

Tikkun

POLITICS+SPIRITUALITY+CULTURE

(tē·kūn) To mend, repair, and transform the world.

JULY/AUGUST 2006

THE BIBLE IN PICTURES
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Orthodoxy & Gay Bishops

LISA GARRIGUES
Campesino Faith

The New Conquistadors

FALSE FREEDOM
from the West

FUNDAMENTALISM
from the East



GREG PALAST
IMMANUEL WALLERSTEIN
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Immigration Reform: Where Are The Jews?
When God Comes Into Our Classrooms
Reviews: Walter Benjamin Goes to the Opera



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مکان: روبه روی شیخان گلزار شهدای خرمشهر

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نوادگی: ۲۱ تا ۲۳

مرکز فرهنگی ۷۷۶۱۷۷۷



WORLD RELIGIONS 101

THE CONTROVERSY OVER your proposal for a course on world religions (Letters, May/June 2006) to be taught in public schools is truly laughable to a mild-mannered Canadian like myself. My father taught just such a course, virtually free of controversy, in a Canadian high school for several years. He even helped develop the curriculum for it and wrote the textbook. Many students benefited greatly from the course, which introduced students to the history and beliefs of all the major world religions and many lesser-known faith traditions. The fear of religion that permeates so much of American society boggles my mind and seems truly alien.

Perhaps the Religious

Right is a much bigger threat in the United States than it is in Canada, but religion itself is nothing to fear. It is also not something that necessarily needs criticizing, at least in the context of an introductory course in world religions. For instance, a course in comparative religions, such as the one my father taught, can easily serve to introduce students to the concept of religion in general and open their eyes to the beliefs of other people, without denigrating anyone's faith. It does, however, require a competent teacher to guide students and to facilitate discussion, something that is crucial to the overall learning experience.

Finally, to suggest that such a course cannot be

graded is preposterous—unless you have completely unqualified teachers teaching it. Any teacher worth his or her salt can grade a student's work fairly, even if he or she does not agree with the student's qualitative conclusions. The point is not whether a student agrees with a particular religious belief, but whether he or she truly grasps the history and theology or philosophy behind that belief.

We would all do better to learn a little more about the many religions that mean so much to so many people in this crazy world of ours—it is one of the only ways I know of for us to all learn to get along better.

MATTHEW A. MACDONALD

Halifax, Nova Scotia,
Canada

PRACTICAL BUBER

THANKS FOR DAVID Starr's thoughtful, erudite article on the legacy of my great-grandfather, Martin Buber (March/April 2006.)

However, I strongly disagree with Starr's conclusion that Buber's politics remain "tragically impractical." What could be more practical than his March 1949 call to Prime Minister David Ben Gurion to immediately initiate a just and quick solution to the Palestinian refugee problem? What could be more sensible than his insistence that Jews honor our Semitic roots by reaching out to our Arab "cousins" instead of aping the racism of the "civilized" Western world?

Not following Buber's pragmatic injunctions has had much to do with

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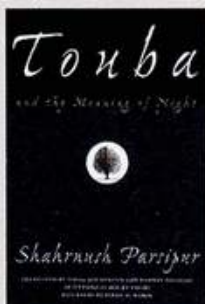
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**TIKKUN
RECOMMENDS**
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TOUBA AND THE MEANING OF NIGHT

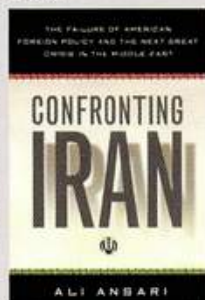
Shahrnush Parsipur. The Feminist Press, 2006

THE PUBLICATION OF PARSIPUR'S first English-language edition could not be more timely. With America and Iran engaged in a volatile stand-off, this now-banned 1989 novel by one of Iran's most distinguished writers provides profound insights into the conflict between religion and modernity in modern Persia. A fictional biography of a woman named Touba, and her struggle to survive successively exploitative relationships in a patriarchal religious culture wracked by cataclysmic political transformations, *Touba and the Meaning of Night* is a feminist tour de force that stands among the classics of twentieth-century Middle Eastern literature. We can't recommend *Touba* more highly.

**CONFRONTING IRAN**

Ali M. Ansari. Perseus Books Group, 2006

DID YOU KNOW THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT once held Iran up as an exemplary model of religious democracy? Yes, not Israel, but *Iran*. In this remarkably clear and fast-paced analysis of the origins of America's current conflict with Iran, British historian Ali Ansari surprises us with many similarly unacknowledged facts. Contending that Western policy towards Iran since the 1979 revolution has either been reactive, inconsistent, or simply non-existent, Ansari concludes that the U.S. and Europe have failed to come up with a coherent approach and understanding of this increasingly powerful, angry and complex adversary. Not exactly a revelation, but never stated quite better either.

**OCCUPATION: DREAMLAND**

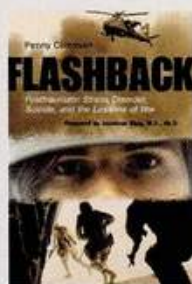
Directed by Garrett Scott and Ian Olds. Greenhouse Pictures, DVD Release, 2006

FREQUENTLY REFERRED TO AS THE second Gulf War's Stalingrad, the June 2004 battle for Fallujah has proven to be ripe fodder for journalists and pundits alike eager to chronicle the failings of America's counterinsurgency program in Iraq. *Occupation: Dreamland* takes a dramatic detour from this narrative, documenting the daily travails of an American infantry unit deployed in the city several months before the attack. Perhaps the most precious element of this film is how faithfully it captures the anxiety U.S. combat troops experience in Iraq, and their forceful criticisms of the Bush administration's decision to invade the country. Never mind generals claiming post-facto hindsight. The grunts are truly where it's at.

**FLASHBACK: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Suicide and the Lessons of War**

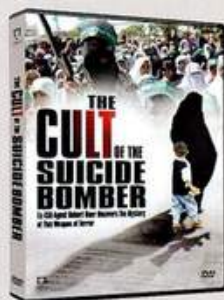
Penny Coleman. Beacon Press, 2006

NOW IN ITS FOURTH YEAR, THE vaunted "asymmetrical" warfare taking place in Iraq has introduced America's enlisted persons to unheard of levels of violence and trauma. In *Flashback*, Vietnam War widow Penny Coleman, who lost her own post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)-suffering husband to suicide, makes a heartfelt case for caring for the emotional lives of veterans. Interviewing women whose spouses returned home from combat only to fatally succumb to its effects afterwards, Coleman writes of the prevalence of PTSD and suicide amongst Iraq war vets, and how, through openly sharing our stories of loss, we can help heal yet another generation of walking wounded.

**THE CULT OF THE SUICIDE BOMBER**

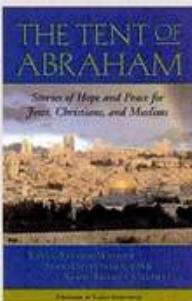
Narrated by Robert Baer. The Disinformation Company, DVD Release, 2006

ACCORDING TO EX-CIA AGENT Robert Baer, the world's first suicide bombing took place during the Iran-Iraq war, when a thirteen-year-old Iranian boy blew himself up underneath an Iraqi tank. Baer is the former intelligence operative on whom George Clooney's conflicted character in the recent Hollywood hit *Syriana* is based; for nearly two hours, Baer dons the hat of a historian and takes us on an extremely empathetic and thoughtful tour through the history of suicide bombing. Interviewing both the parents and the sponsors of "martyrs" throughout the Middle East, *The Cult of the Suicide Bomber* shines a deeply human light on a grisly sacrificial practice, explaining both its religious and economic origins.

**THE TENT OF ABRAHAM: Stories of Hope and Peace for Jews, Christians, and Muslims**

Rabbi Arthur Waskow, Joan Chittister, OSB, and Saadi Shakur Chishti. Beacon Press, 2006

RABBI ARTHUR WASKOW HAS LONG called upon the figure of Abraham to unite Jews, Christians, and Muslims, especially in work for peace. Now Waskow is joined by NSP National Co-Chair and Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister and Sufi scholar Saadi Shakur Chishti in this inspiring retelling of the story of Abraham. This book will open your eyes to the possibilities for collaborative work between our traditions, and is a must-read for those doing interfaith peacework.



Readers Respond

CAPITALIST ETHICS

CONGRATULATIONS FOR running the refreshingly crisp article by George Vradenburg on *The Ethics of Capitalism* (May/June 2006). I noticed that it was dubbed the 'contrarian' view and was not featured on your cover in spite of the fact that it advanced a most important new idea.

If we are to meaningfully join the national debate raging today, we—the progressive, cooperative, heart-centered folks—are going to have to modify our aversive attitudes regarding the market and capitalism. Just as we needed to embrace the family, something Michael Lerner advocated many years ago when the rest of us were calling for the detonation of the nuclear family, and just as we need to embrace spirituality, as *Tikkun* argues today, we will have to reconcile with the fact that the market, (and dare I say capitalism) is, when properly regulated, an essential aspect of human progress.

Two major human tendencies rule human behavior: "What's mine is mine and what's your is yours"—love of self and capitalism—

on the one hand and "What's mine is yours, and what's yours is mine"—love of others and mutual aid—on the other. When either one goes out of control and dominates the other, humanity is in trouble. What we need is to modulate and moderate the interaction of these essential human trends. In a progressive society, that is the job of government and its laws.

CLAUDE STEINER
Berkeley, CA

IF ONLY GEORGE VRADENBURG's idealistic vision of corporate America in the May/June issue were true! In reality, this Adam Smith-inspired version of capitalism applies only to small, local businesses with limited advertising. Larger corporations can indeed make money by giving consumers what they really want, but they have another option: through sophisticated advertising, they can create needs which people didn't know they had.

Yes, large for-profit organizations will succeed "if they are good at serving others" and get the word out. They will also succeed when the goods or services they deliver are worthless, or even harmful, as long as they can fool others into believing that the latest toy, gadget, beauty product, etc.

will make them happier. Television commercials are especially good at deceiving people into buying things they would never want if the advertising hadn't led them on. It's one of the downsides of our mass media society.

Vradenburg's claim that corporate managers can get promotions and salary increases "if their products contribute to consumers' well-being" is patent nonsense. Just look around. How many people do you

see eating at drive-ins, using high-decibel gasoline-powered leaf blowers, and numbing their brains and bodies with hours of TV every day? Consumers buy millions of products that do not contribute to their well-being! Why? Because they are fooled by advertising, and because everyone else is doing it.

Wake up to corporate America in the age of advertising!

MELISSA CARPENTER
Portland, Oregon

From Tikkun.org

TO JOIN IN THE DEBATE, VISIT WWW.TIKKUN.ORG/LETTERS.

Before we jump with glee to say that there are good things to be gotten out of the offer from Iranian President Ahmadinejad's letter to President Bush [published on tikkun.org], let us first translate the untranslated last line of that letter and the context in which it has usually been applied:

The sentence, "*Vasalam Ala Man Ataba'al hoda*," is translated as "*Peace only unto those who follow the true path*."

Since the wars first begun by Mohammed himself, this sentence was used at the end of a letter sent to the 'enemy.' Islam requires believers to give their enemy one last chance to repent and convert before launching war. The letter is not an invitation—it is a threat veiled in 'nice' and 'not-so-nice' words.

The fact that the major news media outlets deliberately let this sentence go untranslated speaks volumes.

—MARK ROSENTHAL
Bonn, Germany

Send letters to managingeditor@tikkun.org or to 2342 Shattuck Ave., #1200, Berkeley, CA 94704. Letters may be shortened for space.

weakening the pro-peace Palestinian "vital center." But instead of calling on us to turn around and take Buber's politics seriously, Starr points to the status quo as evidence that he was unrealistic.

Starr touches on the one state or two states debate, yet neglects to mention Buber's 1965 proposal of a Swiss-style confederation, in which the full national autonomy of all partners is preserved. Are there currently any Palestinians who might be interested in such a solution? I recently asked Hany Abu-Assad, director of the Academy Award-nominated film *Paradise Now*, his opinion on the matter. (*Tikkun* online edition, Jan/Feb '06) He immediately jumped on the concept's—you guessed

it—practical implications.

TIRZAH AGASSI
Mill Valley, CA

David Starr Replies:

I agree with the spirit behind Ms. Agassi's assertions, namely that Buber believed that his course was the most practical one, not just the most ethical of all the Zionist stratagems then being advocated in the period from WWII until his death in 1965.

Buber, and many others less committed to Zionism than he was, thought a two-state solution was unworkable and even madness for Jewish interests in Palestine. Why not? After all, how could anyone think that an entity of barely 600,000 men, women, and children would be able to withstand the

armies of surrounding hostile states that dwarfed the fledgling Jewish state? Many people feared a second Shoah unless partition was rescinded or delayed. In that sense Buber believed that he was being practical, and statisticians like Ben Gurion impractical, in assessing the relative merits of the one state/partition polarity.

As my piece pointed out, Buber's commitment to a binational state didn't prevent him from supporting the new Israel, though as Ms. Agassi implies, he tried to fuse his commitment to Israel with his overarching concern for a "land of two peoples" by continuing to urge that Israel reach out to its Arab neighbors. One can only imagine what Buber would have said if he had lived two more

years to see the Six Day War.

I don't see Buber's position as practical for the simple reason that stray intellectuals and occasional decision makers aside, where is the evidence to support the idea that a one-state solution ensuring democratic rights for all would ever have received majority support among either Jews or Arabs? Each group wanted a state for themselves, for political and cultural reasons. Zionism sought to free the Jews by enabling them to govern themselves, in some sort of democratic, however culturally ill-defined Jewish state, and not to govern others. Arabs sought the same for themselves, though democracy was hardly the beau ideal for them that it was for the Jews. ■



To look beyond the cultural and political barriers that separate us and find the human connection that knows no boundaries is a desperate necessity.

— Naomi Shihab Nye

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Current THINKING

Shutting the Door

What is the argument against immigration? Here is what the leading proponent of immigration reform, Tom Tancredo, has said in an official press release of October 2005 [<http://tancredo.house.gov/press/pressers/PolicyStatement.htm>]:

America has been able to assimilate millions who spoke no English, worshipped at unfamiliar altars and were of all skin colors—and we can continue to do so provided that we do two things. First we, as a nation must move away from the self destructive philosophy of radical multiculturalism that exacerbates the problem of the balkanization of America. Second we need to confer citizenship only on those who are desirous of severing their political ties to their country of origin and who exhibit a genuine commitment to becoming American in every sense of the word. Among other things this means to accept our system of governance and the fact that we are an English speaking nation.



Coming to the United States is not a right, and staying here carries with it a duty to embrace and support the fundamental values that bind our country.

There are many things that pull us apart in this country; we need something that binds us together in order to defend a way of life that faces serious threats to its existence.

Tancredo emphasizes in this release that he is not opposing immigration for racist reasons, and in recent

months has stopped using racial language entirely. He and other advocates of immigration quotas and stronger borders now only talk about “homeland security.” Yet the desire for “a genuine commitment to becoming American” underlies this debate, as is clear from the recent legislation calling for English to be the “national language.”

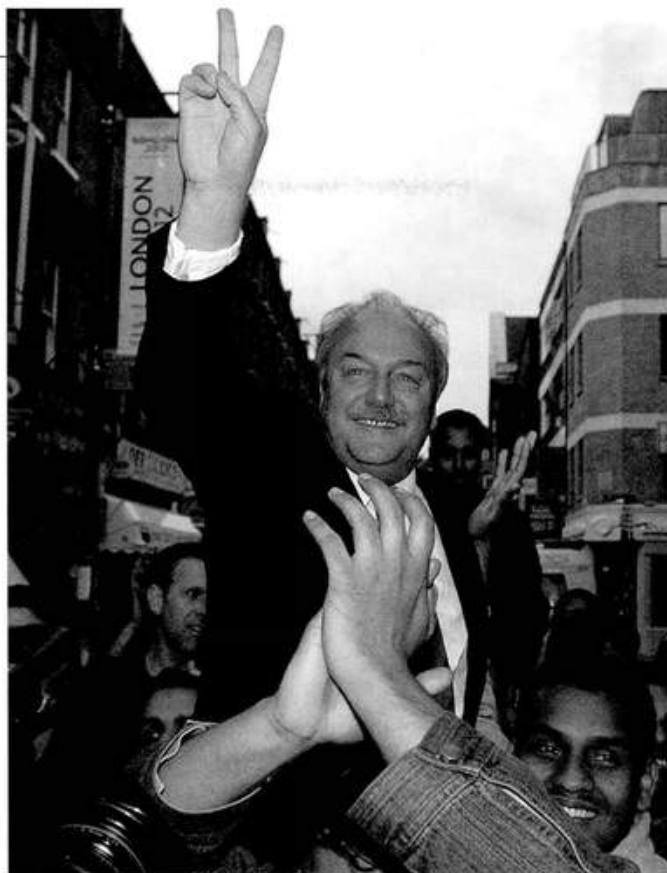
What’s wrong with asking immigrants to “become American”? On the face of it, nothing. Immigrants want to become American. But this

language has a deeper resonance: compare it, for example, to an earlier Congressman’s call for a country of “pure Americans”:

Without offense, ...let us shut the door and ...develop what we have, assimilate and digest what we have into pure Americans, with American aspirations, and thoroughly familiar with the love of American institutions, rather than the importation of any number of men from other countries.

So said Ellison DuRant Smith in April 9, 1924, an avowed advocate of racial purity, speaking in favor of the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act. That Act, which passed Congress with only six dissenting votes, strictly limited immigration based on an applicant's nationality. Visa applicants from each nation were limited to 2 percent of that nation's presence in the U.S. population as recorded by the 1890 census, which had the result of cutting immigration particularly from Southern and Eastern Europe—i.e., cutting off Jewish and Roman Catholic immigrants. [for full text see <http://www.usconstitution.com/immigrationactof1924.htm>]

Readers, note: it was the 1924 Immigration Act's attempt to preserve America for "pure Americans" that prevented Jews fleeing the Holocaust from being admitted to the United States. Reason indeed for many of us to oppose the current immigration "reform" acts.



ISLAM AND THE LEFT George Galloway

Most Americans know little about British MP George Galloway. If he's recognized at all, it is for meeting with former Iraqi government officials and for being a subject of a U.S. Senate investigation into illegal profiteering related to Iraq's oil for food program. In short, the U.S. has only heard negative spin about this extremely iconoclastic politician who has set an example for creating alliances between progressives and Diaspora Islamists in Western politics.

The leading political figure in the UK's Respect Party, Galloway has gone out of his way—to much controversy—to court England's Islamic voting con-

stituency on behalf of the greater British left. Derided by critics across the UK's political spectrum for playing the identity politics card to do so, Galloway's efforts remain subject to question. Historically active in pro-Palestinian and anti-Iraq sanctions work during the 1980s and 1990s, and an outspoken critic of the 2003 invasion, Galloway's interest in mobilizing British Muslims appears entirely consistent with the European Left's historic positions on the Middle East (including its knee-jerk hostility to Israel), and a long overdue overture to a community largely abandoned by European progressive parties.

However, what continually leaves journalists

scratching their heads is what Galloway's own personal interest in Islam actually is. Is this anti-capitalist ex-Catholic a convert, a well-educated sympathizer—or, according to critics such as Harry's Place blog proprietor "Harry Hatch"—just out to get minority votes? In a recent transcript of an interview with Galloway in Algeria's *El Khabar* newspaper (copied from a translation commissioned by BBC Monitoring and posted to Harry's Place), when asked about his religious orientation Galloway gave the following hints:

El Khabar: Many people are wondering where you derive this strength with which you speak and defy the powerful. Is there a secret power behind you?

