

TIKKUN

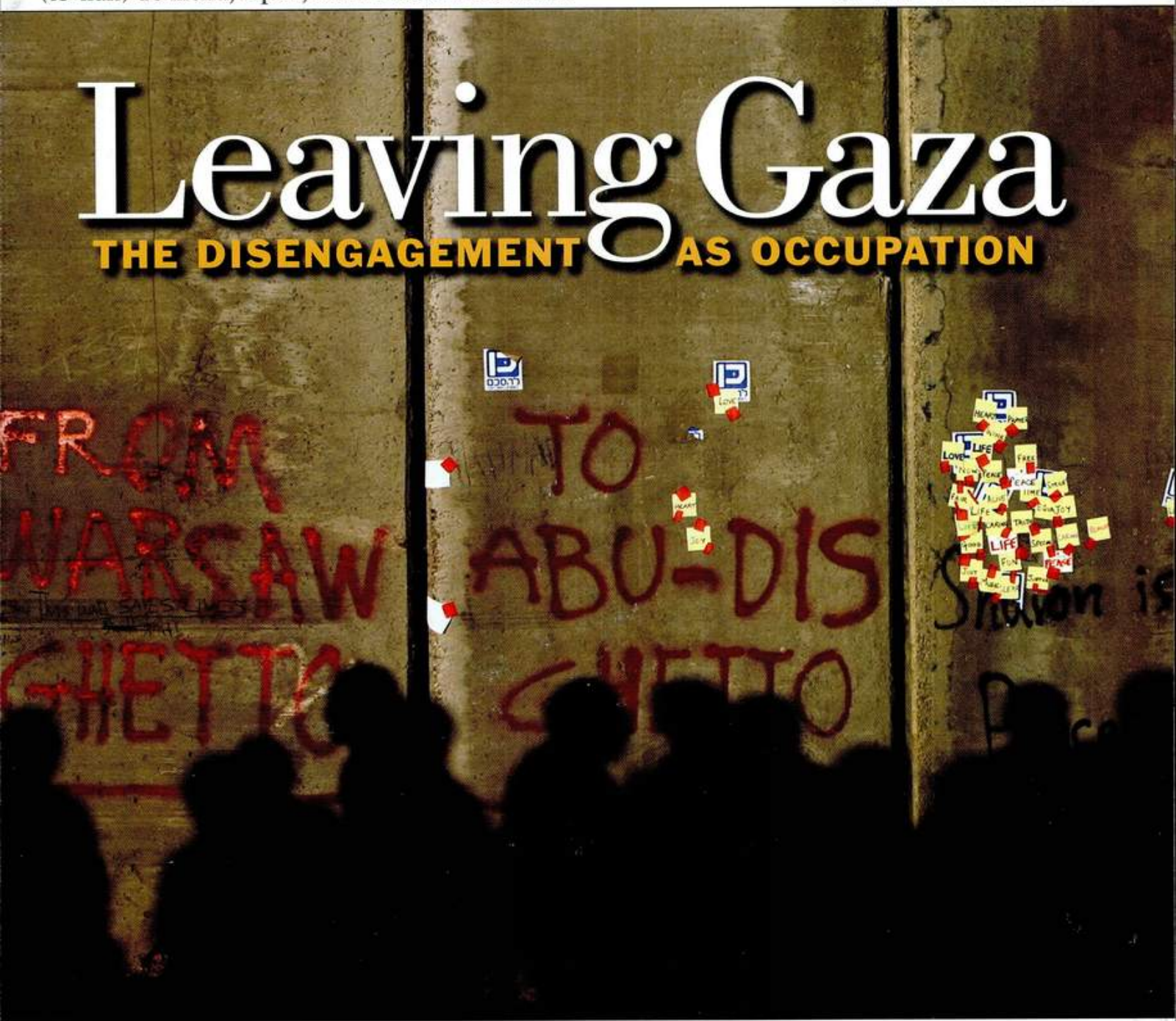
IN DEFENSE OF POP KABBALAH
WELCOMING TRANSGENDERED JEWS
HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR ABUSE

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

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2005

Leaving Gaza

THE DISENGAGEMENT AS OCCUPATION



\$5.95 U.S. \$7.95 Canada



New American Justice | South Lebanon Memoir
Trafficking in Women | Interview with Etgar Keret
Reviews: Alain Badiou, Tikkun Goes to Cannes

Tzohar/Skylight

Tzohar ta'aseh l'teivah: Make an opening for daylight in the ark. —Gen. 6:16

There is a torn place in my sky
a hole in the roof of my house
an opening in the crown of my head
where light comes in and rain
and darkness descends to cover me
but not for so very long
not for all time
not so far forever.
I close my eyes to hide my disbelief
to show no disrespect
and when the open spot becomes a pain I wear a *keipa*
like the hand of God on my head.
Then I can look: and then I can ask:
is the world my shelter
is the world a home
has creation come to an end—
I pray standing up
I'm not ashamed to shout a little
I don't mind if I tremble—
You set me down in one place
and said talk and talk go ahead name the animals if you want
but don't talk too much
You said multiply and started in with dividing
You said go add up and then began to subtract
You spread your *tallit* across the heavens
You set your bow in the clouds and said Never again
You left a torn place in the sky
You left a hole in the roof of my house
You left an opening in the crown of my head.

(*Noach*, Genesis 6:9 – 11:32)

—Dan Bellm

2. LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

6. **PUBLISHER'S PAGE:** *A Flawed Strategy*

7. **EDITORIAL:** *Moving Forward*

9. **MASH DOWN BABYLON:** *London, Utopia*

10. FREE ASSOCIATIONS

FEATURES

16. Israel/Palestine

In *The Dark Refuge* (16), **Matt Rees** reveals the hidden history of abuse surrounding Israel's mentally ill Holocaust survivors. In *A Jewish History of Trafficking* (22), **Nomi Levenkron** puts a new twist on what it means to make aliyah: importing foreign women for sex slavery. **Misha Shulman** recalls coming of age on an IDF base in southern Lebanon in *Memories of a Forgotten People* (25). Returning home, **Eran Kaplan** analyzes the political and religious beliefs that shaped Israel's settler movement (29).

33. Cover: Leaving Gaza

Uri Avnery, the most outspoken leader of Israel's peace movement, talks candidly with us about the explosive ramifications of the disengagement. Detailing both its potential to unravel Israeli civil society and the precedent it creates for a full end to the Occupation, Avnery's words are both sobering and hopeful. In his *Afterword* (40), **Michael Lerner** unpacks what's wrong with the unilateral withdrawal, and what it portends for the future of Israel/Palestine.

ARTICLES

12. *Fashioning Sacred Words*, **Or N. Rose**

13. *The Perils and Possibilities of Teshuvah*, **Michael Bader**

41. *Out of the Past*, **John Atlas**

46. *Lost in Translation*, **Henry Giroux**

47. *Justice and American Particularism*, **Sheldon H. Laskin**

49. *Globalization and the Commercialization of Childhood*, **Allen D. Kanner**

52. *Faith-Based Psychotherapy*, **Richard Schiffman**

55. *Paying Attention to Food*, **Stephanie Kaza**

56. *One God, Many Images*, **Arun Gandhi**

57. *Changing Our Economic Vision of the Bible*, **Rick Lowery**

59. *Transformed Before God*, **Charlie Anders**

63. *Kabbalah, Academia, and Authenticity*, **Matt Goldish**

BOOKS

70. *Interview with Etgar Keret*, by **Ben Naparstek**

72. Alain Badiou's *Infinite Thought* and Peter Hallward's *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, reviewed by **Charlie Bertsch**

75. Derek Rubin's *Who We Are*, reviewed by **Louis Gordon**

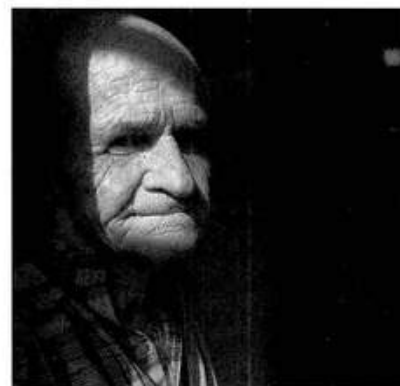
76. Alan Shapiro's *Tantalus in Love*, reviewed by **Dan Chiasson**

77. Capsule Reviews

TELEVISION/FILM

79. *Facing the Other at Cannes*, **Karin Badt**

Inside Back Cover: *Sikkum*: Books TIKKUN recommends



Opposite: "Tzohar/Skylight,"
by Dan Bellm.

Front Cover: AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti

See our High Holiday
Supplement between
pages 64 and 65.

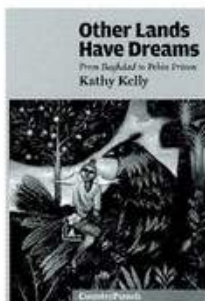
Sikkum

TIKKUN RECOMMENDS...

OTHER LANDS HAVE DREAMS: From Baghdad to Pekin Prison

Kathy Kelly, Counterpunch/AK Press, 2005

Kathy Kelly is someone you ought to know. As founder of Chicago's Voices in the Wilderness, during the 1990s, Kelly was responsible for highlighting the inhumanity of the post-Gulf War sanctions against Iraq. Smuggling desperately needed food and medicine into the country, this three-time nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize was sentenced to a brief stint in prison in 2004 for trespassing at Fort Benning, Georgia as part of a protest against the School of Americas. Also a Catholic Worker Movement member, and a veteran of numerous Christian Peace Teams, *Other Lands* is Kelly's inspiring first memoir.



PICTURE IMPERFECT: Utopian Thought for an Anti-Utopian Age

Russell Jacoby, Columbia University Press, 2005

If 9/11 rendered anything irrelevant, it was post-modernism. Along with the reemergence of traditional revolutionary organizations like International Answer came a return to empiricism and old-fashioned materialism. If Russell Jacoby has anything to say about this situation, it will not stand. Assembling a timely collection of essays arguing that it is time to look back to the utopian tradition of twentieth-century political thinking—Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, and Ernst Bloch—Jacoby argues on behalf of the political necessity of reviving Western Marxism and its predominantly Jewish intellectual progenitors. Essential.



RHYTHM AND BUSINESS: The Political Economy of Black Music

Edited by Norman Kelley, Akashic Books, 2005

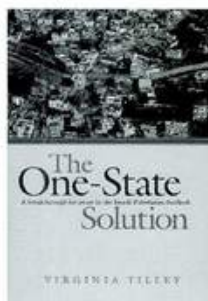
Turn on MTV, VH1, or Fuse, and chances are you'll see a hip-hop video. African American music dominates the screen—as well as the charts. As much as this might seem a metaphor for success and integration, according to Norman Kelley and his stellar cast of contributors—Jeff Chang, Chuck D, and even Courtney Love to name just a few—all is not what it seems. Artists still get ripped off, and African Americans, despite their immense presence in the music market, still suffer from systemic discrimination. The first paperback edition of this 2002 volume, *Rhythm and Business* is even more relevant now than it was when first published.



THE ONE-STATE SOLUTION: A Breakthrough for Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Deadlock

Virginia Tilley, University of Michigan Press, 2005

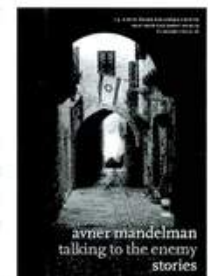
Irrespective of how unrealistic a one-state solution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict might seem, there is much ingenuity and thoughtfulness being applied to thinking through the alternatives right now. Virginia Tilley's book is perhaps the best piece of new writing exploring the one-state solution. Even if you don't agree with her vision of a future Israel/Palestine, her analysis of the factors that would make separating the two peoples practically impossible is utterly sobering and worth taking seriously.



TALKING TO THE ENEMY

Avner Mandelman, Seven Stories Press, 2005

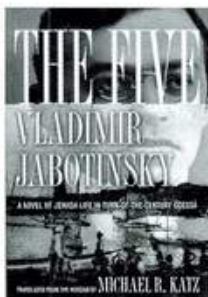
To say that Jewish literature is going through a renaissance remains the understatement of the year. The problem with the new "Jewish" canon that is emerging is that it never includes Israelis, who, even in the form of globetrotting ex-pats like Avner Mandelman, are churning out the most political—and thoughtful—Jewish fiction today. The first American printing of this award-winning collection of short stories, *Talking to the Enemy* captures the psychological and emotional contradictions of everyday Israeli life like no other literary work in recent memory.



THE FIVE: A Novel of Jewish Life in Turn-of-the-Century Odessa

Vladimir Jabotinsky, Translated by Michael R. Katz, Cornell University Press, 2005

How strange to read through the pages of this sad fictional account of Irgun founder Vladimir (nee Ze'ev) Jabotinsky's hometown of Odessa. The sense of conflict you can hear in his voice—clear disappointment at the inability of Jews to successfully assimilate within the Russian empire—is a wonderful key for understanding the rage that animated Jabotinsky's violent brand of Zionist nationalism. While Jabotinsky is clearly no Isaac Babel, the quality of his prose in this new translation by Michael Katz is truly stunning.



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Publishers

George & Trish Vradenburg

Controller

Valerie Bach

2342 Shattuck Avenue, #1200

Berkeley, CA 94704

510-644-1200

fax: 510-644-1255

magazine@tikkun.org

Visit the TIKKUN website at

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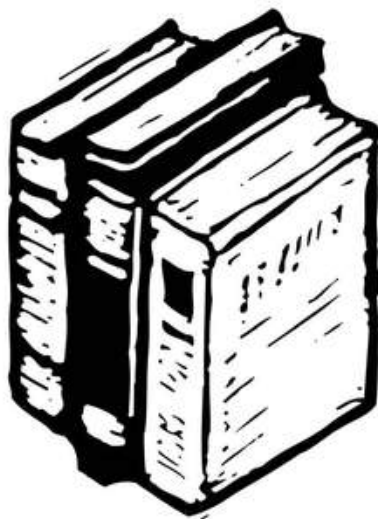
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Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

In Norman Finkelstein's response to my letter, he mischaracterizes a minor clarification by Marc Fisher as a "retraction" by the *Washington Post*. Marc Fisher called him "a writer celebrated by neo-Nazi groups for his Holocaust revisionism and comparisons of Israel to Nazi Germany." Finkelstein threatened to sue the *Washington Post* unless it issued a retraction. It refused to do that. Indeed, it sent him a long letter documenting the truth of this characterization. Ultimately Fisher wrote the following statement "Although neo-Nazi groups have cited his work in support of their theories, Finkelstein has never denied the existence of the Holocaust and I did not intend to suggest that." (Emphasis added.) He certainly did not retract the accusation that Finkelstein is "celebrated by neo-Nazi groups for his Holocaust revisionism."

It is interesting that Finkelstein, who threatened to sue the *Washington Post* for making a true statement about him, is



upset that I have considered suing him for making a false statement about me. He knows he is lying when he says I didn't write *The Case For Israel*. Finkelstein knows that I wrote every word of it by hand and that I have sent my hand-

Articles in TIKKUN do not necessarily reflect TIKKUN's stance on any issue. TIKKUN's positions are presented in our editorials.

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written manuscript to the University of California Press. The Press then insisted that he remove his false, defamatory statement and others that do not meet their standards. He then threatened to withdraw the book and he posted the following false headline on his website "DERSHOWITZ WINS: University of California will not publish BEYOND CHUTZPAH." He also knows that his absurd charge of plagiarism was dismissed after an investigation by Harvard, and that the dean of Harvard subsequently awarded me a writing prize for "exceptional scholarship" for my subsequent book.

In my current book, *The Case For Peace* (Wiley, 2005), I demolish Finkelstein's arguments on their merits and demerits. This is not difficult because Finkelstein admitted to the *Jerusalem Report* in 2000 that he had "never actually visited Israel" and "don't really know much about Israel." This is typical of Finkelstein, who wrote a book about the Holocaust without being able to read the German sources. I invite your readers to judge Finkelstein's arguments for themselves after reading my book.

Michael Lerner claims that TIKKUN has published me, despite the fact that Lerner finds my views "legitimizing the assassination of suspected terrorists" to be "morally abhorrent." First, I have never been "published" by TIKKUN; several of my letters to the editor in response to criticisms of me have been published. Second, my views on targeted killings have never been published by TIKKUN. Third, Lerner mischaracterizes my views on that difficult subject. I oppose the killing of "suspected terrorists," but favor, as a last resort, the killing of admitted terrorist commanders (combatants) who are involved in the ongoing mass-murder of innocent civilians. Here is what I have written:

I believe that targeted assassination should be used only as a last recourse, when there is no opportunity to arrest or apprehend the murderer, when the terrorist leader is involved in planning or approving ongoing murderous activities, and when the assassination can be done without undue risk to innocent bystanders (*The Case For Peace*).

There is nothing "morally abhorrent" about this widely shared view. Any

democracy confronting terrorist threats to its civilians would take such action if necessary to protect its citizens.

ALAN DERSHOWITZ
Cambridge, MA

Norman Finkelstein Replies:

Are TIKKUN readers getting as bored by Dershowitz's antics as I am? In my last reply I pointed to a half-dozen outright lies in his first TIKKUN missive. In Dershowitz's latest tantrum, the very best he can do is plea that one of these outright lies was merely a half-lie, alleging that the Washington Post issued not a "retraction" but a "clarification." This is vintage Dershowitz. When Nation writer Jon Wiener caught Dershowitz lying in his denial of having written a letter to Governor Schwarzenegger to block publication of my book, Dershowitz explained that it wasn't a letter but a "polite note."

Dershowitz is currently best known for his advocacy of the "most excruciating" torture such as a "needle being shoved under the fingernails" in order to extract a truthful confession. For the past fifteen months Dershowitz has applied a variant of this truth-seeking technique—less physically painful but just as excruciating—to prospective publishers of my book, Beyond Chutzpah. Initially using his own letterhead, and subsequently the letterhead of arguably the most powerful law

firm in the country (Cravath, Swaine and Moore), he threatened to bankrupt the presses with litigation, the costs of which an academic press can't bear, if they didn't withdraw publication of my book. He would then be able to proclaim that the "truth" that Beyond Chutzpah was filled with lies had been confirmed by the publishers' decision.

Dershowitz justified these blackmail tactics on the ground that Beyond Chutzpah libels him. Yet, soon after I leveled my allegations, Dershowitz publicly declared that because he believed "so strongly in the First Amendment and full freedom of speech," he would "not sue" me for "libel or slander." Indeed, Dershowitz has denounced Holocaust denier David Irving, who sued Deborah Lipstadt for libel, on these grounds: "Before Irving lost his case [against Lipstadt], several publishers had refused to issue books critical of Irving, out of fear of his bringing expensive and time-consuming lawsuits. That was a chilling of free speech" (his emphasis).

Dershowitz claims both that he didn't plagiarize from Joan Peters's From Time Immemorial hoax and that he wrote The Case for Israel. These statements of his evidently have equal truth value. TIKKUN readers can judge for themselves on the basis of the evidence I have collected in Beyond Chutzpah whether he plagiarized

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LETTERS

and whether to believe his claim that he wrote the book.

Because I readily acknowledge not having spent much time in Israel, it supposedly disqualifies me from writing about Israel's human rights record in the Occupied Territories. I seem to recall Dershowitz having much to say about the Soviet Union's persecution of Jews before having gone there. In any event my book is not about my personal knowledge or opinions. It is about Dershowitz's mangling of Israel's human rights record in the Occupied Territories as documented by mainstream human rights organizations.

Dershowitz faults me for writing a book on the Nazi holocaust without using German sources. That book (coauthored with Ruth Bettina Birn) won the generous praise of fifteen of the leading scholars on the Nazi holocaust in the world, including Raul Hilberg and Christopher Browning, and was named a notable book of the year by the New York Times Sunday Book Review. On the other hand, although I scoured the endnotes of *The Case for Israel*, I didn't notice any Hebrew language sources. Admittedly, there were impressive references to a Sony movie and a letter to the editor of a local newspaper somewhere in Florida and, anyhow, it's unfair to judge Dershowitz's scholarship by his endnotes since most of what he wrote in *The Case for Israel* is pulled out of thin air.

Now that *Beyond Chutzpah* has finally been published, it is my sincere hope that this hideous Dershowitz sideshow will rapidly be forgotten and the real purpose of my book will become the focus of discussion: Israel's shameful human rights record in the Occupied Territories and the misuse of anti-Semitism to delegitimize criticism of it.

NORMAN G. FINKELSTEIN
Chicago, IL

To the Editor:

In a Letter to the Editor published in the July/August 2005 edition of *TIKKUN*, Ralph Seliger, though complimentary about my critique of Dennis Ross, in effect charges that I am soft on Palestinian terrorism. Some of his comments are simply non-sequiturs, as when he says that "you wouldn't know from Slater" that Sharon didn't immediately retaliate for acts of Palestinian terrorism. You wouldn't know a lot of other things from Slater either, only those things that I was actually writing

about, which did not include a comparative analysis of Israeli and Palestinian violence.

Far more grievous is his clear distortion of one of the few things I did say about Palestinian terrorism. This is how he paraphrases my argument: "he [Slater] alleges that the Palestinians didn't engage in 'terrorism' until six months into the Intifada, contenting themselves with attacks on the settlements." But this is what I actually said: "there was little or no terrorism during the first six months of the Intifada, for during that period—that is, until after the election of Ariel Sharon—the Palestinians attacked only Israeli military forces, and the most extremist settlers in Gaza and the West Bank, rather than civilians inside Israel itself." Thus, Seliger manages to distort my argument in three different ways: (1) he fails to include my qualification—"little or no"; (2) he drops my reference to attacks on Israeli military forces (which are not terrorism by any impartial definition); (3) and he refers to attacks on "the settlements"—which clearly means the settlements in general—as opposed to "the most extremist settlers."

Whether or not attacks on the most extremist settlers constitute terrorism just as much as do attacks on civilians inside Israel proper is a complex issue, one over which reasonable people can and in fact do disagree. That is why I worded my argument very carefully, precisely in order that readers, presented with the relevant and accurate information, could make their own judgment.

The first rule in serious intellectual debate is to state your opponent's argument in a scrupulously fair and accurate manner. Obviously, Seliger badly fails this rule.

JEROME SLATER
Buffalo, NY

To the Editor:

Andrew Samuels, a Jungian analyst, writes (July/August 2005) ... "The ego has to be, as it were, 'sacrificed' for movement in the self to take place." Although Samuels writes in parenthesis "as it were" and puts "sacrifice" in quotation marks, it seems to me that this is a wrong understanding of Jung. If the ego as a totality is sacrificed to the Self (which I write in capital letters), there is no ego anymore. As I understand it, one has to sacrifice the idea that the ego is the *only* entity in the person. One has to accept

the fact that drives (instincts) and the irrational in general are parts in the persons. The interpretation of dreams, which come from the unconscious, connects to images and symbols, which connect to another reality.

Individuation as Jung understands it requires the taking into consideration of another reality, the beyond.

Furthermore I think that the word "sacrificed" should not be used when one can say, "given up." Sacrifice has an archetypal and religious flavor. Jung has dealt extensively with the archetype of sacrifice, for example, in the *Collected Works*, Volume 5 ("Symbols of Transformation") or in Volume 13 ("The Philosophical Tree").

DR. GUSTAV DREIFUSS
Haifa, Israel

To the Editor:

With regards to George Vradenburg's "Why Are We Here?" (July/August 2005) article, the author is attempting to frame the debate incorrectly, and in a way that seems counter to *TIKKUN*'s standards. I don't believe that most intelligent people would restrict schools from any discussion of "Intelligent Design." What is being said is that it is not science. Teach it as religion or philosophy or anything, except science.

Science requires positing a hypothesis and testing it, then adjusting the theory. Intelligent Design makes a conclusion based on the lack of any other theory. As a philosophical discussion, if the lack of any other theory or evidence proves there is an intelligence behind the design of the universe, then that same line of reasoning can be used to prove that there is an intelligence behind that, and another beyond that. I don't make this argument to be funny, but to show that "Intelligent Design" is not science.

JOHN WOLFORTH
Sturgeon Lake, MN

To the Editor:

It is a disturbing week in progressive commentary when a *TIKKUN* columnist, Joel Schalit, in "Mash Down Babylon: Remembering Kosovo," (July/August 2005) repeats the same interventionist propaganda and historical fictions as the mainstream press. It is true, as Schalit writes, that "the West brought the Bosnian war to a negotiated end" in 1999. But it is worth noting that this was after prompting the Kosovo Liberation Army

to enter into armed conflict by giving warm bromides of encouragement to the pacifist movement espoused by Kosovar intellectual Ibrahim Rugova, and little beyond that, at the Dayton peace accords in 1995, shattering Kosovar dreams of self-determination.

In a similar vein, the force NATO unleashed on the civilian population of Serbia broke not only a "metaphysical taboo," but American law, as we flouted the United Nations treaty, "the highest Law of the Land," and waged aggressive war against Milosevic's forces—and "the sea in which they swam,"—by raining hellfire down on the Federal Republic of Serbia. Yes, the campaign forced Milosevic's forces to withdraw from Kosovo. However, it also transformed a possibly nascent impulse to ethnically cleanse Kosovo into a palpable disaster, as over a million Kosovars were expelled in the wake of the bombing, which incidentally furthered the destruction of the physical infrastructure of Yugoslavia. As in most wars, the primary victims were the people—thus their resultant demonization in the Western press.

None of the sharpest critiques from the authentic Left, then or now, accepted the after-the-fact humanitarian justifications for the ruinous attacks. Instead, they recognized that the ethnic cleansing was, in fact, catalyzed by the bombing, unsurprisingly, as this was precisely what General Wesley Clark had said, claiming that the expulsions were "entirely predictable." The ends were never liberal or humanitarian. Given the timeline, how

could they have been? As openly admitted by top American officials, the goal was to shine NATO's, and America's, credibility to a coruscating sheen, irrespective, as imperialist force always is, of the catastrophic human costs.

It is important to remember these facts, and recognize subsequent attempts to rewrite history for what they are: illusions and deceptions. It is particularly vital to do so when similar protestations of humanitarian motives were offered as part of the panoply of reasons for America's current imperialist crusade, one which has resulted in massive loss of life, Iraqi and American. TIKKUN, of all journals, should help to dispel the chimerical apologiae for American power, not give them added strength.

MAX AJL
Amherst, MA

Joel Schalit replies:

Thanks for your impassioned reply to my piece. You misunderstood the article. I wasn't necessarily endorsing Parenti's, Chomsky's, and Zizek's positions as much as I was retelling them for being the most representative left intellectual positions on Kosovo at the time that they were written. I also made sure to note that imperialism was a concern of theirs, in their ascription of neo-liberal ideology to the Western powers to justify intervention.

While I understand why you might want to disagree with these respective analyses of the war, regardless of their differences, all three thinkers were trying to highlight the profound political complexi-

ties that mainstream thinking about the conflict ignored. First, that the former FRY had once been a socialist-vetted experiment in multiculturalism, which disintegrated in the years following the death of Tito. And second, that the kind of liberal rhetoric the Western alliance employed to justify intervention was new, albeit quasi-progressive—a "New Military Humanism," to quote the title of Chomsky's book.

Sure, there is a lot more I could have said about Kosovo and what the West did to facilitate the conflict. But the narrative thrust of the article was not as much about those issues per se as it was about the act of remembering the war, as it coincided with the 60th anniversary commemorations of the end of World War II. What you really want is a different kind of article on the subject, which you're more than welcome to submit to TIKKUN. Based on the good thoughts detailed in your letter, I can't say we'd disagree with what you would have to say.

JOEL SCHALIT

ERRATA

In our July/August issue, there are two corrections to make. In Jo Ellen Green Kaiser's review of Lawrence A. Hoffman's *My People's Prayerbook*, Vols 1–8, it is incorrectly stated that "the series concludes with volume 8." According to the publisher, volume 9 is forthcoming this November, and more editions are planned. Second, the translator's name is attributed to Jeff Hoffman. The actual translator is Joel Hoffman.



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WISDOM ACROSS THE AGES

SEEING IS BELIEVING

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A Flawed Strategy

George Vradenburg

Israel's national goal is to live in peace, side-by-side with its neighbors. The Gaza disengagement neither helps to build a peace-loving neighbor nor promotes the peaceful resolution of issues leading to peace. Disengagement is an isolationist strategy that ignores Israel's critical strategic interest in the democratic structure and peaceful orientation of a future Palestinian state.

I acknowledge the logic of disengagement. The Palestinians have shown themselves to be an incredibly unreliable partner for peace. The Oslo process failed when, after the negotiations stalled following the rejection of Barak's peace offer at Camp David, and the Palestinian leadership launched the Al Aksa Intifada. Reinforcing this unreliability have been those elements within Palestinian society that are committed to the destruction of the state of Israel, which have repeatedly initiated violence designed to provoke Israel into (justifiable) self-defensive measures that pre-emptively disrupted any "peace process."

Much of the responsibility for this behavior can be laid at the feet of Yasir Arafat. Arafat is, of course, gone. But Arafat left in place a society where power was and is fragmented among multiple, contending armed security forces; he left a Fatah Party that is a vehicle for rampant cronyism and corruption; and he tolerated or encouraged Hamas, an Islamic force that amazingly has now been able to position itself as a credible populist alternative to the Palestinian Authority because it can provide highly-valued social services that a corrupt Palestinian Authority cannot. Arafat did substantial—but far from irreparable—damage to the capacity and willingness of the Palestinian people to become a strategic "peace-loving" partner of Israel.

What is Israel to do? It could "engage" with the new, democratically elected Palestinian leadership and the international community to build a Palestinian state free of corruption, with a unitary security force operating under the rule of law, capable of delivering social services to its people and open to peace with Israel. Or, Israel could "disengage" by building a wall between Palestinians and Israelis. Sharon has chosen disengagement over engagement. The logic is clear: if the Palestinians cannot be trusted, Israelis will take unilateral steps to maintain their own state behind their own walls and will let the Palestinians stew in their own complicated juices.

It is at best naïve, and at worst dangerous, to believe

that Israel does not have a strategic national interest in how the Palestinian polity, society, and economy develops. Israel needs to invest serious political and economic capital in the development of a Palestinian state that is a stable and reliable peace partner, not a failed state or war-making neighbor.

First, disengagement threatens to increase Gaza's isolation from international markets and economic progress. Israel, even with offers of help from the United States and Europe, is not taking steps to connect Gaza to Israeli, West Bank, and international markets with air, land, and sea links. The current logic and language of disengagement leaves little political space to do so. Trapped and isolated by Israel, angry Gazans are likely to turn to Hamas and increased confrontation, thus sowing discord that will threaten the unity of a future Palestinian state. Perhaps a "Gaza re-engagement" strategy will later emerge, but future investments will take more resources and be more difficult to execute in what will then be an even more hostile political environment.

Second, the logic of disengagement extends inexorably to the West Bank, implying Israeli withdrawal behind the Wall. Sharon, responding to anxiety about the abandonment of Jewish settlements in Gaza, has had to firmly and unequivocally re-commit Israel to maintenance of West Bank settlements, both inside and outside the Separation Wall. This political dynamic, necessitated by the logic of disengagement, is making positions on final status issues more intractable.

Third, the logic of disengagement also requires that Israel not insist on the freedom of individual Jews to settle in what they regard as historic Israel if that land lies within sovereign Palestinian territory. This is a noxious position that all Jews, not just Gaza settlers, should find upsetting.

Thus, disengagement makes the Palestinians less able to become a reliable peace partner in the future, erects a barrier to a peace agreement with the Palestinian people, and compromises the rights of individual Jews.

There is an alternative. An engagement policy would (1) embrace the Palestinians as future political and economic partners, (2) recognize the interest of Israel in having a well-structured, democratic, freedom-loving state on its borders and, (3) work to build a Palestinian state in a spirit of mutual self-interest and respect. Engagement would serve Israel's national strategic goal of living in peace, side-by-side, with a peace-loving neighbor. Disengagement does not. □

George Vradenburg is co-publisher of TIKKUN.

Moving Forward

Michael Lerner

This summer, the Tikkun Community had to close registration for our Conference on Spiritual Activism after we had reached 1,300 registrants. We simply couldn't fit more people into the rooms we had reserved. It was the largest gathering of the Spiritual/Religious Left in American history.

The enthusiasm was amazing and reminded us of the tremendous appeal that our message would have, if only it could reach a mass audience.

The Network of Spiritual Progressives that we are building from this gathering is different from other attempts to counter the misuse of God and religion by the Religious Right because:

- It is interfaith, although the vast majority of participants are Christian. The enthusiastic participation of Muslims, Jews, and Buddhists ensures an important counterweight to a religious chauvinism that sometimes manifests itself, even among progressive Christians.

- It is an alliance between people associated with traditional religious communities and people who are "spiritual but not religious," which works because it acknowledges that there are many individuals whose approach to God or spirituality does not fit into traditional faith-based categories. Reaching those people, many of whom formerly associated with the shrinking memberships of liberal Protestant denominations, creates the potential for a brand new voice in American culture and politics.

- It is spiritually radical, not simply calling for support by religious people of the traditional anti-poverty and anti-war agenda of the Democratic Party, but making a far deeper critique by calling for a new criterion for decision-making in public institutions and corporations: a New Bottom Line that emphasizes generosity, kindness, love, caring for others, and—most subversive of all—enhancing our capacities to respond to the universe with awe, wonder, and radical amazement.

- It explicitly challenges not only the Religious Right, but the religio-phobia and anti-spiritual tendencies of the liberals/Left.

- It is focused not only on social change, but on self-transformation, encouraging participants to develop spiritual and religious practices and forms that can be used in an interfaith context.

What was particularly exciting was the level of seriousness mixed with fun and a spirit of open-heartedness and generosity. People treated each other with respect and genuine caring. And that made everyone in attendance very hopeful that a new kind of social justice movement is indeed possible. There was a tremendous amount of good will. Famous speakers paid their own way, paid for their own accommodations, and then stuck to tough time limits that often gave them far less ego gratification than they are used to—and they did this with grace, con-

tracting ego for the sake of the greater good of the event. People with complaints expressed them delicately, not wishing to derail the spirit of solidarity and mutual caring that we were actually living and not just preaching about.

You can help us by becoming a dues-paying member of the Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP) or by making a tax-deductible contribution. It is going to take a huge amount of money to make this real. An anonymous donor excited by this project has offered a challenge grant: he will match any donation of \$1,000 or more, and he will double any donation of \$5,000 or more (that is, he will give \$10,000 to your \$5,000) up until September 26, 2005. For many of us, \$1,000 is a huge stretch. With a Supreme Court and a judiciary increasingly dominated by reactionaries, a mounting death toll in Iraq, and the Bush administration's continuing assault on social programs, environmental protections, civil rights, and the separation of church and state, the necessity of creating a powerful alternative to the Religious Right could not be any clearer. We have found a way to effectively win back to progressive politics people alienated by the spiritual deadness of the liberals/Left. You personally need this effort to be successful. Even if it means donating \$3 a day or \$100 a month to make this happen. You can join or contribute online at www.tikkun.org or by sending a check (or credit card info) to Tikkun (put NSP on the bottom left hand side of the check). If you are already a dues-paying member of the Tikkun Community, that membership also covers your NSP dues. However, if you're not, please join!

In this and the next few issues we will have selections from some of the ideas that were discussed at the conference. You can also check out even more material at our website at www.tikkun.org. And please resolve now to come to our upcoming conference in Washington, D.C. (details in our November issue).

Precisely because the July conference had such a supportive environment, it was immediately apparent when old habits momentarily reappeared—as they inevitably will—highlighting the issues that still need to be worked on and transcended. Among the problems we still need to work on:

Waiting for someone else to do it for us. We'd like to see social change, but we tend to want someone else to do it for us, or at least get it started and rolling. "Call us when it's all together and big enough to make a difference," we say either explicitly or implicitly by our actions. Of course, that will never happen. The stark reality is that the world we want to see—and even the social change movement we want to see—will only come into existence if we make it happen ourselves, organizationally and financially.

Focusing on who is not yet in the room. One way that we

get off the hook of responsibility for reaching out is to obsess over not having enough of some category or other (obvious: third world, but if we had that, we'd obsess over not having enough of something else—poor people, for example, or Muslims, or Red Staters, or college students or...the list is potentially endless). Of course, we'd be *right* to be self-critical and to try to do more to extend our constituencies, but please note how this kind of self-criticism often functions as an alternative to actually doing the outreach to bring the groups in question in. But it's also true that a movement that tells the people who show up that they are not adequate because they are white or middle class or heterosexual or male or privileged or whatever is a movement that will never amount to anything. The central message of our movement must be: you are enough, you have enough, and there is enough for everyone to share. So while encouraging outreach to others, we should have no space in our movement for the destructive identity politics that make some identities not OK or implicitly blames or shames the men, whites, or heterosexuals who have come to change and heal our social problems for the racism, sexism, and homophobia they actually came to fight against.

Waiting for the great leader. Another way people avoid

taking responsibility is to wait for a Martin Luther King, Jr. or a Nelson Mandela, not remembering that these great leaders' achievements were only possible because there already was a movement in which they could play an important role. Thank God for Fannie Lou Hammer and the thousands of others who took the first steps and created the context for the Civil Rights movement. All our leaders are flawed—focusing on the flaws disempowers them and us. As the Talmud wisely teaches, “do not judge your fellow human being till you've stood in their place,” lived their life, and seen the world through their framework. We can challenge bad policies and oppose people who hold those policies from holding positions of power, but we should avoid making personal judgments.

I was encouraged by how infrequently these kinds of dynamics manifested at our first step in creating the Network of Spiritual Progressives. I was also encouraged at the degree to which religious persons and “spiritual but *not* religious” people have been willing to accept each other in the context of the Network of Spiritual Progressives and not try to prove to the other that they are wrong. Let's keep that going, and we will be well positioned to bring our vision into the mainstream of American discourse. □

The Goals of the Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP)

1 Changing the Bottom Line in America. Today, institutions and social practices are judged efficient, rational, and productive to the extent that they maximize money and power. That's the Old Bottom Line. Here is the *New Bottom Line* that we advocate: We believe that institutions and social practices should be judged rational, efficient, and productive not only to the extent that they maximize money and power, but also to the extent that they maximize love and caring, ethical and ecological sensitivity and behavior, kindness and generosity, non-violence and peace, and enhance our capacities to respond to other human beings in a way that honors them as embodiments of the sacred, and nurtures our capacities to respond to the earth and the universe with awe, wonder, and radical amazement.

2 Challenging the misuse of religion, God, and spirit by the Religious Right, and educating people of faith to the understanding that a serious commitment to God, religion, and spirit should manifest itself in social activism aimed at peace, universal disarmament, and social justice, with a preferential option for the needs of the poor and the oppressed. We affirm our interconnection with all people on the planet—and insist that faith should translate itself into a commitment to ending poverty, hunger, homelessness, inadequate education, and inadequate health care around the world, and to repairing the damage done to the environment by 150 years of environmentally

irresponsible approaches to industrialization, investment, trade, energy, and transportation.

3 Challenging the many anti-religious and anti-spiritual assumptions and behaviors that have increasingly become a part of the liberal culture, and challenging as well the extreme individualism that permeates global market culture. We will educate people in social change movements to carefully distinguish between their legitimate critiques of the Religious Right and their illegitimate generalizing of those criticisms to all religious or spiritual beliefs and practices. We will help social change activists become more conscious of—and less afraid to affirm—their own inner spiritual yearnings and to reconstitute a visionary progressive social movement that incorporates the spiritual dimension.

The NSP welcomes “spiritual but not religious” people as well as people connected to some religious community. The NSP is a project of the Tikkun Community, so we encourage NSP members to join a local Tikkun chapter or, if they prefer, to form their own local NSP chapter. We also invite organizations sharing our perspective (as defined in the Core Vision of the Tikkun Community, the article “Why America Needs a Spiritual Left,” and Rabbi Lerner's forthcoming *The Left Hand of God*) to affiliate. The relevant articles and information on how to join as an individual or organization and get involved are at www.tikkun.org or you can email Simone@tikkun.org or call (510) 644-1200 for more written materials.

London, Utopia

Joel Schalit

It was the first day of sixth grade. Looking outside the window, I could see the rain pouring down hard on the sidewalk below. Tired and frustrated because I hadn't secured the homeroom desk that I'd wanted, I sat there waiting for our teacher to take roll and force us to make our customary introductions to each other. The only things I could think of were how fast the day would pass and whether or not I'd be able to get a pass to eat lunch off campus.

