, and Europe orienting their labor toward local exchange for community benefit rather than toward an international marketplace which concentrates wealth at the top, poverty at the bottom, and environmental destruction all over. The theme of "subsistence labor" is an essential principle of any alternative to globalization, and this theme knits the book's essays together. A good life, these essays show, depends primarily on control over means of subsistence and not on money, education, status, or prestige; the more control a community has over its conditions of existence, the more self-esteem, pride, and dignity its people possess.

To create the social space for subsistence labor, however, political movements are necessary—otherwise the essential physical and cultural conditions of such labor are simply swept away by the forces of global capital. This political imperative is described in *Globalization and Resistance: Transnational Dimensions of Social Movements*, and *Another World is Possible: Popular Alternatives to Globalization at the World Social Forum*. Both books focus on movements against and critical alternatives to globalization, and emphasize that most successful struggles require multifaceted global responses. The essay "The Anti-Dam Movement in Southern Brazil 1979–1992" from *Globalization and Resistance*, though somewhat dry and academic, contains fascinating information about a real-world effort to resist culture-, ecosystem-, and local-economy-destroying development (in this case dams). Here we see the respective roles of preexisting ideas and movements, the importance of local initiative, and a two-way exchange with national and international movements. Resistance to global maldevelopment has connected the often caricatured first-world, chi-chi, effete interest in the rainforest and wildlife preservation with the life-and-death matters of the poor. Most interesting to me was the case of local peasants in Brazil who developed ties with international environmental non-governmental organizataions (NGOs). Other excellent essays in the volume include descriptions of the transnational dimensions of resistance to climate change, activist demonstrations against World Bank and IMF meetings, and the U.S.-Central America peace movement.

From the World Social Forum, an annual massive gathering of globalization's critics, comes *Another World is Possible*. Written by activists from all corners of the world, this collection is concerned with every possible issue. These are not academic papers, but vibrant political manifestos, detailed policy statements, position papers on public policy, reports of working groups, and simple lists of demands. The sheer range of topics—debt relief, trade, the new economy, environmental protection, water rights, gender and violence, the media, and new forms of democracy (to name a few!)—make this collection something of a hodge-podge. Yet its stitched-together feel makes the book a fascinating and valuable reflection of political reality. Unlike much of the last century and a half, radicals today have no single dominant party (socialist or communist); no one coherent strategy of change (activate the working class, raise women's consciousness); no single goal (end the Vietnam War, achieve national independence, overthrow apartheid). Instead there are thousands upon thousands of communities, hundreds of legitimate and tremendously important issues, millions of disparate and marvelously unorganized rebels.

A more tightly organized, comprehensive, and systematic study is offered

by *Alternatives to Economic Globalization,* a collective project of the high-profile and high-powered International Forum on Globalization. If this book lacks the immediacy of *Another World*, it benefits from the fact that its authors include internationally known critical experts like Vandana Shiva, Helen Norberg-Hodge, Robin Broad, Jerry Mander, Edward Goldsmith, and David Korten. The text begins with familiar criticisms of the economic, environmental, and human costs of globalization, but then forges into less charted waters with serious and, in some cases, highly detailed descriptions of what sustainable societies might look like. Individual chapters describe what should be "off-limits" to global commodification, how to move from a global to a local economic structure, how to redesign corporations, and how to change energy, transportation, agriculture, manufacturing, and economic measurement. These are sober, realistic, workable policies, as utopian today as social security and women's rights would have seemed in the eighteenth century, yet as sensible and moral as these comparable changes turned out to be.