Galloway: [in Arabic] This strength comes from God.

El Khabar: You constantly use nice Arabic words in addition to your relations with Arabs and Muslims. Does that mean that you have converted to Islam but you cannot admit that publicly?

Galloway: [shaking his head] This issue is between me and God. This answer is directed at you, the Algerian journalist, and at everyone who asks me this question.

Enshallah! To read the rest of this interview in its entirety, stop by Harry's Place: http://hurryupharry.blogspot.com/archives/2006/02/27/this_issue_is_between_me_and_god.php

A Hopeful Sign

The Religious Left is Back

BY MICHAEL LERNER

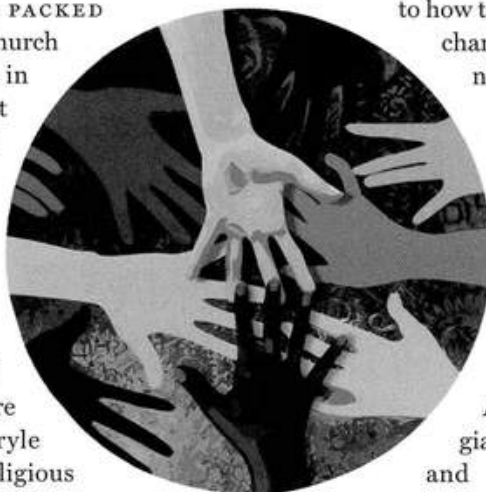
WHEN 1,200 PEOPLE PACKED All Souls Unitarian Church in Washington, D.C. in May for the East Coast launching of the Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP), they gave renewed signs that something powerful is indeed happening.

In a front page article in the *Washington Post* published on May 20 titled "Religious Liberals Gain New Visibility," the political elites of our Capitol City were given a message from staff writers Caryle Murphy and Alan Cooperman: "The religious left is back." And when All Souls' pastor Robert Har- dies read the article's opening paragraph to the crowd on the last day of the conference, people stood up and cheered, recognizing that the idea of spiritual progressives reclaiming a place in public discourse, something that *Tikkun* has vigorously promoted for the past twenty years, had finally found its moment.

Indeed, the energy and seriousness of the conference attendees was inspiring. People knew that they were doing something important and historical.

The conference opened with prayers from many different religious traditions, followed by opening addresses from *Tikkun* Community/NSP co-chair Sister Joan Chittister on culture and spirituality, and *Tikkun* associate editor Peter Gabel on the politics of meaning. We divided the attendees into 120 different "small groups" based on their cities and towns of residence, and most of them continued to meet repeatedly throughout the conference, providing each other with a sense of community in which they could share their feelings, process the ideas that were being presented, and discuss the "next steps."

After I presented an afternoon talk, we broke into eight workshops, each focused on one of the planks of the Spiritual Covenant with America, so that we could prepare to present the Covenant to our Congressional leaders the next day. Next were a series of workshops dealing with everything from the spiritual dimension of the new immigrants' rights movement,



to how to develop compassion for those fearful of change; from global warming as an opportunity for global awakening, to spiritual non-violence, and even a workshop for people who are "spiritual but not religious."

Finally, we hosted an evening of speakers that included the Reverend William Sinkford, the national president of the Unitarian Universalist Association, Rev. Joan Brown Campbell, former general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ, one of America's most respected Islamic theologians Sayyed Hussein Nasr, *Tikkun* author and San Francisco-based psychoanalyst Michael Bader, Marie Dennis of the Maryknoll Sisters, Archdeacon of the Episcopal Church Michael Kendall, evangelical teacher Mary Darling, Brian Walt, national chair of Rabbis for Human Rights, and one of America's most significant progressive evangelicals, Tony Campolo.

We began the next day with a gathering at a Presbyterian church on Capitol Hill, where we heard from Martin Luther King biographer Taylor Branch and President of Human Rights First Michael Posner. Meanwhile, we had set up hundreds of individual meetings with Congressional leaders and their staffs, so that attendees could meet with their elected representatives and present the Spiritual Covenant. Though we had been prepared to have many of the Covenant's ideas dismissed as "unrealistic," several attendees were excited to report how many legislators were open to and engaged by our ideas. Of course, we never expected them to "throw away their crutches and see the light." We were there to begin a process of putting our ideas for a New Bottom Line into national discourse, a process that might easily take twenty to thirty years. Thus, we were surprised at the extent to which our ideas were being welcomed.

I met privately with Senator Barack Obama (D-Illinois). Though the content of our meeting remains off-the-record, I can say that I felt very encouraged by the degree to which he identified with the fundamental objective (though not necessarily the policy details) of the Network of Spiritual Progressives.

That afternoon, the NSP tried something different: a “pray-in” outside the White House in Lafayette Park. Our foci were on prayers for global peace and openness to the New Bottom Line, which is the central shared vision of the NSP. Among the prayer leaders were Bob Edgar (general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ), Reverend Osagyefu Sekou (national coordinator of Clergy and Laity Concerned about Iraq), Reverend Jim Winkler (general secretary, United Methodists Board of Church and Society), Ken Butigan from *Pace e Bene*, John Dear, S.J., and many other leaders of various religious traditions.

We prayed for the healing of our nation and the people of Iraq, and for a spiritual healing and transformation of all those in the White House who are currently committed to policies of war-making and cutting programs for the poor. Holly Near, troubadour of social change, provided music that represented our vision. The pray-in was meant to provide an example of how a peace movement could avoid negative or cynical rhetoric and focus instead on a positive vision, as demonstrated in plank no. 7 of the Spiritual Covenant, which calls for a Global Marshall Plan to end poverty and inadequate health care and education for all the peoples of the earth, a plan that we believe will have greater likelihood of yielding peace and homeland security than the trillions of dollars that will be spent on defense in the next twenty years.

The mood changed dramatically, however, when Cindy Sheehan appeared on the platform. The media present at the event had ignored the prayers and content of what our religious leaders were saying, but massed around Sheehan when she began speaking. Reporters then focused on representatives of Code Pink and Global Exchange, who took the microphones and then led a march across the street to deliver 40,000 signatures opposing the bombing of Iran. Sadly, these two events overwhelmed an introspective and prayerful mood with the cynicism and anger that typically characterizes antiwar demonstrations. Ironically, that very night at our conference, Sheehan delivered another talk that was far deeper and spiritually oriented. However, Sheehan’s justifiable cynicism about the President and the war dominated her talk at the pray-in and found similar expression in some of the other antiwar speakers that we hosted at the event.

Why did we agree to share the podium with these folks instead of keeping the demonstration entirely under our discursive control? The reasons were complex. First, there are the immense benefits of doing coalition work, including putting us in touch with constituencies that we might not otherwise reach. Second, many of us share the antiwar movement’s anger at the current conflict, the sanctioned torture, the erosion of civil liberties, and the assault on human rights—all of which have become hallmarks of the Bush administration’s War on Terror.

We are faced with the challenge of learning how to balance our need to express this anger with our goal of promoting an attitude of hope and compassion toward those with whom we disagree. Why? Because it is incumbent that we retain our spiritual

grounding. Doing so in the context of participating in a mass rally is a challenge that we are just beginning to explore.

Finally, there is the complicated issue of how to deal with the mass media, and how it might best represent us. On the one hand, we know that media will always focus only on celebrity and will distort or ignore much of our message. I asked participants at the event to speak to the media, to insist that they were not just there in their role as activists, but as ordinary citizens. It was our hope that the personal outreach to the media by our attendees would implore the media to cover the message of our event (“New Bottom Line” and the Spiritual Covenant with America) instead of just fitting it into typically biased coverage of an antiwar demonstration and would make the crucial difference in how the conference was covered. Several people tried that, and told me of the futility of their efforts (“I’m here to cover Cindy Sheehan and that’s it,” said an Associated Press person to one of our members). But that was predictable.

So then why invite such an outcome? The answer was given to us by local NSP members who watched the brief NBC-produced clip from the rally shown on North American television networks. Though focused on Sheehan, the voiceover mentioned that this event had taken place at a pray-in for peace led by religious leaders connected to The Network of Spiritual Progressives. Though a slim reed to hang upon, many NSP members were grateful for the message and believed that it will be far easier for them to do local work now that the NSP has attained mainstream media visibility. This, of course, is a perennial question facing peace-oriented organizers: Is some publicity better than none, even if the way the publicity is broadcast misses the essence of your message? Those who believe that some publicity, even if distorted, is better than none at all argue that the very fact that people are able to hear their personal grievances about the war voiced in public offsets the negativity generated when the media portrays us in an unappealing or offensive way. Those who believe that no media coverage is preferable to bad media coverage argue that the anger and the cynicism that people have previously experienced at antiwar rallies leads many potential activists to give up, certain that once again the antiwar movement is in the hands of people who are only slightly more appealing than those conducting the war.

Some conference participants argued that the presence of the media in large numbers was enough to convince those attendees who had not previously been connected to the NSP that the organization we are building has some visibility and that its message will be heard, encouraging them to become more involved. In psychology we talk about “mirroring,” in which our feelings are confirmed and validated simply by having someone else listen to us attentively and accurately, representing our concerns in a way that indicates understanding. Though the media mirrors in an extraordinarily poor and distorted way, it nevertheless does have the effect of making many of us feel that we’ve accomplished something that will be heard

by others, and that in turn makes us feel more certain that what we are doing will not go unnoticed. Yet, the counter argument is that the distortions that we must jump through in order to get noticed are too destructive to our souls to have any value. In that respect, there is something very refreshing about Cindy Sheehan. She is not some staid character playing out a role, which is partly why you never know which Cindy Sheehan is going to be speaking to you. Her authenticity and spontaneity are hard to miss if you are in her presence, and that in itself has a way of breaking out of the stereotypes to which the media would like to relegate and contain her and us. This is an ongoing discussion that will certainly continue in the years ahead.

There were other difficult issues as well. One concerns the issue of "inclusion." In the July 2005 conference there had been some complaints about the low turnout of peoples of color. After the conference, a small group of people of color volunteered to help us in recruiting non-white minorities into our organization and increasing their turnout at our next conference, but it appeared that their efforts did not come to fruition. We thus turned to our many speakers of color to ask them to do some outreach with us, and some assured us that they had many useful contacts in D.C. who would certainly get the word out. The Reverend Hardies of All Souls Church sent invitations to local churches to meet with us in December

B. Our focus away from the traditional Democratic Party message led us to give less attention to the immediate needs of economically disadvantaged people (though our Global Marshall Plan would certainly eliminate poverty in the U.S. were it ever adopted). Thus for people in the grips of immediate suffering and privation, the long-term nature of our strategy might not sound appealing. So, it was argued by some, if we want to appeal to peoples of color we must be prepared to shift our message to become more attractive.

Conversely, many conference attendees argued that there is nothing about our message that wouldn't appeal to people of color. However, just as we had not succeeded in getting our message to millions of "white" people, we hadn't yet found the right way to reach non-white communities. On this account, we ought not to change our message. We just have to do a better job communicating our position to everyone.

People on this side of the debate made two other points: First, the Democratic Party is extremely multicultural, and yet the Democrats are not working to end poverty. Thus, there is no point in duplicating the Democrats' message, because spiritual progressives are making more of an effective contribution to eliminating social inequality. The best way to end poverty in the U.S., argue many NSP members, is to address the (non-economic) needs of many people who are turned off by the

IF WE ARE GOING TO MAKE a serious contribution to ending poverty, it will be by winning back people who are in deep spiritual pain and who have been turned off by the lack of spiritual consciousness in the progressive world.

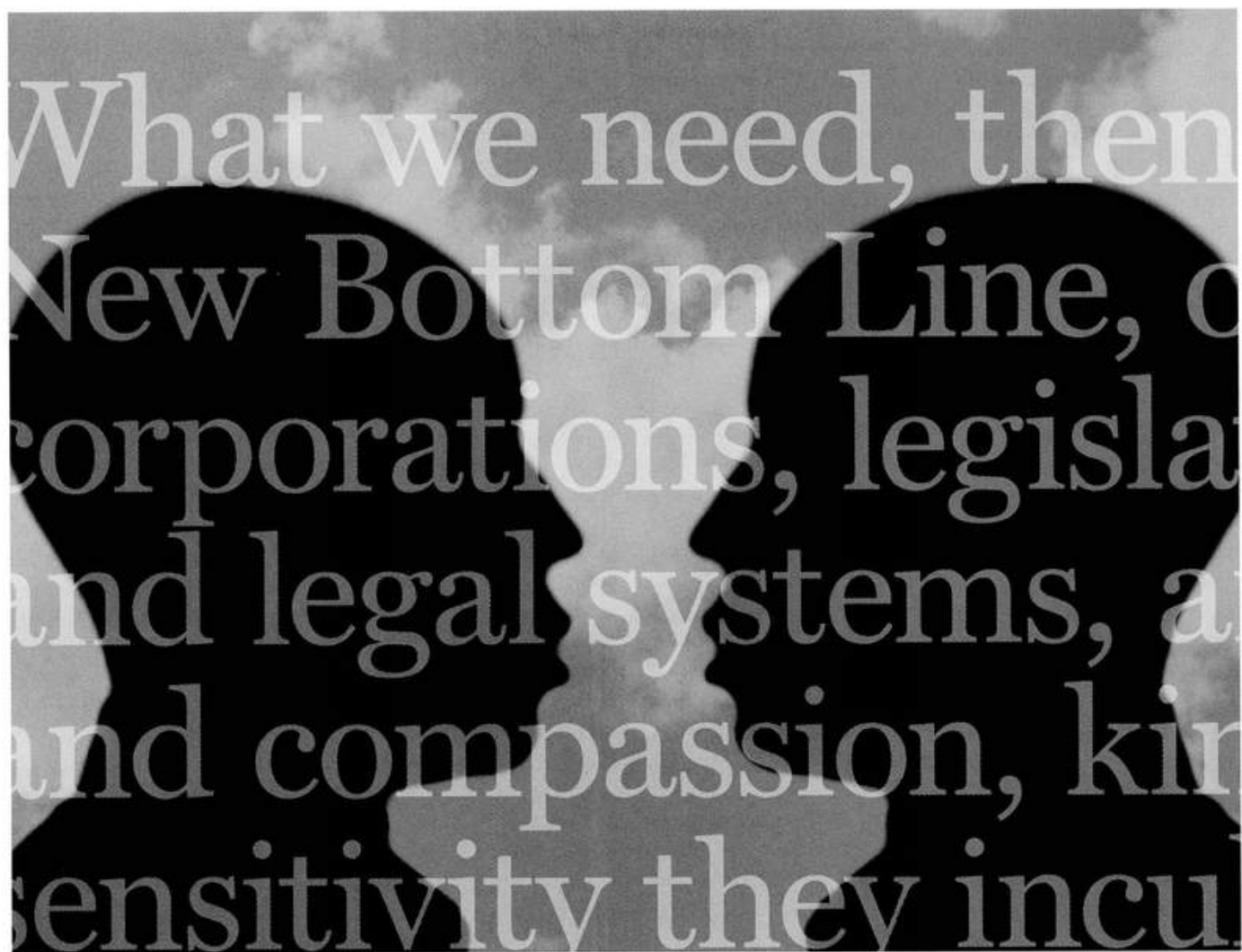
of 2005, but there again we found a low turnout from communities of color. At that point, we hired an organizer who spent much of her time outreaching to churches and community groups as well as writing to many clergy of color in the D.C. area. In addition, we offered each church or group thirty free tickets for minorities who might otherwise be discouraged by the conference registration fee. Imagine our disappointment when we found ourselves with less than 5% of people of color among our attendees. (Our NSP staff has 20% people of color and our publicized speakers included some of the best-known people of color in the U.S.)

Some people came forward with an interesting proposition: perhaps the message itself wouldn't appeal to people of color for two reasons:

A. There may be a higher level of social conservatism among the specific communities of color we reached out to, as compared with this element in the mostly white demographic represented in our organization. This factor may be preventing our message from resonating in these communities. After all, we are opposed to criminalizing abortion and denying rights to homosexuals that are given to heterosexuals.

disingenuous message of politicians who claim to promote an anti-poverty agenda. If we are going to make a serious contribution to ending poverty, it will be precisely by winning back to the progressive side people who are in deep spiritual pain in their lives and who have been turned off by the lack of spiritual consciousness in the liberal and progressive worlds (an argument I was happy to hear being made by others at the conference who had read and absorbed some of the message of *The Left Hand of God*). Second, there is no necessary contradiction between sticking to our spiritual politics message and attracting people of color, as long as we make it clear that "inclusion" is not our highest value, but one of our values, and that for the sake of inclusion we are not going to abandon our message, our analysis, or our Spiritual Covenant, just as we would not do so to attract more people from red states or more people from conservative religious traditions.

Some NSP members were shocked by this kind of thinking. Some belong to religious communities in which "inclusion" is the highest value or at the center of their religious belief system. We need to respect that, but we, after all, are not building a church, but trying to build a consciousness-raising movement,



and in that movement the central question posed to our members has to be: Do you agree with the content of the message that we are putting out? That's one reason why we are urging people who join the NSP to spend the first four or five meetings studying *The Left Hand of God* and the Spiritual Covenant with America so that the organization keeps some intellectual coherence before it tries to do other things. Indeed, our next steps depend on having a group of people who do in fact really share a deep understanding of and attachment to our progressive spiritual analysis. But, there is no reason in the world why we shouldn't do much more to work with people of color who share that perspective and want to collaborate with us. So I was very encouraged to meet with a group of people of color at the end of this conference and hear them commit to doing the outreach in the communities to which they have access. I for one would be very disappointed if we were unable within the first five years of our existence to make significant inroads into communities of color.

There will certainly be other controversial topics that arise. Most organizations try to bury this kind of discussion to avoid weakening their potential outreach to the unaffiliated. We

have a different perspective. We trust our members and want them to be able to speak clearly about their perspectives. To have an honest discussion, we have to make ourselves vulnerable by raising issues that might make us look less attractive.

The theme of inclusiveness was used by *NY Times* religion reporter Neela Bannerjee in an article in which she attacks our movement by making fun of the fact that we were too inclusive. She writes, "Turnout at the Spiritual Activism Conference is high, but if the gathering is any indication, the biggest barrier for liberals may be their regard for pluralism: for letting people say what they want, how they want to, and for trying to include everyone's priorities, rather than choosing two or three issues that could inspire a movement."

Bannerjee made no mention of our pray-in at the White House or our New Bottom Line, which is the central element of our message. She similarly omitted mention of *The Spiritual Covenant with America*, which clearly delineates where we place our focus. To cynics in the mass media, our openness is our weakness. From our perspective, the NSP's strength is that it has a worldview and a very specific set of ideas described in *The Left Hand of God*, and that it encourages people at the

local level to take those ideas into the public sphere. We are open to your creativity and imagination. And as long as you are working within the framework of the book, the Spiritual Covenant, and the Q&A about our organization on the website (www.spiritualprogressives.org), our message is: Don't wait for permission from us. Go and spread the ideas. Do it. This is the time to make our voices heard, and you are the people who can do that.