"Okay now," Miss Kennedy finally said, "I want you all to be quiet and begin introducing yourselves, starting with the front row." A short, fat boy wearing a beige cashmere sweater, with head of thick, black, comb-backed hair began. "My name is Ahmed," he said in nearly flawless English, smiling. "I just moved here from Saudi Arabia." Next up was the dark, pretty girl to his right. "My name is Farnaz," she said. "And where are you from?" Miss Kennedy asked. "Iran," Farnaz replied. "I just moved here too."

And so, based on my survey of how many Middle Eastern-looking kids were in the room, it was clear that Miss Kennedy—a young, blonde and blue-eyed teacher married to an American serviceman stationed in London—wanted us all to confess our countries of origin. Following Farnaz was a boy from Syria, followed by an Iraqi, another Iranian, a kid from Lebanon, a girl from Libya and finally, me. "Joel," Miss Kennedy asked, staring at my nametag, "do you want to introduce yourself?"

An enormous silence fell over the room. I was terrified. I just could not issue a reply. Miss Kennedy stared at me



with a concerned look on her face. "What's the matter Joel," she asked. "Has the cat got your tongue?" My classmates began to giggle. Finally, seeing fifteen curious faces staring intently at me, waiting for me to say something, I finally blustered "Hi, my name is Joel. I'm from Israel. Can I go to the bathroom, please?"

In retrospect, there was absolutely no reason to be nervous. None of us was older than eleven, and besides, no matter what kind of ideology you inculcate children with, as I discovered that year in London, it appeared as though all vestiges of the Middle East conflict seem to disappear through the classroom collaborations and the friendships we inevitably fell into. At least once a week, Ahmed, the nephew of a Saudi government official, would treat me to a free lunch at the cheeseburger joint around the corner, where we both would very unselfconsciously violate every dietary restriction of our respective traditions. And we loved it.

Even at that age, I knew this was

something different. Though I had never been raised to actively hate anyone—indeed, my father would always chide me when I'd talk about how bad Arab infantry were supposed to be, reminding me of how brutally Egyptian forces surprised us at the beginning of the Yom Kippur War—I could not muster an ounce of bad feeling towards any of my

Islamic classmates. I was just scared of them because I'd never spent any time with Muslims before.

If there was any defining characteristic of our relationships that year, it was how warm they were—full of gestures of physical affection and warmth, absent of the teasing and bullying I was accustomed to from my American and Israeli friends. It was as though we were all relieved to meet other people from basically the same place, without any reference to the countries we originally hailed from. We were just kids seeking friendship in a cold and dark place that we all tacitly agreed felt like the end of the world.

I've been replaying my last year of school in the United Kingdom for days now, as I attempt to make sense of what led four British Muslims to stage Europe's first homegrown suicide bombings. And I am angered by it. Not because I'm in denial of the fact that U.K. foreign policy in Iraq and the deficiencies of British multiculturalism contributed to what transpired. What upsets me is how these events negate the memory of a utopian experience I will always identify with London. □

Joel Schalit is managing editor of *TIKKUN*. His memoir, *Jerusalem Calling*, is available from Akashic Books.

FREE ASSOCIATIONS

Peace without Sisters?

When looking at pictures of the partial transfer of power that had been taking place in a number of West Bank cities since Abu Mazen was elected in January, we see an unsettling absence of women on the receiving end of the process.

This absence prompts us to ask who is transferring power, and to whom? In the spring, *Ha'aretz* published a picture of an Israeli officer, his arm around his Palestinian equivalent, confiding to his colleague all the final details of the impending security hand-over in Tulkarem. On the one hand, we should applaud this form of collaboration; for, undoubtedly, Palestinians policing their own cities will reduce tension and violence, and will work as a symbol for political autonomy to come. On the other, any substantial peace relies upon the health of Palestinian civil society, which is threatened by escalating militarism. In this light, who can forget the PA's legacy of civic negligence and political repression, including the suspension of due process and the use of torture, during the Oslo years? The point is that we should be wary of a "peace" plan that transfers power without transforming it.

One way to challenge this impoverished idea of peace is to complicate national sovereignty with a gendered critique of militarism. In this we have allies, such as the Israeli

feminist group New Profile (www.newprofile.org). Their work is predominately educational and includes staging debates, lectures, and discussion circles on such themes as the relationships between democracy, responsibility, and militarism in Israeli society; and the construction of Jewish masculinity, nationality, and militarism.

Such projects question the status quo that seeks to equate male military collaboration across national borders with genuine and peaceful mutuality. They endorse a richer vision of transferring power—a vision left unrealized by armed Palestinian men picking up where Israeli men left off—that supports the national

struggle as a feminist struggle, insisting that power be managed through civil society, with a commitment to equal rights and opportunities, and the privileging of education and economic betterment over arms and security.

This nationalism "interrupted" by feminist concerns is all the more important if what we are witnessing is the beginning of a transition from colonial occupation to post-colonial independence. As it stands now, "independence" in Israel/Palestine means the transfer of military authority to Palestinians, which, while challenging Israeli hegemony, reinforces male and militaristic trends within Palestinian society. —Max Shmookler



Impeachment? It's Time

The so-called Downing Street memo is among the latest pieces of evidence that the Bush administration was planning an invasion of Iraq long before it had legal justification for doing so. According to the memo, dated 23 July 2002 and written by the British foreign policy aide Matthew Rycroft, "Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD. But the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy."

Many opponents of the war have long argued that the administration fabricated WMD intelligence, which supporters have called a "massive intelligence failure." But looking back to Colin Powell's WMD presentation at the UN and Bush's State of the Union blunder, we see an administration

that was not saving war as a last resort.

There has indeed been a massive failure, but the President is not solely to blame. The Constitution entrusts declarations of war to Congress, but Congress has not done its job properly since the Second World War—the last time a formal declaration was issued. The failure rests mostly on our Congressional representatives, who tend to prefer party loyalty and opinion polls to respect for our constitution.

However, all is not lost. A group of approximately 100 Democrats, led by John Conyers, has demanded that the President publicly address the Downing Street Memo. By July 28, still no reply. A Zogby poll dated June 30 found that 42 percent of voters are in favor of impeachment proceedings, should it be found that Bush lied about his reasons for invading Iraq. —Adam Scow

AP PHOTO/ODED BALILY

Listening to Dr. Dobson

This summer, the Supreme Court issued two opposing decisions on cases concerning the display of the Ten Commandments on government property. The Supreme Court ruled that a Texas display was acceptable,

because it did not have a religious purpose, but was shown in historical context. However, the Kentucky display did have an overtly religious purpose and was, therefore, unconstitutional.

According to the Benjamin Spock of family values, Dr.

James C. Dobson, the court's decisions "tore a hole through the First Amendment" because they stripped the Ten Commandments of their meaning: "What it said is that you can only post the Ten Commandments in public buildings if you don't believe

it, if it has no meaning, if it is simply an historic document or edifice" [sic].

Like many right-wing evangelicals, of course Dr. Dobson would object to these rulings, because they insist on the continued separation of church and state. However, progressives should note the shrewd political logic of Dobson's criticism. The constitutionally guaranteed right to the free exercise of religion, in his interpretation, extends to the body of the state. Not only does the constitution guarantee the right to proselytize on government property, but according to Dobson it also guarantees government the right to proselytize to its citizenry, because this is what freedom of religious expression *really* means.

Dobson is one of the single most important religious intellectuals and political leaders in America today, and many people take his words very seriously. When Dobson makes such a statement, it is the Evangelical equivalent of a Vatican Decree that is meant to communicate a policy position not only to church goers, but to social conservatives as a whole—specifically, the Republican Party. With the nomination of John Roberts for the Supreme Court, it's well worth our while to take such words seriously, too, as we work to combat the establishment of a theocracy in the United States.

—Jeani Hunt Gibbon

The End of Civil Law?

Dominionists are radical Calvinists who believe that God, having given man dominion over the living creatures of the earth, also gives the "elect" power over the U.S. government. America's leading Dominionist, Pat Robertson, expresses this position in the following terms: God "desires mature sons and daughters who will in My name exercise dominion over the earth and will subdue Satan, the unruly, and the rebellious."

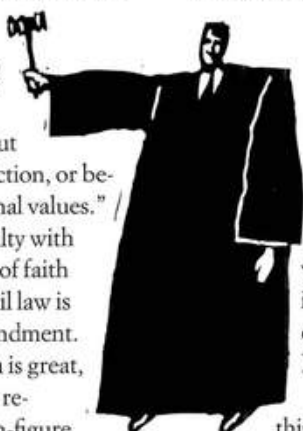
Over the last twenty years, Robertson has spent billions of dollars to translate this ideology into politics. In 1986, he distributed to the Iowa Republican County Caucus a pamphlet entitled "How to Participate in a Political Party." It read: "Rule the world for God. Give the impression that you are there to work for the party, not push an ideology." Fast forward nineteen years, and the 2002 Republican Party Platform of Texas reads: "We oppose any criminal or civil penalties against those who oppose ho-

mosexuality out of faith, conviction, or belief in traditional values."

The difficulty with lifting the law of faith above U.S. civil law is the First Amendment. Since America is great, and the newly revamped action-figure God is great, according to Dominionist logic, the lack of the word "God" in the Constitution must have been a mere oversight.

Justice Antonin Scalia, recipient of God's secret Constitution decoder ring, has said that his interpretation of this document is "not what current society...thinks it ought to mean, but what it meant when it was adopted." And what it meant, contrary to the exact wording, was that the state should, in fact, "establish" a religion and require a "religious test" for public office. Why let the fact that seven of nine Founders doubted Christ's divinity get in the way of direct knowledge of God's will for America?

Enter the alarming Constitutional Restoration Act



(House Resolution 1070 and Senate resolution S. 520), which travels back in time to read—or change—the Founders' minds. According to this proposed legis-

lation, a judge may assert that God is the sovereign source of law, supreme to any federal law—indeed, to every law made by human beings. It looks like Biblical punishments (example: executions for sedition or sodomy, stoning for adultery) doled out by religious fanatics would not be subject to judicial review by the federal courts either. We are free to carry out the violence is sanctioned by a certain brand of religion without the oversight of the judicial system. Katherine Yurica reminds us that Robertson prophesied just this in March of 1986: "Congress could say, 'There's a whole class of cases you can't hear' and there's nobody can do anything about it!"

—Simone Richmond

Fashioning Sacred Words

Or N. Rose

It is customary for Jews to begin their spiritual preparation for the High Holy Days thirty days before Rosh Hashanah. During the month of *Elul*, the final month of the Hebrew calendar, people traditionally take on various ritual practices, including the recitation of special prayers and psalms, the sounding of the shofar (the ram's horn), and studying materials relating to the subject of *teshuvah* ("return" or repentance).

This year, my preparation for the *Yamim Noraim* (Days of Awe) included the study of the following short piece of text from the *Kedushat Levi* ("The Holiness of Levi"), a collection of sermons on the Torah and the calendar cycle, by the famed Hasidic master, Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev (1740–1809). A member of the early Hasidic vanguard, Levi Yitzhak was a key figure in the spiritual renaissance of eighteenth-century Eastern European Jewish life. While this text may seem difficult or esoteric upon first reading, I believe it offers a fresh and imaginative perspective on the meaning of the High Holy Days. Through his creative use of rabbinic and mystical symbolism, Levi Yitzhak presents a novel interpretation of the roles of God and humankind at the New Year.

Levi Yitzhak's main exegetical move in this text is to deconstruct the very first word of the Hebrew Bible. The book of Genesis begins with the word "*Bereshit*," commonly understood as "In the beginning." The word "*reshit*" means "beginning" and the letter

"B" (*Bet* in Hebrew) placed in front of it usually means "In." Levi Yitzhak, however, chooses to separate the letter "B" from "*reshit*," so that "*Bereshit*" is now read as two separate words, "*Bet*" and "*reshit*." In Hebrew, letters have numerical equivalents, so the letter "*Bet*"—the second letter of the alphabet—equals "two." Thus, "*Bet reshit*" means "two beginnings."

But why are "two beginnings" so important to Levi Yitzhak? The short answer is that this interpretation provides him with a context in which to speak about the complicated ways that God and humankind—the two protagonists of this homily—share in the creation and renewal of life.

Jewish mystics (kabbalists) envision life as emerging from the depths of God's inner self. Vitality (*shefa*) emanates from the Divine and flows throughout the cosmos, taking on an endless array of shapes and forms. God is thus imagined as both the source and the stuff of life! Often the kabbalists speak of this process of emanation as involving, paradoxically, some measure of Divine limitation or constriction (*tzimtzum*). This, they say, allows God's creations to enjoy a degree of independent existence. In this case, however, Levi Yitzhak states that it is we who limit and shape God's free-flowing energy, creating the words "life," "wisdom," and "wealth," among many others.

Levi Yitzhak uses the symbols of the High Holy Days to demonstrate

the importance of human action in making meaning in our lives. God's bounty, he suggests, is symbolized by the blast(s) of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah—the pure sound of the ram's horn carries with it infinite meaning. In listening to the shofar we are to understand that God's vitality flows through the world with special vigor on this day, and that we have the opportunity to use this powerful dose of *shefa* to refashion our lives. Indeed, the rabbis refer to Rosh Hashanah as the

"In the beginning (*Bereshit*)..." (Genesis 1:1)

The word *Bereshit* ("In the beginning") can also be read as *Bet reshit* ("Two beginnings").

The Holy One pours forth bounty and we, through our prayers, limit and shape this bounty, each of us according to our will. One person forms the letters of the word "life," a second forms the letters of the word "wisdom," and still another, the letters of the word "wealth." And so it is with all good things, each [is shaped] according to our will.

Now everything spiritual has a physical counterpart: [for example,] sound and speech exist [in both realms]; sound is inclusive, while speech is the concretization of sound through the letters of speech. The sound of the shofar (ram's horn) on Rosh Hashanah is the bounty of the blessed Creator—it is inclusive. The prayers we say ... shape the Divine bounty through letters, each according to our will.

The inclusive bounty that comes forth from the blessed Creator is the "Written Torah" and that which we shape with the bounty is the "Oral Torah," for Oral Torah is [fashioned] according to the will of Israel, according to their interpretations of the Written Torah. This is the meaning of "*Bereshit*": *Bet reshit*, "Two beginnings"—Written Torah and Oral Torah.

—by *Kedushat Levi*, Genesis

Or N. Rose, a contributing editor to *TIKKUN*, teaches at the Rabbinical School of Hebrew College. Or is the author of *God in All Moments: Spiritual and Practical Wisdom from the Hasidic Masters (Jewish Lights)*, and is currently writing a Ph.D. thesis on the mystical teachings of Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev.

birthday of the world, a time of renewal and possibility.

The words of prayer that we utter on the High Holy Days are the beginning of the articulation of our spiritual vision for the coming year. We respond to the call of the shofar by concretizing the Divine bounty in the form of sacred words and deeds. While the prescribed words of the *mahzor* (High Holy Day prayer book) may serve as a helpful resource at the outset of this process, ultimately each of us must write the script of our own life.

Levi Yitzhak ends this meditation on the “two beginnings” by referring to the “Written Torah” and the “Oral Torah.” The Written Torah is the Hebrew Bible: the Five Books of Moses and the prophetic and later writings. The Oral Torah can refer more narrowly to the interpretations of the Bible by the early rabbis of the Talmud (first- to sixth-century C.E.) which were originally oral discussions, or more broadly, as in this case, to the interpretations of Jewish commentators, lay and rabbinic, throughout time.

One might wonder why Levi Yitzhak uses the symbol of the Written Torah to describe God’s infinite bounty, since the Hebrew Bible is actually a limited corpus, a closed canon. Is

not the Oral Torah—with its seemingly endless number of commentaries—a better symbol for Divine blessing? For Levi Yitzhak and his mystical compatriots, the Written Torah is considered boundless because it is the word of God. It is the source of and inspiration for all Jewish creativity, a text in which each and every word and letter can be plumbed for an array of meanings; the transformation of “*Bereshit*” into “*Bet reshit*” is but one example.

In this text, Levi Yitzhak encourages us reconsider the meaning of the High Holy Days. We are asked to reframe our relationship to God and to take seriously our capacity to reshape our lives. Unlike many other High Holy Day sermons, God is not presented here as “Judge” or “King,” but as the source and substance of existence. While it is the Divine that ultimately gives or takes life, only we can make meaning in our lives. Levi Yitzhak urges us to consider carefully what “words” we will form in the coming year, and what specific actions we will take to bring them to life. May we have the courage this High Holy Day season to fashion words of justice and compassion, and the determination to live by these words throughout the year. □

The Perils and Possibilities of Teshuvah

Michael Bader

At the end of the first season of the *Sopranos*, Tony Soprano is sitting in his therapist’s office when she confronts him with the likelihood that his mother, Livia, has conspired with his Uncle to have Tony killed. Suddenly, Tony leaps up, knocks over a table, grabs the therapist by the throat and yells: “That’s my mother we’re talking about. Not some screw up in Attica, stabbing you in the shower. See, we’re through, you and I. We’re finished. You’re lucky if I don’t break your face in 50,000 pieces.” Tony storms out of the office, quitting therapy in a full blown rage.

Now, most of us are not like Tony Soprano, and certainly most of us haven’t had mothers as malignant as Tony’s. But this scene highlights a profound human truth: *Human beings cannot tolerate fully confronting the pathology of their parents nor can they fully register the meaning of the pain of their childhood.*

Instead, as children we cannot help but blame ourselves to

some extent. Sometimes this is overt and obvious; for example, a patient who had been beaten a lot as a child told me: “Well, they *were* too rough but, then again, I *was* a troublemaker.” Sometimes the self-blame is subtle and unconscious: the child merely complies with the parent’s treatment. For example, a patient of mine who was neglected by very self-centered parents secretly believed that she was probably hard to care for or that she simply needed too much. In other words, whatever awareness she might have had that her upbringing hurt her, this awareness was belied by the unspoken belief that ultimately she deserved what she got. She was conscious of her sense of injustice, but she was *unconscious* of her sense of unworthiness.

All of us are wired to protect our parents and ourselves from a full awareness of the ways we’ve been hurt. It is said that a child would rather be a “sinner in Heaven than a saint in Hell.” Children would rather see themselves as having been bad seeds in a benign environment than as innocent in a hurtful one. We all have a difficult time feeling innocent.

This is true even if we know better. You can tell a child that it’s not his or her fault, that he or she isn’t a bad kid but rather is simply responding to a bad environment, and it won’t make any difference: that child will still take too much

Michael Bader is a psychologist and psychoanalyst in private practice in San Francisco. He is on the Editorial Board of *TIKKUN* and the author of *Arousal: The Secret Logic of Sexual Fantasies* (St. Martins Press).

responsibility. An extreme example of this apparent immunity to reality is the often-observed phenomenon of abused children choosing to stay with their abusers. Such children have the terrible problem of depending on the very people abusing them. Not only do they, like all kids, take responsibility for their own pain, but they have no real choice but to remain in a painful relationship rather than face the possibility of having no relationship at all.

The child in us is resistant to feeling innocent, because it would mean facing the emotional reality that our caretakers might not have cared enough about us, or might have hurt us, or were too self-centered to really see us, or even at times might have hated us. Not only can we not face that reality, but we can't face our helplessness to change it. Ultimately, our helplessness derives from the fact that we were dependent on our families for a sense of reality, safety, and morality.

Now, since many of us are parents, let me be clear: I'm talking about the world as children experience it, not some objective world. And it's a world that we too experienced as children. For the time being, we're going to stay inside the subjective world of the children inside all of us and not make judgments about objective reality. It is an irreducible fact that even families with the best of loving intentions inevitably wound their children emotionally and that these children inevitably take responsibility for their own suffering.

We're certainly all familiar with this phenomenon when it appears in a social or political form. In a society that is supposed to reward merit, those who aren't "making it" come to feel that it's their fault. It's difficult to blame our rigged economic system, racial or gender barriers, or inequities of opportunity, because secretly we believe that it's the moral failure of the individual. In addition, feeling responsible and blaming oneself contain a tortured but secret hope that if we could just change ourselves, we could change our world. We preserve a fantasy of some form of agency by maintaining that the problem lies within us, not outside in social institutions over which we might be powerless.

Accepting our actual innocence, then, requires facing ways that we might be essentially powerless. And human beings cannot tolerate feeling helpless. To the human psyche, fully accepting that we're helpless victims of a hurtful or indifferent world is catastrophic. We'd much rather feel guilty than helpless. At least when we feel guilty, we maintain the illusion that our caretakers and social authorities are good and that we can transcend our lot and be good too if only we can change ourselves.

Unfortunately, guilt and self-blame may be preferable to feeling helpless, but they are still painful feelings and beliefs, and our minds inevitably try to get rid of them. We all seek ways of getting off the hooks on which our consciences put us. For example, we blame others. We rationalize. We claim that *we're* the victims. We become martyrs. Anything to get back on the moral high ground. Anything to feel a semblance of innocence.

Externalizing like this, however, doesn't permanently get rid of our guilt because what drives us to externalize isn't some remorse about a current event, but is rather this deeper and special guilt that arose in our families when we complied with various negative messages. Or it's a guilt that we feel when we take personal responsibility for a social lot in life.

The reason that these deeper beliefs and feelings are always with us is that they are unconscious and have helped us adapt to difficult environments. They arose in the context of relationships upon which we were totally dependent and which had an awesome authority to define both reality and morality for us. And they are embedded in the cultural fabric of everyday life. Thus, irrational as it may be, this propensity to feel overly guilty and responsible is, for many people, always there in the background and, as a result, always has to be fended off, externalized, and struggled with.

With that as a backdrop, let us talk about *Teshuvah* (the Jewish "days of turning and repentance" around the High Holidays). What happens when someone—let's say someone like you or me—hurts someone else? Let's say that it's not intentional, although for my purposes it doesn't matter. We might feel appropriately bad or guilty. Logically, this might lead to a wish to apologize or make amends. And apologies are great things. So why, then, are they so hard to do? How many times did your parents apologize to you in a genuine way when you were growing up? If it happened, I'll bet you remember it. When it happens, it can be quite profound.

So why don't more people do it? Why do we have to be in twelve-step programs or therapy or go to Yom Kippur services to face the ways that we've hurt others, to atone, and to ask for forgiveness? After all, the hurt we've caused is often at least partially repaired by a good and sincere apology, alleviating our guilt in the process?

The reason we don't do it more often is that our consciences don't distinguish between old and new sins, between irrational and rational responsibility, and between appropriate and inappropriate guilt. These distorted forms of responsibility, self-blaming, and guilt that we've been discussing lie deep within us and are activated whenever we feel a rational

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sense of guilt about hurting someone. It's a slippery slope. If we give in an inch, we unconsciously worry that we'll have to give in a mile and be flooded with feelings of being bad. But as we've seen, our minds don't tolerate such feelings very easily. Apologizing for a bad action is unconsciously equated with apologizing for being a bad person.

Where does this leave us, then, when it comes to forgiveness? At Yom Kippur we offer forgiveness as well as ask for it. We are not only encouraged to make amends to others and to God for the ways we've been hurtful and fallen short of our ideals, but to find a way of forgiving those who have hurt us. The problem, however, is that not only does unconscious guilt and self-blame interfere with atonement, but it makes forgiveness problematic as well.

For example, I frequently hear from my patients and read in self-help books that the goal of psychological growth is to forgive your parents and take responsibility for your own life. And often this is indeed a helpful goal for people. But not always. The reason is that *forgiveness can too easily be compliance*. Think about it in its most extreme form. Abused children "forgive" their abusers by taking on responsibility for the latter's actions. Most children unconsciously "forgive" their parents all the time, for precisely the reasons I gave at the beginning—namely, that want to believe in a world that is essentially and just and relationships that are always loving and nurturing.

One might say that in these cases forgiveness jumps the gun. It skips a step, a big one, perhaps the most difficult psychological task that people face, namely, facing emotional reality. And the most difficult aspect of this reality is to confront one's own innocence and victimization, which then necessitates facing the reality that one's caretakers might not have had your interests at heart, either some of the time or all of the time. Most of us can accept these realities intellectually but not emotionally.

Therefore, we are motivated to "forgive" in order to then "forget." Our guilt—about being too independent or separate, about being disloyal, about judging and being critical of those who take care of us, about recognizing the pathology of people we idealize—leads us to leap at the idea that we should forgive those who have hurt us.

But because it is a defensive forgiveness, it often doesn't work, and it doesn't usually heal us or our relationships. Similarly, when we atone for our sins against others, whether in our minds or in reality, such atonement often doesn't really stick either. In both cases, the primitive type of guilt and denial that most of us harbor within us remain stumbling blocks.

It doesn't have to be that way, of course. Teshuvah properly done can be extremely powerful if it begins with a recognition that we are all imperfect and that we need to view our shortcomings through a lens of sympathy, understanding, and self-love. When our self-scrutiny is witnessed by another, or by our community, our private sense of being uniquely screwed up is lessened. And by truly facing without denial

the reality of our childhoods and our society, we can even begin to see our persecutors, past and present, as themselves only flawed human beings deserving of compassion. And in so doing, we can begin to free ourselves from a victim role and make possible true reconciliation and growth.

When it comes to our personal relationships, however, sometimes such reconciliation is not only impossible but not preferable. Because so often our primary need is to face and accept our own innocence, the real ways that we were hurt and powerless, the ways that on a spiritual level we are all ultimately made in the image of God. People who claim the loudest that they are innocent are usually people who feel the guiltiest. People who are the most determined to forgive those who hurt them in the past and present are often people who can't tolerate the feelings of hurt, helplessness, and anger that should have accompanied the injustice that was actually done to them.

It is vital, then, that we begin our Teshuvah with compassion for ourselves—not in the service of our narcissism, but in the service of being able to heal ourselves, our relationships, and our world. We have to believe in our innocence not only in order to fight against complying with the evil of others but in order to, at times, reconcile with it. We have to reject our false sense of badness in order to face the real ways we may act badly. We have to believe in our own goodness in order to eventually truly recognize the goodness of others. □



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The Dark Refuge

Matt Rees

The funeral gave me something interesting to do on Christmas Day. Since I became an adult, I haven't liked Christmas. It was about the time of the morning that millions of parents were feeding their children's Santa delusions when a dead man's daughter-in-law called to say he was gone and that the funeral would be held in three hours. Yes, I thought, I'll attend the funeral and tell anyone who asked me what I did for Christmas that I had gone to a burial and that I liked that better than the false bonhomie and sleep-making turkey of the holiday.

I drove up from Jerusalem in a rainstorm that seemed vindictive, as though it wished to drown the land, to punish Israel for the way it let this dead man go. It lashed the familiar route along the edge of the West Bank, skirting the central plain to the moshav near Tulkarem. I rode the speed bumps through the yellow gate of Moshav Sde Yitzhak and passed the standard old huts, painted a dirty cream. The long plots of farmland behind the huts were neglected because there was no one left here but the old who could no longer tend their farms. When they died, their children would sell the plots for villas and they would use the cash to buy bigger homes in Tel Aviv. The little huts represented someone's struggle, a battle to draw nourishment from this crappy soil, promised and parched. The strugglers need not have bothered. Their pomegranates and tulips would soon be uprooted by the foundations of some bland, red-roofed little palace, built with the proceeds of an internet entrepreneur's percentage-per-mouse-click. That was the new power here, just as it had been socialist patronage that held the cards in the decades before. After all, Israel never belonged to the people who lived in these little huts.

I came for the funeral of Alexander Klein, but I couldn't help feeling there was an entire country that was being buried here. Well, if it was, it wasn't my country. My country was Wales—mountainous, green, rock-louring. The sufferings of my people were stuffed way down into their bellies by the quiet of recent history and tickled around their penurious centers by the soothing little fingers of English prosperity. In contrast, Israel's sufferings were spectacular, and no Israeli swallowed them; they vomited them all over each other and blamed someone else for the stench and built their flashy, new villas on the graves of the people to whom they should have

raised monuments. Still, at least it was raining, for a change. That was like my home.

Alexander Klein survived the Holocaust. You could say he survived Israel, too. Sometimes he wondered about that. I still do. He lived through them, the Holocaust and Israel, both. Survival—well, maybe you need time and distance and the kind of calm you find only in a grave to figure out if you really survived. The Nazis took him from Hungary to Melk, and then to the labor camp at Ebensee. Alexander ate a snail there, apologizing to it as he devoured it alive in its shell. He made it to Palestine in time for the war of 1948. He was thankful that the military men on the quay took him from the boat to the artillery, because at least there it mattered not that he spoke no Hebrew and had no training. In the infantry, these deficiencies may have been fatal to him, as they were to so many other new arrivals who didn't live through the charge across the fields at Latrun. He married his cousin, Atara, who lived through Auschwitz, and they raised fruit and cattle at Sde Yitzhak.

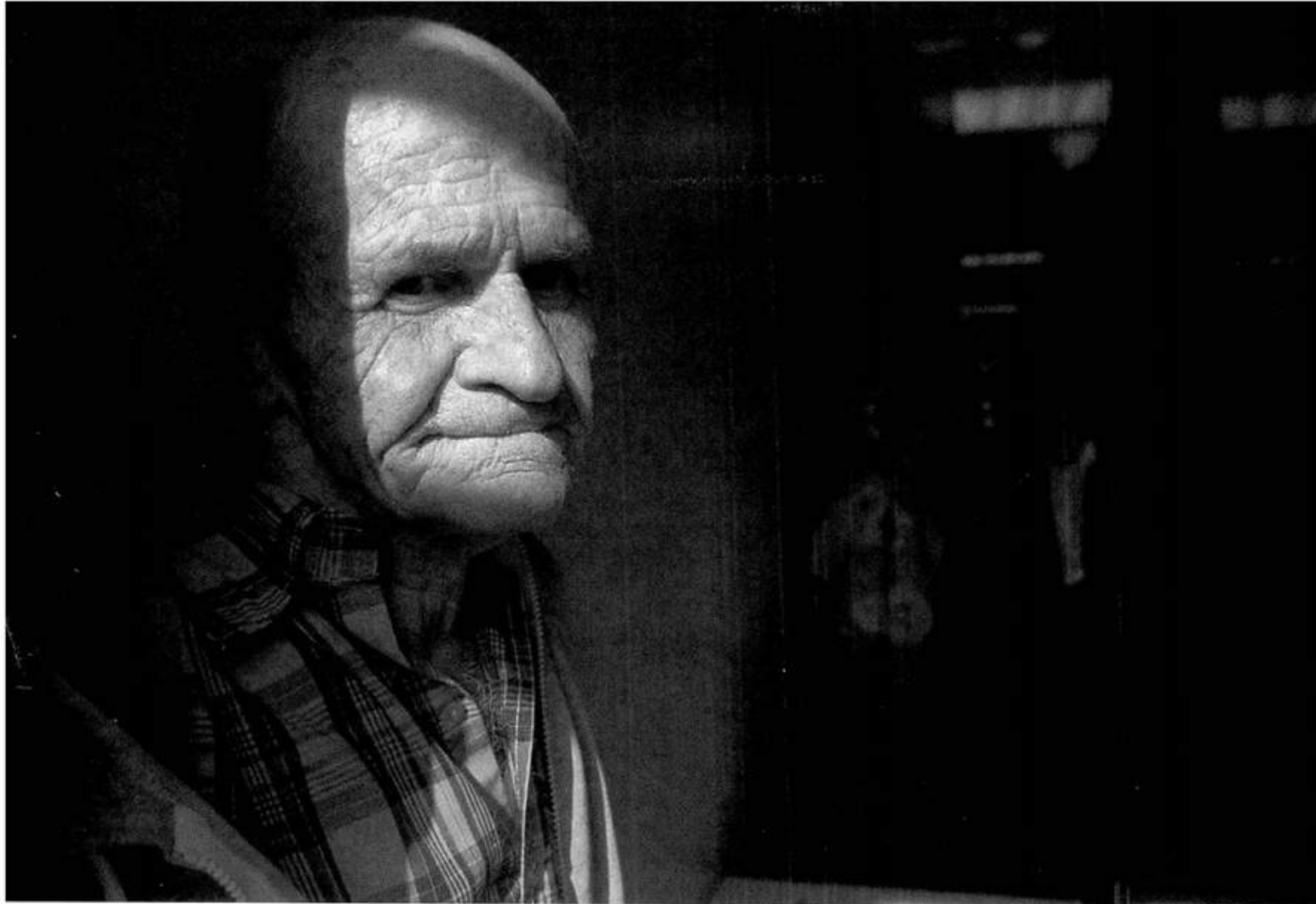
Alexander sat up late at night to guard his cows against Palestinians who came from Tulkarem across the Jordanian border. He sent his son Aharon to a military boarding school in Haifa. There the teenage boy lay awake at night, dreaming about growing up to take revenge on the Germans for what they did to Atara and Alexander. That son came to work for me. That's when I started to wonder who really survived.

Aharon Klein took me to see his parents, because I couldn't quite believe what he told me about the way Israeli bureaucrats treated Holocaust survivors. In my office in Jerusalem one morning, Aharon explained that Alexander and Atara volunteered at a hostel for mentally ill Holocaust survivors near Sde Yitzhak. "They say it's terrible there," he said. "The patients don't even have money for false teeth, for tombstones."

"But this is Israel," I said. "How could they treat Holocaust survivors like that here, of all places?" Later I would feel ashamed of the naivete in that statement. Like anyone who never studied the abuse and neglect of Holocaust survivors from the early days of the state until today, I assumed that Israel was founded primarily *because of* the Holocaust. Yes, there were Zionists before there were Nazis, but nonetheless I thought of the origins of the country as a sanctuary for Jews victimized by Hitler. I never wondered exactly how dark that refuge had been.

I drove Alexander and Atara to the hostel at Shaar Menashe Mental Health Center, where they did their volunteer work. At the door of the hostel, a small stream of patients

Matt Rees is the author of Cain's Field: Faith, Fratricide, and Fear in the Middle East (Free Press). He lives in Jerusalem, where he is bureau chief for Time magazine.



shuffled across the floor in their old carpet slippers and robes. "Who wants a cigarette?" a nurse called out. The gray faces were blank and staring as they shambled toward her. It was as though their walkers responded to the offer of the hourly smoke, not their bodies. They gathered around the counter, and the nurse proffered a light, one after the other kindling the cigarettes in their shaky hands. They dragged on the cheap tobacco with toothless mouths, scored around by deep wrinkles, then they turned and padded to the entrance to finish smoking in the heat outside. I held the door for them, and they passed me as if in a trance. They breathed the nicotine deeply and long, as though they might not live to smoke another cigarette.

There are grades of survival, of course. These ghostly smokers took a step to the good on the scale of torment when they moved to the hostel at Shaar Menashe, even if its air was rank with antiseptic and sweat and unwashed clothing and nightmares; they had spent the previous fifty years consigned by the Israeli state to dreadful government hospitals or cruel private clinics. I met people there who were only now recovering the use of their vocal chords, after decades strapped to their beds in solitary confinement. They stammered inhumanly, as though speaking through an electronic enhancer held to the outlet in the throat left by a laryngectomy. They es-

caped that much suffering, at least, thanks to three young psychiatrists who changed the shameful way Israel treated mentally ill Holocaust survivors. After I heard the stories of the inmates at Shaar Menashe, I decided to uncover the trail of neglect and abuse that led there. I drew a map, and it took me through all the supposed heroes of Zionism. It made me see them differently. I found inspiration in the young psychiatrists who, in their own way, were laudable in terms that no other Israeli could deserve. After all the years I've spent here, writing about the conflict, dispassionately filling the pages of magazines and newspapers with the clichés of radio and television interviews rattling about my head, I read this map of Israeli history and finally found a place where I could draw a little dot and, next to it, write my name.

At Abarbanel Mental Health Center in Bat Yam, the boys from the project next door goaded a bent old woman in the parking lot. She carried two plastic bags bursting with dog-eared papers, the obsessive pocketbook of the mentally ill. Past the metal turnstile at the entrance to the hospital, I walked beneath an arcade of sycamores. The morning's rain weighted the branches and the leaves drooped toward the puddled pavement, as though they were lining up to

get treatment for depression. The trees fronted single-story huts, not much different from the ones in which Atara and Alexander Klein lived on the moshav. They were painted the same dusky cream.

Patients idled under trees and the porches of the huts. Most were fat men with grizzled white chests and flabby breasts poking through their sky-blue pyjamas or women with uncombed hair so thin it seemed to have been sketched there by the soft-leaded pencil of a cartoonist. I passed a girl in her thirties. If she had been pouting from the pages of a glossy magazine, she would have been beautiful. Her face bore the same blank junkie stare and the blue pallor of an anorexic supermodel. Her hair was long and chestnut and lank. There was no energy in her skinny body, except where her lips compressed a cigarette. She pulled on it with power and a bland, distant expression, like a baby on a mother's nipple. It made me unconsciously sad to see a young woman here. I imagined that she would exude the same hopelessness when she was as old as the other inmates lounging in front of their huts, or the desperate smokers of Shaar Menashe. At least this was what I thought unconscionable sadness felt like. I was a beginner.

Yoram Barak took me to the hut at the end of the row where he found the Holocaust survivors. He unlocked the metal door. There was a courtyard shaded by another sycamore. The British army had built the place to house shell-shocked soldiers in World War II. A thin old woman lay on the floor, her flowery nylon smock riding up over her blue-gray legs. Barak stepped over her. I asked him if she was all right. "There's no air-conditioning," he said. "The floor is cold. This is how they cool down." In each room, there were fourteen metal-framed beds. Patients perched at the edges of the mattresses on cheap, fluffy blankets, as though their relatives had only just brought them there and they were yet to settle in.

Barak took over Psychogeriatrics at Abarbanel in 1996, when he was in his early thirties. He trained in Israel and Britain. He wanted to work with old people because he had loved his grandparents very much as a young man. On his first day, he left his office door open. His head nurse asked him why. "Perhaps one of the patients will want to come in and talk to me," he said.

"No one will come," said the nurse, Hannah.

Barak asked her, in that case, when they usually did the rounds of the patients. She told him that his predecessor didn't do rounds. "So they don't come and talk to me, and we don't go to talk to them? That's ridiculous. This is a psychi-

atric hospital—practically all we do is talk. Bring me the files. We're going to go to see everyone in the morning."

Hannah agreed to bring the files. "Even so, no one talks around here," she said.

When Barak saw the records and made his rounds he noticed that two-thirds of his patients were Holocaust survivors. Only a third of all Israeli old people are survivors. Yet no doctor in Barak's post had ever noted the extreme overrepresentation of survivors among Abarbanel's aged patients. They had been diagnosed as schizophrenic, mostly when they first came to Israel in the early years of the state. They received all the voguish treatments for schizophrenia—cold-water showers, electroconvulsive therapy, lithium, every other drug under the

sun. Nothing worked. All there was to show for these treatments were the side-effects of the drugs: a constant, exaggerated masticating, like a grotesque Popeye chewing his spinach with a toothless jaw, and sudden spasms jerking their forearms and hands. Evidently no one ever cared enough to try something different.

Barak joined with the head of Outpatients, Henry Szor, in changing the way the Holocaust survivors were diagnosed. Barak and Szor treated their patients for trauma, instead of schizophrenia, and discovered that their condition improved. They formulated a revolutionary concept they called

Lifelong Post-Traumatic Psychosis. Most of the patients had no more familial history of psychological disorder than patients who didn't go through the Holocaust. They must have been mentally strong to live through Auschwitz. A schizophrenic or a depressive probably wouldn't have survived that ordeal. So they weren't sick before the Holocaust, Barak figured. Yet they came out of the death camps with a psychotic illness that resisted treatment for fifty years. Barak and Szor developed their new diagnosis: their patients were post-traumatic *and* psychotic. Usually a psychosis isn't related to a real event. A psychotic might believe that imaginary Germans want to kill him, but the psychosis of the patients at Abarbanel was rooted deeply in the reality that a massive state apparatus indeed tried to destroy them. The Nazi campaign of genocide was so beyond the scope of normal reality that it somehow had the same effect on these patients as the fictions of a psychotic. This idea was the key to unlocking the minds of the sad inmates of Barak's Psychogeriatrics ward. With the help of the chief psychiatrist at the Ministry of Health, Moti Mark, the young doctors were able eventually to change the treatment of Holocaust survivors in hospitals all over Israel.

But they couldn't cure everyone.