In the short term, while we're waiting for the massive changes called for in the last two books, we have *Sustainable Planet*, an excellent collection which includes pieces from environmentalist Bill McKibben, Rep. Nydia Velazquez (D-NY), psychologist Mary Pipher, and alternative economist Herman Daly. *Sustainable Planet*'s main focus is on the personal, local, community, and particular institutional changes that are still possible. Unlike accounts of forest dwellers in Brazil, power plant boondoggles in India, or organic farmers in Bangladesh, most of this book—with the major exception of Velazquez's passionate account of the costs of the global economy to America's poor—concerns the reasonably well-off and educated citizens who live in the belly of the beast. Juliet Schor talks about shopping for clothes in a less compulsive and consumerist way, Mary Pipher celebrates the community values and ecology of the Midwest, and Bill McKibben tells us that driving an SUV is like "leaving your refrigerator door open for six years." These concerns are a far cry from the billions who have practically no clothes at all, have already seen their communities destroyed by development, and have little food and no refrigerator doors. But the U.S. middle class has a good deal to learn from this book. Jeffrey Hollender's excellent account of "industrial ecology" will open your eyes about ways to design factories and production processes to mimic nature's efficiency; and Herman Daly provides a coherent and enlightening view of how different, and vastly more humane and fulfilling, our economy could be.

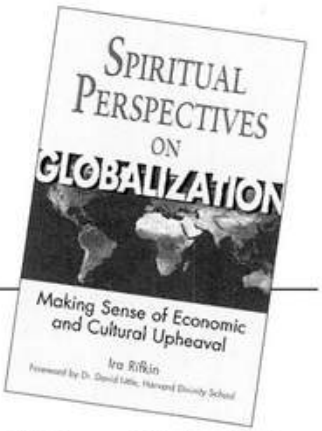
Finally, there is *Mindfulness in the Marketplace*, a wonderful book that brings together many of the concerns raised so far, but under a (very broadly) Buddhist perspective. If its thirty-five essays are short and necessarily lack the scope of development or analytic precision of the previous books, they are nearly all astute, persuasive, and eye-opening. John Robbins, for instance, describes how chocolate—perhaps the last guilty pleasure left for people who've given up alcohol, tobacco, meat, and illegal drugs—is by and large produced by children under slavery or semi-slavery conditions. Yet while our luxury is their servitude, Robbins also tells us of a movement, which we can support, to certify brands properly produced as "slavery free" and to demand that local stores carry those brands. Similar connections between our consumption, the fate of the world, and (gasp) actually doing something about all this are raised in essays on the psychological roots of consumerism, how economic systems can indeed be ethical, choosing voluntary simplicity, and what globalization means in the third world. If *Mindfulness* is a little light on the politics of these alternatives, it contains a wealth of personal, spiritual, and moral insight, and enough descriptions of and writings from the "third world" to give a solid push in that direction.

Like the juggernaut of industrial capitalism, globalization is here to stay, at least for the indefinite future. Like capitalism—though some would say it actually *is* capitalism in its latest form—globalization is not only about economics but about politics, culture, personal psychology, the family, and nature as well. Yet—and here lies our hope—just as capitalism gave rise to movements to constrain its savage effects and limit the prerogatives of its rulers (movements such as the New Deal, the American Socialist Party, and the AFL-CIO), so globalization is giving rise to an international movement which proclaims, and struggles to prove, that another world is indeed possible. These books sketch both the essential ideas of that movement, and the worldwide anti-globalization activism that seeks to realize them. They reassure us that hope, even if slim, still shines. ❑

ILLUSTRATION BY SETH BERKOWITZ

BOOK REVIEW

Globalization, Spiritual Style



David Lindorff

- *Spiritual Perspectives on Globalization: Making Sense of Economic and Cultural Upheaval* by Ira Rifkin. Skylight Paths Publishing, 2003.

Globalization is the wrenching, transformational process by which international capitalism has rendered national borders and governments almost obsolete while undermining traditional cultures with a tsunami of commercialism and Western monoculture. No wonder it is widely seen, even by many of its staunchest advocates, as a soulless, spiritually vapid phenomenon.

It is the strength of Ira Rifkin's new book, *Spiritual Perspectives on Globalization*, that he doesn't see things so simplistically.

True, Rifkin readily acknowledges that globalization is uprooting cultures, threatening languages, and ruthlessly destroying the domestic economies of developing nations. In that sense, globalization has indeed created a huge spiritual vacuum. But, at the same time, Rifkin notes that the world's religions, great and small, are being spread by the same mechanism that has produced global cars and the Internet.