There were many other speakers, including Rev. Jim Wallis, Svi Shapiro, Rev. Deborah L. Johnson, Harry Knox, Pamela

Taylor, Rabbi Arthur Waskow, Bill Meadows, Rev. David Beckmann, Jonathan Granoff, Patrick Whelan, Rabbi Debora Kohn, Rev. Glenn Stassen, Rev. Ama Zenya, Enola Aird, Matt Foreman, and many more. We'll have many of these talks available for sale on DVD and audiotapes. For more information, contact our office (510) 644-1200 or visit us at: NSP@tikkun.org.

Our next immediate project will be opposing the Right's assault on gays and lesbians. Details about our strategy will be included in the September issue of *Tikkun*.

The Global Marshall Plan

OUR EDITORIAL CONTRARIAN (BUT ALSO GENEROUS philanthropist and *Tikkun* publisher) George Vandenburg takes issue with this particular plank of the Covenant, specifically with our call for the U.S. to lead the G-8 countries in dedicating 5% of their GDP for each of the next twenty years to eliminate global poverty, inadequate health-care, and inadequate education (see page 236 of *The Left Hand of God*). Pointing to the mass murders committed by Hitler, Stalin and other oppressive regimes in the 20th century, Vandenburg correctly points out that there is nothing "caring" about abandoning tens of millions to their death or torture without intervention. Our Contrarian conveniently omits the 100,000 deaths caused by our intervention in Iraq or the three million Vietnamese deaths caused by our even larger intervention to stop the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. And as Alan J. Kuperman argued in the *NY Times* on May 31, even in Darfur, a military intervention could, at this point, be counter-productive.

There are always two competing discourses. First: Given the current mess, let's focus on what we can do *now*, and leave that other more utopian talk till later. But of course the later never comes. Second: If we wait till some later, we'll never be able to deal with the underlying problems that cause the hatred that turns into war.

We've never argued that the only underlying issues are poverty, inadequate health care, and inadequate education. On the contrary, we've insisted that it is precisely the values of selfishness, radical individualism, cynicism about people's capacities to respond to love or caring, materialism, domination-as-the-path-to-security, and the ethos of "toughness" generated by the culture of global capital and popularized through our super-exportable media, that must be challenged. That's why the Global Marshall Plan will not work if it is delivered with an expectation of immediate "return on our investment" rather than in a spirit of generosity and caring for the other regardless of whether or

not it "pays off." Similarly, we've insisted that the mechanism for delivery must be developed through NGOs that have a proven record of selfless service to the people and not through governments or private sector corporations that have demonstrated corruption or a narrow focus on their own profits.

Yet in our NSP "talking points" which were used to guide NSP members with the meetings with their elected representatives, we explicitly rejected a call for unilateral U.S. disarmament and advocated bringing all our troops home where they could guard our borders (not from immigrants seeking refuge from economic devastation, but from terrorists). We'll take up the issues of pacifism in a later issue of *Tikkun*, but for the moment it's sufficient to say that the strategy of using violence and wars and military interventions to stop violence, which has been used repeatedly for the past 5,000 years, has not had a successful outcome.

One can argue that things would have been worse if we had not been engaged in endless wars, but it's a tenuous case at best. For example, had there been no first world war, there would never have been a Hitler or the accession to power of the Nazis that necessitated a second world war; perhaps without the Nazi threat, the democratic elements in the socialist and communist movements would have had an easier path to overthrowing Stalin's distortion of their ideals.

In our view there is one primary way to stop violence, and that is to stop using violence and to stop insisting that your violence is justifiable because it serves good purposes. But since this analysis is probably too advanced for where we are as a society, we have an intermediate position: Cut our military budget by half and earmark the rest for a down payment on the Global Marshall Plan. For those who are afraid to go "cold turkey" on violence, this is a middle path—but as far as we can see, not many politicians or political movements are affirming that much of a step toward a nonviolent future. ■

Michael Lerner is editor of Tikkun.

What Is a “Caring” Foreign Policy?

BY GEORGE VRADENBURG

MANY PROGRESSIVES ARE CALLING FOR A radically new approach to American foreign policy. They seek a policy that would abandon military intervention and inject a massive infusion of resources into foreign aid: Restrain our military, adopt a new Marshall Plan, and make America the global symbol of generosity and caring, thereby creating a world that will abandon war and terrorism as weapons of choice—a world that would be made whole.

There is, of course, little debate that it is in our national interest to eliminate war, disease, and poverty. But turning America into a “pacifist” nation, and pumping money into developing nations, is not the answer. Indeed, it is a recipe for strengthening ungenerous and uncaring behavior and perpetuating poverty.

The reality is that there are lawless people in the world whose behavior cannot be stopped without the use of military force. Since the end of the Cold War, we’ve witnessed regimes in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Sudan, who have engaged in ethnic cleansing, genocide, and other crimes against humanity. The most notorious assassins of the twentieth century were the Stalinist regimes of the former Soviet Union and China, and the fascist autocrats who ran Hitler’s Germany, and its wartime ally, Japan. Communist and nationalist governments in Cambodia, North Korea, and Iraq have been guilty of similar crimes. And now we are confronted with terrorists targeting innocent civilians.

The violence and subjugation perpetrated by the Soviet Union, China, Germany, and Japan were halted only by military intervention. The tragedies that overtook the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda called out, and in present-day Sudan continue to call out, for military intervention.

What is “generous and caring” about abandoning millions to their death or torture without intervention? Who gives us the right to stand by as our fellow human beings are being slaughtered? What is it about “Never Again” that we do not understand? Pacifism in the face of evil does not produce a generous and caring world.

There is room for debate about whether certain interventions, such as those in Iraq, can or will serve a humanitarian

purpose. But debate about Iraq should not obscure the need for intervention in other, clearer cases.

Some progressives argue that violence begets violence, making military intervention inherently futile. Certainly not futile, I would argue, for those saved by the such an intervention. Where there appears to be substantial consensus about the existence of genocide or crimes against humanity—as in Darfur—on what principle would our inaction be permitted? There is always a utilitarian judgment to be made as to whether intervention will mitigate or exacerbate a particular situation. We are, as a nation, uncertain about the answer to this question in Iraq; we answered this question, affirmatively, in Bosnia and Kosovo. Rwanda, in retrospect, cried out for an affirmative judgment, as does Darfur today. But weighing the likelihood of success in a particular situation is not a debate about principle, but rather a matter of the application of a principle that military intervention is appropriate where the situation can likely be improved.

Many progressives also argue that a new American Marshall Plan aimed at eliminating poverty around the world would establish America as a generous and caring nation and thus foster peaceful relations. Were that so, the billions spent on foreign aid over the last fifty years should have created just that image. It hasn’t. Why? Because foreign aid has ended up financing autocratic and bureaucratic rule in underdeveloped nations and has effectively disempowered the poor. As a result, foreign aid as it has been practiced has diminished America’s reputation and actually increased poverty.

The most effective tools for creating wealth in the face of poverty is the rule of law, the elimination of corruption, the introduction of private property and private enterprise, and the opening of economies to global markets. Indeed, the largest reduction in poverty to date has occurred over the last ten years, largely as a result of the decisions made by China and India to foster private enterprise—decisions that have raised the standard of living for millions of people once mired in poverty.

It is satisfying to talk about making the world a better place, but results are what matter. ■

George Vradenburg is copublisher of Tikkun.

Back to the Future

BY JOEL SCHALIT

A COLD FRIDAY NIGHT, WINTER OF 1994. AS WE sipped sweet black cups of Turkish coffee and nibbled pieces of baklava my father had brought home from Nazareth, the dinner conversation in my parents' Tel Aviv apartment turned predictably toward politics. "Personally, I'm relieved that we're finally moving to a conclusion with the Palestinians," erupted one of our guests. "Now we'll be able to devote our efforts to dealing with the Iranian problem." I distinctly recall the physical discomfort this statement elicited in everyone sitting around the dinner table. All of the sudden, chairs were pushed back, throats were cleared, and a dreadfully awkward silence ensued, only to be broken by my savvy stepmother telling our guests that more coffee was available for those who wanted it.

Why the displeasure? At this moment, I finally understood how much emotional investment we had all made in the peace process, how strongly we'd come to imbue it with a messianic-like power to bring about a "once and for all" end to the larger Arab-Israeli conflict. Granted, we were just at the very beginning of the Oslo period. It had only been four months since the signing of the Declaration of Principles in Washington, D.C., and the initialization of a formal peace treaty with Jordan was still months away. Nevertheless, it felt like a new zeitgeist was upon us. Enough concrete progress had already been made that we truly felt as though an unabashedly utopian optimism was warranted. Why bring us all down with paranoid conjecturing about a next-phase conflict?

Washing up afterwards, I reflected upon the bloodbath then underway in Bosnia. The unbelievable brutality of the conflict there contradicted the images of pro-democracy forces laying siege to the Kremlin and all of the optimistic declarations about the new spirit of freedom after the overthrow of Communism that had swept Eastern Europe. Freedom was already beginning to feel a bit overused—and that was before George Bush the younger appeared on the scene.

We got Eastern Europe wrong because our attention was focused on the wrong people and places. The same has been true in the Mideast. Ever since the beginning of the Oslo period, Israeli and Diaspora Jewish supporters of the peace process have overlooked—whether out of stupidity, or simply because of Israel's historic alliance with the United States—the impact of America's post-Cold War foreign policy towards

the Islamic world. As legitimate as it might be to argue that a just resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict would have a profound impact on the West's relationship with Middle Eastern states, it is no longer sufficient to place the sole responsibility for regional peace on Palestinians and Israelis. The burden now lies as much on the United States as it does on Israel.

Even if the Palestinians and the Israelis had managed to conclude a final status agreement by the year 2000, it would still be difficult to imagine a Middle East where an Israeli-Iranian confrontation wasn't the next stage of regional conflict. Throughout Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon, Iran waged an increasingly sophisticated proxy war against Israel through Shiite guerilla organization, Hezbollah, which continues six years after Israeli forces withdrew from the country. And, since his election in 2005, Iran's new President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has made confronting Israel one of the central planks of his country's foreign policy. Making a succession of hateful pronouncements denying the historical validity of the Holocaust, Ahmadinejad has made abundantly clear his desire to wipe Israel off the map.

Though many pundits contend that Ahmadinejad has chosen to reemphasize hostility toward Israel because he subscribes to an old fashioned, Iranian revolution era anti-Western ideology, their analysis is wrong. Iran has refocused its sights on Israel because it is an easy scapegoat on which to focus its anti-colonialist anger toward the US government's war-like foreign policy in the Persian Gulf, both during the period of the peace process in the 1990s, and, obviously, in the years following the September 11, 2001 attacks.

With American forces sitting on two of Iran's borders, and with the Bush administration continually advocating for the overthrow of the government in Tehran all the while declaring Israel its closest regional ally, you have all the ingredients to make Israel the perfect fall guy for America's foreign policy failings in the Middle East. ■

Joel Schalit is managing editor of Tikkun. His band, the Elders of Zion, will be releasing their new eight-song Twilight War EP through Apple's iTunes store in July. He is currently working on Israel vs. Utopia, his third book for Akashic.

Who Speaks for Us?

BY MITCHELL PLITNICK

WHILE HE WAS PREPARING FOR HIS FIRST visit to Washington as Israel's new Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert was told not to ask for any money for his "Convergence" plan. The message came from the State Department, but was sent to Olmert through Malcolm Hoenlein, the Executive Vice President of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Obviously, Hoenlein plays a very significant role in relations between Israel and the United States. But how many American Jews have even heard of him? Or of Howard Kohr, Executive Director of AIPAC? These are names that should be known to all American Jews, because these are the voices that are speaking for the American Jewish collective.

Wherever one stands on the question of how much influence various lobbying forces have on America's Middle East policy, it is clear that American Jewish opinion, or at least the perception of that opinion, carries significant weight. And, from the Washington, D.C. perspective, American Jewish opinion is that the United States should never bring any tangible pressure, economic or diplomatic, to bear on Israel no matter what it does; that no matter how much Israel expands its settlements, cuts off Palestinian food supplies or continues with assassination operations that routinely cause civilian deaths, the United States should never do anything more than cluck its tongue, if even that.

Is that what American Jews really believe? Polling data says otherwise. For example, a survey conducted last year by Ameinu, an American Zionist organization, showed that 47 percent of American Jews believe the United States should indeed pressure Israel to be more conciliatory to the Palestinians (in fact, only 20 percent said the United States should not pressure Israel). And even within such polls, there are complexities. For instance, a similar plurality approved of Israel abandoning "most of the West Bank settlements," but they were not even given the option to choose "all the settlements."

A 2003 survey conducted by Americans for Peace Now showed strong support for a settlement freeze. Over 70 percent of the poll's respondents supported it. Further, when asked if Israel should freeze settlements first or if Palestinians should first stop terrorist attacks, more than 56 percent

of those surveyed said that both actions should be undertaken simultaneously, a clear statement of nonsupport for Israeli policy. Not only does the Israeli government insist that Palestinian attacks stop first, but they have not even been willing to freeze settlement "thickening" when they have experienced extended periods without Palestinian attacks.

These polls are only the tip of the iceberg. The pool of Jewish respondents is generally mined from synagogues, Jewish community centers, and other similar institutions. These days, many American Jews have become disconnected from Jewish institutions and the greater Jewish community, although many still hold tightly to their cultural identity. Those are voices that are not heard. Moreover, readers of *Tikkun* magazine and members of advocacy organizations such as Jewish Voice for Peace know very well that most Jews, like most Americans, approach the whole question of Israel with a distorted view, gleaned from the poor reporting that is rampant in the United States.

On top of all this, organizations that promote the perception that they speak for all but "marginal" parts of the Jewish community often refuse to engage in debate and discussion with progressive groups like ours. Failing that, and confronted with the reality that increasing numbers of people within our community wish to hear all points of view, these organizations adopt strategies of intimidation. We have seen Jewish groups threatened with having their funders contacted and urged to cancel their support if allegedly "marginal" groups are given a forum. Churches and secular associations are likewise threatened with chilled relations with the "mainstream" Jewish community.

I make no claim that JVP or *Tikkun* represents a majority of American Jewish opinion. But those who do claim to speak for the entire Jewish community are increasingly out of ideological step with the majority of American Jews who remain pro-peace and politically liberal. Such organizations need to stop behaving so fearfully and so arrogantly, and engage in honest, open debate with us. Then and only then can the American Jewish community make its informed choices and have its real views represented. ■

Mitchell Plitnick is the director for education and policy for Jewish Voice for Peace.

SPIRIT Matters

Selections from forthcoming books, articles, and talks



RELIGION IN OUR SCHOOLS

Excerpted from A Jew Among the Evangelicals: A Guide for the Perplexed, by Mark I. Pinsky. Available August 2006. Reprinted with permission of Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, www.wjkbooks.com.

Public schools continue to be a battleground for evangelicals, and not just on the subject of evolution. The issue of which books are fit for public schools can cut both ways, geographically. In Lake Wales, Florida, according to reports in the *Orlando Sentinel* and Lakeland, Florida, *Ledger*, the mother of a nine-year-old girl tried to ban six novels written by two-time Newbery Award-winner Lois Lowry from all Polk County elementary school libraries. Kristi Hardee, a part-time church secretary, said her daughter chose to read *Anastasia Krupnik*. When she found some "bad" words in it, she told her teacher, who then told her mother. Hardee called the book "vulgar," and at one point she said she checked it out of the library so no one else could read it (so much for the marketplace of ideas). In February of 2005, Hardee and her supporters, including her father-in-law, the Rev. Kenneth Hardee, of Lake Region Baptist Church, succeeded in getting the book removed from her daughter's Spook Hill Elementary School. The pastor told the school board that, while he realized everyone has rights, "I also realize that within those rights, we as Christians have rights." But the county school board refused to remove the other five books from elementary schools in the county. Jacqueline Rose, the senior coordinator for the county's school library system, opposed any removal, noting that in the previous twenty-four years forty books had been challenged by individual school library committees, and only three had been banned.

Far to the north, on both sides of the Delaware River, Christian parents claimed they were discriminated

against in their children's schools. In eastern Pennsylvania, Donna Busch said that other parents in her son's kindergarten class at Culbertson Elementary School were able to read from their children's favorite books during "Me Week." But when her son chose the Bible as his favorite book, Busch was prohibited from reading four verses from the book of Psalms. In Medford, New Jersey, a first-grade student was not permitted to read to his class from *The Beginners Bible*. (The boy's position in that case was supported by a U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals judge named Samuel Alito.) In other cases around the country, students claimed they were not allowed to bring Bibles to school and read them on their own time. Christian legal groups like Liberty Counsel were quick to come to their aid, with frequent success. The issue extends to higher education. Although California State University at San Bernardino allows religious organizations like Hillel, whose membership is limited to Jews, in December of 2005 the school's administration blocked a group of Christian students from forming a campus group because membership would be restricted on the basis of religious beliefs and sexual orientation.

Other issues in Sunbelt schools, where evangelicals are often the overwhelming majority, are more a matter of substance than symbolism. In 1993, in rural Pontotoc, Mississippi, Lisa Herdahl objected to a half-century practice of prayer, Bible study, and other religious activities in the elementary school where three of her six children attended. These included student-led morning prayers over the school's intercom; prayer meetings in the gym; prayers in classes before lunch; and Bible classes led by teachers selected and paid by local churches. Herdahl said that when she objected to school officials, she was rebuffed. One child was given earphones to block the sound, while others were escorted from class during religious activities. With the help of the American Civil Liberties Union and People for the American Way, Herdahl brought suit in federal district court, where in 1996 Judge Neal Biggers Jr.

outlawed all of the school district's practices except for voluntary morning prayer in the gym. "The Bill of Rights was created to protect the minority from the tyranny of the majority," he wrote in his decision. The ruling did not protect Herdahl from losing her job, social isolation, and what she said were mailed death threats. The Pontotoc County superintendent of public schools, Jerry Horton, called the ruling "a setback for religious freedom," and Mississippi Republican elected officials denounced the decision. Before the case was decided, more than three thousand local residents rallied at the county courthouse for a "God and Country" rally, an event organized by area church leaders and students.

In middle and high schools in the Sunbelt, Jews and others have complained that assemblies, advisors, and teachers were involved in aggressive, even coercive proselytizing, sometimes resulting in heated confrontations. In extreme cases, youth ministers representing groups like Young Life and Student Venture were invited onto the campus during the school day to evangelize, some roaming the cafeterias in the guise of "counselors." Mandatory assemblies featured evangelical performances by organizations like the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. This atmosphere of religious permissiveness was the result of both lawsuits and governmental guidelines instituted under the Clinton administration. "The result has been the greatest amount of religious expression in public schools in our nation's history," said Jay Sekulow, of the American Center for Law and Justice, a Christian legal group, financed by Pat Robertson, that argued many of the cases. In 1995, officials at Lake Mary High School outside of Orlando received a report that a youth minister from a local church had approached several non-Christian students and used harsh words during his lunchtime evangelism. As a result, the Seminole County school district sharply restricted such visits, issuing a memo that outlined "a far more cautious position regarding equal access" to campuses. In 1996, at nearby Lake Brantley High School in Seminole County, several parents complained that a teacher delivered Christian testimony in class. Students were invited to her home for a voluntary review of class work, after which she would lead a Bible study group. "It wasn't a formal thing," said Ned Julian, attorney for Seminole County schools, "but we suggested to her that you can't do that in your role as public school teacher in a public school classroom, and that was the end of it."