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On one of my first visits to Barak at Abarbanel, I went with Aharon Klein. While I talked to Barak in his small, white office, Aharon sat in heavy silence for two hours, his arms folded, his long legs straight in front of him and crossed at the ankles. He stared at Barak with a smoldering hatred while Barak discussed the story of the Holocaust survivors with me. I didn't expect to see that look on Aharon's face. I'd seen it in restaurants in the expressions of angry husbands who appeared disgusted by their wives, or back in high school in the hateful expressions of skinheads taunting a Sri Lankan classmate. Yet here it was written on the features of a man who simply couldn't see beyond a lifetime of resentment. For him, the doctor before him was like all the other doctors who mistreated the survivors, like all the party bosses and kibbutzniks and army officers who scorned them and insisted that it was weakness and unworthiness that took Aharon's parents to the proximity of the gas chambers. It was a bitterness that blocked dialogue, for Aharon was fiercely silent toward Barak, even though the doctor was revolutionizing the way Israel treated its Holocaust survivors. The gulf between Israel's myth of the Holocaust and the reality in which Aharon grew up was so great that he would never let any ameliorating action diminish it.

The system that persecuted Alexander and Atara and the inmates of Abarbanel was assuaged somewhat by changes in Israel's social system during the 1990s, but only a little. There was no fundamental change in the way the state viewed the survivors. The history of that system was based on David Ben-Gurion's need for cash to fund his new state, which led him to

strike a controversial deal for a one-time payment of \$715 million from West Germany in 1953. The money didn't go to the Holocaust survivors. It built roads and the military. It paid for the party sinecures and medical care of Histadrut members who toed Ben-Gurion's line. Until the money was all gone. With the restitution spent elsewhere, bureaucrats paid out as little as possible to the survivors who ought to have benefited. Before the mid-1990s, the first people survivors met when they went to claim state benefits were former police investigators employed by the Finance Ministry to sniff out cheats. Slowly, in the 1990s, the dominance of the Labor Party declined and its grip of patronage on health and social services loosened. That left a gap for a few parliamentarians to force reform of the way Holocaust survivors were treated. But it was a slow job, and it isn't done yet.

In a modern Tel Aviv office tower sandwiched between the sunken Ayalon Highway and the eight frenetic lanes of Derech Petach Tikva, Rafi Pinto nervously offered me a coffee. Pinto was pale and almost hairless, like the runt of a Labrador litter. His smile quivered and betrayed his anxious, wide eyes and fiddling fingers. I came to him to talk about how his department of the Finance Ministry dealt out benefits to Holocaust survivors. It was clear that Pinto didn't expect the government to look good. He couldn't even fake the irritating Teflon swagger of the average mid-level Israeli Poohbah. Things must be worse than I figured in this department, I thought, as I watched Pinto swallow like a man on the verge of vomiting, before he asked his assistant to bring coffee. The secretary brought me a steaming, tasteless Nescafe in a glass

mug. Pinto gave the milky liquid a panicky glance as though he thought I might toss it over him.

Here's what Pinto had to tell me. For decades, the government tried to save on the money it was supposed to shell out to survivors. Only in 1996 did it publish the benefits to which Holocaust survivors had been entitled since the 1950s. As a result, applications went up fourfold. So unwelcoming and labyrinthine was the process for filing simple claims that survivors usually hired lawyers. Between 1995 and 2000, survivors paid \$25 million in commissions to these attorneys. Pinto's predecessor told him his job was "to save the government's money." In 1998, a Likud Knesset member pushed through a law that forced the government to pay Holocaust survivors the same amount as those who were entitled to receive their compensation from Germany. Pinto had to increase the average payment to Israeli survivors by 24 percent. "Germany was paying more than Israel for people with the same Holocaust history?" I asked him. Pinto blinked at my coffee cup again. Maybe he was quiet because there were other terrible injustices that were yet to be legislated away. Like this one, for example: when Pinto equalized the Israeli government's payments with those made by Germany, the Finance Ministry clawed a little of it back by subtracting a survivor's social security entitlement from the Holocaust compensation payment.

It was the same story when I went to the Justice Ministry's Custodian General. There I found a massive binder containing long lists in Hebrew of people killed by the Nazis and the property they had owned in pre-state Palestine. No one tried to find their heirs. When a presumptive heir came to claim what was his, he was not welcomed, to say the least. I visited a dignified old man in Caesarea who was trying to claim a bank deposit that had been made in Palestine by his Romanian uncle, who was gassed in Auschwitz. Gabriel Weiss spent an afternoon showing me the massive dossier of legalistic crap he had been sent over the years by the Justice Department. He gasped when he came to a particular letter. It was a demand for proof that his uncle died after his aunt, for if it were the other way around the aunt's relatives might be entitled to some of the money in the account—that's not to say that the account existed, mind you, the government clarified. After a correspondence stretching over an entire decade, Weiss settled for a fifth of what he believed was in the account, just to finish his contact with the heartless stone-wallers in the Justice Department.

When Yossi Beilin was Justice Minister under Ehud

Barak, his director-general told me Israel decided to open up its Holocaust accounts, \$35 million of property and dormant bank deposits, because "it looked bad for Israel to be pressing Swiss banks and the German companies that used slave labor, when we have a similar problem here." Damn right it looked bad. Yet not bad enough for people to take to the streets.

Why not? Because Israelis don't want to face their complicity in the way Holocaust survivors were treated and cheated. It's fine to blame the Swiss, or IG Farben, or the whole anti-Semitic bunch out there in Europe who'd do it to us all over again, if they could. But the lacuna in their own history was like raw skin under a bandage: don't look at it and it won't hurt and you can pretend it's healing. Keep it distant.

Go to the memorial at Yad Vashem on a school outing or army trip, cry a bit, and then forget about the abuse, the fleecing of Holocaust survivors by Israel. Imagine you are pure.

The country made a myth around the Holocaust, and the myth was like the repression that an individual places upon the unthinkable moments buried within his own subconscious. As I researched the mentally ill patients at Abarbanel, I began to think of human history as the constant accumulation of neurosis upon neurosis. I thought of Eden as a time when humans existed in a state of neo-natal present, unburdened by the memory of that moment when their mother screamed at them or

the first occasion they witnessed their father humiliated or were beaten in the street by someone they never met before. Each generation passed along its psychological messes to its children, who compounded them with new layers. Our original healthy psyche lay like an ancient city beneath the garbage and construction and steel pylons of subsequent neuroses and psychoses, like an early civilization glimpsed in an archeologist's trench dozens of feet below the furious level of a heedless modern street. When Tartars or Huns or thugs from the next valley swept through a village, there was no Yoram Barak to pull up a chair and ask the survivors how they felt about it all. It bubbled and boiled within them and spurted out in need-less anger and retaliations against innocents. I thought of this as *total psychosis*. Of course the ultimate horror in all these millennia of mayhem was the Holocaust, and it left those Jews who came to Israel as the untreated, disregarded descendants of an entire history of torment, living among people who refused to understand what it meant to have been through it.

I had my place in this total psychosis. Some years ago, my mother brought her coffee to the kitchen table and sat with

*Israelis don't want to face
their complicity in the way
Holocaust survivors were
treated and cheated. The
lacuna in their own history
is like raw skin under
a bandage: don't look at
it and it won't hurt and you
can pretend it's healing.
Keep it distant.*



me and my Jewish girlfriend. "I believe I'm the reincarnation of a Jew who died in Auschwitz," said my mother, who was born in 1942 in a steel town in South Wales. It was quite something to hit my girlfriend with on a first meeting, and we didn't say much more about it. You see, we're British, after all. But it was there, pegging me to the long, dismal sweep of the total psychosis, to the anguish of my mother, born to a father so tyrannical she felt a kinship of soul with the victims of Hitler. She fed it to me in her bouts of melancholia and rage, and I grew up under its dictation and filled with fear of it.

One of Barak's patients, who died in the ward while I researched this story, told him that he, the *sabra* doctor, was a survivor of the camps. "You survived, I didn't," the woman said, just before her death. I wondered if she was wrong. Did anyone survive?

There *were* people with special psychologies, people who lived on while others died on their feet with hatred. One afternoon in Kiryat Yovel, a scruffy neighborhood of Jerusalem, I listened to Jacques Stroumsa playing his violin. Stroumsa, who was born in Salonika, lost his wife and child at Auschwitz, where he played in the macabre camp orchestra. These days, Stroumsa tours the world, talking of his forgiveness toward the perpetrators of the Holocaust, playing the same scratchy violin that he bought in Paris soon after his liberation. He rocked back and forth on his heels, scraping his bow over the strings, scarcely taller than me, though I was sitting down on his low couch. He played an old Yiddish tune. When he finished, I asked him about the small riot that had unfolded a few days earlier when an orchestra in Petach Tikva

played Hitler's favorite composer Richard Wagner. Stroumsa thought it would be best not to deny Jews the pleasure of Wagner's music. "That would be *schade, dommage, haval*, a shame," he said, as though trying to encompass the slightly different meaning of the word in every language he could think of—German, French, Hebrew, English.

Stroumsa was one of the most inspiring men I ever met. After I left him, I walked through Kiryat Yovel. Like the rest of Jerusalem, it was noisy and heedless; parked cars blocked the sidewalks, buses careered too fast down the hill, people dropped their litter and stared at me with insolent curiosity. It was a little infuriating just to be alive here, merely to exist in this place, and this background radiation of annoyance was, as always, seeded with the sense that it was a prelude to some inevitably greater, scarring affront. I thought of the little violinist, the veneer of his antique instrument faded so that it was patchy as a piece of paper a child might stain with tea to make it look like an old parchment map of a treasure island. By nature, I couldn't be as strong as him. Unless I worked at it, I'd be a hater, the way others were, others who chose the easy path. Ever since I met Stroumsa I have tried to think of the forgiveness that elevated him above his sorrows, above the thousands of other Israelis I met over the years. I imagine his liver-spotted fingers creaking along the neck of the violin and the wattle beneath his chin juddering against the butt and his body swaying back and forth on his tiny feet and his eyes closed with rapture. And I fill my head with a soothing mantra: *Schade, Dommage, Haval, a shame*. □

A Jewish History of Trafficking

Nomi Levenkron

In 1909, Shalom Aleichem wrote a short story titled “The Man From Buenos Aires.” Describing the relationship between a railroad agent and a wealthy traveling salesman from Argentina’s capital city, Aleichem provides a fictional window onto the explosion in trafficking of Jewish women that began to take place in Eastern Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. Crushing poverty, limitations on Jewish settlement and movement, and pogroms and wars in which women were left widows led to Jewish traffickers selling Jewish women to buyers in Argentina and the United States for purposes of prostitution. The Jewish community largely closed its eyes to the phenomenon, refusing to acknowledge what was happening under its nose. Many Jews preferred to believe that such things could not possibly happen, while others were concerned that acknowledging the problem would initiate a new wave of pogroms. Instead of confrontation, the Jewish community insulated itself from the phenomenon.

Aleichem’s story was a wake-up call, intended to pierce the silence and coax Jews into openly acknowledging the problem. “The Man From Buenos Aires” centers on a young railroad agent, who, on numerous occasions, unsuccessfully attempts to discover how this businessman has become so affluent. As a stand-in for a Jewish community in denial of trafficking, the agent gradually becomes more suspicious of the salesman as the wealthy gentleman lets information slip out. The man from Buenos Aires (known to be a center for trafficking in women at the time) tells the agent that he sees many beautiful women in his line of work and pays a lot of money to the police in order to prevent them from interfering in his business; he fears the press will get wind of his doings and worries that a cry of “gevault” will be heard from the Jewish community if the nature of his profession is discovered. The clues are so obvious that only a person applying incredible powers of denial could remain in doubt about the true nature of this man’s business. In fact, Aleichem castigates the Jewish community, which he believes is doing its best to block out what is, to say the least, a highly unpleasant reality.

When it comes to trafficking, the situation in Israel today in many ways mirrors that of Eastern Europe a hundred years ago. Many Israelis completely ignore the domestic trafficking phenomenon. And if they do, they don’t give the issue the importance that it deserves. Israelis frequently want to dismiss

the issue by arguing that trafficking women are not a problem because they are foreigners who came to Israel with the full knowledge that they would be working in prostitution, and serving clients such as Arabs, migrant workers, and religious people—not regular Israelis. Therefore, absolving ourselves of responsibility for the phenomenon is completely acceptable.

Trafficking Worldwide

Over the course of the last two decades, human trafficking has increased significantly. According to UN estimates, every year between two and four million people are trafficked worldwide. The sex industry is one of the main engines behind human trafficking, with most of the victims being poor women from developing countries. Profits generated from trafficking in women amount to an estimated seven to thirteen billion U.S. dollars annually.

The increase in trafficking in women is closely connected to globalization, which has widened the gap between developed and developing countries. As people are driven to migrate for economic reasons, a cross-border sex industry has developed. Former Soviet states are a prime example of this phenomenon: with the collapse of communism, women are faced with a dearth of job opportunities and can no longer rely on the collapsing social welfare system for any kind of help. Desperate to ensure survival for themselves and their families, they seek employment in richer countries.

Because legal immigration is not an option, women are forced to look for less legal and more dangerous ways to make money. Some work in the “grey” market, in the backyard of the developed world, providing domestic labor and sexual services. Many become part of the sex industry by being trafficked for the purpose of prostitution. Tremendous numbers attest to the huge scope of the problem: every year 50,000 women leave Russia on a permanent basis, while hundreds of thousands of women leave as migrant workers for a limited period of time and then return. The government of the Ukraine has estimated that since the collapse of the Soviet Union, 400,000 women have left the country to work in various forms of prostitution.

Trafficking in Israel

At the Hotline for Migrant Workers (HMW), we estimate that between 1,000 and 3,000 women are trafficked to Israel every year for the purpose of prostitution. Most of the women come from Uzbekistan, Moldova, Ukraine, and

Nomi Levenkron is the Legal Director of the Hotline for Migrant Workers in Israel.



Russia. Their ages range from sixteen to forty-five, with an average of twenty-three. In the past two years, we have witnessed increasing numbers of minors coming to Israel, mostly from Uzbekistan. About a fifth of trafficked women are mothers to small children. The vast majority have never engaged in prostitution before. Their average wage in their country of origin was \$38 dollars a month.

These women are recruited in a variety of ways: through advertisements in the newspaper, personnel agencies, friends, and acquaintances. Although the majority of the women are told they will engage in prostitution, many Uzbeki women are completely clueless to the true nature of the work awaiting them. The traffickers promise them a salary of \$1,000 a month—a huge sum compared to what they could earn at home—and convince the women that the work will be easy (a few clients a day), and that they will be able to leave at will.

Then the nightmare begins. After being flown to Moscow and then to Egypt, most victims are smuggled into Israel through the Egyptian border. Depending on the smuggler's skill, and the level of military vigilance at crossing points, it can take between ten minutes and two weeks to cross the border. Many women report that they were raped on the way. Once over the border, trafficked women are sold or transferred to new owners. Some were bought while they were still in their countries of origin, and upon arrival are taken directly to the pimp, while others are bought in a private sale between seller and buyer. Many are auctioned off. Buyers are invited to

the auction in order to check out the female merchandise and then they bid against each other. The purchase price ranges from \$4,000 to \$6,000, depending on factors such as a woman's previous "work" experience, the strength of her paperwork, and, of course, her appearance.

A woman then enters permanent servitude, usually through the creation of "debt bondage." First, she is charged for the cost of being brought into the country and purchased. The trafficker makes it clear to the woman that she has to work for free or for a small sum until she has paid off her debt. Although most of the women cover their "debt" in the first month, the debt will remain forever, because of the exponential rates of interest on the original debt, demands that the woman contribute to the costs of running the brothel (rent, food, and contraceptives), or through "fines" imposed on them for offenses supposedly committed. Being sold to another trafficker generates a new debt, and when the woman is close to having paid it off in full, she is resold, and so the cycle continues. These women have virtually no possibility of getting payment out of the trafficker or of being released from debt bondage.

The daily reality of trafficking victims placed in brothels consists of humiliation, violence, abuse, and deceit. Women are forced to accept up to 30 clients a day, seven days a week, every day of the month, including during their menstrual cycles. Many are locked in their brothels, and most are not permitted to refuse clients. When this state of affairs becomes

clear to them, many women decide that they want out. Even if they knew in advance that they would be engaging in prostitution, they did not imagine it would be under such conditions. Traffickers respond with a complex set of threats and violence to prevent women from leaving. The threat to harm the women and their families in their countries of origin is both common and credible. Traffickers also contend they have "many friends" in law enforcement, warning women that if the police are alerted, they'll receive long prison sentences. They tell the women that entering the country illegally and engaging in prostitution are serious offenses in Israel (even though this is not actually the case). The women, who are unfamiliar with Israeli law, believe them.

The main reason that Israel's trafficking industry is flourishing is enormous client demand, currently estimated at a million visits to brothels per month. The majority of clients, according to interviews with trafficking victims, are Israelis. The clientele include minors, even children between eleven and fourteen years of age. In one case a brothel visit was given as a bar mitzvah present to a thirteen-year-old boy. The indifference to this phenomenon demonstrated by both law enforcement agencies and the general public indicates that the purchase of sex enjoys a high level of legitimacy in Israeli society.

How Is Israel Dealing with the Problem?

In 2000, Israel passed Amendment 56 to the Penal Code, explicitly defining sex trafficking as an offense. Then, in the summer of 2001, the U.S. State Department published a report on the state of trafficking around the world, rating countries according to seriousness of the problem within their borders and their sincerity in fighting the problem. Following that report, which for the first time gave Israel a poor rating, the Israeli government initiated steps against trafficking:

- Enforcement against traffickers has risen sharply and punishments are higher. The number of investigations opened by the police has increased, and sentencing, which used to average two years of imprisonment is now at an average of six years, and in some cases even reaches twelve.

- In February 2004 a shelter for prosecution witnesses (women who agree to testify against their traffickers) was opened and accommodates fifty women.

- Prosecution witnesses are entitled to state funded medical care and legal representation.

- Prosecution witnesses receive, in certain cases, stay and work visas for a year, after they finish testifying

However, much remains to be done.

To date, most of the improvements in protecting survivors of trafficking only apply to prosecution witnesses. The vast majority of victims are arrested and deported with no provision for rehabilitation. Last year, 900 women were arrested and deported, while only 130 testified. There is a need for an emergency solution for all victims of trafficking that does not involve arrest and deportation. Trafficking survivors do not belong in prison. They have had enough.

Medical care, legal representation, and visas should be awarded to all trafficking victims, regardless of their willingness to testify. As human beings, they are entitled to these basic rights, which although small, contribute significantly to full rehabilitation. We need to see more cases opened against traffickers and higher punishments handed down. Women should be encouraged and assisted in suing traffickers in civil courts, and the courts should award them high compensation—compensation that will not only deter the traffickers, but also assist trafficked women in rebuilding their lives.

Training for government officials dealing with the issue, such as police, border control officers, and state attorneys, is urgently needed in order to facilitate their work and enable them to identify victims and handle their cases with the appropriate sensitivity. And, finally, a long process of educating the public is needed to decrease the "demand" side of traffickers and de-legitimize the exploitation of women.

The Hotline for Migrant Workers

The HMW is striving to achieve these goals. Established in 1998, the HMW is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization, dedicated to promoting the civil and human rights of migrant workers and eliminating the trafficking of women in Israel. We aim to build a more just, equitable, and democratic society where the human rights of all those residing within Israel's borders are paramount civic and political values. We achieve our goals by providing direct assistance to detainees and deportees through our telephone hotline and visits to detention centers. Our legal department files suits and petitions promoting public accountability and the enforcement of the rule of law, while our public policy department educates Israel's citizenry by working with academia, the media, and policymakers.

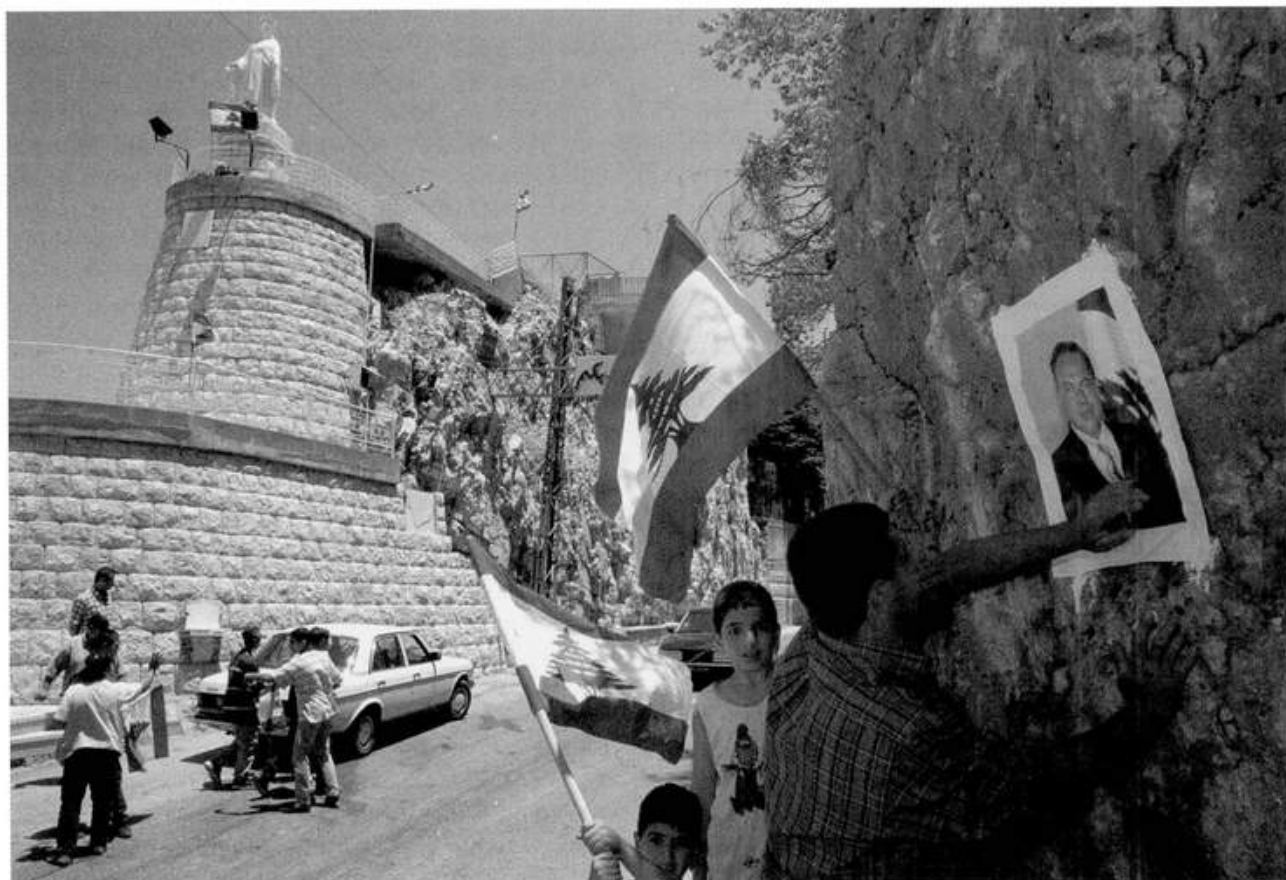
With the help of our friends and partners, we have achieved many legal precedents safeguarding the rights of trafficking victims, particularly in the areas of healthcare, legal representation, and legal redress. Some of our current areas of focus include providing an option besides detention for women wishing to escape from brothels, reducing client demand, and representing victims of trafficking in claims for legal redress against traffickers.

It has been a long and difficult struggle to change the attitudes and behavior of society towards trafficking survivors. Indeed, we are still at the very beginning of the process. But looking back at what we have accomplished gives us hope. This grim reality can be changed only to the extent that we find partners and supporters in Israel, in the United States, and in other parts of the world, who believe as we do that no woman, man, or child, should ever be enslaved or treated as a commodity. As long as these women are enslaved, none of us is really free. □

To learn more about our work and how to support us, please visit our website at: www.hotline.org.il or e-mail us at: lisa@hotline.org.il.

Memories of a Forgotten People

Misha Shulman



It was a land of mistakes and a land of contradictions. A “Security Zone” that happened to be the most dangerous strip of land within a radius of hundreds of miles, a mountainous paradise through which flows the majestic Litani River, turned into a hopeless hell-hole of terrorists, soldiers and their victims, cousin funding cousin to fight brother, all steadily sinking into the economic, social, and moral mud of their rifles’ blazing fire.

On the tip of a tall mountain above the Litani sits an ancient crusader fort turned Israeli army post. Across the

river’s deep ravine lies another army base in the village of Marj Ayoun, in which lie the headquarters of two of the armies inhabiting the area—the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and its puppet army of Lebanese Christians and Druze, the South Lebanon Army (SLA). It was at this base that I found myself watching the sun rise over the notorious Al-Khayyam prison and set over Beaufort Castle from 1996 to 1999.

In the mornings, after watching our blue and white flag raised, I would skip breakfast and go to the office of my friend Abu Mahul, an SLA storage officer. His job seemed to consist of making the most delicious Arab coffee in the world several times a day, occasionally slicing fruit for Israeli officers who came by to ask for a favor. Abu Mahul was a man younger than he looked. Though he was in his fifties, he had soft brown eyes that did not seem to fit his rough, wrinkled face.

As I would step into his office and smell the intoxicating fumes of coffee boiling on the stove, Abu Mahul would greet

Misha Shulman is an Israeli playwright, director, and actor currently living in New York. He is the founding director of the Free Theatre Collective. Misha’s most recent play, Desert Sunrise, about the Palestinian cave dwellers of the South Hebron Hills, will be produced at Theater for the New City in New York in September.

me with what was left of his voice, saying “*Ya halla bik*,” a respectful Lebanese form of “welcome.” Out of the pocket of his shabby IDF uniform he would pull a pack of Marlboros and offer me a cigarette. The one time I asked him to smoke with me, he explained that he had quit several years earlier after an operation in his throat. “Why do you still carry cigarettes around then?” I asked. “For people,” he answered, “for my friends.”

I always felt an affinity toward Abu Mahul and the rest of the rather lazy soldiers of the SLA at the base. Perhaps it was because I felt my presence there was as incongruous as theirs. They had made the mistake of joining forces with Ariel Sharon when he led the Israeli invasion into Lebanon in 1982. We had made the mistake of staying there for nearly twenty years. We were all aware that, within a few years at most, Israel would withdraw, leaving the army of God—Hezbollah—to take over the region. Then the SLA soldiers would either leave or be punished, possibly even killed.

After an excruciatingly boring first eighteen months at the base spent as a clerk, I was granted my request to become a “commander in charge of education.” As such I was to be accountable to the newest colonel at the base, a wannabe-macho nerd whose name could be translated as Starry Spring, who immediately ordered me to report to his office for an interview. At the front of a long and narrow office, at the head of a shiny wooden table, sat Colonel Starry in his throne-like comfy work chair. His glasses were a tad too big for his white face and fifteen years or so out of style. Behind them sat gentle blue eyes that were desperately trying to convince all, including Starry himself, that they were indeed the eyes of a tough fighter.

The colonel began with a question. “What *is* military education?”

“Well,” I mumbled, “I see my job as trying to um...give the soldiers a different perspective. To make their service easier by giving them a break from the monotony—”

I was cut off not by his voice, but by a simple touch of his finger on the laser pen in his hand, pointed at the wall behind me.

“Look back there,” he commanded. Behind me was an army poster, entitled “The Ten Principles of Battle.” The laser’s red dot lay hovering over number nine: Fighting Spirit.

“That,” said the colonel, “is you.”

Reducing my entire being to patriotic military jargon seemed ludicrous. Nonetheless, I did my best to assume this fighting spirit as the colonel expected. I immersed myself in early Zionist writings from the times before the ideology and the practice of the doctrine were at odds with each other. The common practice of denial in Marj Ayoun helped to convince both me and my soldiers that our presence in Lebanon was in fact part of a historical struggle for freedom that had been taking place over the past 5,000 years. We were the slaves in Egypt, the Maccabees fighting the Greeks, the heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, and the brave defenders of our state

in five wars forced on us by our enemies. We were another chapter in our people’s and our state’s struggle for survival, for peace. We were *not* occupiers.

While I did manage to twist my way of thinking, my appearance left no room for the illusion that I was the model soldier Colonel Starry had hoped I would be. The morning I was to receive my first-seargent rank from the colonel in a fancy ceremony at the base, I noticed that the right hand pocket of my army pants was slightly torn. Instead of sewing or replacing them, I decided to simply fold the pocket over the tear in way I thought sufficient, even though most of my friends at the base disagreed, and proceeded to the ceremony.

As I stepped in front of the cheering crowd, I failed to notice the back of my hand rub against the pocket and unfold the tear. That is why I was surprised to hear the colonel whisper in my ear as he pinned the rank onto my arm. “If I see you in these pants one more time I’m going to demote you to private,” he said without allowing his public smile to slip off of his face.

Unfortunately, the warning was not very effective. The next morning, when I saw a convoy of armored trucks lined up ready to take soldiers back to the border for their weekend at home—for me the first part of a long journey to Jerusalem—I postponed my plans to exchange my torn pants for new ones. “I’ve never bumped into the colonel outside the base,” I thought, “why would I this time?”

But that Sunday, by stroke of some of the worst luck known to man, I did indeed bump into the colonel in the back streets of Kiryat Shmona. I was, of course, wearing those very same pants, unshaven and without a beret on my shoulder (as army rules demand), not to mention wearing my perpetually dirty army boots. His blue eyes filled with proud disgust. “Come to my office this evening,” he said, “with a beret on your head.” The colonel will try me himself, I understood. That evening was the first time my trial was postponed.

At 8:00 AM the following morning, all of the officers and myself gathered in the colonel’s office for a work meeting regarding an upcoming event we had all heard talk of before. At the meeting, the colonel detailed his plan to conduct a memorial service for all of the SLA soldiers who had died since the army’s inception in 1985. No Israeli commander had ever organized an event entirely devoted to honoring the Lebanese soldiers who had died carrying out our orders. I was to work closely with a Civil Administration (CA) officer and local Lebanese educators in planning and carrying out the service, which would be highly publicized. The senior SLA officers, all the way up to General Antoine Lahad, the SLA chief of staff, were to be pressured to make sure the event would be well attended by people from all over the Security Zone.

The cause seemed noble—an acknowledgement of the sacrifice of the dead and a commitment to the well-being of the living—until the colonel spoke about the service itself: “It will be modeled on Israeli memorial services—songs, poetry, a short film with interviews of family members of those who

were killed, and the two national anthems." No one in the room objected to the idea of imposing an Israeli-style memorial service on people of a completely different culture. And at the time, neither did I.

The service was scheduled for two weeks from the meeting, and another meeting with the colonel was scheduled for the Wednesday before the event, still ten days away. My trial was again postponed, and I began to realize that my punishment would be decided according to the outcome of the memorial service. "This event has to be just like the colonel wants it," I realized. "Otherwise he'll send me to prison."

The next morning the CA officer and I headed to SLA headquarters for our meeting with Ibrahim, a local teacher. We entered a small but tidy office with the regular Lebanese green, red, and gold decorations on the walls, and a beautiful view of the Ayoun Valley, gently descending towards Metulah, the Israeli border town. As we planned out the service, asking Ibrahim questions about songs or poems that he thought appropriate, I began to realize that the entire concept of a memorial service was foreign to him, as it was to the South Lebanese in general. Here we were planning the first public remembrance session for thousands of people, and only one of us was a member of their community. Ibrahim promised to come back the following day with a few songs and poems that we could use. He didn't. It was nearly a week before he finally came back with some suggestions.

On Saturday we set out with a cameraman in a convoy of armored Mercedes to interview several family members of men who had been killed in battle. We drove east across the Ayoun Valley and up into the Hermon mountain range, which extends from Israel into Lebanon and Syria, regally overlooking the entire region, all the way to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. We drove through the winding streets of the picturesque Druze village of Hasbaya, finally parking in front of a simple brick house belonging to the widow of a famous SLA captain who had been killed in action several years earlier.

The family was a prominent one in the Druze community and as such seemed like a good choice to start our short film with. However, the widow was reluctant. While she knew that agreeing to the interview would grant her favor in the eyes of the CA officers, and could lead to financial and other favors, she understood that it would reopen her wound in a public, un-Lebanese way. The CA officer took the widow into another room and spoke to her in Arabic. A few minutes later he called out for the cameraman. I was left in the living room to look at the mostly white walls, the Turkish carpet, and the enlarged photograph of the woman's husband in a golden frame. It was the centerpiece of the room. Fifteen minutes later the three emerged, the interview completed. Before I was hurried out and back into the Mercedes, I caught a glimpse of the broken widow, her dark eyes shedding humiliated tears of defeat.

That day we interviewed two more widows, several children, and one father who had lost his son. None of them felt comfortable talking about their loved ones who had passed.

The framed photograph in the center of each of their living rooms was enough of a presence, and the money received each month from the CA was a constant reminder of their loss. Their mourning, I learned, was humble and private.

That evening we began editing the material. Wearing bulletproof vests and carrying loaded M16s, we made the short walk from the base to the nearby studio of Middle East TV. A friendly editor sat us in front of a set of televisions, and within seconds we were watching the raw footage, telling him which parts of it we wanted in the film. To his surprise, we chose the most dramatically sad background music he could find, and an hour later we had a beginning to our piece. However, our time was limited, as staying in the unprotected studio was not safe. We used our last few minutes to explain again how we wanted the rest of the piece structured and which footage he should use at each point.

"To close the piece," I said, "put the crying girl again. The one who says 'I miss my daddy.'" For the first time the editor protested vocally. "Isn't one time enough?"

"It will make it more powerful," I replied. "What are you trying to do to these people," he asked. "Make them cry?"

"Yes," I responded, "we're trying to make them cry."

"Why?"

"Because it's what the colonel wants. A memorial service. Israeli style."

"You try to make people cry at your services," he asked, baffled.

"Yes," I said, "that's what we do." He looked at the CA officer who was with me, and he in turn nodded, as if saying "Sounds odd, but he's telling the truth."

Before we left, the editor assured us he would carry out the editing as instructed, and that it would be ready by Tuesday morning. But once again we were let down. The film was finally brought to us on Wednesday afternoon, one hour before our scheduled meeting with the colonel. It was not the film we had told him to make.

An hour later, I found myself again the only non-officer around the colonel's long table. As each officer reported the successful carrying out of his role in this operation I grew increasingly nervous. When my turn to speak came I felt the colonel's gaze land on me for the first time all evening.

"We performed the interviews on Saturday, and went to the station to begin the edit that evening. But the film isn't ready. We have one, but it's no good." Deadly silence. The CA officer spoke up: "They promised us what we wanted by yesterday, and..."

"Tomorrow I am going home for the weekend," the colonel cut him off, staring into my fear-filled eyes. "If the film is not delivered to my house by five o'clock tomorrow afternoon, you can start looking for another unit."

The message was clear: it's either perform a miracle and finish re-editing the film by noon tomorrow, then send a driver to the Colonel's house just north of Tel Aviv—a four-hour drive from the border—or spend a month in prison, come

back, pack my bags, and prepare to be sent off to some other base where I would not be allowed to perform educational work. It would be back to being a clerk for me.

Amazingly, the miracle happened. The CA officer made some phone calls, yelled in Arabic at various people, and got the editor to work through the night to make the film we wanted. At 4:48 PM the next day, I received news that the driver had arrived at Colonel Starry's home with the videotape. At 7:15 PM I got the news that he had watched it and liked what he saw. H-A-L-L-E-L-U-Y-A-H!!!

At 2:00 PM on Sunday I arrived at the local high school, the site of the memorial service. The large cement courtyard was sparsely decorated with the odd color combination of the Lebanese and Israeli flags. A small stage had been prepared, next to a large screen connected to a simple VCR. There were rows and rows of chairs, two towering flags, a dirt parking lot that was created for the occasion, and behind the stage in a large roofed area was a long wall covered from top to bottom with photographs of over eight hundred dead Lebanese men, the harvest of fourteen years of working with the IDF.

Before I knew it, the courtyard was filling up with hundreds of people from all over Southern Lebanon. More people showed up than expected, and so the courtyard took on some characteristics of a local soccer game, with people sitting on top of walls and rooftops, or watching from nearby balconies. TV cameras were set up, making the public nature of the event complete. I spotted my friend Abu Mahul searching around for a place to sit in one of the back rows. At last the officers arrived, both IDF and SLA, including Colonel Starry, General Lahad, and General Amitai.

The hour-long service passed quickly, and despite my fears, the film played smoothly, the people watching and taking it in, some crying quietly. The anthems were sung, and it was all over. As I climbed into an armored Mercedes, I wondered whether joining together to mourn gave these people some new kind of comfort, or if this public glorification of fallen "heroes" only exacerbated their pain.

Reports came from the offices of both generals that they were very pleased, the Lebanese press covered the event widely, and, to the colonel's delight, Israel's Channel One called to say they would like to use the Lebanese station's footage of the event for a feature on the Friday evening news program, *Yoman*. Even Abu Mahul had some good things to say about it, but in Arabic I could hear his friends' bitter sarcasm.

For whom did we work so hard? For them or for us? Perhaps for the colonel's public image. (It seems to have worked—he has since been promoted to brigadier general and has been put in charge of the military component of the Gaza withdrawal.) The sarcasm I heard in the voices of many SLA soldiers in Marj Ayoun, demanding that we help them in a concrete financial and security sense rather than in a glittering, publicized ceremony, unfortunately proved justified.

The Barak government's sudden withdrawal from the Security Zone two years later was not announced to the SLA

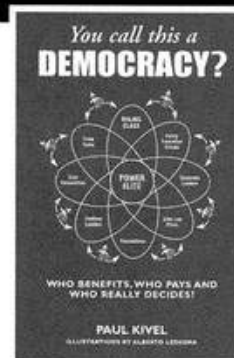
beforehand, leaving our allies only hours to decide whether they would leave everything they had and move to Israel, trusting the Israelis to help them settle there, or stay and hope for mercy in the hands of Hezbollah, their bitter enemy.

As for me, the morning after the service I was called to the colonel's office to be tried. I entered and found him wearing his red beret on his head, looking like a formal munchkin. The colonel was merciful and sentenced me to three weeks confinement to the base with no leave, as well as three weeks in prison were I to be caught in violation of military dress code at any point over the next year. Good thing he didn't know I had received the very same suspended sentence three months earlier from his deputy for roaming the base with a few hairs growing out of my chin.

My only souvenir from Lebanon is a photograph of Abu Mahul and me standing together in front of his coffee-scented office. What happened to my friend I do not know. I picture him living an outsider's life wherever the Israeli government placed him and the rest of the SLA soldiers and their families, in some town up north near the border.

The Security Zone is now a piece of history, the SLA a memory—their dead forgotten, their living in a foreign land. I played a part in the displacement of a people. I was an occupier in their land, and as such my mind became "occupied" with thoughts that were not my own. My actions contradicted who I am. I will not let it happen again. □

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The National Religious Settlers and Zionist Revisionist Ideology

Eran Kaplan

In the early years of Israeli statehood, members of the national religious camp, like other groups that did not fit the model of the secular, Ashkenazi Laborite—such as Mizrahim, the ultra-Orthodox, and Zionist revisionists—were relegated to the margins of Israeli society. Supporting a moderate stance on religious issues and offering a wide spectrum of positions on various political questions, national religious Jews lacked a well-defined voice in Israeli polity. Unlike the ultra-Orthodox, who, despite their staunch anti-Zionism, were regarded by most Zionists as the true carriers of authentic Jewish tradition, the national religious idea was regarded as a moribund attempt to combine traditional Judaism with Jewish nationalism. To many Israelis of the time the national religious camp was the embodiment of Diaspora mentality—ideologically fickle, trying to appease their political masters—while the vanguard of the movement, the religious kibbutz, was seen as nothing more than a pale imitation of the authentic, secular prototype.

If the first nineteen years of the State of Israel were characterized by stern collectivism that imposed a unified set of values and beliefs on a fledgling society, then the 1967 War signaled the beginning of a period of drastic change. With the territorial and economic expansion that followed the war, and as the existential fears of the early years of Israeli independence gave way to a sense of overwhelming power, Israel witnessed the gradual disintegration of the Laborite Zionist ethos and the emergence of alternative voices in the Israeli landscape. Perhaps none was more dramatic than the transformation of the national religious camp, which used the newly conquered territories of the West Bank and Gaza as an arena to reinvent itself and claim a dominant role in Israeli life.