Rifkin, a veteran newspaper journalist and former news producer of Beliefnet.com, a multi-faith Web-based magazine, is clearly a critic of globalization's destructive effects and of its elevation of wealth creation and consumerism above all other values. Yet, in *Spiritual Perspectives on Globalization,* he offers up the hope that many, if not most, of the world's religions can help to humanize the process. Indeed, he challenges religions to step up to the task, explaining how each religion contains within its own teachings the ideas and tools needed for the job.

Take Judaism. Rifkin observes that Judaism, which began as a tribal religion in one small corner of the world, became not just a globalized religion but a driving force behind globalization itself. Forced to survive as outsiders in foreign lands and cultures, Jews, says Rifkin, developed links with far-flung Jewish communities, and developed the concept of credit to allow for trans-global business transactions before the age of wired money. (Rifkin also attributes the development of Jewish law or Halachah to this early need to globalize—he writes, "by ensuring loyalty to an ethical standard … Halachah bred the trust that enabled Jews to engage in commerce with each other over long distances in an era before civic law could be counted upon.")

Rifkin observes that organized Judaism has not been very active in the anti-globalization movement that has sprung up over the past few years—largely, he says, because the anti-globalization movement is strongly identified with support for Palestinian nationhood, and because some of its activists equate the State of Israel with globalist imperialism. However, Rifkin notes that there is much within Jewish tradition and teachings that is critical of globalization's abuses, and singles out a few Jewish anti-globalization activists, including Reconstructionist Rabbis Michael Feinberg and Arthur Waskow.

Along with Judaism, Rifkin surveys perspectives on globalization from a truly global range of religions including Roman Catholicism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Bahá'í, Protestantism, and a variety of tribal rites. As a guide to these religions, the presentation is necessarily brief and simplistic, though entertaining. But *Spiritual Perspectives on Globalization* is not intended to be an encyclopedia of the world's great religions. Rather it seeks to be a tool for activists, using interviews with practitioners and leaders to help activists understand each religion's attitudes towards global change. As such, it provides a useful manual for those who may want to devise ways to draw these powerful and often fundamentally conservative organizations into the growing movement to moderate, humanize, and redirect the inexorable globalization revolution.

As Rifkin writes, "We all share the need for communal membership, and if the harmful effects of globalization—which is likely to proceed in any event—are to be minimized, the spiritual as well as the material needs of the world's plurality must also be addressed. The first step is to show respect for those needs. This means respect for the ways that others structure life, for their values and beliefs, and for the land upon which their ways have flourished."

The world's religions, each in their own way, speak to these issues, he argues, and any successful movement to humanize and control the rampant spread of international capitalism that is globalization's driving force not only should make use of these powerful allies; it is likely to fail without them. ❑

David Lindorff writes on politics and economics for such publications as Salon, the Nation, *and* Counterpunch *and is author of* Killing Time: An Investigation into the Death Penalty Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal *(Common Courage, 2003).*

BOOK REVIEW

Women on War



ILLUSTRATION BY SABRINA JONES

Marlene Nadle

- *Women On War,* edited by Daniela Gioseffi. Feminist Press, 2003.

Ever since the ancient Greeks women have been protesting the military adventures of men. Yet, lamenting the horrors of violence is only one purpose of an iconoclastic new anthology that crosses centuries and continents. Transforming the culture is the more ambitious goal of Daniela Gioseffi, the American editor of *Women On War*, and many of the 150 writers from around the globe who contributed to this volume.

It is not surprising that Gioseffi, a poet and political activist for forty years, has turned the readings for the book into leaflet central. Even without that, the anthology is something of a social marker. It is part of a new opposition to war forming on gender lines in organizations like Code Pink and frantic e-mails from women's groups in Bulgaria.

The classic feminist views that shape this activism and the anthology take on not only war, but the whole male culture. It sees violence as a symptom, looks at it through the broader lens of power, dominance, and hierarchy. As Jasmina Tesanovic, a member of Women In Black in Serbia writes, "My enemy is no longer a bad hero, nor a politician, nor a person in power, but the culture that makes such primitive people possible and empowers them."