Another touchy situation can occur when teachers and administrators in middle and high schools wear T-shirts in their classes and offices proclaiming Christian faith. At Poinciana High School in Kissimmee, Florida,

the principal briefly banned teachers and staff members from wearing T-shirts of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, a campus club with chapters in nearly eighty central Florida high schools, on Friday "Spirit Days." After negotiations with Liberty Counsel, a Maitland, Florida-based organization much like Sekulow's American Center for Law and Justice, the teachers and administrators were permitted to wear the T-shirts, with "Champions in Christ" on the front and a New Testament verse on the back. Poinciana principal Michael Brizendine issued a memo explaining that the shirts "are purely the private expression of that teacher or staff member and do not reflect the policy of or the endorsement from the high school." It may be legal for teachers to wear such T-shirts in class, but some question whether it is appropriate for authority figures. Cliff McInturff, president of the Orange County Classroom Teachers Association, said he thought wearing such a shirt represents "an inappropriate intrusion of religious belief in the classroom. The teacher is modeling a religious belief in a very overt way. It's too close to a subtle form of instruction." In September of 2005, the principal of Boca Raton High School credited the rise in his school's state rating from a C to an A to prayers of Christian groups around the country. The previous year the principal, Geoff McKee, had been criticized for referring to God in meetings with teachers. I reported many of these public school evangelism stories as fairly and dispassionately as I could, and I think I was successful. Yet I could not help thinking that those in the Christian majority—if they had stopped to think about it—might not have been so arrogant and insensitive if they had any experience as a religious minority. Perhaps if they had spent some time in a school or society dominated by Mormons, Muslims, or Jews who assumed that theirs was the one true faith, they might have behaved differently.



SCRIPTURE AND HOMOSEXUALITY

Excerpted from Going to Heaven: The Life and Election of Bishop Gene Robinson, by Elizabeth Adams. Available June 28, 2006. Reprinted with permission of Soft Skull Books.

variably, Gene would be asked about Scripture and homosexuality. He has come to where he is, theologically, through a lifetime of questioning, prayer, studying theology, and considering the world as it is. And while he has moved, over the

course of his life, from a literalist tradition (the Disciples of Christ is a "Bible" church where Scripture is taken more or less literally) to a much more open one, he knows where fundamentalists are coming from.

In one forum, Gene was asked, "In your mind and in your journey, what would you say is the role of Biblical texts in modern theology? Can modern theological writings be considered with equal weight as Biblical writings, or is there something more essential to the Bible?"

He responded by saying that the Holy Scriptures were absolutely primary. "I don't hesitate about that," he said. "It is the quintessential description of God's love affair with humankind, as told through the eyes of many, many different witnesses. And it always needs to be primary. And then it needs to be weighed against how, over time, the church has understood those Scriptures, and understood itself theologically, and then, we need to add in what has been our experience as human beings, and as human beings with one another, and then we need to have that mix of Scripture, tradition, and reason discussed and examined in a community because any one of us can twist things to make it sound like what we want it to sound like. So you always need to be doing that kind of discernment in community to at least lessen the risk that you are fooling yourself about what it says. That's always a fallible process, and one that we always need to be working on, because it's not easy."

The questioner continued, "Is there anything in particular that makes you turn toward that earlier witness, as opposed to modern witness about God's relationship to humanity?"

"Yes," Gene said, "because I believe that it is the word of God, and it has supported and nourished and educated countless Christians before me, and I honor that. It's where I found Jesus. I mean, despite some of the things that my church was saying, and doing, the good news came through to me. It saved my life. If I had not believed the good news that I read in the Scripture, rather than some of the vile stuff that was being said in my parish when I was growing up, I wouldn't be here today. So I owe my life to the Scripture, because I believe God speaks through it, in spite of us."

Richard Hooker, the "father" of Anglican theology who wrote at the time of Elizabeth I, is credited with a description of Anglicanism as a faith supported by Scripture, tradition, and reason—what came to be called the "three legged stool." This strong heritage, which Gene often mentions, of recognizing the value and interaction of all three sources of knowledge, is now under assault by conservative Anglicans who adamantly insist on the primacy of literal Biblical

interpretation. In almost every audience, someone rose to ask Gene about how he interpreted the Biblical passages that seem to clearly denounce homosexual behavior. Gene often said his answer would be "the Cliffs Notes version" and that if the discussion could go on for two days, "we could really do it right." He usually began his answer by saying that, as Christians, we take Scripture very seriously—and then adding that Episcopalians have always taken Scripture seriously, and never literally. "Some of the critics are calling themselves traditionalists," he said, "and yet are trying to take us to a place that has never been our tradition. Ever. We've never been a denomination that literally read and believed every word of the Bible. On the other hand, we take it all seriously. But what I'm going to end up telling you is that I don't believe the Bible addresses what we are addressing today, which are faithful, lifelong, monogamous relationships between people of the same gender. The Bible doesn't talk about this."

The Bible contains seven brief passages that seem to speak to homosexuality. Gene divides them into several different categories. The Old Testament contains the Book of Leviticus, a part of the Hebrew Bible which contains the "Law." Leviticus spells out rules about how the Jews were to live, and much of this is a so-called "purity code," detailing how the people were to keep themselves pure and untainted by the pagan cultures around them. That involved keeping kosher, not wearing cloth and leather at the same time, and a number of other rules. To his audiences, Gene explained his view that the Levitical code also included instructions for survival, as a race. At the time, all that was thought to be necessary for continuation of the race was contained in a man's sperm, and the woman "sort of just provided a nest in which it could grow up." The woman didn't contribute anything; what was precious was the sperm. So to "spill one's seed on the ground" was sinful, and therefore masturbation, sex between two men, and other acts that didn't preserve the sperm for procreation were excluded. "That doesn't seem to be about faithful, committed relationships between people of the same sex," he said.

The often-quoted Sodom and Gomorrah story, in the Book of Genesis, is an example of the wide difference between literal interpretation and the interpretation of scholars who examine ancient texts according to linguistic, cultural, historical, and archaeological evidence. The ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were located in Palestine, near the Dead Sea. According to the Biblical story, because of the unacceptable behavior of the inhabitants—their specific sin is not spelled out—God tells Abraham that he intends to de-

stroy Sodom. Abraham asks God what would happen if he found there were any righteous people in Sodom. God promises Abraham that he will spare the city if it contains ten righteous people, and sends two angels to investigate. Near the city gates, the angels find a man named Lot, who invites them to his house for a meal and shelter:

But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; and they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them."

Lot refuses to give the visiting angels to the men of Sodom and instead offers them his two virgin daughters. The crowd refuses to accept this compromise. The angels then save Lot from the crowd; Lot and his family are told to leave the city, and God destroys Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone.

In speaking about this story, Gene explained that showing hospitality to guests is, and always was, of great value in the Middle East. Travel was difficult; not to offer strangers shelter and food put them in grave danger. "But," he continued, "even if you want to look at the homosexual part of Sodom and Gomorrah, it's about homosexual rape, not faithful, loving relationships. And, when the two angels do not offer to be raped by the townspeople, Lot offers his daughters, his virgin daughters, instead. I mean, hello? Are these the kinds of Biblical values we want to espouse? Even Ezekiel,⁴ and even Jesus, mention that inhospitality was the sin of Sodom, and its failure to take care of the poor, the fact that it lacked justice, and so on. Neither mentions homosexuality. So even within the context of the Bible itself, homosexuality was not thought to be the point of the story."

Paul mentions homosexuality in the New Testament, but those passages also strike Gene as murky. He uses an interesting analogy when explaining this difficulty: "I think the passages written by Paul are very difficult to be certain about, because no one knows exactly what those words mean. There are a number of theories. But the fact is, we've lost the primary knowledge. Let's say the game of baseball were lost to us, and a thousand years from now, someone discovered a novel, and it said, 'Erik is a little out in left field.' Well, you could claim to know what that meant, because you know what left is, and you know what a field is: you would know what each of the words meant, but if you didn't know anything about the game of baseball, you wouldn't get the meaning of the text. You wouldn't know that most people are right-handed batters, and that if you're playing left field you have to back way up. The term 'being in left field' came

to mean a person who's a little out of touch, a little bit isolated and so forth. It's the same here: some of these texts are pretty difficult to understand unless we can figure out what they meant to those who wrote them and what they meant to the people who heard them at that time."

Jesus never mentions homosexuality at all. In Gene's view, in the New Testament passages most often cited, Paul may have been speaking against the common Greek practice by which an older man took a younger boy sexually, as well as intellectually, into manhood. "Today we would call that child abuse, and no one's arguing for that," Gene said.

He continued: "It's very difficult to take a modern psychological understanding, like homosexual orientation, and plug it back into an ancient text, in which it was unknown. Those texts were written at a time when everyone was presumed to be heterosexual. So to act in any other way was to be against one's nature. The whole psychological construct of sexual orientation is a little better than 100 years old. So we can't take something that we know now, and plug it back into a text that's several millennia old, and think that they meant what we mean."

Gene agrees that the seven passages are all negative. But, he says, "they are not talking about what we are talking about today." Likewise, he says he values being in a church in which different interpretations of the same passages can and do coexist.

"It's pretty easy to say that everything in the Bible is literally true, or none of it is true. But the way we have traditionally done Scripture in our denomination is that any one verse must be seen in the context of the whole. In other words, you can't take one verse and raise it to a position of importance if it flies in the face of the whole of the Scriptures. Conversely, just because we decide that one part of Scripture is not eternally binding on us, it doesn't mean that the whole thing comes tumbling down."

Gene says he likes to think of the Episcopal Church as "advanced placement religion" and explains, "It's hard work if you start saying, 'We have to use our minds and prayerfully engage one another as a community of people, using the best scholarship we have among us, to figure out what those writings meant to the person who wrote them, what they meant to the person who heard them, and then ask the question, 'Are they eternally binding?' But that's what we, as Episcopalians, try to do.'"

In one of these question-and-answer sessions, a young woman came to the microphone. She was obviously distressed and spoke in a pleading voice: "But how do you know for sure that what you're doing is right or what you're doing is wrong? If you

don't believe that all Scripture is God-given, then how do you know how to live your life?"

Gene looked at her with a great deal of compassion, and answered, "So—you live your life not being sure of any particular verse. But I'll tell you what I'm sure of. I am absolutely sure that I'm going to heaven. I'm absolutely certain of it. I'm also absolutely certain that I'll do a lot of bad stuff between now and the day I die, that I will fall far short of what God has in mind for me, but I believe without any shadow of a doubt that I'm going to heaven."

"I feel like the Prodigal Son, you know. God has given me all these gifts, and I have, I'm sure, squandered many of them in a far-off realm. But I'm trying to get back home. I'm probably not going to get there before I'm dead and gone, but what I can be assured of is that God will come running toward me with his arms outstretched, and before I can utter, 'I'm sorry,' God will be putting a robe on me and a ring on my finger and ordering up a party. That's what I really believe. So I don't have to be sure about any one verse or any one story. I could be wrong. But I don't believe that my salvation depends on it, because my salvation has already been won. All I have to do is accept it, and then do my very best to be God's hands and feet in the world."



CHOOSING WAR

Excerpted from The Anatomy of Peace: Resolving the Heart of Conflict, by The Arbinger Institute. Available August 2006. Reprinted with permission of Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

I was raised," Yusuf began, "in a village of rock-walled homes in the hills on the western edge of Jerusalem. The village, called Deir Yassin, had been my family's home for at least two centuries.

But that all ended early on the morning of April 9, 1948, at the height of the Arab-Jewish fighting surrounding the establishment of Israel. I was just five years old at the time. I remember being awakened by shouting and gunfire. Our village was being attacked by what I later learned were members of a Jewish underground military group. My father grabbed me from bed and thrust me and my two sisters into my parents' room. He then pulled a rifle from under his mattress and, pulling on his boots, ran out of the house. 'Stay inside!' he yelled to us. 'Don't come out for anyone, you hear? Until I return, God willing.'

"Those were the last words I ever heard my father

say. When it was over and we left the protection of our stone walls, bodies and exploded body parts littered the streets. My father was among the dead."

"How terrible," Ria said.

"It was many years ago," Yusuf responded. "These days and the years that followed were difficult for me and my family, I won't deny it. But we weren't the only ones that suffered tragedy."

Elizabeth spoke up. "I was going to say, I have some Jewish friends that have similar stories to tell."

"I'm sure you do," Yusuf said, "as do I. A Jewish village called Kfar Etzion was attacked by Arab forces at around the same time, for example. The entire village was basically massacred, so I can hardly say that my fate was worse than theirs. By telling my story, I did not mean to imply that Arabs are the only ones that have suffered unjustly. I'm sorry if it seemed that way. Avi's father, for example, was killed while defending his country against an Arab attack. That hurt him as much as losing my father hurt me. Over the years and centuries, violence has been hurled hatefully in all directions. That is the tragic, bloody truth."

Lou was glad to hear Yusuf own up to Arab atrocities, but he felt uneasy all the same. It seemed to Lou that Yusuf was too quick to equate Arab and Israeli suffering when in Lou's mind the scales of unjustified suffering clearly leaned in the Israeli direction. Lou wasn't sure, but he thought he might have an ally in this belief in Elizabeth Wingfield.

"After my father died," Yusuf continued, "my mother moved us from village to village until we finally found refuge in Jordan, or what was then called Transjordan. We settled in a refugee camp in a town called Zarqa, which is on the northwest side of the city of Amman, Jordan. When Jordan annexed the West Bank following the War of 1948, known in Israel as the War of Independence, my mother moved us back to the west side of the Jordan River. We moved to the town of Bethlehem, which is only a few miles from Deir Yassin.

"As I look back now, and put myself in my mother's place, it was bold of her to return so close to the place of her personal tragedy. Years later she told me that she felt compelled to return as close to her roots as she could. We took up residence in Bethlehem with her sister—my aunt, Asima.

"The economy of Bethlehem, such as it was, depended largely on Christians who made pilgrimages to the historical birthplace of Jesus. The war severely reduced the number of visitors, so merchants were hard up for customers. I was hired as a street hustler at the age of eight. My job was to make Westerners feel sorry for me and then lead them to the shops of the people

who had hired me. In broken English, I began to interact with the West.

"As for the Jews, I had little opportunity or desire to interact with them. The Jews had been expelled from the West Bank after Jordan annexed it. Border penetrations from both directions, whether for military or economic reasons, usually ended in gunfire and casualties. The Jews were our enemies.

"At least, this is the simplistic picture most often recited and remembered. The truth was a bit more nuanced. I knew because I worked the same streets as a certain blind Jewish man, appealing to the same Western wallets for the same Western money.

"Which brings me to the story I want to share with you. I had come to know this man, Mordechai Lavon, at what you might call a close distance. We often worked the streets within mere feet of each other, and although I was well acquainted with his voice and he with mine, I had never once addressed him, even though he tried to strike up a conversation on occasion.

"One day, he stumbled as he asked a passerby for help. His purse burst open as it hit the ground, and his coins flew in all directions into the street.

"As his hands groped first for his purse and then in search of the individual coins, I had a sudden thought. You might call it a sense of something to do, something I knew in that instant was the right thing to do. I think it would be accurate, in fact, to call it a desire. That is, I felt a desire to help him—first to help him to his feet and then to retrieve his coins for him.

"I had a choice, of course. I could act on this sense I had, or I could resist it. Which do you suppose I did?"

"I'd imagine you helped," Carol said.

"No he didn't," Lou smirked. "He wouldn't be telling the story if he had."

Yusuf smiled. "True enough, Lou. You're right. I resisted the sense I had to help Mordechai. A stronger way to say it is that I betrayed that sense and acted contrary to what I knew was right in that moment. Instead of helping, I turned and walked the other way.

"As I was walking away," he said to the group, "what sorts of things do you suppose I might have started to say and think to myself about Mordechai Lavon?"

"That he shouldn't have been there anyway," Gwyn responded. "You and the rest of your neighbors were kind to allow him to stay. After all, he was one of the enemy, who robbed you of your peace. A Zionist threat. A bigot."

"Now," Elizabeth began, in a puzzled voice, "who was the bigot?"

"I'm not saying Mordechai was a bigot," Gwyn answered.

"Neither am I," Elizabeth agreed.

"Oh, I see," Gwyn said. "I'm the bigot, then. Is that what you're saying?"

"I don't know, I was just asking," Elizabeth said, coolly.

"Look, Elizabeth, Mordechai may or may not have been a bigot. Who knows? I'm just saying that Yusuf probably saw him that way, and his people too. That's all. Is that a problem?"

"Not at all. Thank you," Elizabeth said as she looked down at her lap and straightened a crease in her skirt.

"Sure. And thank you to the Brits for dividing Mordechai's and Yusuf's lands in the first place. With a little help from the French, of course. That helped a lot."

The air was suddenly electric. Lou leaned forward to get a good look at what would happen next.

Elizabeth didn't say anything for a moment. "History has certainly called those events into question, hasn't it?" she finally said, with no hint of venom in her voice. "Sorry to have tweaked you with the bigot remark, my dear. It was a bit forward. I'd say it was almost American of me, but that would expose me too fully, wouldn't it?" She smiled demurely.

The charge seemed to leave the air as quickly as it had come.

"No, we wouldn't want to be American now, would we?" Gwyn smiled.

"Heaven forbid," Elizabeth cracked.

"For a moment, I thought I might have to put Lou between the two of you," Yusuf said, eliciting a roar of laughter from the group.

"What's so funny?" Lou deadpanned.

Amid the laughter, Yusuf wrote, "No right to be there," "Robs me of peace," "Zionist threat," and "Bigot" to summarize the ways he was seeing Mordechai.

"Okay then," Yusuf said after he finished writing, "if I was starting to see Mordechai

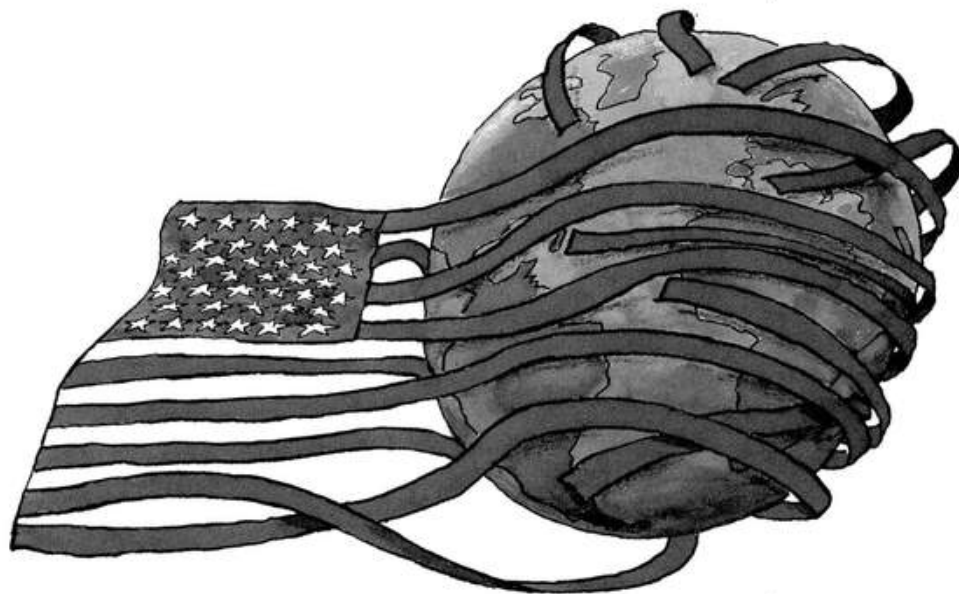
in these ways we've mentioned, how do you suppose I might have started to see myself?"