Unlike other groups that tried to assert their identity as part of the newly evolving Israeli collective—Mizrahim, women—by developing an independent voice that challenged and distanced itself from the dominant Zionist ideal type, the national religious sought to inherit Labor Zionism: They presented themselves as the true bearers of the old Laborite ideal of *kibbush ha-adama* (the conquest of the land). After 1967, a younger generation of national religious ac-

tivists came to dominate the movement, inspired by the messianic teachings of Rabbi Avraham Kook, which saw in the redemption of the Land of Israel a necessary step in the overall eschatological process of salvation. No longer the timid, petit-bourgeois shop keepers who had typified the rank and file of the old *ha-Mizrahi* (later the *Mafdal*) movement, these were young men sporting large knitted skullcaps and carrying automatic rifles and young women in long denim skirts who battled the Israeli army and government on the hills of the West Bank, the very hills where the biblical judges had fought the enemies of the Jews. They became the Bloc of the Believers (*Gush Emunim*), the self-proclaimed true fighters in the persistent battle for national liberation.

After 1967, members of the national religious camp became ubiquitous in Israeli public life; most notable, perhaps, was their growing prominence in the institution that came to define the Israeli collectiveness: the IDF. If in the early days the elite units of the Israeli army had been predominantly populated by kibbutzniks and young men from the established neighborhoods of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem—the heart of the old Labor establishment—since 1967, as more and more Israelis came to view service in the military as a delay on the way to a fulfilling individualistic professional career, a growing number of national religious youths became pilots and members of reconnaissance units.

Similarly, in the Zionist colonizing project (a staple of traditional Zionism), the national religious camp became the dominant force: as the kibbutzim turned from agricultural settlements into industry-based enterprises, gradually shedding their ideological trappings, members of the national religious movement created settlements in remote parts of the Occupied Territories, claiming that they were reviving the spirit of the *Homa ve-Migdal* kibbutzim of the 1930s. (These were settlements that were created in the middle of the night to elude the British authorities and in order to expand the territorial reach of the *Yishuv* (the pre-state Jewish community).

In a society that came to appreciate expressions of individualism and difference, the younger national religious Israelis began to see themselves as the last remnants of Zionism's collectivist idealism. This is how Haim Be'er, the Israeli novelist who came from a national religious family, described the feelings among his friends following the 1967 War: "We met with Yoseph Tabenkin, a Palmach leader and

Eran Kaplan is an assistant professor of Judaic studies at the University of Cincinnati. His book, The Jewish Radical Right: Revisionist Zionism and Its Ideological Legacy, was published by the University of Wisconsin Press (2005).

the son of Yitzchak Tabenkin, the leader of the United Kibbutz movement. Tabenkin told us: 'We were the pioneers of the 1948-generation, but we grew tired and our children no longer want to carry the torch. We pass on the torch of pioneering to a new generation, your generation of the national religious camp'... Until that time we were treated as an afterthought in the Israeli public, as people who cannot contribute to the great military effort. Tabenkin's declaration was dramatic. We realized the great potential that we possess; we saw ourselves as the torchbearers."

The 1977 rise to power of the Likud, the party of Greater Israel, and the new alliance between the Likud and the Mafdal (which until then had what was described as a historical covenant with the Labor movement) made the national religious movement—now a radicalized and mobilized right-wing party—into a highly visible force in Israeli society and allowed its members freedom, and government support, in their settlement project. But the national religious leadership did not consider itself as the activist wing of the Revisionist movement (the pre-State right-wing movement that evolved into the modern-day Likud).

To the Mafdal and settler leadership, the Revisionist movement was historically the party of ideas about might, but it was a movement devoid of a practical, activist side. To the national religious young activists, the Revisionists and Likudniks spoke eloquently about the importance of the land, but they did nothing to actually conquer and liberate it. The Revisionists were considered detached ideologues, while they viewed themselves as the true Zionist mainstream that was always tied to the land. Also, from the traditional Zionist point of view, the Revisionists were a political pariah—Ben Gurion declared that he would never create a coalition with either the communists or the Revisionists—while the national religious activists saw themselves as the authentic pioneering Zionist movement, the legitimate heirs of A.D. Gordon and the Jewish settlers of the second and third *aliyot* (waves of immigration): the genuine Zionist mainstream.

Despite their attempts to present themselves as the true bearers of the old Labor vision, however, a closer examination of the ideological tenets of the post-1967 national religious movement might suggest that perhaps it is in fact linked in a profound way to the Zionist Revisionist ideology of Ze'ev Jabotinsky and Menachem Begin, while the connection with Labor's Zionist ethos is symbolic rather than substantial.

The Revisionist Paradigm

The Revisionist movement, the party of Jewish militarism and power, was founded in the 1920s by intellectuals whose true battle zones were coffeehouses and literary magazines, and whose weapons of choice were the pen and the typewriter. In the early days of Israeli independence, the Revisionists were an opposition party that was denied access to Israel's centers of political power. Although Revisionism was a movement with an elaborate ideology (the most comprehensive alternative to Labor's Zionist vision), it was devoid of an activist branch until it seized power in 1977. It was the young national religious settlers, the champions of Greater Israel, who became the activist wing of the Revisionist idea. In their territorial maximalism, their view of the non-Jewish

world, and their attitudes towards the cultural and social developments in the rest of Israeli society, the national religious camp has assumed the mantle of Zionist Revisionism, while their celebration of the land, it could be argued, parallels the Labor Zionist project only rhetorically.

In his political manifesto from 1928, "What the Zionist Revisionists Want," Ze'ev Jabotinsky—the writer, translator, ideologue and founder of the Zionist Revisionist movement—declared that Zionism's first goal was the establishment of a Jewish majority on both sides of the Jordan. For Jabotinsky and his movement, Jewish nationalism rested on three pillars: the Jewish people, the Jewish lan-

guage, and the Jewish land: And all three had to be reclaimed in their entirety in order to insure the integrity of the Zionist project.

Jabotinsky believed that *badness*, monism, was the ideological key to national rejuvenation. Any divisions or compromises, he claimed, would prevent the Zionist movement from achieving its goals. As Jabotinsky wrote, "A perfect soul is only a monist soul. By its content the word 'ideal' can only have a singular meaning. In a healthy soul there is only one ideal." And the land was a critical element in this process, the foundation for the entire development of the national ethos.

According to the Revisionist paradigm, any territorial compromise would weaken the national body. Jabotinsky and his fellow Revisionists rejected all plans proposed by the international community or the Labor-dominated Zionist establishment that would entail giving up Jewish sovereignty over any part of historical Israel. They called Zionists who endorsed such plans traitors who were liquidating the Zion-

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ist dream. At the same time, they regarded Labor's ideal of *kibbush ha-adama*—the notion that only by returning to working the land and creating a self-sufficient, productive society would a new Hebrew generation be able to shed the legacy of ghetto Judaism—as no more than fetishization of the land, a waste of resources that would yield few tangible results.

Following the teachings of A.D. Gordon—the prophet of Labor Zionism—Labor Zionists believed that before a Jewish State could be formed, an independent Jewish society had to be developed. Before achieving political independence, Labor ideology held, the Jewish people would have to negate the Diaspora legacy of a life of dependency and return to working the land as the source of national vitality. Revisionists, on the other hand, believed that efforts directed at colonizing and working the land were misguided, and that the only way to gain true independence was by developing Jewish national power. As the Revisionist ideologue Yehoshua Heschel Yevin argued, the strength of Zionism did not lie in its ability to build and settle, but in its ability to develop Jewish strength, which should be the only moral objective of the movement.

To Laborites the land was a means to an end: It was like the desert in which the Israelites wandered for forty years to shed the legacy of an enslaved people, while to the Revisionists the land was the ultimate goal. Following the model of Herzl, who was willing to explore alternative sites around the globe for the Zionist project, the mainstream Zionist leadership did not give the land itself a moral value, while to the Revisionists the Land of Israel itself was the core of the moral fabric of the Jewish nation.

In the pre-State period, the Labor Zionists concentrated their efforts on creating social institutions that would allow for the development of a viable and productive society. They created a network of companies, unions, and social services that would be the backbone of the emerging Jewish community in Palestine. At the forefront of their efforts was the agricultural settlement of the land, and the jewels in the crown were the *kibbutzim*, the communal agrarian settlements that encapsulated Labor Zionism's vision. The *kibbutzim* were the avant-garde of the Zionist movement. They were the image that the movement advertised to the world (Jewish and non-Jewish), and the Zionist (and later Israeli) establishment supported the *kibbutzim* generously. The Revisionists, on the other hand, had no interest in social projects; they did not establish settlements, agricultural or otherwise. To them Zionism had to pursue a single goal: developing enough military strength to claim the entire land.

To the Zionist Right, then, only Jewish sovereignty over all of the Land of Israel would constitute a realization of the Zionist idea. Since the mid-1930s the Zionist Right (first under Jabotinsky's leadership and after 1943 under Menachem Begin's) criticized the Zionist establishment's willingness to compromise the territorial integrity of the Jewish state.

After the end of Israel's War of Independence, Begin and other right-wing ideologues (most vocal among them perhaps the writer Israel Eldad) criticized the armistice agreements signed by Ben Gurion; they wanted Israel to do everything in its power to regain the historical parts that had been subtracted from it. In 1953, Eldad claimed that the truncated and partitioned Jewish State was not only physically small, but that the entire national psyche was distorted by the land that was taken from the Jewish people.

Revisionism Gets Religious: The Greater Israel Movement

The 1967 War and the Occupation of all of Mandatory Israel (west of the Jordan River) gave the Israeli Right an opportunity to turn ideas into action. While Israel's political leadership debated what to do with the newly acquired territories—the consensus was to hold on to them until a viable peace agreement presented itself—the Right (with some notable Laborites) created the Greater Israel movement and called for Jewish settlement in the territories. With the Revisionist old guard provided the leading ideologues of the Greater Israel movement, the foot soldiers of the settlement project came from the ranks of the national religious camp.

Battling the government and the army, they went to Hebron and remote hills of the West Bank and built the first settlements, implementing the Greater Israel idea. And they were driven by their own sense of rightist monism that had been formulated in the pre-state era by Rabbi Kook, who wrote that, "Our soul encompasses the entire universe, and represents it in its highest unity. It is, therefore, whole and complete, entirely free of all disjointedness and the contradictions that exist among all other peoples. We are one people, one as the oneness of the universe."

Under Labor governments, the settlements were an underground operation. With the rise to power of the Likud in 1977, the Israeli government openly endorsed the settlers. The young national religious settlers, in the most remote areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, became the main agents in the Likud's policy to expand the boundaries of Jewish sovereignty. (It is important to distinguish here between the "ideological" settlements that were populated by members of *Gush Emunim* and were situated near or in major Arab urban centers in the territories or in remote areas, and the "economic" settlements that were built near the 1949 Green Line and became affordable suburbs for the growing Israeli middle class that brought the Likud to power.)

Settler discourse is fraught with references to the pioneering spirit of the early *kibbutzim*. But the reality of settlements is very different from that of the earlier agricultural settlements. While *kibbutzim* that were envisioned as self-sustaining agricultural communities were erected, by and large, in fertile valleys, the ideological settlements in the West Bank were built, in most cases, on hilltops. Though

from early on, Zionist institutions (and later the Israeli government) had to aid kibbutzim that were struggling financially, all the kibbutzim attempted to be economically viable.

The ideological settlements, on the other hand, were never intended to function as productive economic units. They were conceived and built as strategic outposts aimed at establishing control over the land, not for working or developing the land. The ideological settlers' sole occupation is *being settlers*—they are ultimately paid by the Israeli government to live in the settlements.

In 1920, during the debate over whether to send Zionist settlers to Tel Hai in northern Israel—a dangerous area situated between French controlled Lebanon and British Palestine, where Arab bands roamed free of the control of either colonial power—Jabotinsky opposed sending the settlers without proper military protection (though after the heroic death of Trumpeldor and seven of his colleagues, Jabotinsky and the Revisionists promptly made Tel Hai part of the Revisionist pantheon), claiming that “I think that all those who are in the French zone [Tel Hai] must return to Israel.... People said: we will just go there and work without the need for military protection.... I am here to debunk the second illusion, that we can just work and not fight.” The present-day national religious settlers, guarded by dozens of IDF units throughout the West Bank and Gaza, are living out Jabotinsky's vision. They are not wasting time in futile social experiments; they are providing the military wing for the Jewish endeavor to establish sovereignty over Greater Israel.

Revisionism was at its core secularist; it sought to define Jewish nationalism as a modern, secular movement to restore Jewish national independence—not to rebuild the Temple. Revisionism was certainly driven by a strong messianic sense, but it was the religion of modern nationalism that fueled its notion of salvation. It is also true that the national religious camp, especially its more militant, settler wing, was motivated by a religious, messianic fervor that viewed the redemption of the land as part of the overall divine plan for the Jewish people. But for both groups, in contrast to the Laborite vision, the Land had an absolute role, and giving parts of it away was tantamount to tearing limbs off the national body. Or as Rabbi Kook put it, “Eretz Israel is not something apart from the soul of the Jewish people; it is no mere national possession, serving as a means of unifying our people and buttressing its material, or even its spiritual survival. Eretz Israel is part of the very essence of our nationhood; it is bound organically to its very life and inner meaning.” Ultimately, both the Revisionists and *Gush Emunim* recognized a single source of the national life—the Land.

The Rejection of Universalism

Since the beginning of Zionism, its leaders accentuated the movement's commitment to universal values. Ben Gurion, for example, argued that “Two basic aspirations underlie all

our work in this country: to be like all nations, and to be different from all nations.” To Laborites and other mainstream Zionists, Zionism was the national movement of the Jewish people, yet at the same time, they envisioned it as a movement in the spirit of the Enlightenment, committed to universal ideals. The Revisionist monists, on the other hand, rejected the notion that the Jewish national idea could be in any way compromised by bowing to universal principles. Jabotinsky claimed, “National culture, pure national consciousness is possible only in that language by which the child received his first impressions from the world that surrounds him. If he is to receive them in a foreign language, his entire thought process ties in with foreign contents, with foreign forms.”

Under the leadership of Menachem Begin, the Revisionist rejection of universalism evolved into an ideology of suspicion (and rejection) of the non-Jewish world: a view of history as a continual battle between the Jewish nation and the gentiles. Begin and his supporters viewed Israel as separated from the rest of the world and presented Israeli and Jewish history as the tale of a chosen people who are constantly experiencing catastrophic events of destruction and redemption. To Begin, the Jews were in a constant battle against Amalek, the tribe who came to symbolize the archetypal enemy of the Jewish people in each generation. And after the Holocaust, it was the Arabs who were the modern-day Amalekites—the heirs of the Nazis, who were out to destroy the Jewish people.

In 1970, in response to various peace plans that included territorial compromises, Begin argued, “Would any country in the world accept such a solution; who can ask us to accept such a so-called peace with permanent bloodshed, with the killing of our children? How many Moishelach and Saralach must be killed after one and a half million Jewish children were massacred in our time? That would be the consequence of a repartition of the land of Israel.”

The Nazis, the Arabs, the international community—all were different manifestations of the same enemy with a single goal: the destruction of the Jewish nation. According to this worldview, the struggle between Israel and the Arab world was not simply a national conflict over borders, resources, or land; it was a mythical struggle between the chosen people and its mortal enemies. In such a battle, the Jews could not reach an agreement; their enemies could not be appeased. This was an apocalyptic battle with only one victor. It was up to the Jewish people to ensure that they had the upper hand.

As Prime Minister, Begin moderated his views with regard to the international community and signed a peace agreement with Egypt (he was willing to give away the Sinai desert, but not any parts of Biblical Israel), but his historical view of the Jewish nation as *am levado yishcon* (a nation unto itself will dwell) that finds itself in an eternal struggle continued to inform the settlers' worldview.

According to Nadia Matar, an activist with Women in

Continued on page 67

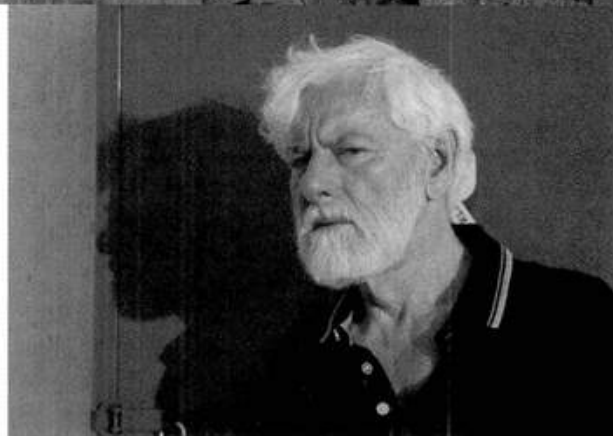
Interview with Uri Avnery



Uri Avnery's opinions are not to be taken lightly. The most outspoken leader of Israel's peace movement, Avnery has in his own life mirrored the country he helped establish. Born in Germany in 1923, Avnery began his political life as a member of the Irgun, then served as an IDF commando in the 1948 war. For forty years the editor and publisher of Israel's now defunct newsweekly, *Ha Olam Hazeh*, Avnery served three terms in Israel's Knesset. With his wife Rachel, in 1993 he helped found Gush Shalom, one of Israel's most influential peace organizations. We spoke to him two weeks before the withdrawal had formally begun.

TIKKUN: Media accounts of the drama of withdrawal from Gaza make it seem as though we now have a struggle going on between the forces of good, represented by Sharon, and the forces of evil, represented by the settlers.

Uri Avnery: The present situation is the culmination of a



process that started immediately after the Six Day War, when Israel had a historic choice between making peace immediately and trying to annex the land that we had conquered. I am not speaking from hindsight, because even during the war, after we had conquered the West Bank and Gaza Strip,

I sent an open letter to then-Prime Minister Levi Eshkol and asked him to immediately establish a Palestinian state in all of the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and make peace with the Palestinian people. Eshkol was typical of activists in the Zionist establishment, which, from the very beginning of Zionism, has been focused on providing space for Jewish refugees from around the world by getting new land on which to build settlements. So even when that land was no longer needed for refugees, one might say that from the very beginning, it's been part of the genetic code of the Zionist movement to create new settlements on more land of Arab Israel.

I don't want to sound mystical, but I believe that there is such a thing as a genetic code of historic movements, by which I mean the basic ideas that created the movement get embedded in them, and it is very difficult to change, even when circumstances have changed. Israel Zangwill's statement that Zionists were trying to put together "A land without people for a people without land," symbolized the Zionist movement and shaped the consciousness of the early Zionists. And I think this is a basic Zionist conviction. Zionism probably would not have produced its incredible achievements without this impetus, which has been to gain more land, settle more land, and enlarge the Jewish homeland until it reaches at least the Jordan River. It is this impetus that underlies all that we have done in the last hundred years.

TIKKUN: At its inception, was the original desire to return to one's ancient homeland already a distortion, or was it a legitimate aspiration?

UA: I think the Jewish people always desired to have its entire homeland back, in the form it imagined it had taken in the ancient world. But Zionism emerged in the nineteenth century as a national movement and shaped itself pragmatically in the framework of existing possibilities, given the realities of global politics. Until 1948, the desire to get more land and put more settlements on the land was restricted by the possibilities of the time. So in pre-1948 Palestine, the Zionist movement acquired land by buying it. Therefore, when the state of Israel came into being in 1948, the Jewish community, the *Yishuv*, had only 4 percent of the land of what was then British Mandate Palestine.

After the 1948 war, by force of arms, Israel acquired 78 percent of the land of Palestine as it existed under the British Mandate. Suddenly there were large new areas of land that could be settled. And in the first nineteen years of the state, this is what Israel did: It put new towns and villages on the land conquered in 1948 and brought in over a million Jews from Arab lands. A great part of the Arab community had been removed to make room for these new settlements and a large part of the land—even of the Arab community that remained—was expropriated.

What happened in 1967 is that we conquered the rest of

Palestine. What changed was not the basic desire to acquire land, which has been there all the time, but the new possibilities of expropriating land and establishing settlements. This started in the 1968, under the Labor government of Levi Eshkol, followed by Golda Meir, and continued under Yitzhak Rabin, until the Likud first came to power in 1977.

Until 1967, the settlement enterprise was socialist-Zionist. It was based on the *kibbutzim* and the *moshavim*, and led by the Labor movement. What happened after 1967 was that a completely new element took over the settlement enterprise: the so-called "national religious camp" which is a very extreme mutation of Judaism. It is a completely new component of Judaism that has very little to do with Judaism as we knew it before. It is a messianic movement, a super-nationalist movement with fascist fringes.

This approach [represented] a very minor and even despised faction of Zionism before 1967. It took the settlement project over, robbed the socialist-Zionist camp of its original vision, and turned it into the hallmark of the national religious Zionist camp. And this is a change, not just in quantity, but also in quality. It is this camp which has become stronger every year for the last thirty-eight years. It has been promoted by all Israeli governments, whether Labor or Likud. It has been assisted not only by the Israeli army, but also by every part of the Israeli government and every ministry, both openly and covertly. This camp has become a very important force in Israeli society.

TIKKUN: Why would secular socialists have allowed religious visionaries to become the center of the Zionist enterprise?

UA: The old socialist part of the Zionist movement and the kibbutz movement has broken down. It is economically bankrupt, and, what's more important, it is ideologically bankrupt. A third generation has now come to the fore in the Labor Party, a generation without ideology, without any real motivation. They are as capitalist as other parts of Israeli society. They're out to make money. The Labor Party is nothing but a reeking cadaver today, and is typical of this process.

The religious Zionist movement has grown in force, ideological motivation, and fanaticism. It is a new kind of Jewish religion—a tribal religion, a very aggressive nationalist religion—and has elements (as I've said before) that must be characterized as fascist. And this force is now the only force in Israel that has a clear-cut ideology, that has thousands of people believing in it. Its thinking is clearly aimed at evicting the Palestinian population, and [creating] a homogeneous Jewish religious state, subject to the Halachah, and governed by rabbis. This is not often clearly articulated, but you can find it in the writings and the sayings of the leaders of this movement.

TIKKUN: Why did the majority of Israelis allow that to happen?

UA: That's a very good question, and it's not easy to answer.

The religious Zionist movement has grown in force, ideological motivation, and fanaticism. It is a new kind of Jewish religion—a tribal religion, a very aggressive nationalist religion—and has elements that must be characterized as fascist.

When a majority doesn't have a clear and dominant ideology, and is faced with a strongly motivated, ideologically fanatical minority, the majority is at a great disadvantage.

A majority of Israelis believe in democracy, but don't feel the urge to go out into the streets. For years, my friends and I have been demonstrating for an end to the Occupation, for peace with the Palestinians, and for democracy in Israel. We have experienced many heartbreaking moments when we called on people to come out and demonstrate and found that there is no force that can bring Israelis out, except on the annual day of mourning for Yitzhak Rabin. The only thing that mobilized these people was his murder and his memory. But it is very difficult to get them out for any other aim.

It is a basic weakness of democracy that the democratic majority only comes out when it is severely provoked. And what is happening now in Israel, perhaps, is that the provocation by the settlers may reach a point where it will succeed in provoking the majority of Israelis to come out and fight for what they believe is important.

TIKKUN: Why did the Labor movement and the original Zionist enterprise lose its ideological appeal to?

UA: There is a group of party functionaries that are fighting among themselves over this cadaver. [Labor Party Chair and Current Deputy PM] Shimon Peres doesn't care about anything except his personal survival. There's no real leader there. The last person who looked like a leader and took hold of the party was Ehud Barak, and that ended in a terrible disappointment. And the Labor Party at this moment doesn't really exist in Israeli politics. It has no voice in Israeli society. During these weeks of crucial crisis in Israel, the Labor Party is just not there. They leave it to Sharon to fight, and they support him.

The Meretz Party is very weak, and has no real voice. It is not heard. It is not really fighting. Somebody might say that the whole political class in Israel is too satiated, too rich, too lazy, and too rotten to put up any real fight. And the masses of the people who could be in the streets at this moment went to the Likud. As a party, the Likud is dysfunctional because a great part of it is against Ariel Sharon. And Sharon cannot mobilize them. So the whole body politic is in a state of malaise. It is sick, and it's very sad and dangerous that this is happening at a time when Israel is nearing a historic crisis that will decide its future.

TIKKUN: What historic crisis?

UA: The crisis is between [the democratic majority and] the settlers and everything the settlers represent, which is a theoretical state in which the rabbis are above the law and the rabbis fix the law. This is a situation very similar to Iran, where the religious leadership is above parliament and above government.

I'm optimistic by nature. I believe that Israeli society will overcome this crisis, and that the democratic majority will at the decisive moment find the inner strength to face this danger.

But this is not at all certain. What will happen at the decisive moment is very difficult to [forecast]. We don't yet know if this government will stand decisively for democracy. Sharon only has a majority because he dismissed the ministers who openly opposed him. Even now this is a government that is very unsure of itself, one in which important ministers like [Finance Minister] Binyamin Netanyahu are openly rebelling against Sharon.

TIKKUN: What about the security forces?

UA: The Israeli army has not been prepared to fight against the settlers. For thirty-eight years, it has supported the settlers, cooperating with them both openly and covertly. Practically all the settlements are where they are because the Israeli army told them where to go. Nor have the police been trained or prepared for this kind of disengagement struggle, much less given reasons to believe in the necessity of fighting against the settlers. The police have been protecting the settlers and acting against the Palestinians for thirty-eight years now. They have been shooting at Israeli peace activists for the last few years. The police and the army go into action against the settlers without any weapons at all, with their bare hands.

All this shows that there is no clear will of the government to fight against the settlers. They find themselves in a fight that they did not expect to have. Sharon is completely bewildered, because when he started this so called "disengagement plan" he did not dream of entering a battle with the settlers. Quite the contrary. Ariel Sharon has been the father of the settlers more than any other person in the country. He put the settlements where they are and has worked tirelessly for years for the settlers. Sharon did not think that his plan was aimed against them. What he told the settlers was something like "we should give up a few settlements in the Gaza Strip, which

LEAVING GAZA



PRELUDE TO THE DISENGAGEMENT

1. Haredi youth hold up a sign showing Sharon behind bars during an anti-disengagement demonstration near Tel Aviv. **2.** A girl wears a mock gag during a right-wing protest outside police HQ in Jerusalem's Russian Compound. **3.** A soldier sits in front of her bulldozer near the Gaza border, as the IDF prepares for a possible ground offensive. **4.** Temporary housing for evacuated settlers, Nitzanim, southern Israel. **5.** A left-wing activist from One Voice shows her support for the troops, Kissufim Checkpoint, Gaza. **6.** An APC on patrol near the settlement of Kfar Darom, Gaza. **7.** Sharon surrounded by bodyguards. **8.** Haredi man walks past Likud-sponsored anti-disengagement referendum posters. **9.** Israeli border police train in the use of a cage for removing uncooperative settlers.



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are quite small and unimportant, in order to consolidate and save the big settlements in the West Bank and annex all the territory on which these settlements are sitting."

This sounded logical to Sharon. It is the logic of an army officer used to giving up territory in order to gain other territory. But the settlers did not accept it, and Sharon found himself unexpectedly confronted by them. This is a difficult situation, not only for Sharon personally, but for the entire Israeli political system to operate with any sense of consistency and determination because it [represents] a kind of cognitive dissonance.

TIKKUN: It seems to me that certain settler arguments are reasonable with regard to their outrage at what's happening now, because some of the settlers are economically motivated. They moved to the Occupied Territories because of government promises, not ideology. Now they're being betrayed for reasons that have nothing to do with why they were encouraged to become settlers in the first place. Isn't there something understandable about their anger?

UA: I don't feel any compassion for them, because every settler knew that they were settling on land taken by force from the Palestinians. They knew that they were settling on occupied territory whose future is undecided.

TIKKUN: Was there any political party that was saying that to the settlers?

UA: When I was in parliament, I said it and several other people said it. But you're right. All of the major parties encouraged people to go there and gave them economic incentives to do so. [But] all of this crying and weeping is a little exaggerated, because what are the settlers being requested to do? Move twenty miles north into Israel proper and establish the same kind of life they've had until now—at our expense. Yet the settlers think of this as [being equivalent to] the eviction of the Jews from Spain or from Germany in the middle ages. It is very, very much exaggerated. Their sense of outrage, I think, emanates from them feeling betrayed by the people who put them there, by their own people. By the people they considered their spiritual or political fathers. In this respect their sense of betrayal is real. It is like a son being betrayed by his father.

TIKKUN: Some of us who support peace believe that the disengagement is a *mach a zeh*, a performance put on for the world to show how much Israel is suffering so as to provide more support for Sharon's desire to hold on to significant parts of the West Bank. So Sharon has decided to sacrifice the well-being of eight thousand people in order to perpetuate his control and Israel's control over the West Bank.

UA: Sharon does have an interest in making this evacuation

appear to be nearly impossible in order to demonstrate that if removing eight thousand settlers is such an immense and dangerous job, how could anyone consider moving two hundred and fifty thousand settlers from the West Bank? I think the Palestinians are right if they suspect this, because I suspect the same

TIKKUN: In order to show support for Sharon's disengagement plan, Labor and Meretz have backed the withdrawal without demanding that it be the first step in withdrawing from the West Bank. Do you think that this was a smart tactic on the part of people who actually want to end the Occupation in its entirety?

UA: All of us in the peace movement have been faced with this dilemma. According to people who are close to Sharon, after Gaza we shall not retreat from any place whatsoever. There shall be no peace agreement, no final status negotiations, nothing. My friends and I are very careful to say that we do not support Sharon. On the other hand, any settlement that will be dismantled is one settlement less. And the dismantling of settlements does create a precedent that has immense psychological and maybe political importance for the continuation of the process. Therefore, whether we want it or not, we are compelled to support the disengagement from Gaza in order to facilitate the disengagement in the West Bank and the end of the Occupation in the West Bank. This is the dilemma we are faced with and which we must somehow try to deal with.

TIKKUN: There was an argument that was once made by progressives who served in the territories. They said "...We need to honor our military obligations to the IDF now so that when there is a disengagement from the Territories, the Right Wing will have to honor their obligation to the IDF." Do you think that this has held up and proved to be true? Because from the newspaper accounts that we get here, it seems as if there have been elements of the religious and others who oppose the withdrawal who are refusing to follow orders.

UA: I think the Right Wing in Israel does not give a damn what the Left Wing is doing. This threat of wholesale mutiny has nothing to do with the refusal by left-wing people to take part in the Occupation. Sometimes it is cited as a pretext, but the religious Right Wing in Israel has its own logic and has very little to do with anything else. They believe in what their rabbis say about Halachah and about the role of the Torah. They live in a completely closed, theocratic society that is not influenced by anything happening outside of it. They believe in their own world. In a way, they are like one of those American sects that ended in mass suicide: they are a cult. They look like a cult, and they behave like a cult. They dress differently and they behave differently. They're a different kind of people all together.

The great majority of Israelis are not aware of the real and present danger to Israeli democracy. They still have the illusion that this is something that will pass. Only when people realize that real danger is there and that people must come out and face it will there be a chance that some leadership will emerge.

There is very little communication between them and us. They speak a different language. They have a completely different outlook on the world. They are subject to completely different laws and rules. They are a distinct part of Israel, separate from any other. This is what makes this situation different from confrontations in other countries. This is not an ordinary part of Israeli society; it is not that one brother is left wing and the other brother is right wing. These are people who live separately, in their own communities, religious neighborhoods, and towns in Israel. They have no contact with ordinary Israeli society. They meet Israeli society only in very special places, like the army. But even in the army they tend to have their own units.

One of the dangerous decisions made by the government of Israel was to establish specific religious units of the army. The pretext was that they need special units so that they can continue their religious studies and so on. But the fact is that now you have an Israeli Army Religious Unit that is subject to [the authority of] their rabbis more than to their military officers. This is why the prospect of a military mutiny is such a danger.

TIKKUN: You said that getting out of the Gaza Strip and withdrawing from some of the settlements might be a first step toward getting rid of future settlements. What is a plausible strategy for the peace camp in the Labor Party and Meretz to start following this fall? What are the things that they will plausibly be able to do to challenge to Sharon's intent to hold on to the West Bank?

UA: We must separate between two stages. The present stage takes place in July, August, and September, probably. We must support the withdrawal from Gaza. Not just by sitting in front of the television set and saying "This is a good thing." We must also come out, because this is not a private fight between the Israeli army and the police against the settlers; this concerns all of us. And if the settlers win at this stage, then we can kiss the state of Israel as we know it—and we want it to be—goodbye.

At the moment, the whole peace camp is not mobilized. It has not come out to fight. It's just not there. The majority of Israel is looking at this fight as if it were a spectator sport—something to be fought out between Ariel Sharon and the

settlers, [while] we are merely onlookers enjoying the fight. This is a very, very dangerous situation. Our goal should be to turn the withdrawal from Gaza into a withdrawal from the West Bank. The task is to use the momentum gathered from this operation to bring about real peace negotiations with the Palestinians and achieve [a negotiated settlement] within a year or two.

TIKKUN: What's a plausible strategy for mobilizing people on the issue of the West Bank? Is there any that exists?

UA: No. There's nothing there because, first of all, there is no unified leadership of any kind on the left side of Israel. There is a very unified and very effective leadership on the right side. The settlers and their allies are beautifully organized. They have a clearly acknowledged rank and file leadership. They don't quarrel among themselves. They've succeeded in unifying the moderate and even the most extreme fascist elements into one camp. They can mobilize their people easily because their people are concentrated in the settlements and the religious yeshivot. There's nothing active on the Left. We only have the government and the Knesset and the political system, which is very weak and not very popular, and there's no leadership at all. We can only hope that once the battle has begun, and people are provoked and feel the need to fight back, that a leadership will emerge...I very much hope so.

TIKKUN: Why has it been so difficult?

UA: The great majority of Israelis are not aware of the real and present danger to Israeli democracy. They still have the illusion that this is something that will pass. Only when people realize that real danger is there and that people must come out and face it will there be a chance that some leadership will emerge. One can only hope that it will not be too late.

I'm very much reminded of the last days of the Weimar Republic. I think about it constantly. And I think that the dangers that people were facing at that time are here. It has been said that the Weimar Republic collapsed not because the fascists overthrew it, but because at the moment of truth no one was ready to step up and defend the Republic. This nightmare pursues me. I think about it all the time. □

Afterword

Michael Lerner

There is little to celebrate in the withdrawal from Gaza. From beginning to end, this was a drama orchestrated by Ariel Sharon with only one purpose: to perpetuate the Occupation of the West Bank.

All this flowed from the unilateral character of the Gaza charade. Sharon was determined to resist Bush's plan for a road map leading to a real Palestinian state. He knew that the death of Arafat would make it harder to portray Israel as having "no partner for peace." So he took the one step that he thought would derail international pressure: creating a huge confrontation with settlers over a tiny part of the settlement, thereby demonstrating to the world that forcing withdrawal would be so "painful" for Israel that no one could reasonably expect Israel to make major territorial concessions in regard to the 300,000 settlers on the West Bank.

From the start, Sharon's advisors were telling their fellow Likud members that this was all a brilliant strategy to perpetuate the Occupation. But as Sharon could have predicted, the settlers would rebel, because for them giving up of even an inch of Eretz Yisrael was a violation of their God-given rights.

In every religion, just as in every other social movement, there is a struggle between the voice of hope that tells us that the world can be based on love and generosity, and the voice of fear that tells us that the Other is inherently dangerous and will hurt us unless we take control of them first. The holy texts almost always reflect both voices. At different moments and for different groups of people, one or the other of those voices is in the ascendancy, and these voices shape the way that people hear the voice of God. In Judaism, the voice of fear became what I call "settler Judaism," a view that insists that in every generation there is an evil force, *Amalek*, that seeks our destruction and that we must wipe it out or it will wipe us out. God has given us our "promised land" and we have the obligation to conquer it and hold it, even at the expense of wiping out its inhabitants.

There is, of course, a counter tendency, a Judaism of love, kindness, generosity, and spiritual renewal that finds expression in a sentiment that is most frequently repeated in Torah: variations of the command that "when you come into your land, do not oppress the stranger; remember that you were strangers in the land of Egypt." Both voices are there in the texts, but in the post-Holocaust period a significant section of religious Jews have turned to settler Judaism and have become followers of a cruel and insensitive approach to the Palestinian people.



Ariel Sharon

Settler Judaism holds that since the world is against us—abandoned us during the Holocaust, and hypocritically condemns us for violence more sharply than it criticizes others—we don't have to live according to a universal moral standard. God gave us the West Bank as our eternal inheritance and we have the right to whatever is necessary to hold on to it. Anyone who trusts Palestinians or assumes that they have the same human needs and motivations to live in peace as Jews, or who doesn't realize that the only Palestinian motivation is to destroy us, is naive and likely to endanger the Jewish people. Peace-oriented Jews are traitors and may be as dangerous to our future as the Arabs. The obligations to pursue justice and love your neighbor apply only to fellow Jews, not to non-Jews, certainly not to Palestinians, and maybe not even to Jews who advocate the peace process. This is the Judaism that is taught at Yeshiva University and at many of the Orthodox synagogues in the United States and around the world (though there are even in the Orthodox world those who teach a Judaism of love and justice and renewal as well).

What is particularly striking and sad is the absence of a powerful counter voice. The Labor Party and Meretz should have opposed the unilateral character of the Sharon withdrawal, seen through its devious intent, and refused to back Sharon against the Likud members who split. Peace forces should have insisted that a final settlement agreement not require that all settlers withdraw from their homes. As we've often argued in these pages, if we are talking about real peace, then it should include the right of Jews to live as citizens of a Palestinian state with the same level of civil liberties that Arabs have living in Israel. Had there been either a courageous Left or a religious party that openly preached compassion for the Palestinian people, it should have welcomed the possibility of new elections and should have used them to advocate for a vision of peace that included withdrawal from at least as much of the West Bank as the Geneva Accord had specified.

Instead, we got the worst of all worlds: a battle that need not have been fought to ensure that the battle that must be fought to end the Occupation gets postponed and the suffering of the Palestinian people continues indefinitely. And if under those circumstances, Hamas rises to the fore, intensifying Jewish fears about what a Palestinian state might mean, and giving new popular support to the forces of repression that increasingly become the mainstream reality of what was once one of the most humane and morally sensitive people on the planet, Sharon has won another round for the settlers, no matter how little they appreciate their real champion. □

Rabbi Michael Lerner is the editor of *TIKKUN*, co-founder of the *Tikkun Community*, and spiritual leader of *Beyt Tikkun synagogue*.

Out of the Past: What Anti-Poverty Groups Can Learn from the American Legion

John Atlas

Even if John Kerry had won the 2004 election, it would have made little difference to those who are not well off. Life would be better for poor Americans, but not significantly. And while the fate of the least fortunate is tied to the future prospects of the Democratic Party (and perhaps vice versa), the debate raging between centrists and left-progressives as to whether Democrats should get tougher on national security or become the anti-war party is largely irrelevant to the struggle for economic equality.

What's more germane to the fate of the poor than even a possible Democratic takeover of the House or Senate is the inherent weaknesses in the civic organizations—non-profit community service organizations, anti-poverty think tanks, and activist groups—that operate outside the Democratic Party. Compare right-wing, outside-the-GOP religious and gun organizations, which have become such successful political support networks for Republicans, with left-wing organizations like the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), the Children's Defense Fund, the Low-Income Housing Coalition, and Handgun Control. Not only have the latter been ineffective in stopping the massive redistribution of wealth from the poor and lower middle-class to the affluent, they have been unable to win legislative battles on their narrower issues.

For example, despite overwhelming support in the United States for the right to an abortion, over the past three decades the country has witnessed a dramatic whittling away of this



right, disproportionately affecting the poor. Since 1977, the Hyde Amendment, named after Representative Henry Hyde (R-IL), has limited federal funding of abortions for women enrolled in Medicaid. In its 1992 *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court reduced legal protections for abortion, inviting government action to restrict reproductive rights. Pushed by right-to-life activists, state and federal governments have restricted access to contraception, legal abortion, and sex education. According to NARAL, the organization at the forefront of protecting the right to an abortion, 87 percent of counties in the United States have no abortion provider. Since 1995, states have enacted more than 400 anti-choice

PETER O. ZIERLEIN
John Atlas is president of the National Housing Institute and a contributing editor of its magazine, *Shelterforce*, a journal of affordable housing and community building. He is writing a book about democracy and the poor through the lens of ACORN.

measures and Congress has voted 166 times with anti-choice politicians, winning all but 32 of those votes.