Marlene Nadle is a journalist and associate of the Transregional Center for Democratic Studies at the New School in New York City.

In America the public humiliation of 9/11, added to the private humiliation of women who won't stay in their place, created a need to reassert "manhood."

Yet, feminism was around during the last Gulf War, and gender organization wasn't the response. It seems to be happening now in and outside of the book as a reaction to the new supermachismo. Many of the essays suggest this exaggerated form grew out of recent challenges to male domination that made men feel insecure. In America the public humiliation of 9/11, added to the private humiliation of women who won't stay in their place, created a need to reassert "manhood." That impulse is making military force America's foreign policy and tearing through the society with a full-throated roar.

Two recent books carry the title *No More Mister Nice Guy*, fist pumping is the new applause, TV detectives are getting tougher than Dirty Harry, and George Bush seems to be imitating their style. With a nasty glint in his eye he said of dead terrorists, "Put it this way. They are no longer a problem to the United States." His words have the same swagger of violence that is mocked in Mavis Smallberg's poem about the police patrolling a black township in South Africa: "Saw this 'Comrade' walking

alone/Shot him down before he got home/Ja, he died./You should have seen the ones we fried."

Bush, even though tightly wrapped in religion, let slip the macho man's image of himself as stud. He answered with a lascivious wink when reporters asked him what he was giving his wife for her birthday. This sexual strut is often a cover for contempt and fear of women as journalist Joan Smith demonstrates with quotes from a song book put together by U.S. Air Force pilots. Their lyrics link women to the enemy, to death, and are so obscenely over the top they are almost funny.

Humor is one of the book's many moods. It's a way to strip the mystique off of violence, to ridicule its association with excitement, eroticism, "manhood." Sometimes the irony is mixed with exasperation as it is when Dr. Helen Caldicott says the only way she can get labor leaders to listen to her speak about radiation from military industries is to mention its affect on the penis. By showing these new machos turning themselves into cartoons, the writers try to persuade people not to take them seriously or follow where they lead.

In their response to the surging testosterone and the trouble it brings, the writers are carrying out one of their essential functions. They are being what Gioseffi calls "Cassandra's daughters," clairvoyant seers revealing the dangers ignored by most of society. German novelist Christa Wolf takes the notion further saying female artists can produce distinct and useful work when they don't buy into the prevailing delusional system.

Many of the women spend their words trying to destroy those macho delusions. Psychologist Carol Cohn deconstructs the language of politicians and defense analysts whose use of abstractions, euphemisms, and inverted meanings allows them to avoid the reality behind the words and deny to themselves the calamity they are creating. Emma Goldman unpacks the "patriotic lie" that pretends to be about love of country, but is essentially about male conceit, arrogance, egotism, and the need to fight to impose their superiority on other nations. In one of the best essays India's Arundhati Roy punctures the national image Washington has been manipulating since 9/11. If the terrorists attacked America because of its democracy and freedom, she asks, why didn't they blow up the Statue of Liberty?

This anthology rejects the myth about the innate goodness and peacefulness of females.

The anthology doesn't allow women illusions about themselves either. It recognizes that the desire to be part of the dominant culture can produce a Condoleezza Rice. Most of the more contemporary pieces specifically reject the myth about the innate goodness and peacefulness of females. Author and activist Ann Snitow urges women to acknowledge their past complicity with men and their wars. As an example of the growing refusal to aid and abet she quotes young girls telling soldiers, "We don't find you sexy any more, you know, with your little musket, fife, and drum." It's the same thing Madonna is saying in her new music video "American Life" that satirizes the military superhero.

For all the usefulness of these Cassandra-warnings about America's culture and the world's, the best case for changing it is made through the stunning impact of the anthology's fiction, poetry, and memoir. The editor's and writers' extensive use of literary forms to deal with society is part of the new rebellion. In our times the preferred style is male-favored analysis, with its distance from people, emotions, and the uncontrolled messiness of the world. That wasn't true in the more androgynous Sixties. Then people like Norman Mailer, Joan Didion, and Tom Wolfe used nonfiction narrative to skewer America.