"As a victim," Pettis answered.

"And as better than he was," Gwyn said.

"I don't know," Carol spoke up, "you might have gotten down on yourself—like you weren't good enough. Deep down, I think you would have felt like you weren't being a very good person." ■

SPIRIT MATTERS contains selections from forthcoming books, articles, and talks that raise significant spiritual, religious, or social theory issues that connect to the *Tikkun* project of healing and transformation of the world. Authors or publishers who seek to have work included in this section must send us the material for consideration at least three months prior to the cover date of the issue of *Tikkun* in which they'd like to be included, and this date must be prior to the actual publication of the book. Email submissions to rabbilerner@tikkun.org.



Whose Right to Intervene?

By Immanuel Wallerstein

ON MARCH 2, 2004, BERNARD KOUCHNER gave the twenty-third annual Morgenthau Memorial Lecture at the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs. Kouchner is perhaps the world's most prominent spokesperson today for humanitarian intervention. He is the founder of Doctors Without Borders; the coiner of the phrase "*le droit d'ingérence*"; at one time a cabinet minister in the French government charged with human rights concerns; subsequently the Special Representative of the UN secretary-general in Kosovo; and in his own words, someone who has "the added reputation of having been Mr. Bush's only supporter in France." It is therefore of some

interest to hear what, on reflection, Kouchner considers to be the place of humanitarian intervention in international law:

There is an aspect of humanitarian intervention that has proved rather difficult to implement: I refer to the tension between state sovereignty and the right to interfere. The international community is working on a new system of humanitarian protection through the UN Security Council; yet globalization clearly does not herald an end of state sovereignty, which remains the bulwark of a stable world order. To put it another way: we cannot have global governance or a UN system without the sovereignty of states.

The international community must strive, in the pattern of the European Union, to resolve this inherent contradiction: how can we maintain state sovereignty yet also find a way to make common decisions on common issues and problems? One way to resolve the dilemma is to say that sovereignty of states can be respected only if it emanates from the people inside the state. If the state is a dictatorship, then it is absolutely not worthy of the international community's respect. (2004, 4)

What Kouchner offered us was the twenty-first century's equivalent of evangelization. For early European imperialists like the conquistadors, the ultimate consideration was whether a country or people were Christian; for Kouchner, the ultimate consideration was whether or not they were democratic (that is, not living in a state that was a "dictatorship"). What the lead theorist of the conquistadors, Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, could not deal with, and thus totally ignored, was the case of countries and peoples that were Christian, but nevertheless engaged in barbaric acts violating natural law, such as Spain and the Inquisition. What Kouchner could not deal with, and thus totally ignored, was the case in which a country or people that has strong popular support might nonetheless engage in barbaric acts against a minority, such as what happened in Rwanda. Actually, of course, Kouchner was in favor of outside intervention in Rwanda, not because it was a dictatorship, but because he considered the acts barbaric. The talk of a dictatorship as a general principle was a fig leaf for this concern, applying in some cases (say, Iraq), but certainly not, in all cases in which Kouchner and others thought it morally imperative to intervene.

In the sixteenth century, the Spanish system of *encomienda*—Amerindian forced labor—was opposed by Bartolomé de Las Casas. Sepúlveda defended the Spanish system with four arguments; Las Casas countered with four principles. Suppose, facing the "inherent contradiction" of which Kouchner spoke—that between the sovereignty of states and common decisions on human rights—we applied the Las Casas principles—his four answers to Sepúlveda—to the situations in Kosovo or Iraq.

The first question with which Las Casas dealt was the presumed barbarity of the other against whom one is intervening. The first problem, he said, is that it is never totally clear in these debates who are the barbarians. In Kosovo, was it the Serbs, the government of Yugoslavia, or a particular group of people headed by Slobodan Milosëvic? In Iraq, was it the Sunni Arabs, the Baath party, or a particular group of people headed by Saddam Hussein? The intervenors moved murkily among all these targets, seldom clarifying or making distinctions, and always arguing the urgency of the intervention. In effect, they were claiming that they would somehow sort out the apportionment of guilt later. But of course later never comes. For a murky opponent allows one to assemble a murky coalition of intervenors, who severally may have different definitions of who are the barbarians, and therefore have different political objectives in the process of the intervention.

Las Casas insisted on sorting all this out in advance. For he argued that true barbarity is a rare phenomenon, normally constrained by the social processes of every social group. If that is so, one of the questions we need always to ask, when faced by a situation among others that we define as barbaric, is not only why did the internal process break down but also the degree to which it did in fact break down. Of course, engaging in such an analytic exercise tends to slow one down, which is the major argument invoked against doing it. There is no time, say the intervenors. At each moment, the situation deteriorates further. And this may well be true. But a slower pace may save one from making grievous mistakes.

The analysis deriving from the Las Casas principle presses us also to engage in a comparison. Are the countries and peoples that are intervening also guilty of engaging in barbaric acts? And if so, are these acts so much less serious than those found among the target countries and peoples such that they justify the sense of moral superiority on which any intervention is based? Certainly, since evil exists everywhere, this kind of comparison could be paralyzing, which is the major assertion against it, and which may also well be true. Yet the attempt at comparison can also serve as a timely brake on hybris.

There is the second Sepúlveda principle: the obligation to punish those who commit crimes against natural law, or as we would say today, crimes against humanity. Some acts may outrage the sense of decency of honest people organized in that nebulous, almost fictive character known as the "international community." And when that happens, are we not obliged to punish such crimes? It is to this argument that Las Casas opposed three questions: Who defined them as crimes, and were they so defined at the time they were committed? Who has jurisdiction to punish? Is there someone else more fit than we to engage in the punishment, if punishment is merited?

These questions emerged, with great clarity, when it came to the intervention in Iraq by the United States in conjunction with a so-called coalition of the willing. The United States attempted to get Security Council endorsement for its military action. But when it was clear that the United States would get only four out of fifteen votes for an enabling resolution, it withdrew its proposed resolution and decided to move on its own without UN legitimization. The Las Casas question then became even more relevant: By what right did the United States assume jurisdiction in this arena, especially since a large number of the countries of the world openly opposed its actions? The U.S. government's answer was twofold. On the one hand, it argued self-defense on the grounds that the Iraqi government posed an imminent threat to the United States and the world, on the basis of its supposed stock of weapons of mass destruction and its presumed readiness to share these weapons with non-state "terrorists." This argument subsequently fell to pieces in light of post-invasion knowledge that such weapons were not in the possession of the Iraqi government, and because of widespread disagreement with the contention that Saddam Hussein had such weapons, he would have been willing to distribute them to nonstate "terrorists."

In view of the weakness of this case, the U.S. government fell back on the claim that Saddam Hussein was an evil man who had himself committed crimes against humanity and therefore eliminating him from power was a moral good. And at this point, the question not only of the truth of these assertions but even more of the jurisdiction comes to the fore, as well as whether the moral crimes of Saddam Hussein were the true motive of the outside intervention, given the previous support of the U.S. and other governments for Saddam Hussein at moments in time when he committed precisely the acts that were the basis of the accusation.

Once again, in this situation as in most, the strongest case for the interventions was the defense of the innocent—the innocent Bosnian Muslims who were being raped and slaughtered, the innocent Kosovars who were being evicted from their lands and chased across borders, and the innocent Kurds and Shiites who were being oppressed and killed by Saddam Hussein. What do we learn from the third Las Casas answer to Sepúlveda? Las Casas insisted on the principle of "minimal damage." Even if all the allegations were absolutely correct, would the punishment do more harm than it prevented? The principle of minimal damage is the Las Casas translation to collective social phenomena of the ancient adjunction in the Hippocratic oath to doctors: "Do no harm!"

One can make that case, however, in regard to the intervention in Iraq. To be sure, as a result of the intervention in Iraq, Saddam Hussein and the Baath party were no longer in power and could not continue the kinds of oppressive acts in which they had previously engaged. Yet the country suffered from a significant number of *(continued on page 58)*

Who are the barbarians? Are the countries and peoples that are intervening also guilty of engaging in barbaric acts?

WHOSE RIGHT TO INTERVENE?

(continued from page 25) were not true before the outside intervention. The economic well-being of the citizens was probably less. The everyday violence had massively increased. The country became a haven for precisely the kind of militant Islamists against whom the action was presumably directed and who were not really able to operate within the country before the intervention. And the civil situation of Iraqi women became considerably worse. At least one hundred thousand Iraqis were killed and many more severely wounded since the intervention. One might certainly have invoked the principle of minimal damage here.

The final Sepúlveda argument was the right and duty to evangelize, and the presumed obstacles to that posed by the Amerindians. The equivalent in the twenty-first century is the right and duty to spread democracy. This has been one of the principal contentions of the U.S. and U.K. governments, particularly invoked by U.S. neoconservative intellectuals and Prime Minister Tony Blair. Las Casas insisted that it was meaningless to evangelize by force, that conversion to Christianity had to come from voluntary adherence from within the person converted, and that force was counterindicated.

The same argument was adduced in critiques of the interventions in the Balkans and Iraq insofar as they were justified on the basis that they promoted democracy. It was a question of how one measures conversion to democratic values. For the intervenors, it seemed to mean essentially the willingness to hold elections in which multiple political parties or factions could participate with a minimal degree of civility and the ability to campaign publicly. This was a very minimal definition of democracy. Even at this minimal level, it was far from certain that this had been achieved with any lasting power in either region.

If, however, one meant by democracy something more extensive—genuine decision-making control by the majority of the population in the governmental structure, the real and continuing ability of all kinds of minorities to express themselves politically as well as culturally, and an acceptance of the continuing need and legitimacy of open political debate—it seems quite certain that these are conditions that must mature internally from within different countries and regions, and that outside intervention is in general counterindicated, for it associates the concept with outside control and the negatives brought about by the intervention.

The question—Whose right to intervene?—goes to the heart of the political and moral structure of the modern world-system. Intervention is in practice a right appropriated by the strong. But it is a right difficult to legitimate, and is therefore always subject to political and moral challenge. The intervenors, when challenged, always resort to a moral justification—natural law and Christianity in the sixteenth century, the civilizing mission in the nineteenth century, and human rights and democracy in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The case against intervention has always come from two

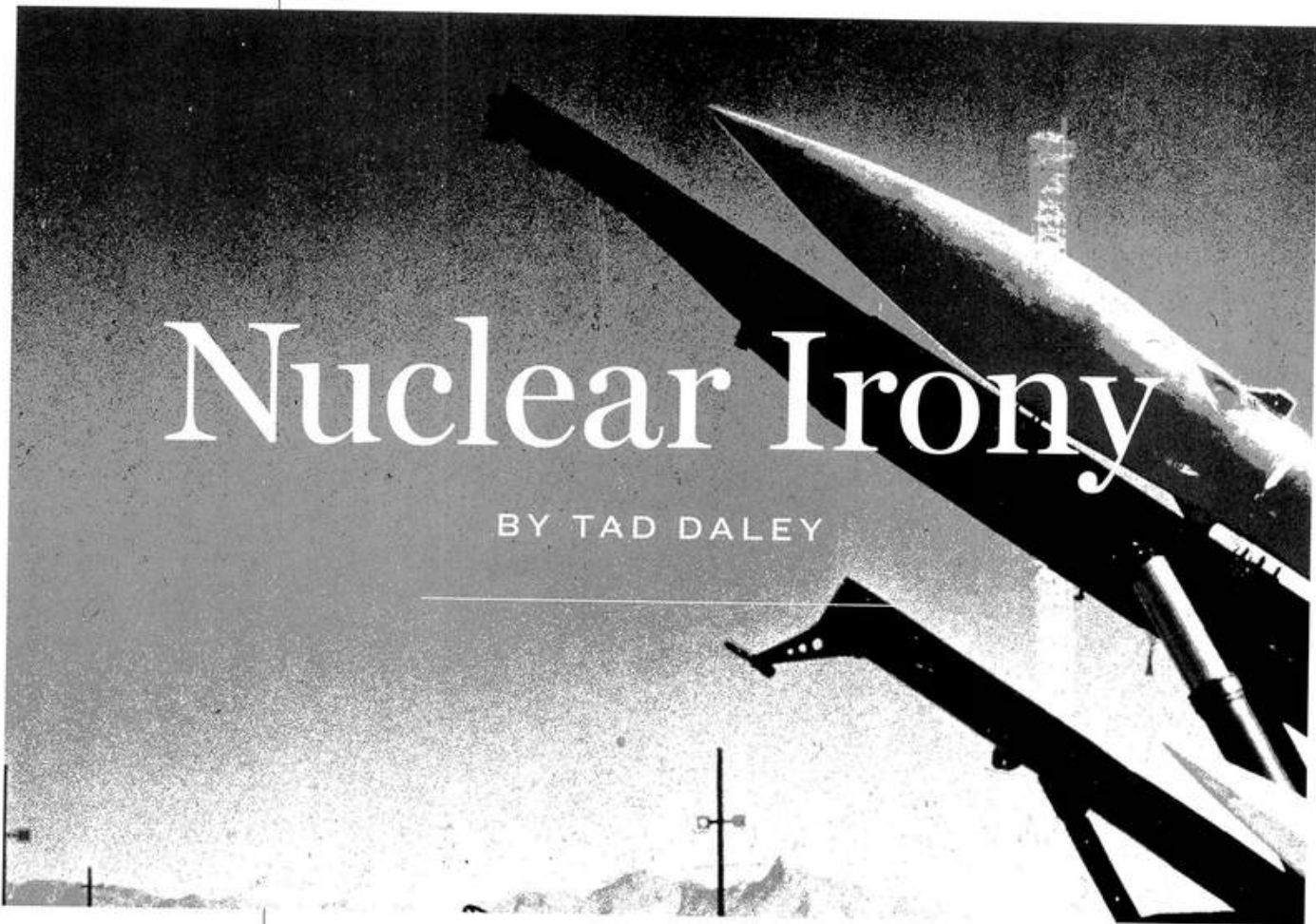
sources: the moral doubters among the strong peoples (those invoking the Las Casas arguments), and the political resisters among those against whom the intervention is aimed. The moral case of the intervenors is always sullied by the material interests of the intervenors that are being served by the intervention. On the other hand, the moral doubters always seem to be justifying actions that, in terms of their own values, are nefarious. The case of the political leaders of the people against whom the intervention is aimed is always challenged as reflecting the narrow interests of these leaders and not of the people they are leading.

But all of this ambiguity comes within the framework of accepting the values of the intervenors as universal ones. If one observes that these universal values are the social creation of the dominant strata in a particular world-system, however, one opens up the issue more fundamentally. What we are using as a criterion is not global universalism but European universalism, a set of doctrines and ethical views that derive from a European context, and aspire to be, or are presented as, global universal values—what many of its espousers call natural law. It justifies simultaneously the defense of the human rights of the so-called innocent and the material exploitation engaged in by the strong. It is a morally ambiguous doctrine. It attacks the crimes of some and passes over the crimes of others, even using the criteria of what it asserts to be natural law.

It is not that there may not be global universal values. It is rather that we are far from yet knowing what these values are. Global universal values are not given to us; they are created by us. The human enterprise of creating such values is the great moral enterprise of humanity. But it will have a hope of achievement only when we are able to move beyond the ideological perspective of the strong to a truly common (and thus more nearly global) appreciation of the good. Such a global appreciation requires a different concrete base, though, a structure that is far more egalitarian than any we have constructed up to now.

We may approach such a common base one day—even one day soon. That depends of how the world emerges from the present transition from our existing world-system to a different one, which may or may not be better. Yet until we have weathered this transition and entered into this more egalitarian world, the skeptical constraints on our impulsive moral arrogances that Las Casas preached will probably serve us better than the self-interested moral sureties of the Sepúlvedas of this world. ■

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Nuclear Irony

BY TAD DALEY

CONDOLEEZZA RICE, APPARENTLY, is to thank for the Bush administration's recent realization that nuking Iran may not be the best way to convince the world that nuclear weapons are illegitimate. As of this writing, the United States looks ready to sit down at the table with the Iranians, and it appears that whatever "stick" the Bush administration proposes to administer in its "carrot and stick" strategy, the nuclear option is now out.

Good. But the question remains: what brought us so close to bombing Iran? How could a country theoretically dedicated to non-proliferation have so quickly embraced the nuclear option?

Nuking Iran

IN THE APRIL 17, 2006 ISSUE of *The New Yorker* magazine, investigative journalist Seymour M. Hersh revealed that to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons perhaps a half-decade from now, Pentagon planners were preparing not just military strikes on that country, but nuclear strikes. Some Pentagon analysts, according to Hersh, insisted that the only tool that could guarantee the elimination of Tehran's nascent nuclear capability was our own tactical nuclear arsenal.

So, in order to show the illegitimacy of nuclear weapons, and to demonstrate our categorical intolerance for nuclear weapons, the United States was going to keep another state from obtaining nuclear weapons.... by using nuclear weapons.

Perhaps because the Bush administration has displayed such unconcealed disdain for international law, hardly anyone since the Hersh story first broke has mentioned that a

U.S. nuclear strike on Iran would explicitly violate the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The grand bargain of the NPT, of course, is that the 183 non-nuclear signatories agreed never to produce or acquire nuclear weapons, in exchange for a promise from the five nuclear signatories to eventually get rid of theirs. (Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, with his usual clarity, said last year, "The treaty has been remarkably successful on the first part of the bargain, but not so successful on the second.")

However, the NPT also contains a number of other, smaller mutual pledges. One of these was that the non-nuclear states insisted, in return for promising to remain non-nuclear, that the nuclear states promise never to launch a nuclear attack upon them. This, former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and former ambassador Thomas Graham have observed, "could be the most reasonable request in the history of international relations."

Three years ago, the United States defied the United Nations in order to show Saddam Hussein that he couldn't get away with defying the UN. Bush likes that sort of irony, I guess, because before Condoleezza stepped in he was apparently prepared to breach the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in order to tell Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad that he could not get away with breaching the NPT.

Bush's Nuclear Doctrine

WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED if Bush had gone through with the nuclear option? A nuclear attack on Iran could have accelerated the march to nuclear weapons by Iran. The case made by Iranian hardliners—that only a nuclear arsenal can deter the great American hyperpower—would have been infinitely strengthened. Tehran might have formally withdrawn from the NPT. (Article X provides all state parties the right to do so if their "supreme interests (are) jeopardized"... and a surprise nuclear first strike on one's country would seem to qualify.)

Finally, following any kind of attack, Iranian leaders would have had every incentive to throw all international inspectors out of their country, move all nuclear activities deep underground, and proceed to construct a sizeable atomic arsenal as a matter of the highest national priority. Indeed, Europe's fear of such a response is apparently one of the reasons Rice told Bush the "coalition" against Iran would fall apart unless the U.S. backed off from the nuclear option.

To those few who have been paying attention to the Bush administration's pronouncements on nuclear policy since it assumed office in 2001, Hersh's revelations come as little surprise. During its first term, the Bush administration codified a new nuclear doctrine that identified several specific scenarios where the United States would consciously choose to initiate nuclear war. The 2002 "Nuclear Posture Review," almost wholly unnoticed by peace activists and progressives, explicitly envisioned launching nuclear attacks against non-nuclear nations. It even named seven states—including Iran—as possible targets of a U.S. nuclear first-strike.