In the fight to promote equality and in the fight for a victorious Democratic party, left-wing groups must become more effective.

Where to Begin?

It may seem odd, but organizations like NARAL could learn a lot from old-line civic groups like the Elks Lodges, the American Farm Bureau Federation, and the American Legion. All of these civic associations built chapter-based, dues-paying national federations that recruited men and women across lines of class and place.

Though satirized by the 1950s TV show *The Honey-mooners* as fraternal groups for men who wear childish hats and swig beer, these groups had a pretty good track record of promoting national legislation that helped the less affluent. The organizers of these groups, as Harvard professor Theda Skocpol documents in her book *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*, built nationally networked associations with local lodges, chapters, or clubs that encouraged lower-income people and the more affluent to socialize and engage in community service and gave an effective voice to the poor.

For example, in the 1920s the General Federation of Women's Clubs successfully organized campaigns for mother's pensions, while the Fraternal Order of Eagles led successful campaigns for old-age pensions. The American Farm Bureau Federation and the Grange played a critical role in generating political pressure for land grant colleges and other government aid to farmers. And after World War II, veterans' organizations—the American Legion, and the Veterans Of Foreign Wars—waged successful campaigns for pensions and educational assistance.

Skocpol reminds us that the G.I. Bill, which brought a college education to millions of returning World War II veterans, was possible only because the American Legion (with a membership that ranged from poor to upper middle class) demanded that the program be a universal entitlement. Skocpol compares the American Legion's support for the GI Bill of 1944 to the Clinton administration's plan for universal health insurance in 1993 and 1994. Both were popular with the public. The GI Bill became law, and GIs who grew up in

squalid, culturally-deprived ghettos received a college education, something their parents could only have dreamed about. The Clinton plan failed.

The difference was that the American Legion was a broad-based network of local chapters, whose membership crossed class lines. The Legion was an organization where the middle, working, and lower-classes spoke with one voice. They drafted, lobbied for, and helped implement the program, which Skocpol accurately describes as "one of the most generous and inclusive federal social programs ever enacted." The Clinton proposal, led by Hillary Clinton, was put together by "highly specialized professional and advocacy associations." Their recommendations were too complex for the public to understand, resulting in defeat.

Role of Organizers

From the early 1800s until the 1960s, the organizers who built these civic associations depended financially not on foundations and government grants, but on mass membership dues and on sales of newsletters or supplies to members and local groups. While often segregated by race, gender, and creed, the organizers met face to face in cities and neighborhoods across the country and brought together citizens from different social and economic classes, uniting local elites and ordinary workers.

The organizers encouraged participation through ongoing serious discussions between members and leaders as well as through common rituals and activities, especially at the local level. According to Lawrence Goodwyn's animated history of nineteenth century populism, *The Democratic Promise*, vast numbers of feisty organizers for farmers' groups toured the country giving lectures and created a movement

that developed an alternative culture to the emerging corporate values of the Gilded Age. Populist newspapers sprang up around the country; huge encampments similar to religious revivals were held where music was played, stories were shared, and crafts displayed. The culture was a system of values based on cooperation and community, rather than greed and consumption.

The organizers of civic groups like the Fraternal Order of Eagles made sure that poorer members and less well-educated Americans had opportunities to develop civic skills of self-government and to attain positions of responsibility and

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trust. "Members and officers of voluntary federations were tutored in the organizational skills they would need to participate effectively in democratic politics," Skocpol explains. "Of necessity, rotating leaders learned how to run meetings, keep record books, make speeches, and organize events ... teach[ing] countless numbers of Americans what it meant to be a presiding officer, a secretary, a treasurer, an elected chaplain, a representative of a local group to a higher representative body, and so forth."

The leaders of these civic groups knew that if leverage over public officials was needed, a voluntary federation had to be able to influence legislators, citizens, and newspapers across many legislative districts. For financial and political reasons supporters had to be continuously recruited through social networks and person-to-person contacts. These ambitious citizen-organizers understood that the associations they built needed to put down strong local roots. The importance of these national federations for the less affluent cannot be underestimated. Dominating our civil society and helping to shape our politics until the early 1960s, these groups provided a place where the working poor could effectively engage in public life.

1960s: The Beginning of the Era of Demobilization

And then everything suddenly changed. People stopped joining. The women's, anti-war and civil rights movements of the 1960s stigmatized these often exclusionary civic associations that were open either to men or women (but not both), that excluded blacks entirely, and that often were blindly patriotic.

So what kinds of organizations did the activist organizers build in their place?

Beginning in the mid-1960s, as the old civic groups shriveled, a new generation organized groups like Common Cause, NARAL, the Environmental Defense Fund, Children's Defense Fund and other inside-the-beltway public interest organizations. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., staffed by lawyers, lobbyists, and policy experts, these groups sought to influence the government by relying on the courts, regulatory agencies, and Congressional subcommittees, rather than doing the more arduous work of mobilizing the majority of the people to their cause. While the professional staffs related well to Congressional staffs and to other elites, most groups had donors but no active members at all.

Instead of developing state and local chapters in the American Legion mode, the groups sought support from foundations and from direct-mail fund-raising. Most emphasized single issues. NARAL's offer of "membership" was chiefly a fund-raising tactic to encourage donations; the organization itself was best known for its professional spokespersons who debated groups like the National Right to Life Committee.

Most importantly, very little, if any, staff time was devoted

to engaging a mass membership and certainly not the poor. These groups rarely brought individuals together across lines of income, education, and social status.

The professionals who might have led civic organizations now had nowhere to go, and instead organized and joined trade associations that represented their specific interests as lawyers, academics, and social workers. When they wanted to support a cause beyond their professional associations they sent checks to their favorite national advocacy groups. To help the poor, they went to soup kitchens or donated money to a non-profit focused on their chosen social woe.

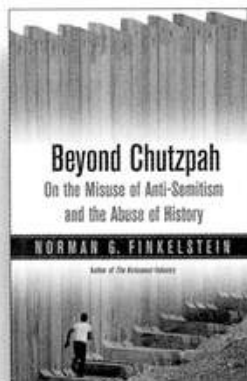
Many human-service workers, who serve their communities in non-profit agencies, saw no need for cross-class civic associations to better the poor, since they saw their own work—much of it funded through government and foundations—as the very epitome of community responsibility.

Even at organizations with local chapters, like the AARP, the professional staff drove the agenda, as they did in formulating national legislation like the recent federal prescription drug program. In such organizations today, you're not likely to find a local chapter where the poor and working class meet with the wealthy and middle class to socialize and discuss national events. (Although Bush's privatization of social security may energize a movement to build local chapters.)

Seeing no need for institutions with cross-class solidarity, professionals practiced their own brand of class-based politics,

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—Amy Goodman,
host of *Democracy Now!*



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which was moderately liberal on social issues, moderately conservative in economics.

This “top down” kind of politics created by 1970s organizers spoke with an upper-middle-class voice. That new focus has brought about some good results, among them increased legal status for gay couples and many more rights for the disabled, women, and other minority groups—but it also brought along less concern for workers and the poor. After forty years, while these movements and professional associations have opened doors of opportunity for those who suffered from discrimination, the percentage of those who are poor remains the same.

By failing to organize grassroots supporters and instead relying on foundations and mass-produced fundraising letters, by supporting narrow issues that often polarize a shrinking electorate, and by running to the courts and staff members of Congressional committees, these groups have weakened cross-class alliances and undermined the base for the inclusive social legislation (social security and the GI Bill) that lies at the heart of a successful progressive politics. The good that liberal activists accomplished has been offset by the outlook of upper-middle-class elites who have cut their ties and policy agenda from the concrete interests of the lower-middle class and the working poor.

The New Right and ACORN

Not all organizers in the 1960s went the route of the inside-the-beltway crowd.

Right-wing organizers, for example, have used nationally federated groups based on face-to-face organizing to build their associations. Like the labor movement, these groups were more ideological and political, and turned out voters. Lisa McGirr, in her book *Suburban Warriors*, traces the growth of the conservative movement from 1960 to 1981 by charting the way the Right practiced this sort of grassroots organizing.

In the late 1950s, American conservatives appeared to have run out of gas. McCarthyism had been discredited. The early 1960s media focused on student activists, who in fighting for student rights and Civil Rights and against poverty were building a New Left. In 1964, Johnson defeated Goldwater in a landslide.

Yet, beneath the headlines a new conservative movement was incubating. McGirr’s “suburban warriors” were the

middle-class mothers who hosted coffee klatches for Barry Goldwater in their tract houses. They were the doctors, dentists, and engineers who started anti-Communist reading groups that agitated against sex education; the Democrats who were increasingly drawn into conservative circles because of their opposition to abortion, busing, and affirmative action; and the Midwest migrants who were attracted to jobs in the defense industry and found a sense of community in swelling evangelical churches.

These groups addressed such populist concerns as the danger of unaccountable government bureaucracies, the erosion of community, the weakening of the family, and the loss of religion in national life. McGirr quotes one activist saying, “it became ... a social thing.” By 1981 they would elect Ronald Reagan president and help dethrone liberalism as the reigning political ideology, and they would transform establishment policies for the next two-and-a-half decades.

It’s not just religious faith, guns, and traditional “moral values” that count for people in these outside-the-GOP organizations that support Republicans. It’s that they have successfully mixed in with the life of the church, hunting, and garden clubs that function as places for people in rural

towns and the growing exurbs to gather and associate. Organizers of mega-churches in America’s fastest growing suburbs equip their communities with voucher schools, child care, and counseling. As Jonathan Mahler observed in his March 27, 2005 *New York Times* magazine cover article, these new town squares help advance a mobilized constituency for a conservative agenda.

It’s true that the work of the Left is harder than it was back at the turn of the twentieth century. The globalization of labor markets may make it more difficult for our system to yield universal economic reforms. At the same time, America is wealthier than ever and has the ability to implement more far-reaching economic populist programs than ever. Those programs won’t be implemented on their own, however. It will take a social movement to shift that wealth to where it is needed.

While the mainstream Left went a different way, a few left-wing organizations took up the challenge of movement-building and organizing the grassroots. Both the Industrial Areas Foundation and the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) have successfully

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adopted a federated organizing approach and over the last three decades have accumulated significant influence.

ACORN is the nation's largest community organization of low- and moderate-income families, working together for social justice and stronger communities. Since 1970, ACORN has grown to more than 175,000 member families, organized in 850 neighborhood chapters in 75 cities across the United States and in cities in Canada, the Dominican Republic, and Peru. ACORN runs a national home-ownership counseling program, several public schools, a corporation that builds low-income homes, two radio stations, a law office, and two public-employee unions. It provides the leadership for several independent political parties, such as the Working Families Party in New York.

ACORN successfully used its political might in the 2004 presidential election with a national campaign to register over one million voters. On November 2, while the country was electing George Bush to a second term, ACORN engineered a landslide victory in Florida to increase the state's minimum wage over the united opposition of Governor Jeb Bush and the state's big business community. Florida's voters, by a margin of 72 percent to 28 percent (4.95 million to 1.96 million), passed a ballot initiative to raise the state minimum wage by one dollar an hour, to \$6.15/hour and indexed it to annual increases in inflation.

Through the same kind of face-to-face organizing, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) won big victories in places like San Antonio, Texas and East Brooklyn, New York. The IAF works with voluntary institutions—mostly churches—to identify, recruit, train and develop leaders in local communities. Those leaders then organize their neighbors, creating a stronger social fabric. That communal base proved powerful in San Antonio, where IAF members shifted power from the wealthy Anglos who controlled the city to poor and working-class Mexican-American families. They helped to elect Henry Cisneros as the city's first Hispanic mayor, and got the city to channel more than \$1 billion worth of sewers, sidewalks, parks, clinics, streetlights, and other improvements to low-income neighborhoods. In the scorched earth of East Brooklyn, the IAF built more than 3,000 affordable homes as part of the Nehemiah Housing Program.

Both the IAF and ACORN recruit members by going door to door or create house meetings in run-down housing projects. They build alliances with politicians but also do not hesitate to stage dramatic public confrontations when they must. "Public confrontation, is, at bottom, an attempt to engage and relate," explains Michael Gecan, an IAF organizer and author of *Going Public*, a book about his life as an organizer. "Most activists fail to appreciate this. Bureaucrats seek to stifle it."

More important than confrontation is ACORN and IAF's reliance on building new leaders. IAF mostly recruits from schools and churches, while ACORN organizers go door-to-door. Both organizations train leaders from local communities—people like Alice McCollum, a determined middle-aged

African-American mother from Brooklyn, who learned how to confront the city bureaucracy in order to win the long-delayed restoration of her local park.

Build It and They Will Come

In the Sunday *New York Times* book review of March 6, during a roundtable discussion on the future of liberalism, Mike Tomasky, the editor of the *American Prospect*, was asked, "Can the Democrats become the majority party?" Tomasky replied: "One of the Democratic Party's problems is that they don't have enough contact with its rank and file. Right-wing people in this country have a place to meet and talk politics—their churches, increasingly the mega-churches in the exurbs. There's not a meeting place like that for liberals and for Democrats."

Ancient Greece had the agora. Rome had the forum. What was important to those institutions was not, of course, the ossified bureaucracies of the ancient cities that built the temples and stoas and council buildings, but the open spaces between and among such structures, creating for average people a place to meet, talk, eat, and drink. In Czechoslovakia it was the cafes, theaters, publishing houses, and other places where poets, writers, and musicians gathered and eventually formed the political base that removed the Communist from government power. The right wing has this. Their people come together in the bleachers of NASCAR races and the pews and basements of evangelical churches.

History suggests the Left needs associations that build agorae—spaces for people to meet, talk, and be exposed to progressive politics. Leaders in the labor movement like Larry Cohen of the Communication Workers of America, who emphasizes stronger union locals, as well as Howard Dean in his presidential race, have started to take steps to provide those places. During Dean's run for the presidency, over 65,000 Howard-Dean-for-President supporters met up at coffee shops, houses, and restaurants in over 580 cities nationwide to discuss how to support Dean. They found one another through meetup.com, a web site that began as an independent, volunteer-generated site and eventually was used by the Dean campaign to organize volunteers without employing its own staff and field offices. Dean's willingness both to support the creation of the meet-ups and to give these volunteers some measure of independence creates some hope that he will use the same grassroots techniques to rebuild the Democratic party.

Perhaps a new generation of leaders and organizers will adopt some of the lessons learned from the old civic groups and build organizations that can simultaneously provide a place to hang out, services to their members, and the capacity to lobby and engage in electoral politics. Without that kind of foundation it's unlikely that a Democratic presidential candidate, like a John Edwards, who would inject the concerns of the working poor into the presidential debate, could win and make a significant difference. □

Lost in Translation

Henry A. Giroux

Democracy begins to fail, and political life becomes impoverished, when society can no longer translate private problems into public, social issues. Unfortunately, that is precisely what is happening in the United States today. In a post-9/11 world, the space of shared responsibility has given way to the space of private fears; the social obligations of citizenship are reduced to the highly individualized imperatives of consumerism; and the language of public life is emptied of all substantive content and becomes a playground for endlessly enacting and reinforcing the banal privatized fantasies produced by shopping malls and celebrity culture.

As the public collapses into the personal, the personal becomes "the only politics there is," to quote anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff. Under such circumstances, the language of the social is either devalued or ignored. Public life is often reduced to a form of pathology. In contemporary political discourse, "public schools," "public transportation," and "public welfare" have become dirty words. All dreams of the future are now modeled around the narcissistic, privatized, and self-indulgent needs of consumer culture and the dictates of the alleged free market. Stripped of its ethical and political importance, the public has been largely reduced to a giant reality-TV show where notions of the public register as simply a conglomeration of private woes, tasks, conversations, and problems.

As the very idea of the social collapses into an utterly private discourse, it becomes more difficult for people to develop a vocabulary for understanding how individual misery could be translated into public concern and collective action. Instead, individuals are told that the misery they feel is a personal flaw that they must bear in isolation. Poverty, for example, is now imagined to be a problem of individual character. Racism is merely individual discrimination or prejudice. Homelessness is reduced to a choice made by lazy people. Misfortune is viewed as a private disgrace that deserves only a sneer. At the level of social policy, public officials make lyrical pronouncements suggesting that a crisis such as water pollution can be solved by buying bottled water.

A democratic politics may take many forms, but central to

it is the need for individuals, groups, and social movements to be able to translate individual problems into public concerns. Such a challenge must be central to any progressive politics of hope and meaning. Without the ability to see how each of our lives is related to the greater good, we lack the basis for seeing ourselves as citizens who govern as well as those who are governed. We lack the means for raising questions about the goals and aims of our society and what we want our society as a whole to accomplish. In short, we lack what philosopher Zygmunt Bauman has argued makes a democratic politics viable at all. The alternative is a growing authoritarianism that encourages profit-hungry monopolies, the ideology of faith-based certainty, the militarization of everyday life, and the undermining of any vestige of critical education, responsible dissent, or public dialogue. Increasingly unable to grasp how public consciousness and questions of power, politics, and history are mediated at the interface of private issues and social concerns, public life becomes impoverished as many people either refuse or find it difficult to reactivate their political sensibilities and conceive of themselves as engaged social agents.

Democracy relies on a kind of political imagination and collective hope that allows us to move from the personal to the political and back again. Translating the private into the public is about more than enlarging the realm of critique and affirming the social; it is also about public responsibility, the struggle over democratic public life, and the importance of critical education in a democratic society. It is, as Alain Badiou argues, about the willingness of those who believe in a democracy to show "how the space of the possible is larger than the one assigned—that something else is possible, but not everything is possible." [For more on Badiou, see page 72.]

Any viable progressive politics has to address the educational challenge of providing the conditions for a populace to be able to negotiate between the private and the public as part of a broader attempt to foreground issues of understanding, agency, and social responsibility and address the implications the latter have for a democratic society. As the artist and politician Vaclav Havel has noted, "Democracy requires a certain type of citizen who feels responsible for something other than his [or her] own well feathered little corner; citizens who want to participate in society's affairs, who insist on it; citizens with backbones; citizens who hold their ideas about democracy at the deepest level, at the level that religion is held, where beliefs and identity are the same." □

Henry A. Giroux is the Global TV Network Chair at McMaster University in Canada. His most recent books are: Schooling and the Struggle for Public Life, second edition, and Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education, second edition.

Justice and American Particularism

Sheldon H. Laskin

Justice, justice shalt thou follow,
that thou mayest live,
and inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.
—Deuteronomy 16:18–20

With the departure of Justice Sandra Day O'Connor from the U.S. Supreme Court, and the likelihood that Chief Justice William Rehnquist will retire within the next year, President Bush is in a position to influence the judicial philosophy of this country for a generation. While specific issues such as freedom of choice are of course important, even more critical will be how a candidate for the Court will conceive of justice itself. The Declaration of Independence proclaims that our nation was founded on the idea "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights," among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This idea, which came to the United States from the European Enlightenment, was internationalist and universalizing in its intent (even though limited in practice to the political and economic rights of propertied, white males). Today, however, neo-conservatives, led by Justice Scalia, have attacked internationalism in law. Isolationist in intent, this neo-conservative theory of justice dangerously separates the United States from international jurisprudence and—ironically—from the founding principle of universal rights to which these neo-conservatives claim to adhere.

The history of the United States has been a constant struggle, often in the face of bitter, violent opposition by entrenched interests, to create a more just world. Over time, rights once extended by the Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights only to white, propertied males came to be enjoyed by African Americans, women, and laborers. The struggle continues today to clarify the rights of juveniles; of gay, bisexual, and transgendered people; of foreigners; and of other powerless and persecuted minorities. In many of these areas, international law has leap-frogged U.S. law. For example, Spain, Canada, the Netherlands, and Belgium all have passed measures legalizing gay marriage. Nodding to the growing recognition of the universality of human rights in international, and especially European law, a majority of

the Supreme Court has referenced such measures in deciding several recent U.S. cases.

Yet Justice Antonin Scalia, usually joined by Chief Justice William Rehnquist and Justice Clarence Thomas, has persistently resisted any recognition of these international standards. Indeed, this contempt for international law is one of the bedrock principles of the Federalist Society, many of whose neoconservative leaders have occupied influential positions in the Bush II Administration. In addition to Justice Scalia, members of the Federalist Society include former Attorney General John Ashcroft, Homeland Security Director Michael Chertoff, Interior Secretary Gale Norton, former Solicitor General Theodore Olson and former Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham. But by virtue of his position as the leading theoretician of the Radical Right on the Supreme Court, Justice Scalia is in a position to lay the theoretical underpinnings for a darkly isolationist view of American justice for years to come, should the President succeed in appointing one or two like-minded justices to the Court.

Several recent cases have illuminated the benefit of drawing upon international standards to evaluate what constitutes justice in U.S. law. In *Roper v. Simmons*, for example, the United States Supreme Court ruled that capital punishment, as applied to individuals who commit homicide under the age of eighteen, violates the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution. The Court used the fact that juveniles are rarely executed in the United States as the key to its decision that it is cruel and unusual under the Eighth Amendment to subject juveniles to capital punishment. Yet, this ruling was clearly reinforced by international standards, with the majority noting that the United States is the only country in the world that continues to allow juveniles to be sentenced to death. The majority considered the overwhelming weight of international opinion against executing juveniles as confirmation that the death penalty is cruel and unusual punishment for offenders under age eighteen.

In his dissent, Justice Scalia also focused primarily on practice in the United States, asserting that only legislative repeal of most state statutes allowing juveniles to be executed would be proof that it would be unconstitutional for any state to retain the punishment. In his view, the legislative record is too ambiguous to conclude that the Eighth Amendment precludes the states in all cases from executing juveniles. Yet Scalia's opinion was notable for the intensity with which he savaged the majority for its citation of evolving principles of international law and justice as supporting

Sheldon H. Laskin is an attorney and community activist in Baltimore, Maryland, where he is a member of the Baltimore Tikkun Community. He has represented employees in discrimination litigation in the United States Supreme Court and the lower federal courts.

its holding, declaring that “the basic premise that American law should conform to the laws of the rest of the world ought to be rejected out of hand.”

The death penalty case is not the first time that Justice Scalia has attacked a majority of the Court for relying on evolving standards of international law and justice. In *Lawrence v. Kansas*, Justice Scalia dissented from the majority opinion, which ruled that criminal laws prohibiting consensual sex between adults of the same sex violate the Due Process Clause. He bitterly attacked the majority for noting that the European Court of Justice previously ruled that the right of homosexuals to engage in intimate consensual conduct is a human right that European governments must recognize. As with the juvenile death penalty, Justice Scalia is perfectly comfortable with this country’s taking a far more limited view of the rights of homosexuals than is the case in most developed nations. Leaving aside the devastating effects on gay Americans of Justice Scalia’s views, the Court’s adoption of such views can only contribute to the general sense of American isolation and alienation fostered by the Bush Administration’s arrogant international policies.

Justice Scalia’s narrow view of universal human rights is nowhere better illustrated than in his contrasting views of the rights of American detainees as opposed to the rights of non-citizen detainees in the war on terrorism. In *Hamdi v. Rumsfeld*, the Court majority ruled that a U.S. citizen may be detained indefinitely as an enemy combatant as long as an adequate judicial review of the grounds for detention is provided. Scalia dissented, arguing that the inalienable right to due process of law guaranteed by the Fifth Amendment requires the government to either charge a detained citizen with treason or release him. Yet, those “inalienable” rights somehow disappear when the person in question is a non-citizen. In *Rasul v. Bush*, Scalia wrote in dissent that he does not believe a non-citizen detainee has any rights whatsoever that an American court must recognize.

Ultimately, to ground a human right on the ephemeral basis of an individual’s citizenship is to call into question whether or not any universal human rights exist at all. Legal requirements for citizenship change constantly over time, and from country to country. Indeed, citizenship *itself* is a transient concept as nations come and go; a Soviet citizen born in 1990 found herself a person without a country the following year. A British subject born in Massachusetts in 1775 found himself to be an American the following year.

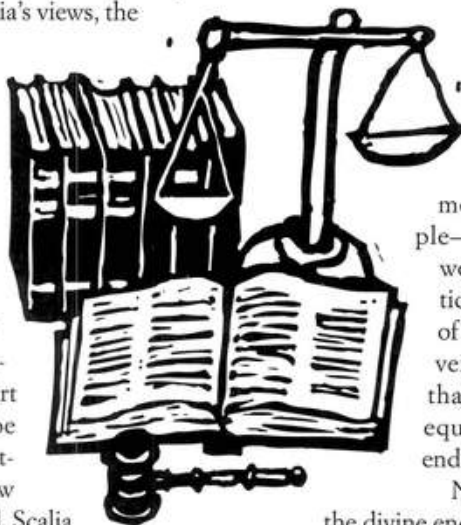
Whatever the narrow legalistic merits of Scalia’s views, the foundation for human rights must be on firmer ground than the ever-shifting historical sands reflected in notions of citi-

zenship. Those rights must be based on the self-evident truths recognized by the Founding Fathers in the Declaration of Independence—that *all* people are entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Indeed, the Founders recognized that a momentous event such as the declaration of a free and independent United States could not be explained merely on the parochial basis of national self-interest, but must be publicly explained out of “a decent respect to the opinions of mankind.” In honoring those opinions, the Founders acknowledged that the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness did not originate on this continent, but rather from the perpetual strivings of peoples everywhere to create a more just world.

Further, Scalia’s America-first ideology is deeply at odds with his own belief that justice derives from the divine. For example, Scalia has argued that the Ten Commandments “are a symbol that government authority comes from God.” Leaving aside the questionable basis of this assertion—a fair reading of the Declaration of Independence and other contemporary documents supports the view that the Founders believed governmental authority derived from the people—how can it be that a universal God would mandate different standards of justice for different nations? The Declaration of Independence clearly proclaims the universality of justice by its acknowledgment that all men are created equal and are equally entitled to the inalienable rights endowed by *their Creator*.

Nations come and go, but, presumably, the divine endures. A God that modifies her views of justice depending on the flag that flies over a particular piece of real estate is a God that most religions would find difficult to recognize. And Justice Scalia would be hard-pressed to find any theological basis for his supposed belief, shared by the Religious Right, that Americans are God’s chosen people whose purpose is to bring the Word of God to the benighted people of the world. Such a belief is a classic pseudo-theological justification for imperialism and jingoism, but hardly augurs well for creating a more just and peaceful world.

A jurisprudence of meaning should aspire toward a legal system based on deeper and higher levels of social justice, taking its authority from whatever sources move the world in those directions. Sometimes, as in the right of trial by jury of one’s peers, those rights may come out of the American legal system; in other cases, those rights may come from beyond our shores. However, in all cases, recognition of those rights in the American legal system must reaffirm the value of every single human being. Justice is not the province of one nation or one people; it belongs to all humanity. □



Globalization and the Commercialization of Childhood

Allen D. Kanner

The Girls Intelligence Agency (GIA) is a relatively new American company that offers the services of its 40,000 "agents"—girls aged six to eighteen—to corporate customers that want to create a buzz for their products. GIA recruits these girls from around the country by inviting them to become an "official GIA agent" of a "very elite group." The girls are given exclusive offers for products, events, and free online fashion consultation with Agent Kiki, a supposed "big sis" who in fact is the GIA staff providing answers to the girls' email questions. The hallmark of GIA is its "Slumber Party in a Box," in which a GIA girl invites up to eleven friends for an overnight party at which she passes out free products—toys, cosmetics, films, and the like—while taking notes for GIA on her friends' reactions. She does not tell them that the event is sponsored. In fact, GIA instructs the girls to "be slick and find out some sly scoop on your friends," such as what they think is currently fashionable.

There's so much wrong with this picture that it's hard to know where to start: large corporations teaching girls to manipulate their friends for profit, parents going along with it, the girls being used as consultants for a pittance (they get to keep product samples but don't get paid), GIA lying to its young agents about Agent Kiki, the company recruiting girls by playing to their need to be recognized as special when in fact the girls are being used and deceived.

Yet GIA is in certain respects only a symptom, a recent entry into the race to the ethical bottom that is modern marketing to children. The deluge of advertising aimed at young people over the last twenty years has caused children and teenagers to become cynical about marketing, forcing marketers to constantly come up with new manipulations and deceptions to reach their audience. The marketers call this cynicism a form of "sophistication" as opposed to what it really is: children shutting down emotionally to protect themselves from the commercial world. But with the clever assistance of companies like GIA, the industry is staying one step ahead of the game, and each

year children are spending more than they ever have before.

Going Global

With the rise of economic globalization, the commercialization of childhood has become a worldwide phenomenon. The institutions and treaties that drive globalization—such as the World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and NAFTA—all require participating nations to open their borders to multinational corporations and to put these powerful entities on equal footing with their domestic industries. The result is that these huge companies bring their sophisticated marketing campaigns, including those aimed at children, to every corner of the earth.

For example, from 1992–2001, India had one children's TV channel, the Cartoon Channel, owned by Turner International. Since last year at least eight more have been or will shortly be launched, most of them owned by multinational corporations such as Nickelodeon, Disney, Sony, and Turner. As of mid-2004, India had 337 million youngsters fourteen or under, even more than China's 289 million, representing a huge untapped market.

A recent report by the British-based marketing company Euromonitor, entitled "Marketing to Teenagers," gives a sense of the growing global market. The document is extremely detailed, breaking down teenage spending by geographical region, major countries, types of products, and a host of other variables. From it we learn that in 2002 teenage expenditures, and parents' expenditures on teenagers, together amounted to over 220 billion dollars worldwide. Not surprisingly, the United States accounted for the largest market share (39 percent), followed by Japan, Germany, and the United Kingdom, although Norway, Sweden, and Denmark had the highest spending per teenager. The most popular products were computer games/consoles, mobile phones, "grazing" items (i.e. junk food, tobacco products, and alcohol), clothing/footwear, and musical recordings.

The report describes a world on the brink of the worst global economy in thirty years, yet anticipates a robust adolescent market, predicting that "'pester power' and peer pressure are likely to remain a strong counterbalance to any threat to teenage expenditure levels." The report also forecasts that

Allen D. Kanner, Ph.D., a Berkeley-based child, family, and adult therapist, is co-founder of the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood (www.commercialfreechildhood.org) and co-editor of *Psychology and Consumer Culture*.

the developed countries will continue to dominate the market in the near future, but adds that “nevertheless, the sheer numbers of teenagers in developing markets such as China, India, Indonesia, and Brazil means that only a slight increase in teenage spending can create huge overall growth in global teenage markets.”

As multi-national corporations are well aware, there are at least three major reasons for advertising to children that go well beyond how much children are currently spending and that justify aggressively expanding the global market. The first is the creation of “brand loyalty.” If you advertise to children early, you can significantly increase the chance that they’ll stay with your product as the years progress. The second is that children become attached to adult products long before they buy them—an insight that has led to the singing frogs in beer commercials and talking cars in gasoline ads. Finally, children are increasingly participating in their parents’ purchasing decisions, which is why the automobile industry and even the real estate industry are now wooing young customers.

Corporate Materialism

Why is all this advertising a problem? There are several reasons. One is that the vast majority of products marketed to children and adolescents are harmful to them. These include junk food, violent toys and media, alcohol, tobacco, and sexy clothing for pre-teens. Apparently it is relatively easy to sell products that appeal to children’s impulsive, rebellious, and hedonistic sides, so marketers take the path of least resistance. In doing so, they reinforce these qualities in young people, while neglecting and often denigrating the more gentle, thoughtful, and compassionate dimensions of childhood.

Beyond selling harmful products, however, modern advertising conveys an overarching materialistic message that penetrates deep into children’s psyches, molding their values and understanding of the world. This message is subtle, as each ad is a variation of the basic theme that happiness comes from purchasing the right product. This theme is repeated 40,000 times a year to American children on television alone.

A growing body of evidence, however, has documented the harm that arises from adopting materialistic values. Throughout the course of history spiritual traditions have taught that materialistic values are antithetical to compassion, generosity, and kindness, and recent psychological research supports the wisdom of these insights. Studies have shown, for example, that materialism is associated with selfishness and a lack of social concern. Further, this research indicates that materialistic individuals are less happy than others, more anxious and depressed, and less skilled in interpersonal relationships.

However, modern marketing does not simply promote a generic form of materialism. Rather, it conveys a narrow and highly specific consumer message, one that claims that happiness is attained through purchasing the products and services of multi-national corporations. I call this “corporate materialism.”

Thus, these days children do not yearn for just any old shoes, hamburgers, sodas, dolls, cell phones, and computers, as generic materialism would have it, but for the offerings of Nike, McDonald’s, Coke, Mattel, Cingular, and Apple. Branding is paramount, and the company that makes what you own is as important as what you own. It is corporate stuff that is the stuff of dreams.

The corporate dream, in turn, is one of a world in which the same stores, the same restaurants, the same movies, the same fashions—that is, the same products and services—can be bought anywhere, any time. Jerry Mander and his colleagues at the International Forum on Globalization have described this ideal as one of a worldwide corporate monoculture. In this monoculture, differences among nations and cultures are homogenized to such an extent that people’s desires and tastes are fully in concert with the output of multi-national corporations. This is the vision underlying economic globalization.

Children absorb the vision of globalization, of a worldwide corporate monoculture that provides all that people could ever need and desire, when they are repeatedly exposed to corporate marketing. In the process, they come to identify with brands, logos, and ultimately with corporations themselves, and come to see the existence of corporations as essential to their happiness. As children mature, their early bonding with brands undermines their ability to critically evaluate the corporate structure and to decide if it is truly delivering on its utopian promises.

Many marketers believe that telecommunications technology holds the key to the creation of an interconnected consumer planet. In this respect, it is worth noting that computers and cell phones are the top two revenue-generating products worldwide for teens and pre-teens. Martin Lindstrom, an expert in marketing to pre-teens, or what the industry calls “tweens” (roughly ages eight through fourteen), spells out how the virtual monoculture is taking form in his book *Brandchild: Remarkable Insights into the Minds of Today’s Global Kids and Their Relationships with Brands*. Lindstrom describes the growing popularity of interactive role-playing games that are “located” in virtual fantasylands.

These games are accessible twenty-four hours a day and capable of including thousands of participants simultaneously. Sony’s EverQuest, which features the virtual world of Narrath, is a prime example, boasting over half a million subscribers to date and 60,000 players logged on at any given time. The average Narrath citizen spends thirty-six hours a week in this virtual world, while some 93,000 players spend more time there than at their jobs. The game is so addictive that it is reportedly responsible for several thousand divorces.

According to Lindstrom’s survey, young people are already heavily involved in virtual role-playing games. Over a third of urban pre-teens have at least two “avatars,” or characters they have developed for interactive games, which are often the product of an enormous investment of time. Twenty percent

of urban pre-teens say they prefer the virtual to the real world.

For Lindstrom, all of this comes together through a relatively new development, the use of real money to purchase goods and services sold in the fantasylands of cyberspace. He anticipates, for instance, that in the near future children will be able to purchase at the virtual hat store the same hat for themselves and their avatar. Or they could get a full-time job through their avatar as, say, a clerk at a virtual Wal-Mart. In this way global on-line "communities"—created by multi-national corporations and structured around their wares—will develop in which children can participate from an early age.

Think Globally, Advertise Locally

Even if we remain within the confines of the real world, the general consensus among major corporations that sell to children is that it is necessary to market internationally in order to survive. Starting this year, for example, Coca-Cola is substantially increasing its global marketing expenditures, concentrating on high growth markets such as Brazil, China, India and Russia. Last year, as part of its global marketing campaign "i'm lovin' it," McDonald's announced its partnership with the rhythm and blues group Destiny's Child, whose new tour, "Destiny Fulfilled and lovin' it," will stop in the U.K., France, Germany, Spain, Japan, Australia, and Brazil this spring and the U.S. and Canada in 2006.

McDonald's "i'm lovin' it" campaign uses two contrasting marketing strategies, both of which are highly effective at promoting a global monoculture. The first strategy, as illustrated by the partnership with Destiny's Child, involves developing the cross-cultural appeal of a company's product. Thus Dan Barrett, Senior Vice President of McDonald's Global Marketing, promises that the company "will continue to develop innovative, breakthrough programs in the areas of music, fashion, entertainment and sports. These universal themes connect with people everywhere...."

Finding ways to appeal to people everywhere is certainly consistent with creating a globalized consumer monoculture. But marketers tout the second major international marketing technique, called "localization," as being culturally sensitive and as encouraging diversity. Localization occurs when a multi-national corporation infuses local culture into its products, services, and marketing. For example, for its new children's TV channels in India, Disney is producing shows using local television crews, writers, and actors. In the same vein,

McDonald's has modified its menu to meet the cultural preferences of different countries, serving cheeseless Big Macs in Israel (to keep milk and meat separate) and chilled yogurt drinks (*ayram*) in Turkey, while decorating some of its Chinese outlets with paper cuts of auspicious traditional symbols, such as magpies and twin fishes. Kentucky Fried Chicken, which has over 1,000 outlets in China and is adding 200 annually, is serving preserved Sichuan pickle and shredded pork soups. These companies also produce commercials starring local musicians, actors, and other celebrities.

In short, localization is a euphemism for the commodification of culture. International marketing campaigns that employ this technique are simply using cultural trappings as a lure, much like draping a beautiful woman over a car in an automobile ad. A cheeseless Big Mac, after all, is still fatty processed food sold by a huge corporation, and thus still part

of the monoculture. The association of traditional Chinese symbols with fast food is a distortion and cheapening of these emblems. A popular local musician who sings in a McDonald's commercial sends a message to children that it is acceptable to compromise artistic talent—to sell out—for corporate money.

Hiring local employees and businesses is not a problem per se, but the friendly young Chinese woman serving Kentucky Fried Chicken in Peking is severely limited by corporate protocols in what she can say and do. The local New Delhi TV crew hired by Turner International is yoked to a global trade bureaucracy that, through treaties and loan agree-

ments, dictates India's investment rules, overpowers India's truly local businesses, and funnels profits out of the country. In all of these instances, local culture has been subsumed by corporate culture, and the homogenization process continues.

The challenge we face, then, is this: as global marketing to children expands, so too does its overarching but subtle message supporting globalization. What is to be done? It is time for the anti-globalization movement to promote a worldwide ban on marketing to children. This ban would protect children from the commercialization of childhood, which not only commodifies the process of growing up but also emotionally bonds children to the corporate monoculture.

Our children deserve a commercial-free childhood, one in which they are free to play, free to determine for themselves what is cool, and free to work things out with their parents and society—without being hounded every step of the way by mighty corporations. □

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Faith-Based Psychotherapy

Richard Schiffman

Does psychotherapy work? The answer—if one has the patience to plow through the morass of often contradictory research—is a resounding “maybe.” Ever since London psychiatrist H. J. Eysenck published his controversial study in 1957 purporting to show a negative correlation between psychotherapy and psychological healing (the more therapy one received the lower the recovery rate!) a debate has raged about how effective Freud’s talking cure actually is.

The world of modern psychology, of course, has moved well beyond its founder’s theories. The past century has witnessed an explosion of often contradictory forms of treatment: Jungian archetype work, Adlerian therapy, Reichian orgone boxes, behavior modification à la B.F. Skinner, the Logotherapy of concentration camp survivor Viktor Frankl—to name just a few of the diverging branches of practice that have grown from the Freudian trunk. The cure rates reported for these varied approaches are mostly lackluster, and, surprisingly, they differ little from one therapeutic regimen to the other. Even more dismaying to the professional psychological community is the conclusion reached in a recent study by professors Andrew Christensen and Neil Jacobson that therapy delivered by untrained nonprofessionals—folks without big offices and fancy credentials tacked on to their names—is just as effective, if not more effective than the far pricier work performed by academically qualified psychiatrists and psychologists.