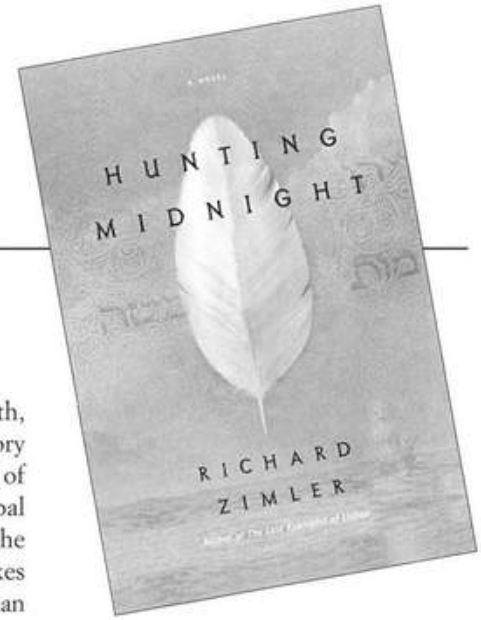
The writers bring a unique perspective to their storytelling. Most women, unlike those soldiering in Iraq, don't experience war with buddies on a battlefield. So their tales encompass the necessary periphery and are part of the mourning. There are accounts of the solitary woman caught in the crossfire in Beirut, or alone in a bath when the atom bomb drops. In Slavenka Drakulic's narrative, it is possible to enter the mind and body of a Bosnian woman spread on desk as the grunts of her rapists fill the room. There are other reports from the home front where male power and dominance are used with relish to silence heretics, segregate the ethnically suspect, and torture political prisoners like those in a dictator's jail in Isabel Allende's Chile. Most importantly, these sketches portray the devastation that lingers long after the army passes by: the theft of land and religion, the stunted trees and hopes, the tenuous world left after seemingly solid walls and bodies have crumbled.

Whatever form they use, the writers rescue wounded words damaged by the culture's retreat to the caveman. Equality, cooperation, negotiation, empathy, justice, peace are part of their dissenting language and strategy debates. The activists in Bush Country want to end its trust only in domination and power. Optimistically, Ann Druyan reminds these new gender organizers that their own experience as feminists tells them that radical culture change is possible.

In many ways the book is an antidote to the dark, supermacho world in which we are living. It pulses with defiance, hope, and celebration. There is the pleasure of sensuality in Luisa Valenzuela's short story. There is the lushness of the melons and mustard greens in Grace Paley's poem. The women thumb their words at the war makers and say with June Jordan, "Here is my song for the living who must sing against the dying." ❑

BOOK REVIEW

Hunting Midnight



Elizabeth Rosner

- *Hunting Midnight* by Richard Zimler. Delacorte Press, 2003.

Through a rich blend of insight and imagination, Richard Zimler's dazzling new novel, *Hunting Midnight*, offers the best gift of historical fiction: an opportunity to view not only a distant time and place in vivid detail, but a revelatory web of personal and political interconnectedness, crossing oceans and linking continents, leading implicitly to our own lives in the present. Ultimately, the timeless theme of this novel turns on the question of individual responsibility for suffering and transformation. Our links to one another and to the whole of creation insist that through healing ourselves, we therefore have the potential to heal the world, one soul at a time.

When we first meet the novel's narrator, John Zarco Stewart, he is a clever and insatiably curious seven-year-old. A native of Porto, Portugal, he is the son of a Scottish father and a Portuguese mother. The year is 1798. He is soon to learn that his mother is one of Porto's many hidden Jews, or Marranos, and is being targeted bya necromancer who wishes to resurrect the goals of the Inquisition. In his novel *The Last Kabbalist of Lisbon*, Zimler (who has lived in Portugal for the past 12 years) explored a prophetic connection between the devastations of the Inquisition and the Holocaust. Here, in *Hunting Midnight*, he forces the reader to confront the parallels between religious persecution in Europe and the evil of slavery in the American South, by intertwining a complex family story with an intricate and vast portrayal of social, political and, indeed, global drama. Zimler's capacity to detail the human as well as the historical makes this novel a stunning tapestry of human experience. In its weave exists a narrative that is as personal as it is universal.