Moreover, the administration plainly intends for the U.S. nuclear arsenal to remain an integral component of American military power for decades to come. The Nuclear Posture Review envisions a new ICBM—our long-range, land-based nuclear missiles that can incinerate an entire city, anywhere in the world, within the hour—coming on line in 2020. It foresees deploying a new SLBM—our submarine-based nuclear missiles with identical capabilities—in 2030. And it plans to unveil a new intercontinental strategic nuclear bomber in 2040—just in time for the centennial of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

To the rest of the world, this is all sanctimonious and self-righteous. Some, it seems, both anoint themselves as responsible enough to be "trusted" with nuclear weapons, and arrogate to themselves the job of assessing whether others meet their test. President Bush himself has often let slip this conceit of cultural superiority. "We owe it to our children," he said in August of 2002, "to free the world from weapons of mass destruction in the hands of those who hate freedom."

In order to show the illegitimacy of nuclear weapons, the United States was ready to keep another state from obtaining nuclear weapons by using nuclear weapons.



The Bush administration plainly intends for the U.S. nuclear arsenal to remain an integral component of American military power for decades to come.

But who will decide? Who will render subjective, ad hoc verdicts on whether certain leaders or certain peoples do not love freedom quite enough to be permitted the nuclear prize? Who will serve as prosecutor, judge, jury, and enforcer?

Why, the “freedom lovers,” of course, in whose hands nuclear weapons already reside.

Creating Terrorists Worldwide

AROUND THE WORLD, IN BARRACKS, bazaars, and boulangeries, angry young men repeatedly ask, “Why can the United States have thousands of nuclear weapons, but our countries can’t have even one?” If one actively tried to conjure a motive for our enemies to take the next step to nuclear terror, it would be hard to come up with something better than executing a nuclear first-strike—on a Muslim country, no less—in order to perpetuate the nuclear double standard.

The greatest effect of such a first-strike might be on those young Muslim men who are essentially still on the fence about the West. Who are still contemplating whether to buy themselves a one-way ticket down the dead end road to jihadi martyrdom. Who have not dedicated their lives, yet, to getting their hands on one of the 30,000 atomic bombs already floating around the planet, using it to slaughter the inhabitants of a major U.S. city, and perhaps causing a panicked America—wondering which city might be next—to utterly unravel.

The American diplomat Paul Nitze, no weak-kneed liberal but a hard-line cold warrior who died in 2004 at 97, concluded near the end of his life that he could “think of no circumstances under which it would be wise for the U.S. to use nuclear weapons,” and that our atomic armory is “a threat mostly to ourselves.” Nothing could do more to provoke a nuclear terror attack on the United States than the use of a nuclear weapon by the United States. One might think of such an act as the finest, purest Faustian bargain in all of human history.

We are the ones who created these weapons in the past. We are the ones contemplating the use of these weapons in the present. We are the ones who vaingloriously insist that we—but not others—must perpetually possess these weapons into the future. And yet—it is we, perhaps, who will be devoured by our own creation.

In the end, that could turn out to be the greatest irony of all. ■

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Why SDS Now?

BY PAUL BUHLE

ON MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY, a day heavier than usual with progressive web traffic, an email blast went out asking recipients to join Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Within days, online memberships began pouring in. Within a week or so, a dozen chapters had been organized or were in formation, both at big, familiar SDS campuses (Illinois, Missouri, UNC, etc.) and at community colleges, not to mention a couple of high schools. A few more weeks passed, and regional conferences were announced for the spring semester, the largest of which took place in late April at Brown, with several “old” SDS founders and a couple hundred youngsters on hand.

SDS now? There are ample ironies, for sure. Former SDSers now would need, to be accurate, to style themselves Seniors for a Democratic Society. The original SDS, after all, blew apart in 1969, having evolved from a small “d” democratic organization into an anti-war campus-based resistance, and then, most lamentably, into a factionalized, leader-driven competing set of would-be vanguards. Critics are bound to point toward an inability on the part of old radicals like me to accept either grim twenty-first century reality or approaching old age, or both at once. But these things don’t seem to deter the youngsters at all. If they discover SDS from their teachers or their textbooks or in one of the increasingly popular college courses on the 1960s—like my own “Sixties Without Apology”—the discovery nevertheless seems to make sense to them. In the absence, that is, of anything that makes better sense.

Why would that be? The appeal of SDS then and now is, as much as anything, an appeal for grassroots democracy, decentralization, and resistance to the leviathan state and its war-making. The *Port Huron Statement* (1962), drafted collectively and rewritten by Tom Hayden, stands up awfully well because it appeals to students and other young people to take fate into their own hands and throw off bureaucracies of all kinds, liberal as well as conservative.

In other words, it’s not about “socialism,” at least not in classical terms. It is about values, along with generations. Why now? The reasons are not so puzzling. After all, there’s an intractable foreign war with no prospect of U.S. victory or withdrawal. No draft yet, but who can say what happens when the tensile strength of the military is exhausted? Historian William Appleman Williams (at once a greatly admired figure among SDSers and a severe critic of SDS) used to say that until and unless the ruling groups of the United States are divided against each other, radicalism gets nowhere. As never before since the 1960s, radicalism once again has the chance to go somewhere.

Won’t a new SDS stumble, fumble, and blow itself to bits like the old SDS did?

Critics of the old SDS rarely give the movement credit for struggling to overcome a basic dilemma of contemporary liberalism, which had so wedded itself to the security state and the necessity of American global hegemony that it could not help seeing the Vietnam war as an inexplicable blunder, or the control of society by elites as a natural and mostly benevolent matter. One very particular line of criticism seen most often today in the pages of the *American Prospect* or *Dissent* insists that the New Left devolved from its wonderful, idealistic, early-1960s beginnings into a madness of drugs, sex, and anti-Americanism typical—or so they say—of the late 1960s. These criticisms do injustice both

The world of post-9/11, for those who experienced it in high school, is not the world that we older people saw, tried to understand, and change.

to the Sixties and to the fundamental problems the New Left faced, including how to replace an entrenched liberal establishment.

It's not surprising, really, that writers for these journals would want the New Left good and dead. But there are other, better criticisms to be made, and eventually any new generational movement will be compelled to respond to them.

The original SDS, shaped by civil rights experiences and full of youngsters who came and went from campus chapters regularly, was nearly formless, with too little material help and too little constructive criticism from the older generation of progressives. Soon, charismatic individual SDSers seemed to overshadow the organization at large. This media-driven politics was still considerably more democratic than, say, the Democratic Party, but it failed to sustain the impulses behind the "brother" and "sister" language that could be heard at most every SDS gathering until the last years of the 1960s. A movement formed as the very anti-vanguard, throwing off the pretensions of past socialistic movement became, particularly in its leadership, hyper-vanguardist, "us" versus "them" (with no certainty about who the "them" were).

As it became clear, soon enough, that time was running out on SDS and that the efforts to move the movement off campuses and into communities were not likely to be all that successful, all the assorted weaknesses and blunders became frighteningly evident. The national leadership, a fairly small circle of full-timers who received little financial support from the membership, had been maddeningly frustrated. The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in 1968, and the ghetto uprisings that followed, derailed most of the serious thinking about what kind of future workforce was about to graduate from college and what their needs for a political movement might be. "Revolution Now!" became the motto—a recipe for disaster as well as an invitation to infiltration by sectarian groups, the FBI and Red Squads alike.

Whether the new SDS will face these kinds of extreme situations and dilemmas, the future will have to judge. We can say that the disillusionment with mainstream liberalism was no mistake, and that the determination to work toward a very different kind of global order was a deep and lasting insight. How does a campus group or any group of young people reach out with the moral power of a Cindy Sheehan and expose the hypocrisy of the high and mighty, without falling into postures that alienate potential supporters? How to appeal directly to students to deal with their own deteriorating situation and empower themselves democratically, rather than demanding that the most politically conscious leave behind the hopeless 95 percent and rush to the working class? How to break through the familiar barriers created inadvertently by decades of divisive interest-group politics? How to encompass a spirituality that was so evident in the logic of the civil rights movement and, yes, the counterculture, but failed SDS proper?

It's not for me to decide how young people should organize themselves. But as I read the emails, SDSers are working on the problems. And maybe there's a larger lesson here, although not one that's particularly easy for ex-SDSers or even over-30ers to digest. The world of post-9/11, for those who experienced it in high school or even in elementary school, is not the world that we older people saw, tried to understand, and change. The ferocity of warfare, including the now-standard use of depleted uranium weapons; the ruthlessness and recklessness of the White House along with its pet media; the sudden apparentness of global warming's drastic effects; and the public revulsion to America that seems to be sweeping the world outside the United States, have framed a very new situation for the young.

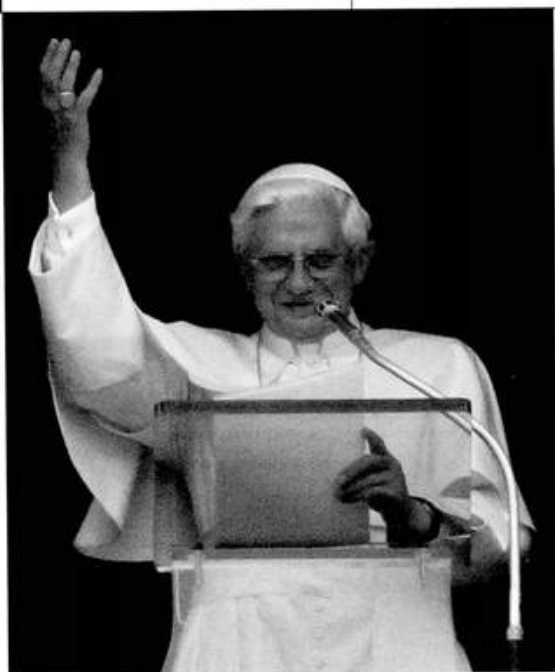
It reminds me of seeing the Cuban Missile Crisis on television, during my second year of college, and how the whole war-trauma struck me: I had been right all along. If "they" stayed in charge—those crackpots, liberal, conservative and otherwise, here and in other empires—they would surely blow us all up. Something had to be done by young people, because no one else would be likely to do it. ■

Founder and publisher of Radical America, "an SDS journal of American radicalism," Paul Buhle teaches at Brown.

POPE
BENEDICT
XVI

The First Year

by Matthias Beier



IN EARLY MARCH 2006, POPE BENEDICT XVI PUZZLED the world by quietly dropping one of his nine titles, “Patriarch of the West,” held by popes since 642. Dropping the patriarch-title, traditionally reserved for Eastern Christian leaders, was meant to “be helpful for ecumenical dialogue,” explained the Pope, whose “primary commitment” is unity with all Christian churches. But the gesture is more ambiguous than that. It also reasserts the Pope’s claim to authority over the entire church, East and West. The true test for Benedict’s openness to genuine ecumenical dialogue depends on whether he is willing to put the most valuable of his eight remaining titles on the table: Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church—something he is *least* likely to do.

Benedict XVI’s first year record is mixed. Although unity, peace, and love have been key words of his papacy, his actions or inactions are at times at odds with such rhetoric. While his fashionable wardrobe has received much attention—flashy red

To skeptics, Benedict XVI's argument for cultural purity is dangerously reminiscent of the Nazi Christian argument that Jews had no place in a Christian country.

shoes by Prada, hip sunglasses by Gucci, elaborately imperial gowns by Gamarelli, and, most recently, a stylish white 2GB iPod Nano—the jury is still out on how open-minded the former top guardian of the Church's tradition really is. The central question for assessing Benedict's first year may well be whether his obvious changes in style from rigid moral watchdog to diplomatic, meeting-happy uberfather are more than merely a Pope's new clothes.

Has Benedict XVI truly had a change of heart? Or do these superficial changes in style conceal the same absolutistic claims to truth and power which guided him throughout his tenure as the Church's top watchdog? To explore that question, let us look at four areas that the Pope himself has highlighted: issues of peace and justice; inter-religious dialogue; moral values and the fight for Europe; and carrot-and-stick power struggles within the Church.

On peace and justice issues, Benedict XVI has, for the most part, continued his predecessor's stance. He frequently speaks out against violence, terrorism, poverty, consumerism, and economic injustice. Yet his lack of direct criticism of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq stands in stark contrast to John Paul II's unequivocal opposition to the war. As World War II taught us, a Pope's calls for peace and justice are of little or, worse, negative consequence, unless they call particular countries or leaders to responsible action.

In the area of inter-religious dialogue, Benedict XVI has focused particularly on relations with Jewish and Muslim leaders. Countering initial fears that a German Pope who once served in the Hitler Youth might harbor subtle anti-Semitic views, Benedict XVI recently paid a historical visit to Auschwitz. Visits to synagogues in Cologne and Rome and several meetings with Jewish leaders helped repair initial tensions with Israel after the Pope deliberately omitted from a July 2005 statement against terrorism any mention of a suicide attack inside Israel while, however, referring to attacks in Britain, Iraq, Egypt, and Turkey. A visit to Israel might come as early as 2007.

Benedict's attitude toward Islam has, regrettably, been more reserved. In meetings he has pressed Muslim leaders to fight against terrorism and to support 'reciprocity,' meaning that Muslim countries should grant the same religious freedom to Christians which traditionally Christian countries grant to Muslims. The Pope stunned those familiar with Catholic-Muslim relations when he removed the highly respected Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald from his post as president of the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue. Analysts suggest that the Pope saw Fitzgerald as 'too soft' on Islam, failing to press Muslim countries on respect for religious freedom.

Indicative of tensions between Benedict XVI and the Muslim world was the unusual delay by one year of a papal visit to Turkey. It had originally been planned for the fall of 2005 in response to an invitation by Patriarch Bartholomew I, head of the world's 200 million Orthodox Christians. The Turkish government refused to open its doors so soon to the new Pope, who, as Cardinal Ratzinger, had angered Turkey in 2004 by remarking in the French newspaper *Le Figaro* that the European Union should keep its doors closed to Turkey, since "Europe is a cultural continent, not a geographical one."

As Pope, he has reiterated that Europe's unity is based on its "indispensable Christian roots." To skeptics, Pope Benedict's argument for cultural purity is dangerously reminiscent of the Nazi Christian argument that Jews had no place in a Christian country such as Germany. While Benedict's intentions for dialogue with non-Christian religions are no doubt sincere, his fight against the political influence of non-Christian cultures in Europe may inadvertently fan the flames of discrimination based on religious creed.

The intermezzo with Turkey expresses a key feature of Benedict XVI: his Eurocentrism. The Pope's focus on Europe does not imply that he ignores other parts of the world, as his plan for a special bishop's synod in Africa clearly indicates. Much of his fight against secularism in Europe applies similarly to America, although Benedict XVI has commented surprisingly little on the U.S. situation. He firmly believes that the

moral values of Christian Europe are the safeguards of civilization around the globe. The Holy Father considers Europe his most troubled child and laments that it has fallen ill with secular values. His antidote: to re-evangelize Europe in the spirit of St. Benedict, the patron saint of Europe, with whom he explicitly identifies.

The Pope has reason to be concerned. The Church is fighting a losing battle for control over hot-button issues such as same-sex marriage, birth control, abortion, divorce, and religious instruction in schools. Just two days after he was elected Pope, Spain's parliament approved a same-sex marriage bill, unimaginable only a few years ago in this heavily Catholic country. Similar bills have been passed or introduced in Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Canada. Since taking office, Benedict XVI has become increasingly aggressive in his support for conservative political leaders who could reverse such bills. He has met twice with Spanish opposition leaders working to overturn the sweeping liberal reforms of the Socialist Zapatero government. In Italy he stepped into politics to prevent the repeal of key provisions of Europe's most restrictive law on medically-assisted fertility, and, most recently, to launch a staunch attack against same-sex marriage and abortion rights during Italy's elections.

Of even greater concern to the Pope is the fact that Europeans are leaving the Church in droves. In Germany alone, his home country, the Church has lost a record number of more than two million disaffected members, or nearly 10 percent, since 1990. The annual loss of members more than doubled when Catholic bishops, at the behest of a "deeply worried" Cardinal Ratzinger, began a drawn-out two year public controversy with the Pope's most potent challenger in Europe today: the German dissident theologian and bestselling author Eugen Drewermann. Hailed by *Time* magazine as a new Martin Luther, Drewermann, who also works as a psychotherapist with the clergy, has urged the Vatican in more than seventy books to end the tremendous psychological and spiritual suffering inflicted on Catholics by the merciless rigidity of traditional teachings on abortion, divorce, homosexuality, and celibacy. Drewermann's 1989 international bestseller on clergy mentality, *The Cleric*, exposed more than a decade before the U.S. sex abuse scandal the devastating effects of the Church's traditional clergy ideal. As a result, the Church stripped him in 1991 and 1992 both of his license to teach Catholic theology and of his duties as a priest, imposing one of the most severe punishment meted out to any priest-theologian in the twentieth century.

Partly in response to Drewermann's strong resonance with the European public, the 79-year old Pope has tried to reinvent himself within the Church by emphasizing God's love rather than the Church's rules. He did so at his first World Youth Day in Germany. He did so, too, in his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, which surprised with its positive references to erotic love, albeit clearly limited to heterosexual marriages. Another hopeful sign came in September when Benedict amazed the world by granting a request for a private *kaffeeklatsch* to one of his best-known critics, the Swiss theologian Hans Kung—although Benedict XVI stressed he had no intention of rehabilitating Kung's theology as officially Catholic. During the March consistory, in which he announced fifteen new Cardinals, among them Boston's Sean O'Malley and Hong Kong's Joseph Zen, known for his efforts for religious freedom in China, he made room for an unusually open debate among Church leaders.

While the Pope's words of love and openness are noble, they stand in glaring contrast to several Vatican actions taken under his watch. In an alarming November 2005 document, Benedict banned all gay men from seminaries and from ordination, calling gays emotionally immature and homosexuality "objectively disordered." American Catholics were equally put on alert when the well-respected editor of the Catholic magazine *America*, Fr. Thomas Reese, was forced to resign for allegedly permitting too much open discussion in a Catholic publication. Then there was Benedict's questionable choice of his own successor to the post of Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, the conservative American Cardinal Levada, who is under intense criticism from victims of clergy sexual abuse for allegedly attempting to cover up abuse.

On the whole, Benedict has certainly fulfilled requirements of diplomatic sensitivity and expressed desire for peace among the world's religions and nations. But he has shown ambiguous signs about his willingness to embrace a diversity of viewpoints within the Church. He still has ways to go to convince the world that trading in his absolutistic Cardinal's hat for the Pope's new clothes signifies substantial changes of heart. He could begin, for instance, by retracting the substance of his extremely inflammatory 2000 statement made in *Dominus Jesus* that labeled all other faiths as "gravely deficient." Or, by inviting progressive voices such as Eugen Drewermann, Joan Chittester, Matthew Fox, Hans Kung, and Leonardo Boff, to a truly open dialogue. Or, by finally admitting that the Church as an institution—rather than mere individual Catholics—is morally guilty for closing its eyes to the Holocaust which literally happened at its doorsteps. Who would be more qualified to express such a sincere apology than a German Pope?! ■

Matthias Beier, Ph.D., is the author of A Violent God-Image: An Introduction to the Work of Eugen Drewermann (Continuum, 2006 pbk. ed.). He teaches at Drew and Fordham universities.