Given the less than inspiring success rates, the daunting length of treatment (often years, if not decades on the couch), and the prohibitive cost of traditional psychotherapy (at least when the insurance company is not footing the bill), many sufferers are now opting for alternative forms of treatment—everything from self medication with herbal remedies, to encounter groups, to deep massage and therapeutic touch—to help allay their anxieties and relieve their depression. I recently got a taste of the dazzling variety of new techniques that are out there at the annual conference of the Association for Spirituality and Psychotherapy in New York City, where I joined over two hundred working therapists as they wandered

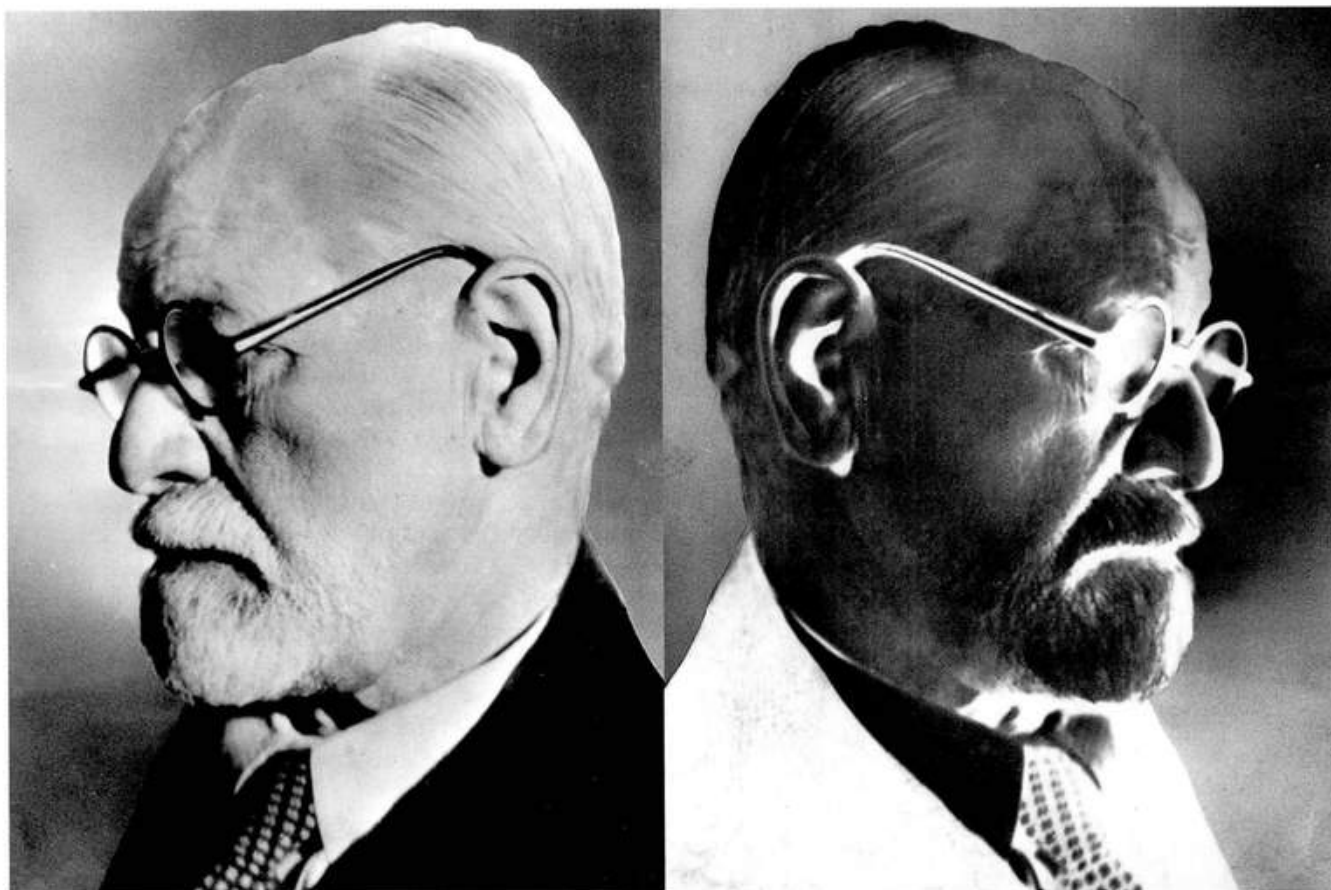
wide-eyed through a veritable bazaar of workshops, panel discussions, and shamanistic rites. There were past-life therapists, Yoruba ritualists, psychic healers, Course in Miracles gurus, and practitioners of recently developed technologies like psychosynthesis and neurolinguistic programming—all of them smiling effusively and proffering their wares with missionary zeal. I left the weekend extravaganza with head spinning, chakras throbbing, and mind opened to the exhilarating new vistas on psychology’s Wild West frontier.

But I also left with some nagging questions about the efficacy of methods whose scientific virginity has not yet been violated by a double-blind study or statistical analysis. Will the new “spiritual” approaches be any more (or perhaps less) successful in relieving mental anguish than old-fashioned psychotherapy? Not that I am a skeptic, mind you. As a spiritual writer who spent several years chasing enlightenment in Hindu India and Buddhist Asia, I have experienced time and again how spiritual practice can open up the deepest layers of one’s own psyche, the numinous realm which pre-moderns called “the soul.” What remains to be demonstrated, however, is whether practices taken out of the context of the living traditions of which they are a part and applied more or less indiscriminately toward purposes they were never intended to serve will do the trick.

A dash of Yoruba ancestor worship and a dollop of Hindu *kirtan* to chase away an urbanite’s midwinter blues? No more strange, I suppose, than lying prostrate on a leather couch and prattling on about one’s toilet training, or free-associating about last night’s dreams. And arguably no less “scientific” either, if by “scientific” we mean “consistently proven to be effective.” Every culture has developed its own ways and means to banish the inner demons that assail its members. Psychotherapy—underneath its high-gloss scientific veneer—may turn out to be a form of modern day shamanism, no better and no worse than shaking a rattle to clear one’s aura, or burning effigies to exorcise offending spirits. What heals, in any event, may not be so much a particular therapeutic regimen, as the relationship of trust forged with a healer in whose caring presence one feels free to release one’s burdens. Sometimes just being heard is enough.

Nevertheless, an even deeper question remains: What are we looking for when we seek psychological help? Are we seeking the revelatory—and invariably stormy and disruptive—journey of deep soul work, or are we simply trying to get through our days in one piece? If all we want is to feel better, then I am not sure that we need to ransack the treasure

Richard Schiffman is a freelance journalist whose work is heard on National Public Radio and a spiritual writer whose latest book is Mother of All: A Revelation of the Motherhood of God in the Life and Teachings of the Jillellamudi Mother, published by Blue Dove Press. He is currently working on a book on the archetypal meaning of the Exodus story.



house of world mysticism. A little Prozac and access to a sympathetic ear may well do the trick. But many of us today are yearning for a more radical (in its original sense of striking directly at the root) transformation than orthodox therapy is likely to provide. We don't just want to feel better, we want to know who we are, and what we are here on earth to accomplish.

I do not mean to disparage those who want to feel better. Who doesn't? The real question from the spiritual standpoint is: can mental suffering be radically relieved—not just masked or somewhat alleviated and made bearable? Psychotherapy aims to return its patients to a semblance of psychological normalcy—whatever that might mean. The great mystical traditions, on the other hand, are unanimous in declaring that the normal human condition is shot through with illusion, suffering, and unease. Yet all alike hold out the hope that this misery can be substantially transmuted—if not perhaps eliminated entirely—through time-tested sacred practices like forgiveness, compassion for self and others, profound meditation, self inquiry, and surrender to a Higher Power. When we know who we are in the greater scheme of things, we will be happy. Not before.

The goal of psychotherapy is more modest. It was founded on the assumption that by ferreting out the childhood causes of our present-day neurotic patterns of thought and behavior we would become free of them. Experience demonstrates, however, that merely understanding the origins of one's

malaise intellectually is not enough. Understanding how I came to develop low self-esteem as a child, for example, will not magically make me feel better about myself as an adult. Something more needs to be added to the equation—namely faith and intention. The challenge of spiritual therapy is to provide effective techniques for helping believers and nonbelievers alike to reconnect with their own innate will to believe in themselves and in the larger possibilities of the world around them. Faith heals.

But how exactly do we develop faith in ourselves? The answer that the wisdom traditions give is counterintuitive. They tell us that we do not develop faith in ourselves by focusing on the self, its symptoms, and healing, as psychotherapy does. Just the opposite: we uplift ourselves by looking away from the self and its narrow orbit of concerns and toward the mysterious existence of the Other—God, our neighbors, the greater society, the universe itself. We possess ourselves most fully, ironically, when we give ourselves away selflessly to the greater-than-self, and not when we pander to the ego and its insatiable need to “feel better.”

This “turning toward the Other” is radical medicine indeed, and not at all what Freud and company had in mind when they developed the introverted practices of psychoanalysis at the beginning of the twentieth century. Yet there is surprising new evidence that cultivating a devotional attitude toward life may be the best antidote for the infirmities that plague the postmodern soul. In his keynote address to the

conference on spirituality and psychotherapy, David Lukoff, an expert on spiritual issues in clinical practice, quoted a variety of studies which demonstrate that religious believers as a class are healthier than nonbelievers, that they are less prone to substance abuse, that they are four times less likely to commit suicide, and that they are more likely to recover, and to recover more quickly, from heart surgery than their agnostic counterparts. He also cited the growing body of research that shows prayer is a powerful aid in both physical and psychological healing. Lukoff went on to assert that lack of religious belief is a risk factor equivalent to tobacco and alcohol abuse for a wide assortment of illnesses of the body and the mind.

Still, the professional psychological community has been slow to integrate these findings into its practice. Freud's famous antipathy to religion, which he viewed as an essentially infantile search for the unbounded love and protection we experienced in earliest childhood, still colors the thinking of many psychotherapists. This view is articulated by Barry Farber, the Chair in Clinical Psychology at Columbia Teacher's College, who says that spirituality is often used "in the service of denying death, disallowing the inherent complexity of life, and avoiding hard work on oneself and relationships." Farber quotes the lyrics of Billy Joel: "Some people hope for a miracle cure, some people see the world as it is."

Yet I wonder if the real divide is, as Barry Farber suggests, between a head-in-the-sand spirituality, which pretends that everything is perfect or about to become so, on the one hand, and an unblinking psychological realism, on the other hand. Far from denying suffering and death, genuine spirituality (as opposed to the spirituality-lite that is indeed endemic today) forces us to confront the transience and unsatisfactory state of our lives head on. It tells us that our suffering comes from the ego's misguided effort to perpetuate itself as an isolated entity separate and apart from the greater life beyond our skins. The ego's attitude of "me against the world" leads inevitably to conflict in all its myriad forms. Spiritual practice means fearlessly challenging this fundamental division between self and not-self.

And this is, of course, where psychology and spirituality part ways. Psychology takes as its mission shoring up the ego-self and defending its boundaries, whereas spirituality wants to knock those walls down and return us to a conscious oneness with all things. Does this fundamental divergence of purpose doom the efforts of those who are trying to bring about a marriage between these two seemingly antithetical disciplines? I don't think that it does. But achieving a synthesis *will* require a radical rethinking of the very nature of the self that psychotherapy aims to heal. The science of psychology will need to move beyond the reigning model of "fixing" the self toward a new paradigm of transcending the small self and selfishness, which lies at the root of all our human problems.

As we increasingly tap into this more spacious self, healing happens. Healing in this way does not mean "suppressing"

our self, as Barry Farber implies, or (as some spiritual salesmen suggest) ending our mental suffering once and for all time. What healing does mean is becoming *whole*. As we are guided to become aware of our own big heart and vast spirit, the so-called problems that once loomed large are placed in proper perspective. We find out that we are so much greater than our problems, indeed greater than anything that life can throw at us. We are enabled to cope with life's inevitable pain (as well as joy) no longer as an embittered and embattled ego, but from a position of inner confidence and strength born of spiritual self knowledge.

Spiritual therapy shares the age old mystical insight that the way to access the greater self is by developing a devotional attitude toward the greater-than-self, which religious believers call variously "God," "Allah," "Buddha Nature," "Jesus," and "the Brahman." Most spiritual therapists, however, are reluctant to preach any particular religious system to their clients. They see their role as facilitators whose task is not to impose belief, but rather to uncover the will to faith and meaning that already exists latent within those who come to them.

With some religiously inclined clients this may include talking about God, prayer, and the great issues of life and death. But spiritual therapy is based on the conviction that all people, and not just religious believers, are motivated to lead rich inner lives. All of us want to feel intimately connected to the Greater Life, whatever we may choose to call it, and to find meaning in our existence. The art of spiritual therapy is to finding out how our own souls are already uniquely striving to awaken, and to support them in their efforts.

Does spiritual therapy trespass on the territory of religion? I don't think so. Religion provides the fundamental moral and mystical principles which are the basis for living a healthy life. Psychology in the years ahead can provide the scientific rigor to test out and develop effective methods to apply these principles to the task of healing. As my visit to the conference on psychotherapy and spirituality showed me, we have a long way to go before the techniques of spiritual therapy—or orthodox psychotherapy, for that matter—are placed on a genuinely scientific basis.

And maybe the whole model is wrong. Maybe what we need is not more studies and a new scientific theory on healing, but a humble acknowledgment that what makes people get better is not so much the expertise of the therapist as the therapist's love and empathetic concern; not so much the psychological knowledge generated in the client as the will to become free; not so much the eradication of the symptoms as the clear seeing that looks beyond the symptoms to the innate wholeness that underlies them.

Readers who would like to explore further the burgeoning field of spiritual therapy can contact: the Association for Spirituality and Psychotherapy (psychospiritualtherapy.org), the Association for Transpersonal Psychology (atpweb.org), and the Association for Humanist Psychology (ahpweb.org). □

Paying Attention to Food

Stephanie Kaza

Eating, these days, is a political act. Every choice of food carries moral and economic implications, whether we are aware of them or not. Take a simple breakfast for starters. Orange juice from Brazil, grapes from Chile, apples from New Zealand, coffee from Vietnam, bananas from Costa Rica—all of these appear on our plates without us giving them a second thought. And yet the average bite of American food travels 2,000 kilometers from field to fork. The ecological implications of this global food travel are astounding: forests are cleared, soils poisoned, water tables drained, and oil wells drilled to ship the annual load of 650 million tons of food from producer to eater.

As a practicing Buddhist and environmental studies professor, I have long engaged this question of what to eat and why. There are many well-established Western arguments for being a vegetarian, but what does Buddhism have to offer on this politically hot topic? What kind of advice can we find in the Buddhist literature for addressing the complex ethical dilemmas in everyday eating?

At the heart of Buddhist moral guidelines is the central philosophy of nonharming. The first precept is: do not kill. The Buddha's prescription for reducing suffering, the Eightfold Path, defines "right livelihood" as prohibiting Buddhists from being butchers. And yet today's modern agricultural production is far from nonharming to soils, laborers, and ecosystems. Using nonharming as a guideline, one might choose those foods that have been raised in healthy soil free of chemical assaults and foods that have been grown locally and use the least energy for processing and packaging.

The Bodhisattva vow to "save all sentient beings" adds further urgency to this practice of nonharming. If we save all the beings, then who do we eat? Eating becomes an impossible koan we must solve or else starve. The Chinese Buddhist tradition offers up a beautiful metaphor of interdependence that can inform our eating choices. The "Jeweled Net of potatoes and pill bugs" is a vast web of infinitely linked beings, each a shining node of infinite facets. Western environmentally minded Buddhists often refer to this web as the ecologi-

cal metaphor for our global times. Every item of food prepared for our tables was generated from many sources, through many complex relations and many causal links across the web. Using this Buddhist metaphor we could investigate each food choice for its ecological footprint; we could study the labor practices, the moral questions raised by the markets.

Contemporary Buddhist teachers such as Thich Nhat Hanh work with food to practice mindfulness, bringing the eater's attention to truly experiencing the food that is eaten. This deliberate slowing down and observing of biting, chewing, desiring, enjoying—a tangerine, for instance—helps cultivate a concentrated mind able to consider food choices in more depth. Conscious consumption naturally becomes an ethical practice path. "Socially engaged" or politically active Buddhists take up food choice and preparation as an active practice for liberating all beings.

Based on these ethical approaches, should all Buddhists be vegetarians? Indeed, some have argued that the principle of nonharming requires us not to eat meat. One of my students surveyed Buddhists of different lineages and found that, in fact, only 63 percent of Theravada practitioners were vegetarian, 50 percent of Chan, 44 percent Zen, and 31 percent Tibetan. The rest were meat-eaters to varying degrees. The survey comments showed a wide range of health concerns, prayers, and ethical thought supporting various personal choices. I then surveyed Buddhist retreat centers and found a similar spread of eating practices across the United States. Clearly, the various Buddhist lineages and personal practitioners do not all agree on this politically challenging subject.

Where, then, does this leave the concerned eater? From a Buddhist perspective, it leaves us with no absolute answers. Instead we are called by the teachings to actively cultivate a questioning mind and a compassionate heart. To take up these dilemmas with any seriousness, we must develop our intention and attention. Food, eating, production, farm health, and fair labor offer a virtually infinite practice field with abundant opportunities for Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike to contemplate these complexities. In some of my classes, I ask my students to write personal credos regarding food that lay out their concerns, beliefs, and intentions. It is a good place for them to start on what I hope will be lifelong ethical practice. Maybe Buddhist sanghas could take up this work too and make public the struggle to sort these questions out. Though Buddhist teachings provide no absolute guidelines, facing the dilemmas with full heart and mind keeps the practice (and thus us) quite alive. □

Stephanie Kaza is a professor of environmental studies at the University of Vermont where she teaches religion and ecology and other ethics-related courses. Her works include The Attentive Heart: Conversations with Trees, Dharma Rain: Sources for Buddhist Environmentalism (co-edited with Kenneth Kraft), and Hooked! Buddhist Writings on Greed, Desire, and the Urge to Consume.

One God, Many Images

Arun Gandhi

In the mid-1930s when the leader of the “untouchable” caste, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, threatened to leave the Hindu religion and adopt a new one, scores of Christian and Muslim missionaries flocked to India hoping to convert some 160 million who were condemned to the lowest status in life. They stood on street corners and denounced Hinduism and offered equality and respect to those who would convert. A few did, but a large majority shunned these overtures. Several weeks later a Christian missionary, a close friend of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, asked him why the lower caste did not accept this offer.

Gandhi’s reply was prophetic. He said “The day you stop talking about how good Christianity is and start living it, everyone will be willing to convert.” I believe the answer to the present spiritual crisis that we face lies in this sentence. In a manner of speaking, we are all standing on street corners denouncing others and proclaiming our superiority without proving it in action.

It was his early experience with religious exploitation, on the one hand, and religious unity on the other, that inspired Gandhi to work to change the culture of violence that dominates human civilization to a culture of nonviolence.

Gandhi says in his autobiography that as a little boy walking to school, he would see Christian missionaries standing on street corners denouncing Hinduism. This experience turned him against Christianity to the point that he began to hate Christians. However, at home, Gandhi was at the same time exposed to spiritual openness and tolerance, because his parents were very interested in learning about different faiths. They invited religious leaders of various faiths home to have dinner and engage in dialogue, and little Mohan was present for these discussions. This friendly dialogue encouraged him to develop respect for all religions.

Much later, Gandhi was moved to say: “A friendly study of all the scriptures is the sacred duty of every individual.” He emphasized “friendly” studies, as opposed to critical ones, which frequently dwell on the differences between scriptures. When we stop dwelling on where our faiths diverge and focus instead on the similarities, we will find that religion is like climbing a mountain. If we are all attempting to scale the same peak, why should it matter which side of the mountain we choose to climb?

Religion, Gandhi believed, must unite and civilize human

beings and not divide people and turn them into savages. At the root of many of our spiritual problems today is the strong belief that each of us “possess” the truth. No one “possesses” the truth. We can only “pursue” the truth with all sincerity and diligence. There is a vast chasm that separates these two concepts. When we feel we possess the truth, we shut our minds and live in ignorance. This leads to disrespect for others, discrimination, oppression and aggression. If, on the other hand, we are committed to pursuing the truth, our minds are open, accepting, respectful, and welcoming.

Gandhi perceived the culture of violence as the root of all contemporary evil. He saw violence in many forms, not just the physical violence that concerns us today. Violence exists in all aspects of human life — spiritual violence and exploitation, economic violence, social violence, cultural violence, political violence, educational violence, and much more.

When I lived with Grandfather between the ages of twelve and fourteen, he taught me to ask myself everyday, in fact at every moment, if what I was contemplating to do would help or hinder other human beings. If the honest answer was that it would harm others, then I was committing an act of violence.

On one occasion he made me go out into the streets at night and search for a little three-inch stub of a pencil that I discarded on my way home from school. When I brought the stub to him two hours later, Grandfather sat me beside him and explained why it was important that I find the pencil. He said when we waste little things, we get into the habit of being wasteful and begin to waste larger things. Besides, he said, wasting natural resources was violence against nature and over-consumption of these resources led to a global imbalance that meant some people lived in poverty and others in luxury, and that would be violence against humanity.

For almost a year after this incident, Grandfather asked me to build a genealogical tree of violence with “physical” and “passive” as the two branches. Every night he helped me analyze my day’s experiences and put them down on the tree. Passive violence was where physical violence was not employed but nevertheless what I did or did not do hurt someone somewhere. In a few months I filled up one wall in my room with acts of passive violence and the experience has remained with me ever since.

Later, Grandfather explained to me the connection between passive and physical violence. Passive violence, he said, generates anger in the victim, and because justice in modern times has come to mean revenge, the victim resorts to physical violence. Thus passive violence is the fuel that ignites physical violence, and since all of us contribute to passive violence in

Arun Gandhi is the president of the M. K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence in Memphis, Tennessee and the grandson of Mohandas Gandhi.

substantial measure everyday “we must become the change we wish to see in the world.”

It is for these and many other reasons that I reject the concept that nonviolence is a strategy to be used according to convenience. As Gandhi would say, “Nonviolence is not a coat that one can wear today and take off tomorrow.” Although many people tend to regard nonviolence as the opposite of violence, and, therefore as passive, I am convinced it has a positive effect, because it appeals to the good—love, respect, understanding, and compassion—in a human being, while violence appeals to the worst aspects of human nature—anger, disrespect, hate, prejudice, and aggression.

Gandhi always believed one must live what one wants others to learn. We cannot tell others how they should live when they see us doing just the contrary. In his attempt to replace the culture of violence with a culture of nonviolence, Gandhi chose to do it one person at a time beginning with himself.

He lived a Spartan life because he said: “The world can produce enough for everyone’s need but not for everyone’s greed. If all of us simplified our lives and stopped wasteful expenditure and consumption, we would be able to share the resources with so many more people around the world.”

To bring about religious understanding, Gandhi’s daily prayers in the morning and evening, attended by thousands, were simple and inclusive. The prayers were held in an open ground or in an auditorium without any religious symbols and

included hymns and prayers from every major religion. During his lifetime, millions of people like myself were brought up singing each others’ prayers with respect and understanding. It did not mean that we rejected the religion of our birth. In fact by understanding other religions, we enhanced the meaning of the religion of our birth. If a religion does not teach and promote respect, love, understanding, and acceptance of each other and each other’s faith, then it cannot be a worthy religion; for no God can profess or promote hate, prejudice, discrimination, or violence.

At an adult-education class on religion at the Christian Brothers University in Memphis, a Muslim, a Jew, and I were invited to explain our respective religions. The Muslim gentleman began his discourse by saying “We Abrahamic religions have something in common. We have the word of God in a Book, whereas you Hindus are pagans who believe in 50,000 or more Gods.” This, unfortunately, is a universal misconception. It is not that Hindus believe in multiplicity of gods, but rather that we cannot afford to reject any image because no one knows what the true image of God is. Hence Hindus accept all images of God as being true. My fellow presenter’s view was the result of ignorance and an outstanding example of “possessing” the truth as opposed to “pursuing” the truth. Respect for all religions will come only when we make concerted attempts to replace the present culture of violence with a more inclusive and positive culture of nonviolence. □

Changing Our Economic Vision of the Bible

Rick Lowery

I am a Christian minister, biblical theologian, and progressive Democratic Party activist working in Oklahoma. Once the heartland of progressive populism and New Deal politics, Oklahoma has moved steadily to the Right during the past several years. Last November, Oklahomans turned out in droves to elect George W. Bush, install a Republican state legislature for the first time ever, and send a very conservative U.S. Senator to Congress. Many of these people knowingly voted against their own economic self-interest.

As I worked to get out the vote, I talked to a number of people who said something like this: “I know that Republicans are the party of big business and that I’m going to be worse off under them. But like my pastor says, it’s wrong to put our pocketbooks before our morals. Some things are more important than money. We can’t be selfish when we vote. We’ve got

to stand up for Christian values.” I heard this from union members, teachers, students, parents with small children, even people on public assistance—all of them crystal clear that Republican economic policies would hurt them, and all of them voting Republican anyway. These people are not stupid. They are voting their conscience. For them, moral conviction trumps economic self-interest.

Morality matters, and for these voters at least, the Bible is a primary source for moral reasoning.

Our challenge as progressives is to help more people understand that economic fairness and sustainability are deeply moral, not simply matters of enlightened self-interest. We will not convince many of the people I’ve been describing. The moral convictions they bring to the voting booth are too closely linked to understandings of the family and the exercise of power that are inconsistent with progressive political visions. But we will stand a much better chance with some of them if we’re able to connect our moral vision of economics with biblical traditions.

Rick Lowery is the Johnnie Eargle Cadieux Professor of Old Testament at Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

SPIRITUAL ACTIVISM

Biblical texts emerged from very different economic worlds than our own. In an important sense, the Bible does not offer a meaningful blueprint for economic activity today. We really cannot institute biblical jubilee, sabbath-year, or seventh-year debt release (*shemittah*) as they are described in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Biblical principles, however, can reasonably function as the moral bottom line for economic judgments we make today.

An economic vision that takes the Bible seriously necessarily begins with the family, whose long-term survival is a central concern of biblical thought. In much of the Bible personal identity is rooted in the family. The individual is embedded in a household that extends into the infinite past and infinite future, is grounded in a particular place (the ancestral property) and lives under the care and guidance of the family God. The life's work of each person is to foster the wellbeing of the household while ensuring the long-term productive power of the land that gives life to the family. Economic decisions must serve the welfare of the family in the here and now, but they also must honor ancestors and lay a secure foundation for generations to come. Wealth is meant to be shared for the family's common good, not hoarded or squandered. Justice applies in relationships within the household, reflected most powerfully in sabbath-keeping, a pattern of work that mandates regular rest and recreation for every household member.

The collapse of families poses a particular threat to the larger community. Rootless, alienated, impoverished individuals are potentially dangerous. So biblical traditions require support for families made economically vulnerable by death, natural disaster, or debt. They also embrace hospitality rules common in biblical times that mandate care for economically vulnerable travelers and resident aliens.

The Bible's concern for the wellbeing of the family sometimes is parochial, but is usually more inclusive. Most biblical texts expand the principle of family solidarity to the nation as a whole. In Exodus, for example, God is portrayed as Israel's "redeemer" (*go'el*), the economically secure kinsperson who pays off the debt of poor families, rescuing them from debt slavery. Other passages universalize the principle of family solidarity. Isaiah 2:2-4 (see also Micah 4:1-3), for example, envisions a day when all the nations will stream to the house of Israel's God. Isaiah 56 explicitly welcomes the foreigner and the eunuch (a living symbol of exclusion from the "normal" family structure) into the family of Israel, though elsewhere they are explicitly banned (Deuteronomy 23). "My house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations," God says in Isaiah 56:7. "Thus says the one who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them, besides those already gathered" (56:8).

Jesus of Nazareth stands firmly in the tradition of Isaiah 2 and 56 when he universalizes the family ethic: "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" he asks. "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:48-50). In Jesus' vision, family is global.

God is the universal parent, and all who work for the wellbeing of the household are family members in good standing.

The practical implications of this global vision are outlined in Matthew 25. Ostensibly a description of the great judgment at the end of history, the content and placement of this segment suggest that it's actually a discussion of where to find the risen Christ in the world here and now. The themes of family solidarity and hospitality are striking: "I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you cared for me; I was imprisoned and you visited me" (verses 35-36). When the people ask when they ever did any of that, Jesus replies, "When you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (verse 40).

It is important to note that membership in the family in this passage is not a matter of right belief. Those judged worthy, in fact, had been wrong in their belief. The important thing is how they treated "the least of these." In acts of family solidarity and hospitality, Jesus says, we serve God.

This fundamental conviction is expressed in the core elements of Jesus' teaching and ministry. Recent scholarship has identified a few key themes in the earliest Jesus traditions: free healing, free food, open tables (Jesus would eat with anybody, regardless of social rank or status), and safe spaces for peasants, day laborers, and other "disposables." Each of these expresses a concern for family solidarity toward those who fall outside the family-based patronage system of Roman imperial society. The household rules of "God's empire," unlike those of Rome, cover everyone. Health, food, community, and security are the right and responsibility of all.

In this vision, human beings are sacred offspring of God, members of God's family—and therefore mutually responsible for the wellbeing of all. It's an idea consistent with the creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2, where women and men are created in community together "in the image of God" (1:26-27) and where the human body springs to life by the breath of God (2:7). Every person bears the imprint of God, is called into community with God and other persons, and breathes divine breath.

Economic practices and policies that keep faith with the vision of Genesis, Isaiah, and Jesus must respect this moral bottom line: every person is a sacred part of a common global household. We are related as family and therefore have mutual responsibility to each other and to the earth that sustains us.

This moral vision has several implications for economy today. The following are bottom-line principles that are non-negotiable: universal health care, adequate food for all, rules of work that allow for reasonable and regular periods of rest and recreation; bridge support for families hurt by market forces, death, and other disasters; political space for protest and redress, and disciplined protection of the earth's ability to sustain human life into the indefinite future.

These principles constitute a moral foundation for our conversation about economics in the era of global economy. □

Transformed Before God

Charlie Anders

Razi was raised as a girl, in a feminist Jewish Revival synagogue. Nobody ever told Razi not to do the things boys did, but still Razi found religious events a source of discomfort. This was because Razi “felt too self-conscious in my own skin to wear the appropriate clothing” for ceremonies. Razi wanted to dress up, but didn’t feel comfortable. It was only when Razi grew up and transformed from a girl into a man that he discovered a new relationship with Judaism. Instead of being the bane of his existence, dressing up for synagogue became a thrill. “When I began identifying as male, I couldn’t wait to put on a tie and yarmulke and enter the community as a young Jewish man,” says Razi, now a college student.

As transgender visibility increases across Western culture as a whole, gender-transforming Jews have started to carve out a space for themselves in Jewish society. They’ve stared down gender preconceptions, paranoia, and misunderstandings. But in many cases, they’ve also found that transitioning has enriched their relationship with Judaism, and vice versa.

Trans Jews also have created their own communities on the Internet and elsewhere. These include a “TransJews” email group on Yahoo, a community on Livejournal.com, and an acclaimed zine called *TimTum: A Trans-Jew Zine*, written by tranny anti-Occupation activist Micah Bazant, who also wrote the *Trans Manifesto*, a well-circulated online call for the recognition of equal rights for the transgendered.

Inevitably, when a Jewish person changes gender, this changes his or her relationship to the religion. Israeli American Beth Orens completed her transition from male to female in 1997 and finds that her status is “a little different now.” Orens runs the Dina email list for Orthodox Jewish trans people.

“It annoys me when I know more about something than a rabbi does, but I have no authority,” frets Orens, herself an Orthodox Jew. Even before she transitioned, she lacked authority, but she feels this more keenly as a woman. At the same time, she says, “Judaism is all about distinctions,” and “difference does not have to mean inequality.”



On the other hand, transitioning from female to male “made involvement with Judaism possible for me,” says Jerrold, a twenty-four-year-old man. “As a female, I had no connection to the religion at all. My Bat Mitzvah was a farce. I was the first girl to be allowed to read Haftorah at my shul but still wasn’t allowed to read Torah. None of it meant anything to me.” But as soon as Jerrold became a man, he felt as though he had a place in Judaism. His only awkwardness comes because he didn’t receive the upbringing and training that would have come with being raised as a male. He doesn’t know how to put on tefillin, and he only knows Haftorah trope, as opposed to Torah trope. He still feels “awkward about women’s roles,” such as the fact that women must sit on the other side of the mechitzah (the barrier that divides men from women in Orthodox synagogues). But as a man,

he doesn't feel it's his place to raise these issues on women's behalf.

Brooklynne Thomas, events coordinator for the Youth Gender Project in San Francisco, converted to Judaism from Catholicism at age nineteen. At the time, Thomas was a man in the process of marrying a Jewish man whose mother wanted Thomas to convert or leave her son. Thomas had already been "harboring secret desires to be Jewish," so the ultimatum proved liberating. Thomas' marriage to the Jewish boy ended some time later, and then she transitioned into a woman. She says she feels much safer as a Jewish transwoman than she would have as a Catholic. She feels that Judaism is more accepting and less concerned with creating distance between the priesthood and the laity than Catholicism.

Castration Anxiety, Sterilization Terror

Even if changing your gender makes you more comfortable with Judaism, there's no guarantee that every Jew will accept your new gender identity. The majority of Orthodox rabbis refuse to recognize the gender identities of people who've had genital surgery (regarding it as genital mutilation), much less those of people who've merely taken hormones or taken on a genderqueer identity.

The majority of halachic authorities in Israel take the position that a person's gender is irrevocably fixed at birth, according to a 1998 article in the *Jerusalem Post*. Not only that, but the article cites the influential 1977 opinion of Yeshiva University Professor J. David Bleich that genital reassignment surgery violates the prohibition on sterilization for women, or castration for men. The article also cites a "minority" view by Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg, a judge in the Supreme Rabbinical Court in Jerusalem, that surgery does change someone's gender. Often cited by Orthodox trans persons such as Beth Orens as an authoritative halachic position, Waldenberg's opinion is not widely shared by other Orthodox rabbis.

However, even if, like Waldenberg, they accept that someone can change his or her sex, halachic authorities see a host of bewildering questions, according to the *Post* article, such as whether a female to male transsexual must be circumcized, whether a transgender person must get divorced, and what sexual partners are "appropriate" for transgender people.

Orthodox Jewish transphobia "makes *frum* homophobia look like nothing," says Orens. And non-Orthodox Jews can be just as bad, she adds. Orens had one friend, formerly Orthodox but now intermarried, who stopped talking to Orens after she realized Orens was formerly male.

But Reform Judaism has been more accepting. Jonathan Edelstein's blog HeadHeeb links to a 1990 responsa from the Central College of American Rabbis that says Reform Judaism should "accept the findings of modern science, which holds that external genitalia may not reflect the true

identity of the individual."

Jerrold says that all his relatives reacted positively, although his parents were slow to adjust. His ninety-year-old grandmother was the second person to start calling him by his male name. And even his Orthodox extended family in Europe had no problems.

And then there are some who regard transgenderism as a special benefit. Razi tells of one Orthodox Jew who identified as bisexual but vowed he'd "take a gun to the head" before sleeping with a man. Someone brought up the issue of transmen, and the man became excited, because that would be perfect. "Because to me he'd be a man, but to G-d he'd still be a woman, so it would be allowed!" the man said. His interlocutors were horrified.

Some Orthodox rabbis, at least, would disagree with that reluctant bisexual that a transman is still a woman "to G-d." Orens says she's obtained two legitimate halachic opinions that she's actually female.

Traditions Enrich Transformation

Judaism offers some rituals that help people add meaning to the process of transitioning from one gender to another. Before he had his chest reconstruction, Jerrold went to a Renewal rabbi, who performed a spiritual mikvah in his hot tub. It was "a great experience," Jerrold says. Jerrold asked another rabbi to perform a *hatafat dam brit* for him, "but he thought it was unnecessary since I'm already Jewish."

"Adapting traditional rituals for use in my transition, especially the surgery, helped me to feel safe, grounded, [and] settled about what I was doing," Jerrold explains. "Because Judaism is so rich in life-cycle events, everything can be very easily adapted to provide a ritual framework for transition and celebrate what are truly joyous, freeing occasions."

Almost every story in Judaism is about transition, the most important one being from slavery to freedom, Jerrold adds. "It's a great lens through which to view your own life and a means to draw lessons from your history."

"My involvement with Judaism and spirituality has given me a chance to take issues of identity seriously, and has given me wise teachers with whom I can discuss the things in life that are important," says Razi. Conversely, changing his gender has forced him to reconsider many things about his life, including his Judaism.

One online guide to running a progressive seder suggests asking everybody present which pronoun he or she prefers. If there are any transgender people present, this will put them at their ease. If not, it'll make the participants think for a moment about how they take their own gender identities for granted.

And there are other ways that Judaism can help people seeking alternative ways of viewing their gender identity. "Did you know there are seven genders mentioned in the Talmud?" asks S. Bear Bergman, a writer and performance

artist who deals with issues of Judaism and gender, and identifies as a butch rather than as a transsexual. The Talmud includes guidelines on incorporating different genders and sexes into Jewish society. Even if those multi-gendered guidelines aren't followed today, they set a precedent for accepting non-binary genders in Jewish life, says Razi.

Because Judaism doesn't have a hell, Jewish people can't claim that transgenders will go to hell, notes Razi.

Exceptional Cases Illuminate the Rule

It's often through the outliers that you see the true nature of the center. In the case of Judaism, transgender people often raise unusual questions that past generations of Jews might never have considered. And yet the answers to those questions reveal much about the heart of the Jewish faith.

Now that Thomas has converted from Catholicism to Judaism and from male to female, she mostly dates female-to-male transsexuals. If she chooses to have a baby with one of these transmen, most likely her partner will carry the baby in his womb. But Thomas will be the baby's mother in every other sense. Such reverse-gender parenting situations are rare, but becoming more common in San Francisco, where transmen and transwomen sometimes date.

If the baby's father is a gentile, will the baby be Jewish? It depends on whether you believe the mother is the person who gives birth to a child, or the child's female parent. Or looked at another way, it depends whether you believe someone's gender is their physical self, or their inner essence. "I've talked to several Jews and rabbis about this, because this is an important issue with me," says Thomas. She says it boils down to the clash between biological sex and spiritual and mental gender. The consensus among the people she's consulted is that the latter is more important than the former, especially for transgender people. So Thomas would be her baby's mother even if she didn't give birth. "It's the spiritual gender that you would follow to determine the Jewish status of the child," Thomas concludes.

Jerrold identifies as a gay man, and isn't sure how he stands with regard to Judaism's marriage and purity laws. "I struggle with what kind of marriage can be sanctified as kiddushin." Like Thomas, he wants to become a parent and isn't sure "what kinds of challenges there will be halachically."

For Bear, who has become progressively more masculine and ended up with a self-described "Rorschach" gender, Jewish ritual has become a minefield. Often, Chabad people have made assumptions about Bear's gender identity based on appearances and have "been quite insistent on showing me how to lay tefillin or daven," or have tried to put gender-specific ritual objects into Bear's hands.

When this happens, Bear's identities "feel at war. Whose interpretation of my gender, my sex, do I honor?" Bear always resists the temptation to take on the male role and "defile" the ritual objects for anyone who thinks about sex

and gender more conservatively. Bear would rather educate people about gender than show disrespect for someone else's religious beliefs "in such a direct and dishonorable way."

People whose gender either contradicts or reinterprets their birth assignment are working hard to create a space for themselves within Judaism. They're finding that the variety and depth of Jewish traditions offer them opportunities as well as constraints.

"I love that Judaism contains a function for responding to current issues in responsa," says Bergman. "I think of Judaism, especially Reform Judaism, as practical and compassionate, and I expect that the responsa surrounding trans issues will emerge in a similar spirit."

But even Orthodox Jews whose rabbis have thrown roadblocks in their way have found ways to integrate their new gender identities into their faith. And in the process, they're finding that religious faith, like gender, is greater than its component parts. □

This Just In ...

The Conservative movement has recently issued a policy statement on transgender Jews, which suggests that a wholesale change in Rabbinical recognition of the transgendered is afoot. According to a *United Synagogue Review* summary of recent decisions of the Rabbinical Assembly's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards circulated on the TransJews listserv, Rabbi Mayer Rabinowitz issued a responsum entitled "The Status of Transsexuals," which took the following revolutionary positions:

1. Only those who have undergone full Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS), including phalloplasty/vaginoplasty, are to be considered as having changed their sex status and should be recognized as their new sex by Jewish law.

2. A person who has undergone partial SRS is not deemed to have changed their sex status.

3. A *brit* of *hatafat dam brit* is not required for one who has had a phalloplasty.

4. A *get* (Jewish divorce) is not necessary if one spouse undergoes SRS since the kiddushin are automatically annulled. However, in the case of a Male to Female (MTF) person, a *get* should be given before the SRS is completed.