As an adult, John journeys to the American South where he is referred to by a freed slave as a "white man with a memory," which makes him a "powerful creature." His mission is a personal one: to try to learn what happened to his best friend from childhood, an African bushman healer named Midnight, who was betrayed many years earlier by a member of John's family. Compelled to right a wrong that has been done to a man he deeply loves, John's individual pursuit of justice becomes a map of universal injustice. The implication is both mystical and practical: one person truly can change the world. As one of John's mentors, an alchemist, describes,

> the essential reciprocity of movement that marks the boundary between each person and the world. All that you do in your life affects all that is done here on earth and in all the other realms.... If you succeed in freeing Midnight, then you will not only set an entire universe free, as the Torah tells us, but in so doing you will also be helping to repair all that has been broken since the beginning of time.

In the second half of the novel, when we are introduced to its new setting in the antebellum South, we are also introduced to a new narrator, a teenage slave named Morri. The bridge she creates between the two worlds is testimony to the talents of this novelist. As John and Morri share and alternate narration for the next 250 pages, their lives intersect in moving and uplifting ways; together and separately, both are transformed and redeemed. Though both of them—and the unforgettable Midnight, who is the link between them—can easily be read as archetypal figures, they each possess wonderfully idiosyncratic personalities and means of self-expression. John, for example, has an endearing habit of

Zimler's capacity to detail the human as well as the historical makes this novel a stunning tapestry of human experience. In its weave exists a narrative that is as personal as it is universal.

Elizabeth Rosner is a novelist and poet and author of The Speed of Light *(Ballantine) and* Gravity *(Small Poetry Press). She lives in Berkeley, CA.*

self-deprecation; he offers honest assessments of his weaknesses to his prospective employer and his future wife, as if full disclosure will somehow prevent any disastrous discoveries later on. Morri manages to be both a hardened realist and an unbroken spirit of almost infinite generosity.

It must be said that terrible things happen in this novel. In addition to the backdrop of Napoleon's conquest of Europe, the brutalities of the slave trade, and the excruciatingly familiar pairing of demonization and dehumanization, there is despair in abundance, suicides both actual and spiritual, loss of life and loss of love, betrayals and murders. There is much to remind us that sometimes damage done to the spirit is more permanent and irreparable than damage done to the body, even in the face of forgiveness. "We do not always receive the keys to the rooms we inherit," explains the narrator, even as he longs to believe otherwise.

Where, then, does any hope lie? There are profound glimpses here of the solidarity possible between Jews and blacks, among those who are able to recognize in one another's suffering the potential for collaboration and liberation. The often inexplicable ways that love and friendship can allow souls to merge offer antidotes to the pain of separation and death. Just as slavery is depicted as both a literal and metaphorical death to the spirit, so is a break for freedom offered as a promise of a repeatable act of redemption. Sometimes, when we're lucky, art whispers to us that in the midst of the worst suffering and darkness, we can break free of our shackles. It shows us our own reflections and inspires us to reach higher than the past might have predicted.

Like Cain and Abel, we continue to turn against one another. And yet, somehow, we also manage to love and forgive. *Hunting Midnight* is an eloquent reminder that the darkest time of the night comes just before the dawn. ❑

Somebodies and Nobodies

(continued from page 70)

movements need, a name for their problem. "Rankism" expresses the principle that the abuse of all forms of power—physical, mental, social, and spiritual—is not only unacceptable, but, like racism or sexism, is ultimately not a viable practice either financially or socially.

The cure for rankism is not complete equality (rank based on merit and natural ability is healthy and necessary), but rather recognition. Rankism engenders "recognition disorders," another Fuller coinage. Sometimes those without recognition become terrorists, whether at Columbine or on 9/11; and sometimes they become our school dropouts, our mentally ill, our misfits, our unemployed.