New Faces of a Liberating God

The Evolution of Liberation Theologies in Latin America

BY LISA GARRIGUES

MOST OF THE 10,000 PEOPLE who live in the mountains surrounding the Andean village of Layo, Peru eat potatoes when their small farms provide them with enough to eat. When they don't, they simply go hungry. The children walk for several hours to get to the village school. There is no doctor. Many sick people brought down from the mountains by their families just don't make it.

I am in Layo looking for whatever happened to liberation theology.

Sister Margarita Recavarren offers me a cup of cocoa leaf tea in the kitchen of the adobe building in Layo where she works. She is a tall, vibrant Peruvian, seventy-five years old with cropped grey hair, who emanates strength and enthusiasm.

Sister Margarita remembers the early effervescence of liberation theology in the 1960s and 1970s, and how the reforms of Vatican II led to conferences in Medellin, Colombia in 1968 and Puebla, Mexico in 1979, where Latin American theologians began to articulate a theology specific to Latin America.

It was here in Peru that Gutierrez organized the first 'liberation theology' conference in 1968, followed by his book *Liberation Theology* in 1971. He and other liberation

theologians challenged a vision of God that was apolitical and removed from the problems of everyday life. They wrote of the importance of praxis, that a theological theory or lesson needed to be lived and practiced in the real world of hunger, oppression, and poverty. A true Christian should exercise “a preferential option for the poor.” Base communities were formed all over Latin America that encouraged the poor to actively analyze and challenge their situation, drawing inspiration from the liberation stories of Jesus and Exodus.

“The crux of liberation theology,” says Sister Margarita, “is the question that Father Gustavo Gutierrez asked more than thirty years ago: ‘How can you talk about a good god to an oppressed people? We are still asking that question.’”

How Liberation Theology was Silenced

THERE AREN'T VERY MANY PEOPLE like Sister Margarita left in Peru these days, people working within the Catholic Church who are still around from the early days of liberation theology. There is Father Victor Ramos, a friend and associate of Gutierrez who directs the Southern Andean Institute in Cuzco. And there is Gutierrez, who became a Jesuit and now directs the Instituto Bartholomé de Las Casas in Lima [Editor's Note: For more on Las Casas, see the piece by Immanuel Wallerstein in this issue].

Local people speak with nostalgia about concerned activists within the church who are no longer with them: Monsignor Albano, who they say was forced out of his position by the Catholic Church five years ago despite massive popular demonstrations of support, and Father Luis Santoni, who died in a mysterious car accident on a lonely road in the 1980s. Margarita shows me on a map of Peru the thin strips of territory which are still considered liberation theology territory. In Peru, Opus Dei and the conservatives are winning.

The story has been similar in other Latin American countries. During the 1980s, as liberation theologians challenged U.S.-backed governments in Central and South America, right-wing forces responded by cleansing the church of its progressive leaders. Archbishop Romero of El Salvador was gunned down in 1980, and six Jesuits were killed in El Salvador in 1989. In Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay, religious activists were taken away with other suspected subversives and killed, imprisoned or disappeared. The United States raised its own call of alarm at the progressive forces within the church in reports published by Rockefeller in 1969 and Reagan advisors in 1980, calling them “dangerous to the exterior politics of the United States.”

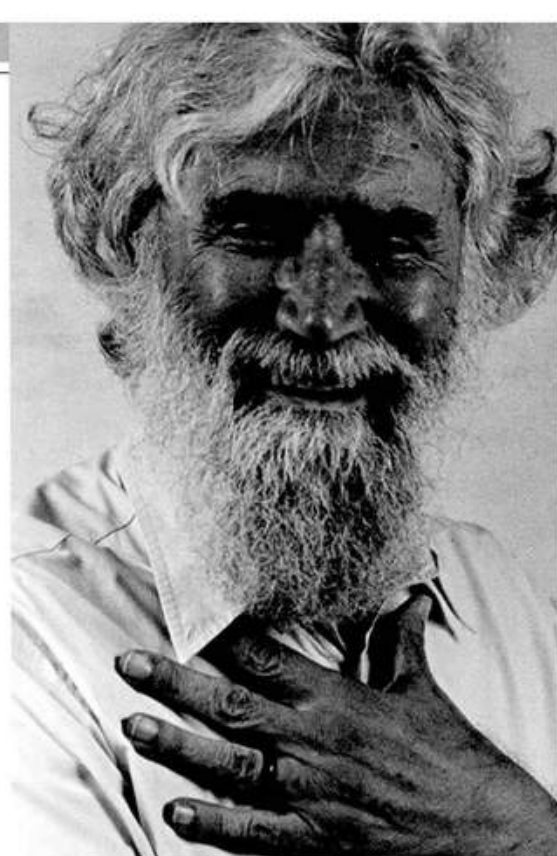
Though Marxism and armed resistance formed a part of the early dialogue of liberation theologians, people who lived through those times have told me that the label ‘Marxist’ was used to condemn all progressive theologians much in the same way it was used in the Communist witch hunts of the McCarthy Era.

“Just as some people in his time were scandalized by Jesus’ appearance among the poor, the liberation theologians suffered the attacks of those who didn’t want to know anything about the poor” said Father Ramos.

These attacks contributed to the theory of martyrdom that evolved within liberation theology, first articulated by Jon Sobrino, the only survivor of the Jesuit murders in El Salvador. Not those who die for Christ, but those who live like Jesus and die in the line of his commitment, are the martyrs, say these theologians.

Elsa Tamez, a Mexican Presbyterian theologian who studied at the Department of Ecumenical Investigations at the University of Costa Rica, remembers coming of age as a liberation theologian in Central America during the 1980s when feminist theology began to be articulated among Latin Americans in a Latin American context.

“We rejected the analytical and rational as the only valid discourse in which to make theology. We spoke of the importance of tenderness within the revolutionary struggle. The praxis of justice was not enough, we also needed the praxis of *cariño* [tr: caring, tenderness, love] between men and women if we were going to heal “the open veins of



Former priest Leonardo Boff, who before leaving the priesthood wrote several books criticizing the rigid hierarchy of the Church, was punished with a year of “obedient silence” in 1985. He was forbidden to teach or make public statements. He resigned the priesthood in 1992.

Latin America," Tamez wrote in *Discovering Different Faces of God*.

Today, women like Tamez, Maria Pilar Aquino, the Brazilian ecofeminist Ivonne Gebara, the Conspirando group in Chile and many others continue to contribute to the dialogue generated by Latin American feminist theologians.

An Indigenous Challenge to the Church

WHILE RIGHT-WING FORCES WERE clamping down on the most vocal liberation theologians in the 1980s, the people whose voices had not been heard in the first wave of liberation theology were beginning to speak: women, Afro-Latins, Indians.

In the course of books like *Afro-Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics*, Latin American feminist theologians like the Afro-Brazilian Maricel Mena began to write about the importance of drawing on African oral traditions of resistance as well as recovering biblical stories of resistance by African women. For Mena, theology was in part about "manifesting the revelation of god in the lives of poor black women, in the wisdom of nature and the body."

Other explicitly Afro-American theologians began drawing on these indigenous traditions, including Haitian theologian and sociologist Laenec Hurboa, the Brazilian priest Antonio Aparecida de Silva, and Clara Luz Ajo of Cuba, who has written about the Santeria traditions in her country.

Within the resurgence of indigenous theologies in Latin America, there have been two currents: those who practice their indigenous spirituality within the Christian church and those who reject the Christian church as a colonial imposition and focus on strengthening their own diverse spiritual traditions.

Despite their differences, some of the theology arising from indigenous Indian traditions has common ground with that of the liberation theologians.

As Aiban Wagua, a Catholic priest of the Kuna people of Panama, has said, "God is very big and we can't entirely understand him. Each people knows a part of him. And it is necessary that this part keep itself different from the others so that when you put all the parts together you can arrive at the entire truth of God."

A growing, self-defined Indian theology has become a theology of resistance, says Manuel Arias Montes on the website *Cristologia Indigena* (www.tinet.org), "that fights to emerge from its own prostration....to verify and validate the option for the poor, because it signifies the recognition that the poor not only rely on the strength of those who interpret what their liberation should be from the 'Christian' perspective, but also relies on, as a people, the liberating force of their own theology."

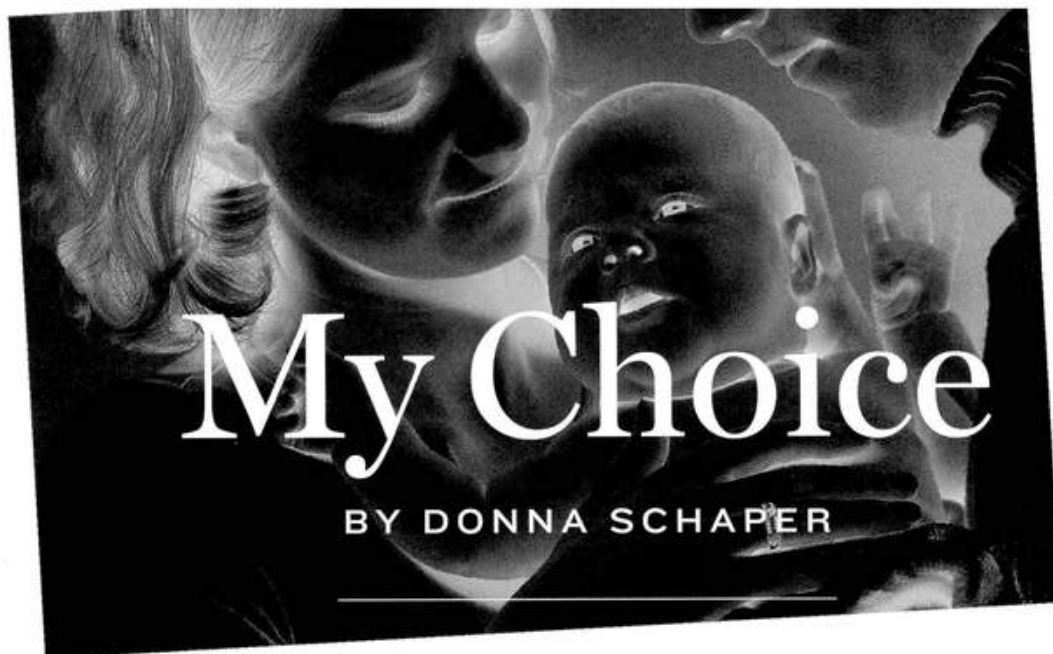
This liberating force was in full flower during the ceremonial inauguration of Evo Morales at Tiawakanu that I attended, where Morales received a traditional Aymara blessing from spiritual authorities. The night before the inauguration, Christian Aymaras unfurled a banner of indigenous resistance heroes Tupac Katari and Bartolome Sisa, and sang freedom songs inspired by Jesus and the Exodus. "Oppression has finally ended," they sang, in Spanish and Aymara. "Liberation has arrived."

Redefining the Third World

IN A 2003 INTERVIEW WITH *EL COMERCIO*, Gustavo Gutierrez said the fierce reaction against liberation theology in Latin America had actually helped strengthen it, bringing people of diverse religious backgrounds together in their common belief in a liberating God.

In the 1990s, liberation theologians criticized the "idols" of global capitalism, consumerism, and efficiency, which have turned the human being from a subject into an object. The discourse has shifted from the 1970s' emphasis on class analysis to an emphasis on the oppressed and "the excluded" who are the victims of an increasingly globalized system.

In this globalized world, where increasing numbers of people have become "unnecessary," Richard says a new third world liberation theology needs to draw not on arms but on its own cultural and spiritual strength, fighting a (continued on page 59)



My Choice

BY DONNA SCHAPER

I AM A 58-YEAR-OLD WHITE WOMAN. I had an abortion nineteen years ago. I am not bragging nor am I apologizing. I am a mother of three children in their twenties and I am an ordained Christian minister.

After my first child was born, I had twins. Having twins the second time caused me the great good fortune of having three children in diapers. While I was nursing the twins, I did not think I needed birth control. I was wrong. When I got pregnant with the child I call "Alma," which means soul, I did not feel prepared or ready for a fourth child. I chose, with some searching, to exercise my constitutional right to choose to end her birth.

Why do I tell my story now? Because I fear that abortion rights may become even more restricted than they already are. I also find the very intimidation that I experience in telling my story to be the reason I must speak. Why would I be afraid? Because pro-life people like to punish others. Plus my editor warned me to expect a lot of heat. Should that fear replace free speech? I think not.

I did what was right for me, for my family, for my work, for my husband, and for my three children. I happen to agree that abortion is a form of murder. I think the quarrel about when life begins is disrespectful to the fetus. I know I murdered the life within me. I could have loved that life but chose not to. I did what I think men do all the time when they take us to war: they choose violence because, while they believe it is bad, it is still better than the alternatives. The Just War theory assumes that human beings get caught in terrible choices all the time. This freedom is not just for men; it is for women also.

When I made my choice to end some life on behalf of other life, I was terribly troubled. I was in a double bind. I prayed and anguished. Then I made a choice. Adults make choices.

I have long thought that the drama of the abortion battle was not about unborn babies at all. Instead, it is about women and sex and about women and maturity. We are considered babies, sub-adults, in need of supervision over our sexuality. Otherwise we are dangerous. We are the virgin or the whore.

When I made my choice to end Alma's life, I was behaving as an adult. I did not shrink from the responsibility of making a choice. I did not ask someone else to make it for me. And I certainly did not request the government's help in my bedroom. Instead I behaved as an adult who is also a sexual being. Things happen sexually between people that are not always controllable. The unprotected sex I had with my husband while nursing our twins had a consequence that neither of us desired. It was a human life. That's why we named her, wept for her, wanted her, but also knew we did not want her enough.

The drama of the abortion battle is not about unborn babies at all. Instead it is about women and sex.

Because women are mature sexual beings who make choices, birth control and abortion are positive moral forces in history. They allow sex to be both procreational and recreational, for men and for women. That is good news, even though most of the world doesn't know it yet. In some parts of Africa, for example, men assume the freedom to have unprotected sex with women, giving them AIDS and heartbreak. What does our so-called pro-life government recommend? Abstinence! Such a recommendation is immoral to its core.

Obviously protected sex is the most moral thing of all. Unprotected sex is adolescent, immature, sometimes life-threatening, and always stupid. Women are mature enough to handle even that. We are not children. Sometimes in the battle over killing our babies, I hear the echo of people wanting to kill women's maturity and sexuality. I don't like it. That's why I am breaking my silence about who I am. I am a 58-year-old, sexual, mature woman. That's who I am. I had an abortion. I am not bragging and I am not apologizing.

Abortion that is legal, safe, and rare is the best policy conceivable for men and women and for mature, moral sexuality. ■

Donna Schaper is Senior Minister of Judson Memorial Church on Washington Square in New York City. She is also the author of twenty-eight books, most recently, Holy Vulnerability: A Spiritual Path for Those with Cancer. She is working on a new book, Living Well By Doing Good.

Why Pushkin?

BY NAN FINK GEFEN

WHY DON'T THEY TEACH Pushkin in Israel?" the old Russian woman called out. She was huddled in the bed next to mine in a hospital room in Safed, a town in the north of Israel.

I couldn't understand the woman's Hebrew, but Anat, my Israeli stepdaughter, translated for me. We shrugged apologetically in my roommate's direction to convey that we didn't know anything about the subject, but she wasn't to be satisfied. "Pushkin is good," she said, more animated than she'd been since I arrived in the hospital room three hours before.

Beckoning Anat to her bedside, the woman shoved a tattered, brown book into her hands, a biography of Pushkin written in Russian. Anat brought the book over to me and we quickly flipped through the pages, checking out the photographs. My roommate watched us, nodding and smiling in an approving way. A short, heavy woman, she wore a brightly flowered bathrobe over her pink pajamas, giving an impression of vitality despite her pallor.

When I first arrived, my roommate had tried to talk to me in Russian, then Yiddish, then Hebrew, but I'd hardly responded. Worried by the heart symptoms I'd been having for the last two days and irritated by the doctors' insistence that I stay in the hospital for observation, I had my own concerns. Besides, the language barrier between us seemed too vast to traverse under these circumstances. But now we were becoming acquainted with the help of Anat, who returned the Pushkin biography to her and helped her straighten her sheets.

Alone for a moment, I looked around me. The room was in the newly remodeled wing of a district hospital, and it seemed clean and efficient in a bare-bones way. To my relief, there were no televisions or telephones to disturb the quiet. Through the large window by my roommate's bed, I could see the mountains of Safed. These mountains—some forested by pine trees planted in the last century and others left rocky and bare—weren't just any mountains. They were mythic: a great Kabbalistic community had flourished here in the sixteenth century and left behind writings that profoundly shaped Jewish mystical thought. For years I had known about Isaac Luria and his fellow kabbalists meditating in the fields around Safed, and their teachings had often inspired me.

Here I was, in the same place, on sacred ground.

Only it didn't feel so sacred just now. The beeping heart monitor and the oximeter on my finger were reminders that I was having a health crisis and that I lived in a different century. But more than that, my mood was anything but peaceful: I had been cast into helplessness, a state that awakened the demons within me.

Caught in the System

I HAD COME TO ISRAEL the week before with my husband, Jonathan, to celebrate his granddaughter Enya's bat mitzvah; she was the first in the family to insist on having one, and we wanted to support her. But after the event was over, I developed chest pain and all attention turned to me. Jonathan and his two Israeli daughters acted with speed and decisiveness, bringing me to the emergency room and arranging for shifts at the hospital. This was done in a loving spirit—but I, who have a lifelong dread of imposing, could hardly bear it. I was making a lot of work for everyone.

The Russian woman began to fish through her possessions in her bedside cabinet, pulling out a sack of green plums and offering them to us. "Here," she said in Hebrew. "Eat."

"No," I answered abruptly, preoccupied by my own thoughts. Anat quickly accepted the offering, covering for my lack of grace.

Jonathan came through the door in his state-of-the-art wheelchair, followed by his younger daughter Rebecca, who reported that she hadn't been able to learn anything about my case from the doctors. "You've gotten caught up in the system," she said in a matter-of-fact tone. "I was afraid of that. They'll want to keep you here for a while."

"Damn," I said unhappily. I had only three days left in Israel, and I didn't want to spend any of them in this hospital.

The Russian woman sat on the edge of her bed, listening to our conversation although she couldn't understand it, sighing loudly when she saw my distress. Her presence was not easily ignored. With Anat's urging, Jonathan went over to her bedside, pleased to have the opportunity to resurrect the language he had learned long ago as a scientific editor in Jerusalem.

"*Privet!*" the woman said, greeting him enthusiastically. She began to speak in long, eager sentences, gesticulating with her thick hands, and he listened politely for several minutes. When she stopped to catch her breath, he reported to us that she'd been brought to the hospital a few days earlier with something that sounded like congestive heart failure. Her only relative in Israel, her nephew, was a doctor on the staff and he'd been looking after her.

"So many Russians, they're everywhere," Rebecca said, telling me about the recent wave of over a million immigrants and how it had profoundly affected every part of Israeli society. "They've moved into all the professions and schools, and taken over neighborhoods in every town. A lot of people don't like them, but I do."

I had noticed that most of the doctors at the hospital were blonde-haired and blue-eyed, coolly professional, obviously Russian. "It's not what I expected," I said. "So much has changed since I was last here." Over the past seven years I had carefully followed the Mideast political situation from the U.S., becoming an activist in a pro-Israel organization that worked for an end to the Occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state. I had fiercely held onto my dream of what I thought Israel should be, but somehow I had not noticed this cultural shift. What other changes had I failed to see?