5. Recognition by the civil authorities of the new sex status is required in order to marry a person who has undergone SRS. This will prevent us from performing same sex marriages according to civil law.

6. A new name should be given to the person with a new sexual status by means of a *misheberach*.

The *teshuvah* was approved.

Kabbalah, Academia, and Authenticity

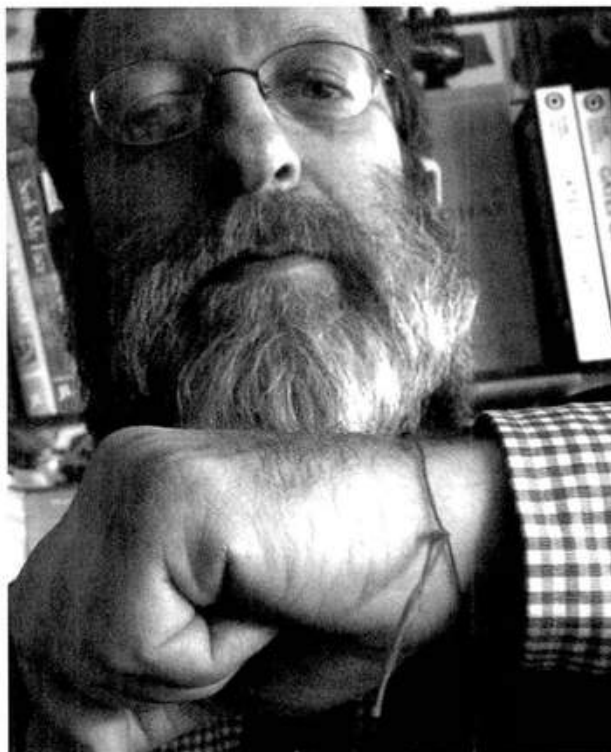
Matt Goldish

A few months ago I sat down to have lunch at the Ohio State Hillel. I picked up a couple of magazines from the wall rack to read while I ate—the November/December 2004 issue of *TIKKUN*, and the Winter 2004 issue of *Reform Judaism*. Leafing through *TIKKUN*, my attention was arrested by an article called “Madonna’s Challenge: Understanding Kabbalah Today,” by Or Rose. Rose begins with a critique of the Kabbalah Centre and its links with Hollywood celebrities, questioning the authenticity of the Kabbalah Centre’s teachings. He then recommends a “cadre of American and Israeli religious teachers and scholars, such as Daniel Matt, Arthur Green, Melilah Hellner-Eshed, Havivah Pedayah, and Elliot Wolfson, who are engaging in thoughtful explorations of the classical teachings of Kabbalah, asking what of this ancient tradition remains compelling to seekers today and what is better left aside.”

When I finished the article, I picked up *Reform Judaism*, where I found that Rabbi Eric H. Yoffie’s “Dear Reader” column in the front was titled “The Kabbalah Craze.” Yoffie, too, attacks the legitimacy and authenticity of the Kabbalah Centre’s teachings. He adds that “Today, our Jewish community is fortunate to have such scholars as Professor Daniel Matt, Professor Arthur Green, and Rabbi Lawrence Kushner who, unlike the Kabbalah hucksters, understand and respect this tradition, and have undertaken to teach it to committed students in a serious way.”

Something about these two pieces disturbed me. It dawned on me that the problem of authenticity and legitimacy—the specific statements of whom to reject and whom to rely upon, coming from two such different authors—presents a paradox. Rabbi Dr. Philip S. Berg, director of the Kabbalah Centre, has a concrete pedigree in Kabbalah. He studied it with Rabbi Judah Brandwein, a student of the famous kabbalist Rabbi Judah Ashlag. The scholars deemed reliable by the two articles do not generally have the credentials of kabbalists,

Shlomo Perelman, owner of Pinsker’s Judaica Center, displays a red string, or *bendel*, in his Pittsburgh shop. Perelman wants to educate people about the significance behind a strand of red string worn around the wrist that’s linked with Kabbalah.



nor would they claim to. Their qualifications come from a different source: they are academic scholars of Kabbalah.

I am no defender of the Kabbalah Centre. What I wonder is why Berg, a rabbi and traditionally-trained kabbalist, is perceived as a fraud while these scholars are seen as reliable teachers of Kabbalah. The answer requires some historical background on the relations between academia and Jewish religious practice in the modern world.

The “Science of Judaism,” Reform, and Kabbalah

Academics played an enormous part in the birth of modern Judaism. The Reform movement is a key example. Reform began in Germany with a group of lay leaders who wanted to make Judaism more palatable for assimilated Western Jews. Their concern was not with theology, but with decorum and appeal. And where would such forward-thinking congregations look for spiritual leaders? They found rabbis with both traditional training and a university education, particularly a group professing *Wissenschaft des Judentums*—the “science” of Judaism’s historical development. Personalities

Matt Goldish is Samuel M. and Esther Melton Professor of Jewish History at the Ohio State University. He has written on Christian Hebraism, Jewish messianism, Sephardic history, and other areas.

like Abraham Geiger, Leopold Zunz, and Samuel Holdheim formulated a new Jewish ideology based around the evolution of the Jewish people rather than around the sanctity of canonical texts.

This seemingly anomalous impulse to synthesize a rational and skeptical worldview with Jewish religion has been embraced by all the major movements in American Judaism today. Each has rabbinical seminaries staffed with academically trained faculty. Most of us seem to be satisfied with their attempts to synthesize academic and religious worldviews. It appears, then, that we prefer our religion, like our science and medicine, to come mediated by empirical thought.

The one area in Judaism that the Wissenschaft rabbis could not abide was Kabbalah. German Jewish scholars were embarrassed by the irrational, supernatural, exotic nature of Jewish mysticism. While they had found ways to rationalize and Westernize the lessons of the Torah and Talmud (or jettison what did not fit, since they did not believe in the divine origin of those literatures), Kabbalah could not be assimilated into their scientific Judaism. The solution was to speculate that this was a foreign accretion that had wormed its way into Judaism from Middle Eastern idolatry.

This was the situation until the day of Gershom Scholem (1897-1982), a German Jew who rebelled against his roots in Wissenschaft rationalism and created the modern academic field of Kabbalah studies. Scholem insisted that Kabbalah is a completely genuine, as well as necessary, part of Jewish life and thought. In fact, he claimed, the very irrationality and occasional heresy of the mystical tradition was what kept Judaism alive over the millennia, preventing its desiccation under the dry sun of rational philosophy and law. The brilliance of Scholem's work assured the study of Jewish mysticism a permanent place in the academic study of Judaism.

Scholem spoke of Kabbalah as gnosis and myth. The kabbalists tell us about God—how and why God created the world, what God's nature is, how God relates to the world, what God's views of Jews and non-Jews are, what God will do in the messianic era—based on the special knowledge that they have received (this is the meaning of the word Kabbalah). "Receiving" has a double meaning that is often obscured: that received from past generations, and that received through mystical experiences. The kabbalists' knowledge of God, as opposed to Maimonides' views, for example, is concrete and detailed, not abstract.

Immanence and Transcendence in the Academic Study of Kabbalah

The kabbalists' belief that they have direct knowledge of God touches on one of the great debates in theology: Is God immanent—present in the world and our lives? Or transcendent—abstract and distant from human experience? In a sense, this distinction seems to be relevant for academic studies in general, and for Kabbalah studies in particular.

Scholem insisted that it was the scholar's scientific detach-

ment from the subject that makes true understanding possible. When asked whether there was not some personal aspect to his involvement in Jewish mysticism, Scholem (as quoted in Herbert Weiner's *9½ Mystics: The Kabbala Today*) answered:

Oh, of course. By now I imagine that anything I say or do has the influence of the Kabbalah in it. But the main thing I try to maintain is distance. Without distance, there can be no real scholarship. I must be ready and have been ready to change my views if the facts have proven me wrong. This is the main virtue that I claim for my scholarship.

Scholem wanted to distinguish clearly between the work of the academic scholar of Jewish mysticism and the mystic. While in his writing hints occasionally surface about his personal feelings toward Kabbalah, he was the champion of "transcendent" scholarship that avoids the academic heresy of confusion between the researcher and his or her subject of study.

Immense strides have been made in this field during the generation since Scholem. I had always assumed, however, that his insistence on scholarly transcendence of the mystical subject was almost a dogma of the discipline: academics are not kabbalists. My first indication that this was not the case came about a decade ago at a meeting of the Association for Jewish Studies, the organization of academic scholars of Jewish studies. I joined an unofficial evening session of the professors who work on Kabbalah. I was amazed to hear that the main topic under discussion was how the gap might be bridged between their scholarly work and the outpouring of interest in Kabbalah as part of Jewish religious practice. Many stated that on their own time they taught community courses in kabbalistic meditation, mystical prayer, the Zohar, and similar topics.

Since that time I have seen academic scholars of Kabbalah move decisively into the "immanent" mode. Indeed, the articles in *TIKKUN* and *Reform Judaism* confirm that academics are now near the forefront of popular Kabbalah as a part of Jewish religious practice. It seemed to me that they trailed only behind Rabbi Berg's Kabbalah Centre and Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi's Jewish Renewal movement. This may have been a misconception of mine as well. As it turns out, both these leaders also come from academic backgrounds. Rabbi Berg holds a doctorate in comparative religion (though his literature does not say from where), while Rabbi Schachter-Shalomi earned a Ph.D. at the Hebrew Union College (the Reform seminary) and was a longtime university professor. Each of the leading figures has an individual style and message, but it can still be said that the entire modern Kabbalah movement is mediated by academics.

What does this tell us?

"Reform" Kabbalah?

The most immediate point I derive from this confluence of academic Kabbalah scholarship and mystical Jewish practice is that today's Jews still follow in the footsteps of their fore-

bears from the period of the birth of Reform Judaism. We continue to look to the academy for our religious leaders, and we still prefer the paradoxical amalgamation of the scientific and the spiritual that they are able to mediate.

It would seem obvious that neither traditional Jewish law and thought, nor the Kabbalah, can maintain the meaning they had for 1,800 years when they are handled by academic skeptical and rationalist inquiry. The most basic tools of academic scrutiny—philology, historiography, form criticism—have long since expressed their determination that the Bible, Talmud, Midrash, and mystical texts are all human creations. Most practicing Jews today accept these conclusions, yet they have managed to create a Jewish life based around the first three of those literatures anyway. Is this possible with the Kabbalah? Kabbalah, after all, is deeply grounded in the sanctity of the letters, words, and commandments of the Torah and Talmud.

Scholem thought it was possible only in a very specific way. In a speech called “The Possibilities of Jewish Mysticism in Our Day,” he pointed out that, “we are not able to be shloimei emunah, wholehearted in the faith of our fathers who accepted the Torah as the word of God, as a revelation from heaven.” He stressed that the whole meaning of the Kabbalah was premised on this worldview. Herbert Weiner, reporting on the speech, paraphrases Scholem.

It was this acceptance of a common faith in the divine origin of the Bible that accounted for the continuity of Jewish history. Without such faith, there is danger of anarchy. Scholem said:

For, all of us are anarchists. Is there any hope, then that a generation lacking this kind of faith in divine revelation can produce a kind of mystic ferment so strong that it could form its tools and vessels of communication, and also draw from the past?... Perhaps it would be a kind of mysticism related to [Rabbi Abraham Isaac] Kook's attempt to find holiness in the secular.

I think Scholem would have been astounded to see a new wave of Jewish practice in our day, fueled not by a mystical appropriation of the secular, but by the same kabbalistic books, ideas, and practices from the Middle Ages that he spent his own lifetime studying. He would surely have been even more surprised to see the wave led by academics trained largely through the study of his own writings!

What we are seeing in our day is the completion (despite itself, perhaps) of the original project of Reform Judaism. Even Kabbalah, that most unassimilable and faith-dependent of Jewish literatures, has now been processed through the mill of academic analysis, and the refined product reintroduced into Jewish practice. This raises the question of authenticity.

Authenticity and Modern Popular Kabbalah

The early Reform ideologues were immediately attacked by traditional rabbis, who were still the vast majority, for teaching an inauthentic Judaism. What could it mean to have

a rabbi who did not believe in the sanctity of the holy texts and did not teach his congregation the practice of piety and commandment observance? This was some new invention masquerading as Judaism.

Today the tables are turned. The leaders of Reform and liberal Judaism see only academically trained scholars as the legitimate arbiters not just of Jewish practice, but of Jewish mysticism as well. What appears to make the academic ingredient critical, just as in early Reform, is its ability to identify the various strains of thought in the original literature, discuss them with other specialists in abstruse academic venues, then select those pieces that will resonate with the Zeitgeist to present for public consumption.

Heresy and anarchy, the areas that fascinated Scholem, are not a major issue today; most Jews no longer recognize any orthodoxy or doctrine in Judaism outside the strictly ethical dimension. The elements in earlier Kabbalah that were normative and not radical in the Middle Ages are the only ones that would raise an eyebrow now: misogyny, anti-Christian diatribes, denigration of homosexuality and masturbation, and the like. What was radical and potentially heretical then—physical descriptions of God, multiplications of elements in God's essence, ritual antinomianism—do not even have meaning for most modern Jews.

So, what does modern “Wissenschaftliche” Kabbalah look like? It does not always reflect the rationalistic academic worldview, but it does fit the Zeitgeist. For example, Jewish Renewal is largely a product of the 1970s. Here is Rodger Kamenetz, no stranger to unusual religious expressions, describing events at a Renewal retreat:

Under Reb Zalman's influence, Jewish renewal settings became laboratories doing “R and D work in davenology.” At my first kallah some experiments looked pretty far out: one morning some folks in tallises davened knee-deep in the swimming pool for water prayer; another morning, clay smeared on my face, I prayed earth—I slept through fire (*Stalking Elijah*).

Among Kamenetz's other experiences was Reb Zalman's dancing Adam Kadmon—the rabbi assigned each of ten retreat participants a kabbalistic *sefirah* to represent, and arranged them in the outline of a human body. “From our position among the sefirot, he had us invent gestures, acting out the feeling of heart or strength or mercy as we prayed the morning service.” Kamenetz himself was given the part of yesod and placed at the crotch. “He told me that as a writer I would be generative and get the news out about Jewish renewal.”

Here the 1970s style of personal expression, connection with the earth, and sexual candor are paramount, but a note of academia still creeps in—this is all part of research and development, and the act of prayer has become a science of “davenology.”

Berg's Kabbalah Centre, though it was created decades earlier, is in its present form largely a product of the 1990s. Its

message is also on target for the spirit of the times. The journalist Yossi Klein Halevi, a much less sympathetic witness than Kamenetz, reported in a May 2004 article in *The New Republic* on what he had seen at the Centre:

The Rav leads his disciples in the Kaddish prayer, shouting its words as if in a rage. Then he interrupts the conventional service and begins chanting "Chernobyl" and other names I can't identify. A devotee explains, straight-faced, that these are all names of nuclear power plants: The Rav is trying to heal the problem of nuclear waste, which the Centre's devotees believe is spreading AIDS.

Again, the message is targeted to the issues of the day, delivered through the medium of prayer, and marked by a note of concern with science (if not the rational) in the background.

What of the more theological and contemplative modes in modern popular Kabbalah? Rabbi Lawrence Kushner's book *Honey from the Rock: Visions of Jewish Mystical Renewal* offers examples of how this Kabbalah bridges the scientific and religious:

Adam Ha-Rishon, the first man and the last man are one and the same. The one who left the garden in order to continue eating from knowledge will, after all the generations have come and gone, at long last be sated. Even as he will be the same one who will be called God's anointed one. The Messiah who will return to the garden.

If we had remained in Eden we would have been as one with the universe. But we never could have been conscious of our unity. So we left seeking that unity and consciousness. Leaving the garden is a metaphor for our forgetting that we are one with the universe. Holy awareness is the only way to return.

And by drawing this primordial man, Who is also us, We draw the universe. And by envisioning the heavens, We portray our own Human consciousness.

This is not a simple piece. Kushner begins with the biblical (and midrashic and kabbalistic) image of Adam, explaining that he had to leave the Garden of Eden to continue his quest for knowledge. His descendent, the Messiah, who sets aside Adam's pursuit of knowledge at the End of Days and returns to the spiritual Garden, is in fact identical with Adam himself. Kushner appears to be saying that the same human spirit that thirsts for knowledge (read: rational, scientific knowledge) will ultimately recognize that this quest leads back to spirituality as well. Here and throughout the book Kushner is speaking particularly of contemporary Jews, using allegory and kabbalistic terminology to communicate his message: the unity of the rationalist and spiritual realms.

The writing of Arthur Green, a professor of Jewish thought at Brandeis University, is equally rich with this message. Green articulates clearly and repeatedly his disbelief in the literal meaning of the Bible and the force of the com-

mandments. Here, in a passage about Shabbat from *Seek My Face, Speak My Name: A Contemporary Jewish Theology*, he provides an example of his approach:

I thus find myself living in an active and symbolically deeply connected way with a story that says God created the world in seven days. I know that I don't believe that story in the literal sense. Neither do I believe in the seven-day Creation, nor am I particularly attracted to the notion that the seven days should be reinterpreted as seven time periods.... I also know with all my being that I find this tale both deeply attractive and irresistibly powerful. It draws me to itself, sustains me through the week, and expresses my existence and its meaning. It has become my own so that I choose to live with it in this regular and ever-reaffirming way.

Thus, the simple act of reciting kiddush on Friday night leads me to theological crisis. How do I affirm that which I do not believe?

Green follows with a tale of the mystical Hasidic master, Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, in which a prince finds the intellectual lessons taught him by his royal tutors lead him to be skeptical of the ancient wisdom in which he was raised. He finds it is only when he listens to his heart rather than his mind that his knowledge of the ancient truth prevails:

By now, nearly all of us have become that prince. Are we, who refuse to choose between modernity and religious language, condemned to live our lives in constant conflict between heart and mind? Or will we be able to give birth to a new tale of Creation, one that sanctifies our rest and our humanity while also satisfying our search for truth and nourishing our scientific imagination? Can such a new tale, told in other words, come to bear the old tale within us?... The real task may be that of integrating our two tales, the one inherited from ages past, and the one emerging from our own spiritual understanding of contemporary science.

Green's conundrum resembles that of Scholem at first blush. The difference is that Scholem never tried to integrate his academic study with his practice, while that is precisely the goal of certain academic specialists today. But what Green and the other contemporary popular Kabbalah theorists create has a great deal more to do with ancient mystical texts and terms than I think Scholem could have imagined.

And yet, none of these practices and ideological statements, whether from Berg, Kushner, or Green, would be recognizable at all to a traditional kabbalist as a genuine part of his tradition. As radical as Kabbalah often was in the Middle Ages, it has, like all mystical movements that survive past a second generation, become its own sort of orthodoxy. The new popular Kabbalah, like the old medieval Kabbalah, and like modern liberal Judaism, takes the forms and terms it finds from past generations and turns them into something entirely different.

What is ironic is that in just one century the new Jewish

mystical movement of Jewish Renewal and the academics have now become an orthodoxy. As inauthentic as their Kabbalah would seem to older kabbalists, the proponents of this Wissenschaftliche Kabbalah now look at Rabbi Berg's Kabbalah Centre as a mystical heresy. It seems to me there are two reasons for this, neither having to do with the bedrock issues of authenticity. One is the crass commercialization and marketing done by Berg's organization, which embarrasses the Jewish community. The second is that apparently, despite Berg's academic background, he and his adherents are true believers in the sanctity of the Bible and mystical writings, if not always in a strictly traditional sense. Their Kabbalah, like that of Kushner, Green, and Shachter-Shalomi, is partly about feeling comfortable in both the academic world of Western scientific culture and the traditional world of Jewish ideas. But Berg's practices and ideas are much edgier and more radical because he truly comes down on the side of mystical intuitions and gnosis rather than of logic—he is of the iconoclastic stamp of the radical medieval kabbalists. That may make the academics uncomfortable, but nothing the Centre actually teaches—feel-good Kabbalah Lite, the inclusion of non-Jews, the completely untraditional use of Jewish symbols, the power of Kabbalah to affect the physical world—lacks a solid precedent in traditional Kabbalah, and the other popular Kabbalah teachers know it.

The clash over authenticity is really about our society's struggle with gnosis and myth. The story the old kabbalists tell is about wise ancient traditions and revelations illuminating God's nature and relationship to the universe. The story the Enlightenment tells is about man's ability to discover the truth within the world, including the human origins of traditional ideas and texts. The story we desperately want to hear is the one that seems impossible: that both of these stories—call them systems of gnosis or myth—are true, meaningful, and most importantly, compatible. Neither medieval Kabbalah nor modern scientific rationalism seems wholly palatable to many people. This is why Western society is fascinated by tales that cross science with myths of the ancient and medieval worlds, like *The Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, *Codex*, and *The da Vinci Code*. The only explanation for the debate among modern Kabbalah factions is that each stream is convinced it is closest to achieving that reconciliation.

The error in this is a human error. Each person's truth meter is set at a unique place. Some lean more toward a rationalist gnosis, some toward a more mythical gnosis. Human nature leads us to join with people whose search for truth takes them in the same direction we are headed. We can dissociate ourselves from those who seem to us to be running pointedly in the wrong direction, but before we declare that another person's search lacks authenticity we had best look around us, and especially, behind us. There are searchers who are dishonest and there are searchers who are lazy, but the only truly inauthentic search is the one not undertaken. □

Continued from page 32

Green, "In my humble opinion, the Holocaust is an event that could recur, in some form or other, if we do not open our eyes and understand that the Nazi monster is still breathing, and attempting to continue what Hitler, may his memory be blotted out, did not have time to finish. I am speaking of the Arabs around us, who have been trying, even from before the establishment of the State of Israel, to eliminate any Jewish existence in Eretz Israel, regardless of our borders." And so the war against the Arabs has to be an all-out struggle.

Or, as Matar has described it: "We've such a wonderful army, such wonderful soldiers; let them fight the enemy as in a war, and in a war you have to go and hit the enemy so hard that those we overcome should crawl and beg that we should stop. In a war you have to bomb from the air, entire neighborhoods. The purpose in a war if we want to be victorious is to break the spirit of the enemy."

To the settlers, the battle with the Arabs should not end until the other side is destroyed, at least spiritually. Laborites spoke of war as a necessary evil, as a means to the end of creating a stable peace and a prosperous society. The old Revisionists and settlers view war as the purest expression of the Zionist idea. Any attempt by the Left to stop this war and propose peaceful alternatives is seen as a betrayal of Zionism. Both Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 and Chaim Arlozoroff in 1933 were assassinated (by a radical national religious youth and, in all probability, by radical young Revisionists, respectively) for their ideological pragmatism, for their willingness to deal and compromise with the enemy—which for the Zionist Right, in its different incarnations, is tantamount to treachery.

The Value of Nationalism

From Herzl to Nordau, to Ben Gurion to Katzenelson, Zionists believed that Jewish nationalism afforded the Jews a unique opportunity to return to the normal course of history. The Zionist formulation of the past offered a division into distinct periods characterized either by activism (before the destruction of the Second Temple and after the emergence of Zionism) or Diaspora, which in the Zionist imagination is regarded as a period when Jews were not active historical agents: They did not control their historical destiny and were at the mercy of others. For mainstream Zionists, Jewish nationalism and the return to the land allowed the Jewish people to once again become a normal people, like any other nation—to be accountable and responsible, a regular member of the family of civilized nations.

To the Revisionists, the idea of a return to the normal course of (Western) history was potentially as dangerous as exile. Firm believers in Oswald Spengler's dire predictions in *The Decline of the West*, the Revisionists believed that Western civilization was in the midst of a cultural crisis that threatened its future. They argued that Labor Zionism had been conceived during a period when some of the West's most

THE NATIONAL RELIGIOUS SETTLERS

superficial ideas were at their height—most notably progressive liberalism and socialism. The First World War, they argued, had destroyed the credibility of progressive liberalism, and Jews had to acknowledge this fact. Zionism could not be constituted using liberal principles of universal justice and truth; the time had come, they believed, for the monist Zionism of power and revolt.

To the Revisionists, liberalism, socialism and all the other legacies of the Enlightenment had only weakened Western culture. Any political theory that promoted individualism, pacifism, and materialism deprived people of their true nature. The Revisionists wanted to uncover the authentic power that would allow people to realize their true selves and live the virtuous life. They did not want the Jewish national movement to follow the general course of mainstream Western culture; they wanted to follow an alternative path that embraced violence and militarism in the service of the nation.

As Jabotinsky succinctly put it, "For the generation that grows before our eyes and who will be responsible, probably, for the greatest change in our history, the Aleph Bet has a very simple sound: young people learn how to shoot... For one to be a true person, he must study 'culture' in general. To be Jewish, he must know the language and history of his people... But if you will learn how to shoot, there might be hope. This is the language in which the historical reality of our generation and the next generation speaks to us."

The Revisionist ideologues of the 1920s and 1930s believed that they were living at the end of an era. They believed that Western civilization, which was collapsing before their very eyes, was about to make a radical leap from the age of rationalism to a new epoch of vitality and power. The great ideological battles of the period, primarily between nationalists and socialists, were an indication to them that Western civilization (and its representatives in the Zionist camp) was falling apart, and that only a return to man's fundamental values could provide an alternative.

Crisis View of Israeli Society

The hard-line national religious settlers similarly view current Israeli society as a community on the verge of internal collapse. According to Hanan Porat, one of the leading ideologues of the national religious camp, "Israeli society is experiencing a crisis: a desolate and divided political situation, an extreme polarization, declining morals, the undermining of concern, weakness of mind, flabbiness of action." To the settlers, Israel beyond the Green Line has become a decadent society that values individual material pursuits and has lost its moral compass; it has become a pale imitation of the United States. This is how Emuna Alon, a prominent voice in the settler community, described the characters in *Ha-Burganim*, a television show that follows the lives of thirty-something Tel Avivians:

"All the *Burganim* are caught in a cold and alienating world, and they suffer from lack of personal fulfillment and

too many unrealized ambitions in the areas of money and sex... Their boring dialogues always deal with 'I feel' and 'I want' and in comparing the country to bodily fluids; you will never hear them discussing values or ideas, and when a young '*Burgani*' volunteers to do good works, he quickly comes to his senses and pursues a lucrative high-tech job, preferably in the U.S."

The settlers in the frontier of the hills of Judea and Samaria, on the other hand, are perceived by the national religious ideologues as the only ones who keep the Zionist torch of commitment to and self-sacrifice for the cause alive. While the rest of Israeli society is succumbing to the temptations of consumer materialism and to the idols of the marketplace, the settlers are preserving Israel's spiritual qualities. (The Revisionists wrote a lot about the frontier, ironically mainly the American western frontier, and how it afforded people the opportunity to escape the decadence of modern civilization and explore their true selves.)

To the settlers and their leaders, only a community that is constantly fighting can maintain its vitality. Peace, prosperity, and security are the hallmarks of decay. To Jabotinsky, the greatest Jewish hero was Samson, the warrior Judge who left civilization and its cultural demands behind and went to the Land of the Philistines, the dangerous frontier, to fight and live life to its fullest. The settlers too want to go back to the time of the Biblical Judges, to a period when wars restored the Israelites' moral sense (and when, in times of peace, the Israelites lost their moral course). They view themselves as the true Zionist warriors. In true Revisionist manner, they honestly believe that fighting is the very essence of life. Struggling against the non-Jewish enemy to protect the integrity of the Land is, to the national religious settlers, the only way to ensure the future of the Jewish nation; it is the only authentic fulfillment of Jewish history.

As the Greater Israel platform is losing its support among growing segments of Israeli society—including parts of the Likud—its crown jewels, the settlements (especially those in the more remote parts of the West Bank) may have to re-adjust as well. The kibbutznik Laborites, ever the pragmatists, were able to adapt fairly successfully to the changing currents in Israel: First they shifted from agriculture to industry, and then gradually have given up their collectivist character altogether and have become players in the free-market economy.

The ideological settlers, who view history from a messianic perspective, would probably eschew any sort of pragmatic compromise. Their ultimate battle with the Israeli government would be their Armageddon. But just as the kibbutzim, which had a much more elaborate infrastructure than the West Bank settlements, could not withstand the changing tides, one suspects that social forces in Israel will ultimately overcome the settlers, though they may exit the historical stage in a far more dramatic fashion than the quaint old socialists of the kibbutzim. □

Interview with Etgar Keret

Ben Naparstek

Some writers dedicate their books to their partners. Etgar Keret took it one step further. After his girlfriend, Israeli actress Shira Geffen, complained that he'd never written a story about her—even though many of their friends and relatives had made appearances in his work—Keret wrote a story called "Fatso" for her as a sort of love letter. A strange sort of love letter, as it turns out. "Fatso" is a bizarre parody of a werewolf tale, in which the narrator's girlfriend transforms by night into "a heavy, hairy man, with no neck, with a gold ring on his pinky." Still, Keret is adamant that it's a love story. "In the beginning I thought, 'I wish that my girlfriend would walk like a supermodel. She waddles like an old lady.' But now, every time I look at her, I can imagine how she'll be forty years from now, because she already has the old lady walk in her. It just makes me love her more," he says. "That's the story with this Fatso guy. In the end, you have somebody who's also a mate. When you truly love somebody, all those things that at the beginning are really alienating are things you learn to love."

In his homeland of only five million Hebrew readers, Keret's four collections of stories have sold more than 200,000 copies in all. His sharp depictions of urban alienation bear an uncanny relation to his unique and at times presumed pseudonymous name. With *etgar* translating as "city" and *keret* as "challenge," Etgar Keret means "urban challenge." Apart from collaborating on slick comic-book novels, Keret writes barbed sketches for Israeli television,

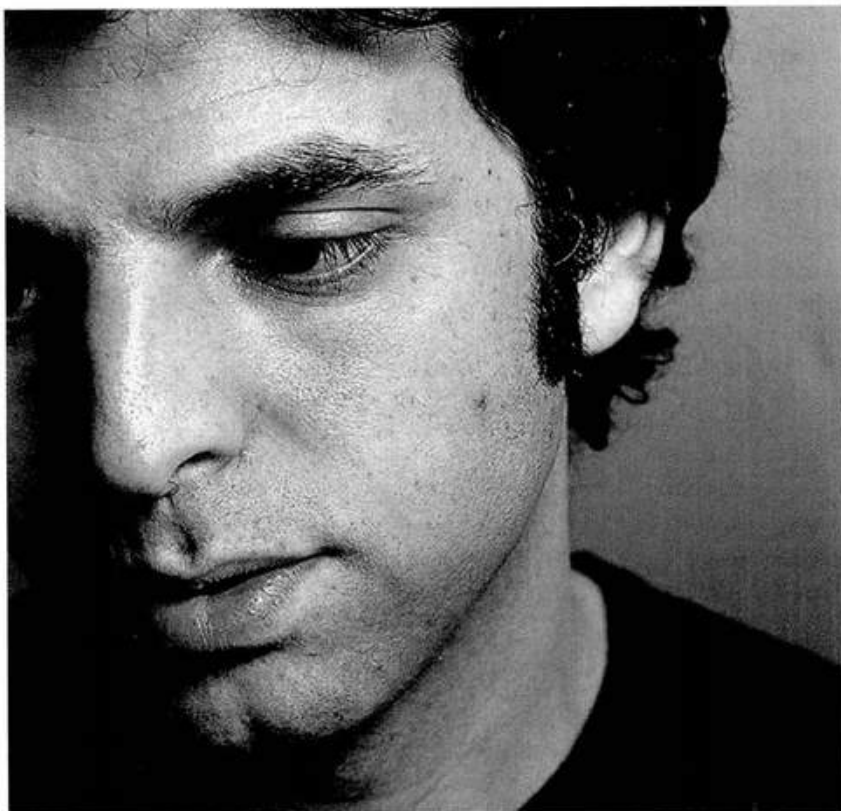
pieces that have led to his being denounced in the Knesset as an anti-Semite. His books are the most stolen volumes from Israeli bookstores, and he's the most widely read writer in prisons. "A lot is to do with their attention spans," Keret says of his fans behind bars. "They like my stories because they're short." His pithy sentences and blunt prose rarely propel his cameo tales beyond a few pages—a feature of his writing Keret traces to his asthma. "When you are having an attack and say to somebody, 'I love you very much,' you could, instead of 'very much,' say, 'Call an ambulance.' You don't have time to bullshit."

A child of Holocaust survivors, Keret grew up with a crippling sense of insignificance. His experiences felt dwarfed by what his parents had endured: "I would bump into a wall and I wouldn't cry, because I'd say, 'You just bumped into a wall. Smile to your mum and make her happy.'" Literature helped Keret to legitimize his emotions. Through fiction, he discovered "a place where what I truly feel really counts." He regards his family as a microcosm of Israeli society. Keret's brother, a militant anarchist, heads an Israeli group that lobbies for the legalization of marijuana. His sister, with her ten children, lives by ultra-Orthodox beliefs that bar her from reading his books. But unlike fragmented Israel, Keret's family remains tightly knit in their disparate convictions. "When my sister goes on a demonstration, my brother will give her tips about how to deal with police brutality," says Keret. "The ultra-Orthodox are also anarchists in their own way." Keret began

to write during what he describes as the worst years of his life, as a nineteen-year-old doing his military service. A "terrible soldier," Keret was regularly court-martialled before eventually being assigned to a computer unit five floors underground. Keret was in desperate need of a reprieve from the despair brought on by the suicide of his best friend in the army. He explains that he also stuttered and had "a very big problem expressing [him]self in any way." During forty-eight-hour shifts at the computer outfit, Keret thought to himself: "You must find a way out or you'll go crazy." So, he started to write stories.

Older Israeli intellectuals don't always respond favorably to Keret's non-ideological vignettes. Chief among his critics is A.B. Yehoshua, an elder statesman of Israeli letters who criticizes Keret for his lack of political commitment. While Yehoshua composes epics that stridently draw attention to their political significance, Keret's short stories flaunt their irreverence in hip rebellion against the ideological zeal of the generation that came of age with the state. Keret says he identifies more with the Jewish tradition of self-flagellating comedy than the epic nationalist fiction that dominates his country's literature. "The moment Israel was formed, people gave up their Jewishness for being Israeli," he says. "The writers became national figures. They lost the self-criticism that you find in Isaac Bashevis Singer or Woody Allen. I'm a lot closer to Hasidic tales than Yehoshua is." Humor, for Keret, is a form of protest—a weapon for the subjugated and dispossessed. "The things you can change in life, you usually won't bother to make a joke about." Keret considers Yehoshua's short story "Facing the Forests," which depicts the relation-

Etgar Keret is the author of The Nimrod Flip-Out and The Busdriver Who Wanted To Be God. Ben Naparstek is a law student and literary journalist in Melbourne, Australia. He writes regularly for the Sydney Morning Herald, Canberra Times and Jerusalem Post.



ship between an Israeli and a mute Arab, emblematic of left-wing Israeli fiction. "Many times you meet those mute Arabs [through whom] the Israeli narrators and writers tell the reader exactly what they want," says Keret. "I think much left-wing writing has a very patronizing subtext, saying, 'We are for peace and we know what the Palestinians want.' I've never tried to write a realistic text in which I've claimed to know what's going on inside a Palestinian's mind."

Yehoshua and Keret's divergent politics came to a head when they shared the podium during a panel discussion at a writers' festival in Greece. They argued about the older writer's disparaging attitude towards the Jews of the Diaspora. Keret stressed the affinities that bind the Jewish people, whereas Yehoshua maintained his controversial belief that exile is the "disease" of Judaism for which Zionism is the cure. Keret sees Yehoshua's view of the diaspora Jew as an instance of blaming the victim for the crime. "It's not much dif-

ferent than the 'she shouldn't have worn that dress' reaction to rape victims," he says. "Claiming that the Israeli is the complete Jew seems very strange and wrong to me. The archetypal Israeli is more an anti-diaspora Jew than a complete one. If the diaspora leaders were intellectuals, the typical Israeli political leader is a general or a farmer, preferably both. Jewish cosmopolitan and self-reflexive critical thought is also hard to find in the archetypal Israeli, who is more simple, pragmatic, and straight to the point—which doesn't at all seem to me a continuation or improvement of Jewish thought."

Keret says that, in a society where "you go on a blind date and the second question you're asked is what party you vote for," he's been attacked by the older generation for refusing to align himself with political parties. But Keret stresses the importance, "as an intellectual, of not patronizing people, of not instructing people on what to do." Often alarmed at the regime under which he lives, Keret at times experi-

ences the alienation of "a Jew living in the Diaspora of Israel." He explains the political impasse with the Palestinians as being about who has the strongest claim to victimhood. "Because we've been persecuted for hundreds of years, we cannot listen to other people's pain; we never think it is as great as our own," he says. "I think we passed this syndrome on to the Palestinians, who have now become contenders for ultimate victim status—both sides competing for this title, comparing scars." He says that, for a nation tired of being cast as a villain on the world stage, the U.S. invasion of Iraq provided a perverse form of relief. Initial hysteria quickly dissolved with the outbreak of the war, the mood lifting into "a kind of high. Many people felt a strong release from the fact that there was a war and that we weren't the victimizer or the sufferer—the fact that there were airplanes dropping bombs on cities and suicide bombings and we had nothing to do with it."

Keret speaks candidly about the proposed academic boycott of Israeli universities. His English translator, Miriam Shlesinger, was a victim of the previous academic boycott, fired from the board of a scientific journal for carrying an Israeli passport. That Shlesinger was the former head of the Israeli branch of Amnesty International was immaterial. "Like the IDF strategy of collective punishment—demolishing the houses of suicide bombers which sheltered relatives that didn't have anything to do with the bombing—the boycott is an ineffective way of making its initiators feel they're doing something right—or, more accurately, righteous," Keret says. "Universities are a stronghold of the Israeli Left and serve more as a thorn in the right-wing government's side than as anything else. It feels like a mob action—a group of people wanting to vent their anger without much effort. If they were in the Deep South fifty years ago, they could look for some minority member to hang. But they're British professors, so they look for an academic with an Israeli passport." □

Infinite Commitment

Charlie Bertsch

- Alain Badiou, *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return of Philosophy*
- Peter Hallward, editor, *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*. Both from Continuum Publishing, 2005

All too often, fame is the handmaiden of hypocrisy. People make it big and renounce their youthful excesses. It happens to politicians. It happens to movie stars. And it happens to intellectuals. That's why France's philosopher of the moment Alain Badiou is so refreshing. Even when it would be easy for him to reject portions of his past, he refuses. Reflecting on the supposed "death of communism" in one of his recent essays collected in *Infinite Thought*, he recalls a political chant he composed two decades before in the fading light of May 1968. Instead of bemoaning the chant's datedness—he was a Maoist at the time—he insists that it remains relevant. The vicissitudes of intellectual fashion do not trouble him. "Against aesthetic nihilism, I hold that convictions and commitment are more durable than tastes. *Must be.*"

This sentence provides an excellent point of entry for *Infinite Thought*. Badiou's project is not easy to grasp. Because he goes out of his way to break with the dominant trends in contemporary philosophy, he actually puts informed readers at a disadvantage. And his writing is too spare to give much help to neophytes either. But, though it

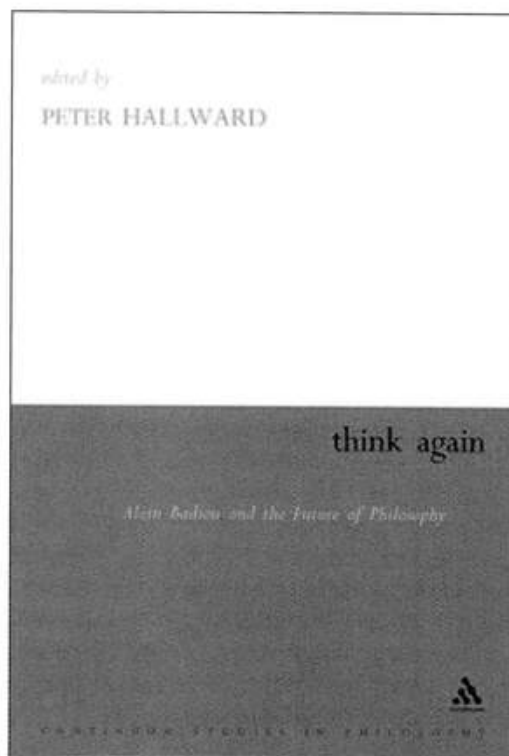
proves difficult going, his work radiates a consistency of "convictions and commitment" that demands our patience. He is no intellectual gadfly bent on provocation for its own sake. Even if it's a struggle to figure out what, precisely, he means, we know that he means it.