As a mathematician and physicist (he received his Ph.D. under the tutelage of John Wheeler, who rebirthed Einstein's theory of gravitation), as an economist grappling with international disparities of wealth, as a teacher of high school dropouts and delinquents, as a college teacher and administrator, and now as a writer of fiction and non-fiction, Fuller's genius is to cut through the shadows of the way things are and offer illumination for the way they could be.

Readers of this magazine will identify with the fact that the new bottom line is how we treat each other, not as instrumentalities and objects, but as caring, sharing, loving human beings. That said, we read this book at our own risk, because whatever rankist tendencies we secretly harbor will be revealed (no pain, no gain!). However, we will walk away with a new truth serum and a new tool kit. Not only will we be able to recognize these tendencies in ourselves, but we will now see them in our families, our communities, and our institutions, including our governments. Once we have discovered the root of these disorders, we are challenged to become radicals, working on the front lines for a more just and sustainable society, brought into being by what Robert Fuller calls "the dignitarian revolution." ❑

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1. Create a study group about the Middle East conflict. Read *Healing Israel/Palestine* to learn how to articulate our "middle path" that is both pro-Israel and pro-Palestine.
2. Create a group of people to meet with your congressional representatives and with the representatives of presidential campaigns seeking your support. Help them understand the importance of a balanced perspective that recognizes the fundamental humanity of both peoples.
3. Create a local Tikkun Community and get involved in education and outreach to get our message heard. Get the Resolution for Middle East Peace endorsed by public officials, local community groups, civic organizations, churches, synagogues, and mosques.

We'll send you materials for distribution, provide you with guidance, and work with you to make this happen.

Contact Robyn Lundy, National Coordinator, at lundy@tikkun.org or Evan Derkacz, Tikkun Campus Network Coordinator, at media@tikkun.org. Or you can reach us at 510-644-1200.

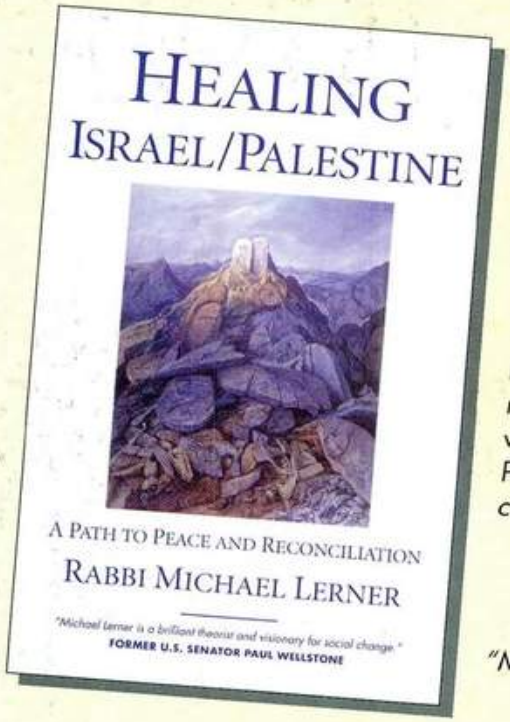
Tikkun (te-kün) ... to heal, repair and transform the world. All the rest is commentary

תיקון

THERE IS A PATH to Peace in the Middle East

A first step is for both sides to stop the "blame game" and the attempt to make one side "right" and the other side "wrong." Both Israelis and Palestinians have legitimate claims, both sides have been unnecessarily hurtful and cruel toward the other—and both sides have co-created the current mess.

Healing Israel/Palestine shows how it is possible to be both pro-Israel and pro-Palestine, to recognize that both peoples' best chance for lasting security lies in a new spirit of generosity, open-hearted reconciliation, and a genuine commitment to nonviolence.



This book will give you all the information you need to become an activist for peace. It is the perfect manual for those who need to know how to answer the tough historical, philosophical, and political questions that emerge when you argue for peace and justice in the Middle East.

"Rabbi Michael Lerner has been one of the great Jewish liberal voices, and his work on behalf of Israel will be remembered with gratitude by Jews in future generations who understand that his courage to critique Israeli policy toward Palestinians is motivated by the deepest love and caring for the survival of the Jewish people."
—**Abba Eban**,
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