This may explain why Badiou is finally achieving the international fame his philosophy merits. Fed up with the slippery thinking associated with post-structuralists like Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, many intellectuals of the post-Cold War era have been seeking more stable ground. Some have given in to the hegemony of neo-conservative thought. Some, like Students For A Democratic Society-veteran Todd Gitlin, have advanced a sober, restrained progressive agenda frequently identified as "left conservatism." Some have turned to religion and the politics of meaning advocated by Tikkun-founder Michael Lerner. Interestingly, Badiou has something to offer all of them. Because he occupies the center of French intellectual life as a professor at the *École Normale Supérieure*, the critiques he levels against relativism carry special force.

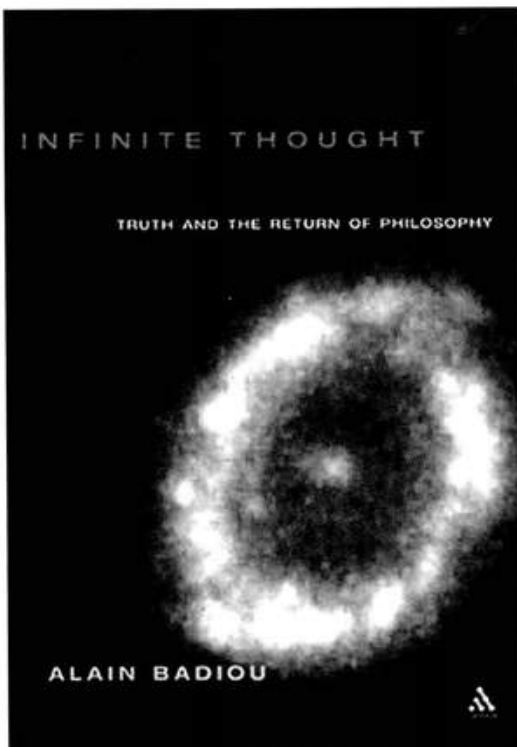
Badiou is an insider who stands outside the "common sense" of the Left. Although neo-conservatives do not share Badiou's political allegiances, they

can find ample ammunition in his work for their attacks on the sacred cows of American and European progressives. Intellectuals of Gitlin's stamp can find validation for their conviction that the Left goes astray when it concludes that anything goes. And the spiritually-minded can point to Badiou's repeated invocation of religion and his reliance on the idea of a higher truth as evidence that even outwardly secular leftists cannot, if they are honest with themselves, dispense with the human need for the superhuman.

If it seems like the right time for Badiou's philosophy, it is because he argues forcefully that we still live in a time when philosophy has the power to right us. "My hypothesis is that although philosophy is ill, it is less ill than it thinks it



Charlie Bertsch (cbertsch@comcast.net) is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Arizona in Tucson, where he specializes in twentieth-century American prose, cultural studies, and the history of aesthetics. He also teaches film.



is, less ill than it says it is," he writes in "Philosophy and Desire," the first of the essays included in *Infinite Thought*. "When it is the patient who says he is ill, there is always a chance that it is at least in part an imaginary illness." Because Badiou is not given to flights of metaphoric fancy, this picture of philosophy as a neurotic is particularly significant. It implies not only that philosophy is a patient in need of a cure, but that he is the analyst capable of performing it. The task is to break philosophy free from its destructive self-absorption. Despite all the "negative pressures" that the world places on philosophy, Badiou contends, "the world, that is the people who live in it and think in it, is asking something of philosophy. Yet philosophy is too morose to respond due to the morbidity of its own vision of itself." What philosophy needs, then, is a confidence boost. The world has not turned its back on philosophy; philosophy has turned its back on the world. Philosophy only needs to recognize its delusion to once again have a meaningful impact on everyday life.

One of Badiou's main objectives,

then, in the essays included in *Infinite Thought*, is to demonstrate how philosophy can resume the conversation with the world that constitutes its reason for being. The essays range widely, going far beyond the sphere of his professional expertise. He writes extensively about philosophy, to be sure, but also about politics and art. Many of the big names in American philosophy departments confine themselves to a tiny subfield they can dominate. Badiou, by contrast, exercises a less intense dominion but one that covers far more territory. This quality is apparent when we compare *Infinite Thought* to Peter Hallward's collection of articles about Badiou, *Think*

Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy. Although all of the pieces in it have something valuable to offer, they tend to be a lot more specialized than the work they examine.

While Badiou generalizes without apology, his commentators find hidden folds within the fabric of his boldness. Even intellectual superstar Slavoj Žižek, always ready for a stroll down the runway of the public sphere to the staccato of flashbulbs, comes off as somewhat too disciplined in relation to the Badiou of *Infinite Thought*. Whereas Badiou keeps the name-dropping to a minimum, Žižek finds it necessary to situate his friend's thought at the intersection between two competing intellectual traditions, Marxism and psychoanalysis, by invoking names like Lenin, Jacques Lacan, and Ernesto Laclau. Similarly, political theorist Étienne Balibar contrasts Badiou's interest in the "history of truth" to the homologous efforts of Derrida, Foucault, and Georges Canguilhem. Other contributors throw in the usual suspects from the history of philosophy: Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche.

While all this work is illuminating, it

threatens to strip Badiou's work of what makes reading it most worthwhile. For it is precisely in his refusal to confine himself to the safety of a shared tradition that he proves most radical. As he states in the essay "Philosophy and Desire," his aim is to "rediscover a foundational style, a decided style, a style in the school of a Descartes." Given what Descartes means in the history of philosophy, this statement indicates that Badiou really does mean to start over, no longer bound by the self-defeating expectations that have hindered his predecessors and his contemporaries alike. It doesn't get bolder than that.

Badiou's daring manifests itself principally in his will to redefine terms with long histories of both philosophical and everyday usage. When he writes of "truth," or "the event," or "the political," he goes out of his way to make it clear that conventional definitions are inadequate to the task of understanding his argument. Consider this passage from the essay "Philosophy and Politics":

Any politics of emancipation, or any politics which imposes an egalitarian maxim, is a thought in act. Thought is the specific mode by which a human animal is traversed and overcome by a truth. In such a subjectivization one goes beyond the limits of interest, such that the political process itself becomes indifferent to interests.

While Badiou cannot be accused of failing to define his terms—he tells us here what "thought" is, for example—the violence with which he frees them from their past sometimes makes his work seem like a riddle without a solution. What does it mean to be "traversed and overcome by a truth?" Why does that process entail a "subjectivization"? How can it be possible that such a "subjectivization" actually transcends self-interest, unless the self in question is explicitly differentiated from the subject? Everything Badiou has written inspires this sort of questioning. In the abstract, that must be regarded as a good thing. In practice, however, it may make

his work too baffling to achieve its goals.

The more Badiou one reads, of course, the easier it becomes to make sense of passages like the one above. What is obscure here may be clarified elsewhere; what is obscure elsewhere may be clarified here. The degree of traction his readers get within his work is directly proportional to the amount of time they spend on it. That's true of any difficult work, surely, but the effect is especially pronounced where Badiou is concerned. And that's where the trouble with his philosophy arises.

Even the least busy among us has limited time for reading philosophy. If understanding Badiou requires a long-term commitment—the intellectual equivalent of monogamy—then deciding to take that step will decrease the amount of time one spends reading in other philosophical traditions. The danger, in short, is that readers of Badiou will spend so much time trying to figure him out that they will end up turning their backs on the world despite his injunction to face its demands. That certainly seems to be the case for the contributors to *Think Again*. Even those who normally do a good job of maintaining a healthy balance between scholarly specificity and real-world concerns—Zizek, Balibar, and Ernesto Laclau come to mind—fail to escape from the vortex of Badiou's prose. Paradoxically, then, Badiou manages to provoke precisely the sort of responses that his philosophy seeks to transcend.

A better approach to his work might be to favor practical application over theoretical explanation. As Marx's famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach waits to remind us, "the philosophers have only interpreted the world; the point is to change it." Let's start with Badiou's reflections on the Cultural Revolution, which pop up at a number of points throughout *Infinite Thought*. When he was a Maoist, he clearly regarded the radicalization that occurred in China between 1966 and 1968 as a positive development. And even today, he obviously retains some affection for the idea of it, while distancing himself

from the harsh realities that sullied that idea's promise. It would certainly be a worthwhile scholarly exercise to situate Badiou's philosophical project within the context of the peculiar brand of Maoism that flourished in French intellectual circles in the 1960s and 1970s, noting the sectarian disagreements whose after-image can be discerned in his prose. But that labor would also require a turning away from the here and now that would be inconsistent with the spirit of his philosophy. By contrast, if one seeks to excavate his reflections on the Cultural Revolution in search of tools appropriate to the present conjuncture, the result might be something less rigorous but also more useful.

In the essay "Philosophy and Politics," Badiou writes that, "for a political orientation to be worthy of submission to philosophy under the idea of 'justice,' its unique general axiom must be: people think, people are capable of truth." His two examples of this "egalitarian recognition of the capacity for truth" are something Saint-Just said before the French Revolutionary Convention of 1794, and "the sixteen-point decision of 8 August 1966: 'Let the masses educate themselves in this great revolutionary movement, let them determine themselves the distinction between what is just and what is not.'" Badiou does not use these examples to shock, though their revolutionary dimension is clear, but because they are specific examples that help him make a general point:

Equality is in no way a social programme. Moreover, it has nothing to do with the social. It is a political maxim, a prescription. Political equality is not what we want or plan, it is what we declare under fire of the event, here and now, as what is, and not as what should be.

Debating whether or not this description really matches up with the actually existing Cultural Revolution is less important than recognizing the value in what Badiou's philosophy has been able to pry loose from its historical example.

In the essay on "Philosophy and the

Death of Communism," Badiou argues that, "philosophy exists solely insofar as it extracts concepts from a historical pressure which would grant them nothing other than a relative sense." From his perspective, then, philosophy begins its work precisely where "actually existing" circumstances end. "What does 'communist' signify in an absolute sense? What is it that philosophy is able to think under this name?" The point of philosophy, in other words, is to transcend the particular. What really happened in the Soviet Union of Lenin or the China of Mao is important, according to Badiou, but it is not the task of philosophy to think it.

At times, formulations like these leave him open to charges of historical erasure. The person who thinks the name "communism" without stopping to recall the atrocities committed in its name is treading extremely dangerous ground. There is a fine line between the roles of redeemer and apologist, one that grows imperceptible when contemplated from the distance of philosophical abstraction. Thankfully, Badiou does demonstrate awareness of the risk he runs in trying to overcome relativism.

"We know now that there are no such great emancipatory forces, that there is neither progress nor proletariat." Instead of relying on these abstract forces to serve as the instruments of change, individuals must fall back on their own devices. "This means that each of us, and not only the philosopher, knows that today, if we are confronted with the inhuman, we must make our own decision and speak in our own name." If we think the name "communism," then, it is not in order to act in its name but our own. "But in order to take a position in one's own name when faced with the inhuman, a fixed point is needed for the decision."

Badiou's philosophy—bold, iconoclastic, open to the absolute—represents his attempt to provide us with such a point. Whether his readers choose to seek this point there or elsewhere, they will surely benefit from his forceful argument for its necessity. □

The New Jewish Canon

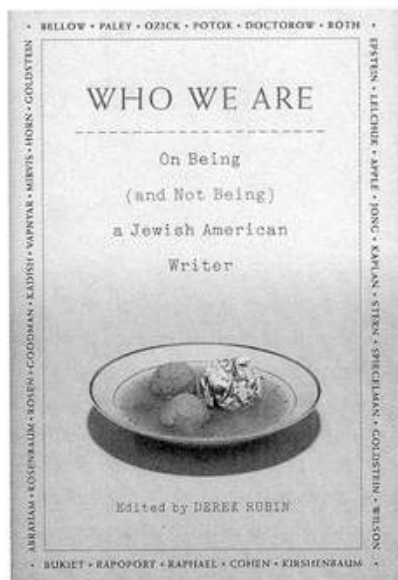
Louis Gordon

■ *Who We Are: On Being (and Not Being) a Jewish American Writer*, Edited by Derek Rubin. Schocken Books, 2005

The celebrated American playwright and author S.N. Berhman revealed in his 1954 memoir, *The Worcester Account*, that though his father was a Talmudic scholar, he himself never knew what was contained in that compendium of Jewish legal thought and literary expression. And while Berhman's failure to incorporate Jewish themes into his creative work may have earned him criticism from the aggressively Jewish author Ludwig Lewisohn, it can not be said that the playwright's general disinterest in things Judaic was unusual for a man who came of age in early-twentieth-century America.

Nearly a hundred years after S.N. Berhman began his meteoric ascent from a Massachusetts shtetl to Broadway, a new generation of Jewish writers has taken the American literary scene by storm. Hardly a week passes that the *New York Times* or the *New Yorker* does not tout the emergence of a new talent whose work draws on the Jewish experience. While S.N. Berhman may have come to terms with his Jewish roots only toward the end of his life, the new generation of Jewish writers has, from its inception, achieved a mastery of Hebrew, Yiddish, Torah, Talmud and ... literature.

Derek Rubin's anthology, *Who We Are: On Being (and Not Being) a Jewish American Jewish Writer*, appears then at a



curious time. Comprised largely of essays by writers who populate the generations that came of age between Berhman and Generation X, the anthology seeks to gather in one place the musings of writers on their relationship to their Jewish roots. According to Rubin, a professor of American Studies at Utrecht University in the Netherlands, although critics and scholars have had their say, what has been sorely needed is a collection that sheds light on fiction writers' feelings on being Jewish writers in America.

To this end, Rubin presents the essays of thirty-nine writers, beginning with Saul Bellow, who recently passed away at eighty-nine, to one Yael Goldstein, a New Jersey born writer who is twenty-five years old. While some of the selections are re-edited essays from yesteryear that will be familiar to students of American Jewish literature, others have been pre-

pared specifically for the anthology. Encompassing an extremely broad spectrum of American Jewish writers, the authors line up roughly along two trends of thought: those who see the fiction of authors with Jewish origins as a necessary component of the larger world of literature and those who find some deeper Jewish purpose in their craft. Among the former are of course Bellow, whose essay on becoming a writer in depression-era Chicago is as dazzling as any of his fictional writings, and *Ragtime* author E.L. Doctorow, who without hesitation argues that "all writers worth the name are unfiliated." While Cynthia Ozick also places herself in this camp, the most articulate and literary defense of this position comes from Alan Lechuk, the controversial author of *American Mischief* and *Brooklyn Boy*. Recalling the inner conflict of the early Hebrew writer Joseph Hayyim Brenner, Lechuk cogently argues that while an author's ethnic background and experiences will necessarily affect their writing, great literature should be judged on its artistic merits. Still, Lechuk celebrates the possibilities of richness that can occur when the ethnic is "joined with the familial to provide conflict."

Philip Roth's essay, "Writing about Jews" is, forty-one years after its initial publication, hopelessly dated. Roth takes to task Rabbi Emmanuel Rackman for publicly criticizing his 1959 *Goodbye Columbus* for its depiction of a materialistic Short Hills matron as an Orthodox Jew. But Rackman, who stood for all that is tolerant and progressive in Orthodoxy, was essentially correct in his critique of Roth. What needs to be said at this late date is that while Roth accurately transcribed his experiences with the real-life family on whom he based his novella, the young Roth lacked

Louis Gordon, a former executive editor of *Jewish Spectator*, is a widely published essayist and critic. His work has appeared in the *Forward*, *Jerusalem Post*, *Jerusalem Report*, *Midstream*, *Tradition* and numerous other publications.

enough Jewish education to understand that they were not Orthodox Jews.

Some of the Jewish writers of the earlier era present personal narratives that are compelling in their own right. Leslie Epstein, author of *King of the Jews*, details his tortured flight from the Hollywood of his father, Julius Epstein, who wrote the screen play for *Casablanca*, while Johanna Kaplan, (*O My America!*) relates the fascinating legend of her great-grandfather, a saintly rabbi whose life is depicted in the memoirs of Israel's third president, Zalman Shazar.

The second group of writers in the anthology represents a much more Jewishly conscious set of artists. As Allegra Goodman succinctly puts it in her essay, "Writing with a Return Address," such writers have two separate traditions to draw on: the Yiddish world of Chaim Grade and the Singer brothers, and the American Jewish world of Roth, Bellow, and Malamud. More importantly however, it is clear from their essays as well as their fiction that the new writers including Tovah Mirvis, Dara Horn, and Yael Goldstein

all have been exposed to substantive Jewish sources, whether in religious school, the academic world, or other settings. The development of so many new sources of Jewish education has thus in itself nullified Irving Howe's thesis that the American Jewish novel is passé, because the new educational systems have given rise to new sources of Jewish experience, which in their own way equal if not surpass the world of Howe's fathers.

While Rubin's efforts to collect all these writers in one volume is certainly appreciated, two things are clearly missing. One is that aside from Lev Raphael's account of his struggle to write as the homosexual son of Holocaust survivors, there is little discussion of literature as a tool to elucidate important social dilemmas. One almost wishes that a selection by the late Bernard Malamud was included if for nothing other than this purpose.

The other missing element is the relative lack of any communication between writers of different generations. While some younger writers, such as Binni Kirschenbaum, speak about how certain

authors (in her case Philip Roth) influenced them, given that nearly all the older writers are living, Rubin misses the opportunity for critical commentary from the established masters on the newer generation. The only taste of this approach in the collection comes in the essay by Jonathan Rosen, the former cultural editor of the *Forward*, who in the course of his work for that newspaper had the opportunity to interview such critics as Howe and Alfred Kazin as well as Saul Bellow. The results of those interviews however, are disappointing.

For all their wisdom the older writers, as reported by Rosen, do not have much insight into the younger generation or the effect of a new Jewish reality on the craft of writing. And yet Philip Roth on Nathan Englander's *For the Relief of Unbearable Urges*, or Alan Lelchuk on Jonathan Lethem's *Motherless Brooklyn*, or Anne Roiphe on Dara Horn's *In the Image*, would certainly add some real spice to the current literary revival and create a modern dialogue of lasting importance.

Acts of Watching

Dan Chiasson

- *Tantalus in Love*, by Alan Shapiro. Houghton Mifflin, 2005.

In the story of Tantalus, Tantalus is a mortal, a favorite of the gods and a guest at their table, who is punished for tasting the heavenly foods. Tantalus spends eternity waist deep in water he cannot drink—it recedes whenever he bends to drink it—under a tree whose boughs drift away whenever he reaches up to pick its fruits. Perpetual hunger and perpetual thirst, but not merely that: perpetual hope that one's hunger is about to be sated, one's

thirst about to be quenched.

Our word "tantalize" includes a strong sexual component, sex often seeming most desirable when withheld or withdrawn. *Tantalus in Love*, the title of Alan Shapiro's eighth poetry collection, restores the original atmosphere of the Tantalus story to our more colloquial, and more sexualized, understanding of temptation. The big, ripe peach on the cover of this book stands for the sensory component of emotional life—the actual tastes, smells, and touches we want with our bodies, even as our minds describe the world by means of abstract categories like "loss" and "yearning."

Tantalus in Love opens with the death of a marriage—a thing long "neither mourned nor buried" that consumes time ("days pass and years vanish") and drains the world of wonder. "How filled with awe/This place is, and we did not know it," writes Shapiro in the beautiful invocatory poem that opens the book. When the world goes dark, the lovers disappear into their selves—masturbating ("touching yourself...under the hungry covers/in all the ways/that you could never/say with me/you wanted"), doing yoga, staring out the window—but also, of course, writing poems. The suspicion here is that being an artist always involves turning inward and away from social life, and as such is a species of cruelty rather than a balm—a

Dan Chiasson's new book of poetry, *Natural History*, is forthcoming from Knopf this fall.

“promised touch,” in the words of one poem, rather than “a touch.”

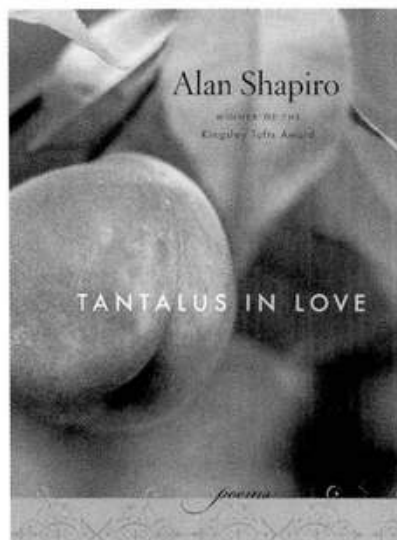
The early poems in this book suggest that private acts (the poetry, the yoga) function as theatrical demonstrations of privacy, crude assertions of selfhood meant to make the beloved feel redundant, a spectator, a voyeur. Acts of watching and being watched fascinate Shapiro; his world is thatched by the invisible vectors of people’s attention. A father watches his daughter watch herself in the mirror; at a Super-Bowl party, the guests pretend to watch the game but in fact watch “the changed formations, the/ timing routes, the thud/of impact” of their own conversations, their husbands’ conversations and those of their exes across the room. Most poignantly, Shapiro watched his wife do her yoga in the dawn:

the body...there to be looked at
without her knowing,
being moved, yes, carried, drifted
from pose
to pose by the whispery currents
of her teacher’s
urging—the Warrior, the Dog, the
Dolphin,
and then the two he always waits
for, the Cobra
that has her hips flat on the floor,
arms pushing
up slowly, straightening while the
back arches,
keeps arching until the breasts
push out against
the tank top and the nipples
show, and then
the one the Cobra mutates
into... (“Anger”)

There is a long tradition of poems by men describing women’s bodies as they move through a dance—think of Yeats’s “Among School Children”—but, as far as I know, this is the first poem ever written about a woman doing yoga: the ceremony of it, the weird intimacy that results between master—in this case, an image on a TV screen—and pupil.

In a book that begins with the ending of one love and ends with the beginning of another, it is the middle that feels richest and strangest:

Is this it, love,
so long bereft,



we’ve had to teach
ourselves to make
oasis of
the in-between
where no place is,
no dwelling...

This “in-between” is invigorating because it’s improvisational, created along the way in telephone calls and hotel rooms, but also deadening because, like an oasis, it is always on the verge of unreality. Beginnings and endings are rock-bottom real; it is the middle that we make up as we go, and the mingled joy and fear of that process is captured unforgettably here. Note my words “create,” “make up,” and “process,” for it is an explicitly creative act, a collaboration between two artists, that people undertake when they fall in love.

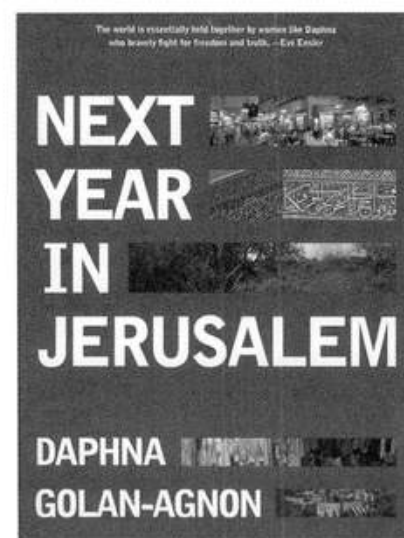
This is a book of middle age, everywhere wryly acknowledged; it is aware of the risks of sentimentality and does not everywhere avoid them. But Shapiro’s poetry is distinguished by how much human experience, from the most filigreed perception on down to the basest and most animal drive, is given form.

Capsule Reviews

■ *Next Year in Jerusalem*, Daphna Golan-Agnon. The New Press, 2005

In Israeli activist circles, Daphna Golan-Agnon is a household name. The founder of the women’s peace organization Bat Shalom and the co-founder of Israel’s leading human rights NGO, B’Tselem, Golan-Agnon has dedicated her life to ending the Occupation and fighting inequality between Arabs and Jews. *Next Year in Jerusalem* is the first English-language translation of her 2002 Hebrew memoir about coming of age politically in the Israeli peace movement.

For progressive Jews who lament the decline of the Israeli Left over the course of the Al-Aksa Intifada, the sheer amount of work Golan-Agnon recounts—founding both Bat Shalom and B’Tselem and working for Israel’s Ministry of Education—leaves one con-



vinced that activists like her helped create a permanent institutional infrastructure that will serve a revitalized Israeli Left in the future. Examining the story of Golan-Agnon’s political evolution—as the daughter of a former member of the Stern gang who herself entered politics

Despite the optimism Next Year in Jerusalem imparts, Golan-Agnon believed that when her children grew up, they wouldn't have to serve in the IDF the way she and her husband had.

as an anti-apartheid activist and went on to become an internationally recognized human rights advocate—only serves to reinforce this sense even further.

However, despite the optimism *Next Year in Jerusalem* imparts, like many Israelis of her generation, Golan-Agnon believed that when her children grew up, they wouldn't have to serve in the IDF the way she and her husband had. In a particularly heart-wrenching passage, she expresses her dismay at the arrival of her daughter's induction papers, telling the story of her mother's belief in the same thing a generation earlier, echoed in song after the Yom Kippur War. (*Ani maftiach lach, yelda sheli k'tanah, sheh zot tibiyei hamilchamah ha'achronah*: I promise you, my little girl, that this will be the last war.)

In fact, Golan-Agnon's exhaustion is so palpable that it becomes almost a character in the memoir. She repeatedly asks herself why she keeps planning demonstrations, taking jobs that require her to fight prejudice every day, and working against the denial that is part of the psychological landscape of her country. While early in her career she believed that overcoming the refusal to acknowledge the facts of the Occupation was the most important work one could do, by the end of *Next Year in Jerusalem*, it's clear that she no longer believes that this is enough. If denial of the facts is the first stage, and insisting that there must be a good reason for the facts is the second, overcoming the belief that "there's nothing we can do to change anything" is the final and now most important stage of denial to move beyond.

In the end, however, *Next Year in Jerusalem* documents a deeply personal account of the human rights movement in Israel and the frustrations of living a conscious life in a land where it would

be demonstrably simpler to pretend that everything is far better than it appears. —Cynthia Hoffman

■ *Ruling America: A History of Wealth and Power in a Democracy*, edited by Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle. Harvard University Press, 2005

Americans are a people who have a notoriously difficult time speaking about class. When they do, they usually invoke value-laden terms like "welfare mothers," "society matrons," and "elites" as synonyms for such basic and fundamental concepts as "rich" and "poor." Given the facts that most low-income people never speak about themselves in such pejorative ways, and that Republicans are frequently fond of invoking the term "elite" to deride their liberal opponents, it's not hard to figure out who it is that really defines how Americans discuss economic inequality.

In *Ruling America*, editors Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle have gathered together a number of eye-opening articles that examine how America's elites have historically exercised control over the country's economic, social, and cultural life. Taken individually, these essays provide a wealth of historical detail and information about each privileged group.

The major strength of this anthology, however, is its brilliantly assembled structure. Set in chronological order, starting with an essay examining colonial elites, *Ruling America* traces the rise and fall of each group that has attempted to rule the United States against 250 years of history, political and economic struggles, and social changes. Historical



periods overlap when the fall of one dominant group gives rise to another. As the exigencies of democracy bring one down, the next steps in to exercise its prerogatives and assume hegemony.

As the text progresses, *Ruling America* exposes both how each new elite class differentiated itself from those that came before it, and also the common features that united elites across time. Those who lead today's corporate America and military-industrial complex have absorbed and improved the laissez-faire economic practices of the mercantile elites in the antebellum North and the millionaire businessmen of the Gilded Age.

Today, America's elites expect the government to repay them for their financial support and influence by passing legislation to protect copyrights, opening public contracts to private industry, and easing the rules that bind corporate growth and profits. The power of this anthology, with its message about the unequal distribution of power in the United States, can at times feel overwhelming. And yet, given such a wonderfully explanatory guidebook, it's clear that their power to over-determine how Americans think about class is not entirely binding. When thinking about what it's going to take to revitalize American democracy, *Ruling America* is absolutely essential reading. —Jane Credland

Facing the Other at Cannes

Karin Badt

When I asked Toni Morrison during the press conference for the Cannes film festival jury to justify her best-screenplay vote for Guillermo Arriaga's *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada*, I expected her—a member of the Helsinki Watch Committee on Human Rights—to be on my side. My question was how she, who treats violence with such care in her own novels, could vote for a screenplay which glorifies macho vigilante violence as a form of justice.

Morrison looked stunned. She glanced nervously at Yugoslavian director Emir Kusturica, president of the jury. I repeated my question. In *Three Burials*, a gringo who abuses Mexican immigrants at the border, killing one, is taught his lesson when Tommy Lee Jones, best friend to the murdered Mexican, makes him take a journey across the border to face the Other whom he has murdered. The gringo must dig up the body of his victim and bury it two more times, to give the Mexican a proper burial.

A touching story of justice from the other side? That is what the jury seemed to think, awarding the prize.

But little did they contemplate the lesson of this film: that the only way to wake people up to face the Other is at gunpoint. Tommy Lee Jones forces the errant gringo to sleep with the corpse, wash the corpse, dress the corpse, and then drag it across the border, pistol-whipping him throughout. The handcuffed gringo suffers wounds to his wrists, thirst, exhaustion, and finally a deadly snakebite. It is torturous to watch this predictable movie run to its

predictable conclusion, where the amoral gringo—after enduring every form of torture that can slip by human rights commissions (including having boiling coffee spilled in his groin by the very Mexican woman he once punched in the face)—finally cries uncle and confesses his sins. “I did wrong!” he whimpers. “I realize the error of my ways!!”

It is a macho reverse-Western, simply told from the politically correct side. In the aftermath of Abu Ghraib, do we really need that?

Kusturica gamely defended the screenplay. “I picked it not for rational reasons,” he said.

Morrison came back to the fore with a more rational explanation. “For me it is a deeply moral film,” she said. “The transition from vengeance to justice. A learning process for two men, for the reckless killer and the determined friend.”

Vengeance that leads to justice. What kind of world are we complacently accepting? Evidently, a world in which Americans can torture prisoners without mandate because it leads—in their noble minds—to “justice.” Gone are the anti-vigilante films of the idealistic past, such as *Taxi Driver* that made the heroes of gun violence, intent to “clean the scum,” look as foolish as the public that idolizes them. Even more disturbing: a recent New York Times article has suggested that ever since Abu Ghraib, torture—as a means to achieve justice—is just the way it goes, even on prime time. In the counter-terrorist world of *Twenty-Four*, writes Adam Green, “torture represents not the breakdown of a just society, but the turning point—at times even the start-

ing point—for social relations.” *Three Burials* speaks to this phenomenon: our acceptance of torture as ethics. As Mexican actress Salma Hayek said at the press conference: “it is man dealing with being man for the right reasons for being a man—not for simple violence”: in essence, violence for the right cause.

Perhaps appropriately, the necessity of violence to force people to recognize the Other seemed the theme of this year's Cannes festival. Collectively, the films gave a kaleidoscopic image of a world of schisms, of people unwilling to face either themselves or others, unless with force.

In Michael Haneke's film *Hidden*, one of the best at the festival, a bourgeois television producer is haunted by menacing videos of his own house, each of which is accompanied by a scrawled drawing of a cock with its throat cut. It turns out that behind these threats is an Algerian from the producer's past—a victim of first-world injustice—who is seeking revenge on the powerful who once ignored him. The producer, however, would prefer to hide from the Other, insulate himself in apathy, in his disconnected family life, surrounded by beige walls and big black TV screens. What will it take for him to face himself and the Other? Violence. The climactic scene of the film replicates the bloody image of the cock having its throat cut, and for once the deadened producer is awakened to his “chicken” guilt.

The director, a former television producer himself, explained the contemporary need for his jolting film: “All of us feel guilty, about the relationships between the industrialized world and the third world, or how we deal with the elderly, for example. We all take ‘sleeping pills,’ although it may take many different forms: it may be a drink before we go to bed, or we may donate money to children

Karin Badt is a professor of cinema at the University of Paris VIII, with a Ph.D. in literature from the University of Chicago. She would like to dedicate this piece to the memory of historian Peter D'Agostino (1962–2005).

in the third world. But each of us pulls the blanket over our heads and hopes that the nightmares won't be too bad."

It is a disturbing comment, bleak in its lack of hope for humanity. When I asked Haneke if there is any way out of this alienating deadlock, he responded: "That is the \$64,000 question."

Almost all of the filmmakers at the festival, not just Haneke, seem to want us to confront the Other, mirroring back our world with an almost cynical moralism. In *Manderlay*, Lars Von Trier shows us how Americans still don't face their history of slavery, and yet pretend to be good people. In what is obviously a metaphor for U.S. involvement in Iraq, a naïve white woman attempts to liberate slaves and instill democracy, a crusade that turns into a parade of micro-tragedies. In the film's finale, a gung-ho American idealist whips the slaves herself. *Manderlay* steamrolls to a dead end. Why has grace become so unbearable? I asked the director. What has happened to Von Trier's faith? His previous films, like *Dancer in the Dark*, upheld faith in innocent idealism: maintaining one's convictions despite all evil. "Faith!" scoffed Von Trier. "Has grace already forgotten that she has killed a whole town in my last movie?"

Italian Marco Tullio Giordana also wants his audience to face their sins. Giordana's *Once Born You Can No Longer Hide* tells the story of a rich Italian forced to see the poor dark immigrants who are becoming part of Italy's landscape when he falls overboard and is saved by such people. The boy is literally pushed into an encounter with the Others at his borders. As Giordano explains: "Italians were once the other themselves: 60 million Italians emigrated in the twentieth century. Now we must confront people coming here."

Amos Gitai—in a similar splurge of idealism—puts an American, a Palestinian, and an Israeli in a car, crossing the border to Jordan himself to make the ironically-titled *Free Zone*—the first Israeli film to be produced in an Arab country. "The women are stuck with each other in the car," Gitai explained.

"They have to sit face to face and resolve the conflict."

It is astonishing how almost all of 2005's films urge us to see, if not take responsibility for, the Other. In *Don't Come Knocking*, Wim Wenders portrays a lost cowboy, adrift in America, who finally realizes he will be a dissolute nobody until he takes responsibility for his past: for mistresses left behind and children abandoned. Newcomer Tony Krawitz's *Jew-boy* shows a Yeshiva bocher, who having lost his faith, must desexualize the outside world that tempts him—respecting its Otherness—and then go back to his Hasidic grandmother. And what can we say about George Lucas' latest version of *Star Wars*, which does its techno-savvy best to make us think, along with Yoda, that maybe it's not such a good thing to selfishly take over an empire and destroy democracy?

It is only Jim Jarmusch who refuses to draw a lesson. In the Grand Prix-winning *Broken Flowers*, a middle aged bachelor who, like Wenders' cowboy, lives life too lightly, takes a midlife trip to face the Other—his own abandoned mistresses, his own sperm-dropped son. Bill Murray plays the disconnected drifter, a perpetual bachelor despite the fact that he once had his pick of stereotypical American babes. He visits a sexy Sharon Stone (now with a Lolita daughter), a hippie-turned-yuppie real estate agent, a new-age animal-speaker who communicates with purring cats, and a tough leather-strapped cycle cookie in a trailer home. But drifter without roots he remains until the final shot: a hesitant yet eager greeting to his possible son, driving by, eating fast food in a juiced up car.

Jarmusch's film is, in its comedic emptiness, what all these films are about. People who can't become "fathers," who can't connect, even with one last spurt of a road-trip. We just drive by.

"Lightness is the problem of our times," said the Dardenne brothers, winners of the Palme d'Or, the highest prize at Cannes. In their film, *The Child*, a drifter sells his own infant for money: Happy-go-lucky, he tells his girlfriend, "we can just make another!" "Our char-

acter Bruno resonates with today's world because of his lightness," Jean-Pierre Dardenne eagerly explained, waving his hands with passion. "We asked ourselves why does Bruno not recognize his child, who is a human being, a living being, and why he is not able to be a father? He lives in such lightness, with formidable liberty, where nothing has any importance. Even he himself has no importance for himself." At the end of this film, Bruno does learn to recognize his child—to pick it up, buy it back. He finally becomes a human being.

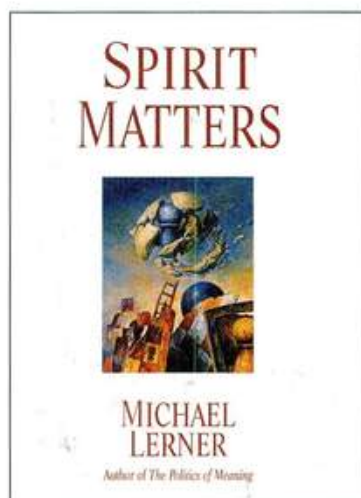
The jury was hard-pressed to decide whom to award the prestigious Palme d'Or this year—no film stood out for the daringness of its story or its storytelling—and so it was indicative in this moral wasteland of hopeless confrontations with the Other, that they chose the one film that offered hope: a man who learns to be a father.

Hope also rallied in the underground, from the Others themselves. One of the most moving films in the festival won the top prize of a side-division called "A Fortnight of New Directors." *Sisters-in-Law*, a documentary by two young British directors, is about a magistrate in Africa who instructs husbands that wife-beating is not right, and who tells mothers not to beat their children with hangers, mothers so ignorant that they cry self-pityingly: "But I only beat her when I'm angry!" In one lyrical encounter, the magistrate says to a culprit: "You expect me to believe this seven year old raped you? Is that what you want me to believe?" "Yes," the man nods his head.

In Cannes that night, I asked the magistrate how she felt about her role as an educator, teaching these violent ignorant people to respect the Other, be it child or wife. She responded shockingly: "Oh, I don't teach them anything. They already know it is wrong. I just scare them. They didn't know that the law exists."

The law? In the splurge of vigilante violence, we almost forgot about that. The Other—here an African female magistrate from Cameroon—shook my hand in parting, and gave me her email. No gun necessary. □

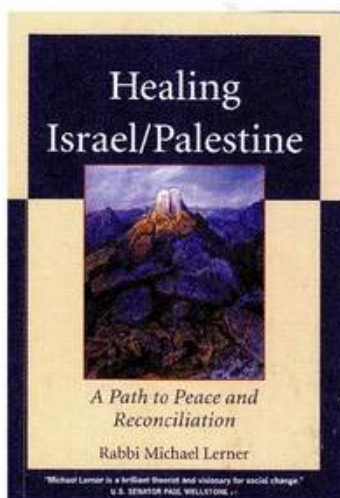
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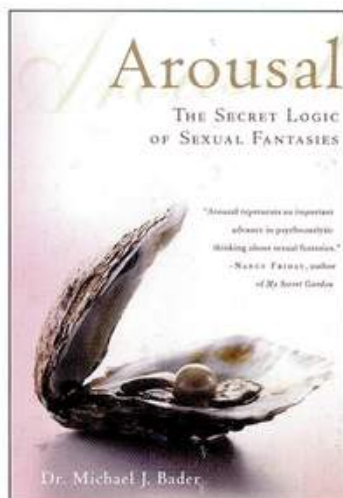
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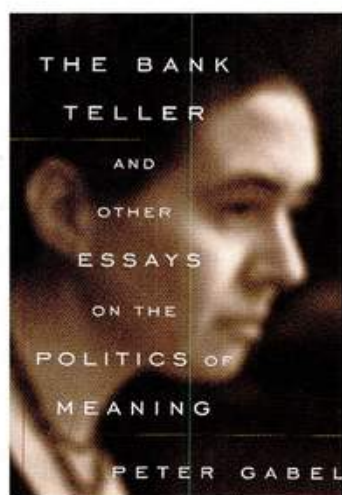
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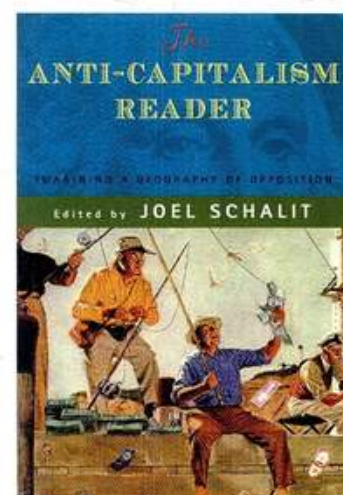
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