I thought about
life's inevitable
move toward death
and how we try to
stop it by holding
onto those things
that are familiar.
But sometimes the
veil is lifted and
we glimpse what
lies beyond.

Familiar Old Ways

THE ROOM FELL SILENT. Through the hospital window I could see the light begin to fade, a subtle darkness settling over the mountains. Rocks and trees dissolved into the deepening shadows and the sky softened into night. Just beyond my view in the town of Safed, people would be coming home from work or Torah study, stopping for their evening meal.

I had heard from Anat and Rebecca that Safed now was a center of religious fanaticism. Many of the art galleries and coffee shops of the recent past had been shut down and replaced by institutes, religious schools, and shuls. They did not approve of this change, and spoke with anger about the political influence of the right wing. Their antagonism toward fundamentalism had always been great—but the day before the bat mitzvah was to take place, something happened to intensify it even more.

Rebecca had received a call from the synagogue manager, saying that a Lubavitch group was planning to disrupt her daughter Enya's bat mitzvah. Their leader had arranged for the men in his community to come to the synagogue early and create a barrier so that none of us could enter. For them it was intolerable that a girl would read from the Torah or say the prayers in that space. Although they didn't own the synagogue, they considered it their obligation to protect it from blasphemy. Rebecca, who is not shy, had argued unsuccessfully on the telephone with these men for hours. Finally Enya said she didn't care where the bat mitzvah took place and her mother had given in. "I would have liked to confront those bastards in person," Rebecca confided, "but I didn't want to mar Enya's day."

On Shabbat we had gathered with family and friends in a rented community hall one block from the synagogue. Everyone agreed that the bat mitzvah was a great success. The paneled room was decorated with sprays of golden wildflowers, an ark had been fashioned out of yellow curtains, and a radiant Enya chanted from the Torah. We told each other that this space was better than the synagogue, that it didn't matter that we'd been forced to move. But at the very end of the service, our tears began to flow. They came from happiness, certainly—but some, at least, were from anger and frustration.

The bat mitzvah had taken place only a few days before I ended up in the hospital. Now, as I stretched out in bed listening to Jonathan and his Israeli daughters speak in a language I hardly understood, I thought about what had happened. Enya would get over it, but what a bitter experience to have just as she was coming into womanhood. I was afraid it would harden her toward Judaism, a loss when she had seemed so open to it.

Closing my eyes, I thought about change and its inevitability, and how we try to stop it by keeping the past alive. But this attempt is doomed to failure: Pushkin's poetry, written in nineteenth-century Russia, will never take root in modern-day Israel, and second-class status for women will never be accepted in cultures that embrace equality. I felt sudden sympathy for the futile, misguided efforts of the Russian woman and even the Lubavitchers.

Back to Pushkin

"WE'RE LEAVING FOR DINNER," Jonathan said, interrupting my reverie. "Will you be okay?"

"Of course," I answered quickly. "I don't need anything."

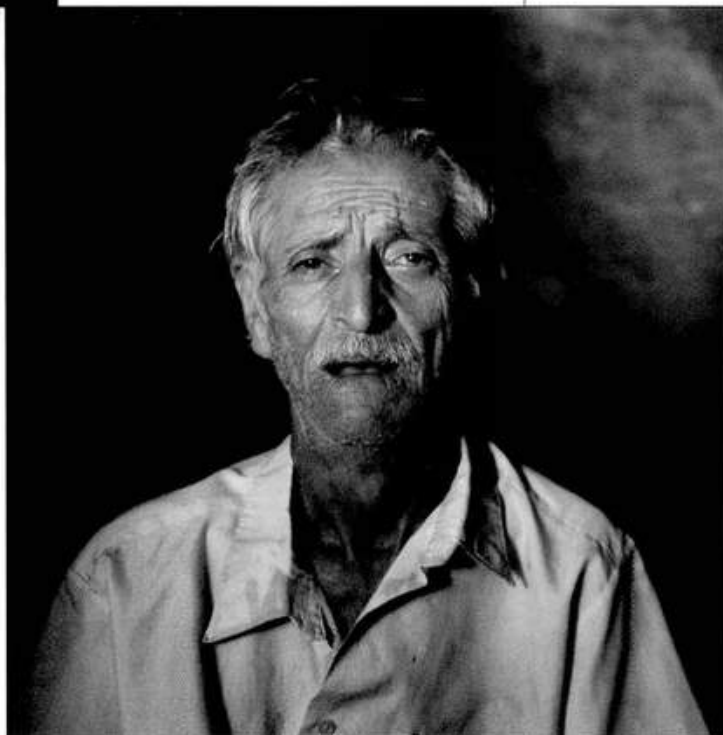
"You always say that," he laughed.

"An independent woman," Rebecca added. I smiled gratefully at her, glad that she saw me this way.

The door closed behind Jonathan and his daughters. Left alone for the first time since I'd been admitted to the hospital, I felt frightened. I wished that I had put aside my pride and asked one of them to stay in the room with me. All my worries rose to the surface, including my heartache over the political situation. The day of our arrival, a child had been shot in the West Bank, and I had seen for myself the gray, concrete wall that separates Jews from Palestinians. Soon I became convinced that my heart was breaking here in Israel and that I was headed for debilitation, even death.

(continued on page 59)

Portrait of the Artist as Political Philosopher



Adi Nes

By Joel Schalit

THE MAIN ISSUE IN MY ART AND IN MY WORK," says Adi Nes, "is the issue of identity: male identity and Israeli identity." Best known in the U.S. for his homoerotic photographs of Israeli soldiers and in Europe for a series on designer clothes-wearing prison inmates commissioned by *Vogue Hommes*, since the late 1990s Nes has become regarded as the face of modern Israeli photography. A queer Jew of Iranian descent who grew up in southern Israel, Nes' carefully staged photos are an art critic's dream come true. Politically charged, theoretically informed, contending with the intersection of gender, class, religion and nationality, Nes' work resonates with an absolutely heartfelt and intuitive understanding of the universal political questions raised by the complexities of Israeli culture.

Above: *Job*, 2005, 40 x 40 inches, color print. "Three years ago, my father passed away from lung cancer. I remember his face during his last moments, fighting for every breath. In this image, I created a portrait of Job, but what I had in mind was my father—so I had my uncle pose for me."

Visiting San Francisco for the Contemporary Jewish Museum's April opening of the *Art of Living: Contemporary Photography from the Israel Museum, Jerusalem* Exhibition (ongoing thru July 30th), Nes and I sat down for coffee to discuss his latest series of photographs, this time dealing with a subject of increasing interest to Jews worldwide: Israel's rising levels of social inequality. "In the new series," Nes begins, "I deal with people whose identity is being erased by society, by economic, and social (forms) of integration taking place both in Israel and all over the world."

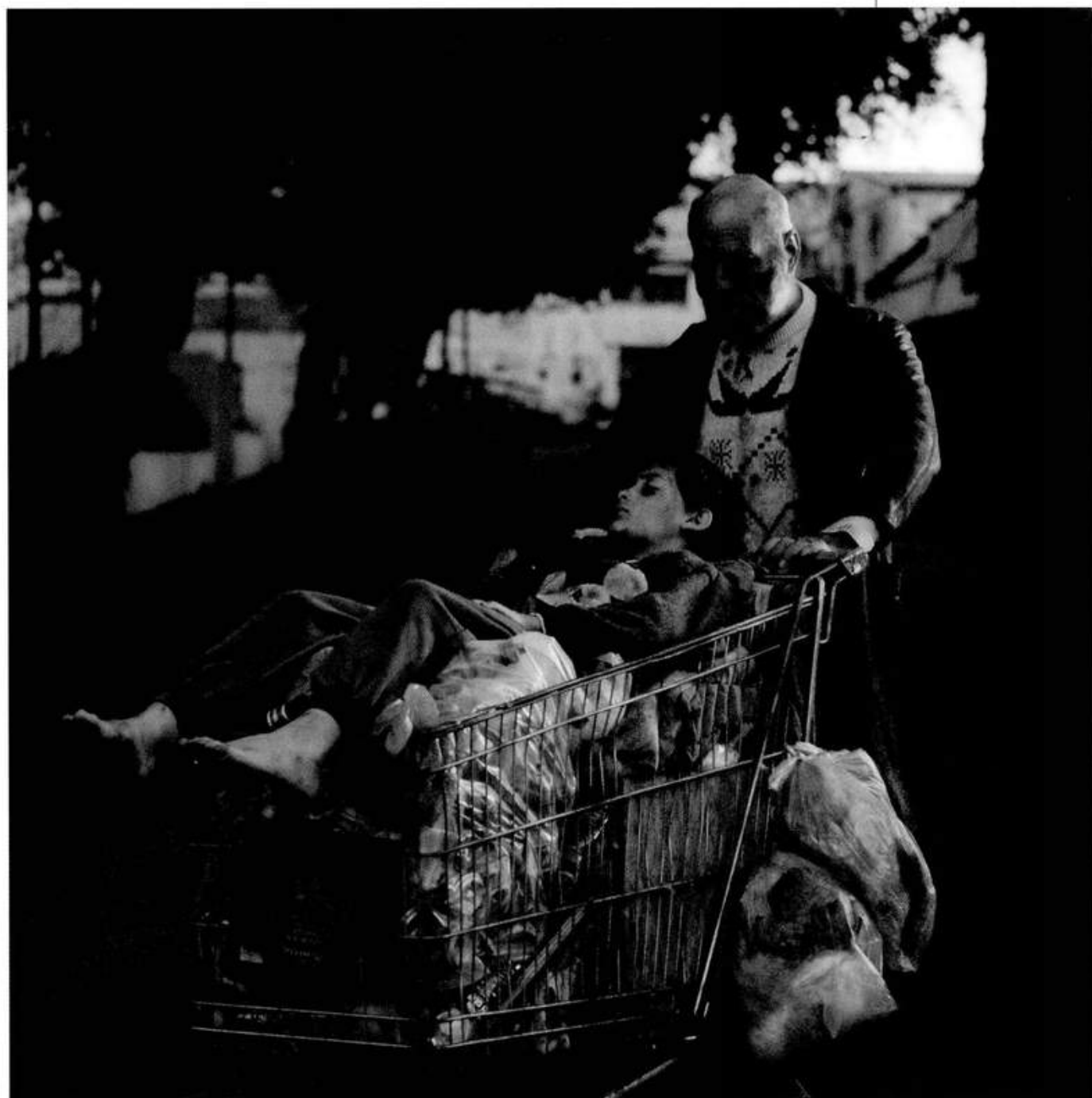
However, as straightforward as Nes' explanation of his new work sounds, there's more to it than that. Framing his photographic treatment of Israeli inequality are the stories of the Prophets, Abraham and Isaac, the artistic influences of medieval Italian painter Caravaggio and American sculptor Duane Hanson.

"One layer (of the series) is the Bible, and on the other hand I pay tribute to Caravaggio," he explains. "Caravaggio made (Abraham and Isaac) into heroes, so I looked for a face very similar to Caravaggio's Abraham. But as long as it's the actual situation in Israel, it's not just the old masters. It's Duane Hanson's very famous sculpture, *Supermarket Shopper* as well. You can see my tribute to this in the picture of a man who is collecting bottles for recycling."

Adi Nes's work first appeared in *Tikkun's* November/December 2004 issue, accompanied by captions written by San Francisco poet Daphne Gottlieb. In this second installment of his work, we showcase three of Nes' newest photos accompanied by

Noah, 2005, 40 x 50 inches, color print





commentary on them by the artist himself. For a full-length transcription of our interview with Nes, please visit our website, www.tikkun.org/nas.

Noah (left): "[As I did] with most of the pictures for the new series, I deal with the 'lower' part of the lives of Biblical heroes. Not the Noah who got down from the Ark and saved the world—but the drunk Noah, after God gave him the grape and he made it into wine."

Abraham and Isaac (above): "In this picture, you see a man who is collecting bottles for recycling. I was thinking about the recycling of myths, about how many people I know who sacrifice their boys to the army to fight for the country, to fight for ideals which no longer exist." ■

Joel Schalit is Managing Editor of Tikkun. All work courtesy Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Abraham and Isaac,
2005, 40 x 40 inches,
color print

The Art of Living

BY MICHA ODENHEIMER

THERE IS AN ART TO LIVING on 2,500 shekels a month, and many within the Ethiopian community in Israel are masters of it, virtuoso artists of the miniature. In Israel, the average family income is around 7,000 shekels a month, or 1,500 dollars. "The average Ethiopian family?" says Shula Mola, current Chairman of the Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews, "They're economic geniuses!"

The first rule of the art of economizing: absolute clarity. Know exactly what you have, what you owe, and what you need—and, whatever the price, don't go into debt. When the first of the month rolls around, every bill must be paid: the mortgage, the electricity, the water, and the gas. Never leave bills until later. Why should there be any more money later than there is now? Later there will only be a knock on the door from the *Hoza'ah le Poah* (the wing of the Israeli judicial system that repossesses property from debtors).

After the bills, one more sum must be set aside: money for wedding gifts and for contributions to the expense of mourning gatherings. This is the fee for keeping one's membership in good standing within the Ethiopian community, where financial participation in the lifecycle events of a wide circle of extended family and friends is not an option, but a necessity.

Only after these obligations are met can Ethiopian Israelis think about food. Here, the most essential purchase is the Ethiopian community's secret weapon: *teff*. "The whole community lives on teff," says Wonde Akale, a forty-two-year-old community activist who works for the office of Yedid in Ashdod. "Without teff, we wouldn't be able to make it. We'd be going hungry in the streets."

Teff is a grain—high in protein and in iron—that grows only in Ethiopia. Ground into flour, fermented, and baked into a sourdough, pancake-shaped bread called *injera*, it is the staple food. Over the past seven or eight years, teff has become increasingly available in Israel, brought over by several dozen Ethiopian-Israeli entrepreneurs. Virtually the entire adult Ethiopian community eats injera at just about every meal. "We buy a sixtykilo sack for three hundred shekels, and that can last for a month or two," says Yosef Tezazu, a handsome, mustached Kiryat Malachi resident who came to Israel twenty-four years ago.

Other food purchasing must be strategic. Meat is often procured collectively. Ten or fifteen families pitch in a few hundred shekels, and a cow is bought and slaughtered by a rabbi or Ethiopian *kes*. Every adult Ethiopian knows how to butcher an animal "better than the most expert surgeon," Tezzazu tells me. "The meat we get for a few hundred shekels would cost a thousand in the supermarket, and half of it would be ice."

Feeding the children adds another layer of expenses. Ethiopian-Israeli children, as a rule, don't eat the *injera* that allows their parents to survive. Their mothers run a children's kitchen with a separate, and very limited menu—pita with chocolate spread or humus, and the occasional frozen schnitzel.

Clothes? Bought in the *shuk*, almost never in a store. Telephone? It is estimated that 60 to 70 percent of Ethiopian families pay a small monthly phone fee that leaves the

phone working for incoming calls only. Electricity? Appliances are turned on only at night, when rates are cheaper. There is pride in the accomplishment of surviving in Israel; Discovering exactly which motions will propel you successfully towards the next month is like learning to swim. "A lot of life-wisdom is involved," says Tazzazu. "If our attitude toward money was like the average Israeli's, we wouldn't last a week."

"Sociologists talk about the culture of poverty," says David Meherat, a Kiryat Gat resident and an advisor on Ethiopian affairs to the Minister of Education. "There is no culture of poverty among those who grew up in Ethiopia. If you ask most Ethiopians, even those getting by on 2,500 or 3,000 shekels a month, if they think of themselves as poor, they'll say, 'By no means.' And the day they answer yes? That will be catastrophic." Akale says, "Ethiopians here will not say 'I am poor,' because in Ethiopia that meant: I have nothing, I have given up on my honor and am ready to be a beggar. You have to be in danger of dying from hunger before that happens."

In Israel, people are not starving to death, and yet, despite their resistance to labels, many in the Ethiopian community are finding ways to define the price of economic conditions in Israel. "In Ethiopia, poverty was felt in the belly," says Akale, "Here, poverty affects primarily the head."

"In an Ethiopian village you might not have anything to eat, but your mind is clear and free. You don't have to worry about the government reclaiming your possessions. Maybe you don't eat, but nobody is going to throw you out of your home. You have neighbors who can give you a loan, without interest. Or you can bring something from the village to the city and sell it. This leaves people with fewer worries. Suicides and divorces over money—I didn't see any over there. Here, your mind becomes filled with strain and nervous tension. I've seen a lot of suicides and broken families that are the result of these pressures."

"The economic situation creates a lot of pressure," agrees Shula Mola. "People are terrified of being thrown out of their apartments, of having the electricity or the water turned off. And when the slightest thing goes wrong—say the refrigerator breaks down—it's tragic. A 200 shekel repair is a hole that is impossible to fill."

In Ethiopia, Jews, or the *Beta Israel*, had been artisans, experts in metalwork and ceramics, and also small tenant farmers and sheepherders who plowed their land with teams of oxen. They grew much of their own food, and their skills were highly valued in the Ethiopian highlands. Although the Beta Israel, like other highland Ethiopians, had a highly developed oral culture rich in vocabulary and nuance, nearly 90 percent were functionally illiterate. They arrived in Israel in the 1990s, when the country was in the throes of a radical transition to an economy dominated by knowledge-based industries and in which agriculture, even of the modern, high tech variety, no longer played a major role.

Much of Israel's industry, including the garment factories, which had previously been important to the Israeli economy, had folded or been relocated to countries with a cheaper labor force. Israeli society as a whole, once the most equitable in the West, was becoming more and more stratified. There was little work available for immigrants who spoke broken Hebrew and whose last job had been driving a team of oxen. Moreover, the jobs one might be able to find paid minimum wage at best, nowhere near enough to support a large family in the new Israeli economy (having ten children was not uncommon for Ethiopians). The majority of Ethiopian adults—57 percent according to one recent survey—are not part of the workforce, meaning that they are unemployed and are not actively seeking work (because they are elderly, home raising children, or have never acquired the basic skills needed to get a job). Of those looking for jobs, a whopping 26 percent are unemployed, compared to 10 percent in the general Israeli population. Of those who are employed, 28 percent are unskilled laborers—working as

"If you ask most Ethiopians, even those getting by on 2,500 or 3,000 shekels a month, if they think of themselves as poor, they'll say, 'By no means.' And the day they answer yes? That will be catastrophic."

We need a special word for those who survive with dignity on 2,500 shekels a month. And we need a word for people who don't consider themselves poor—until they think about their children.

security guards, cleaners, ushers, or attendants. Only 2 percent are employed as academics or professionals.

Poverty that finds its most immediate expression in the mind eventually affects the body as well. Dr. Anat Jaffe, an endocrinologist and one of the founders of *Tene Briut*, an organization dedicated to raising the standards of healthcare for Ethiopians in Israel, recently finished a major study of health conditions among the Ethiopian population. Although Ethiopian immigrants had virtually no incidence of diabetes, high blood pressure, or high cholesterol when they arrived in Israel, today these conditions are rampant—diabetes and high blood pressure among Ethiopians are two to three times higher than the national average. Ethiopians also experience a substantially higher rate of asthma and of depression than the general population.

Although she is still completing her analysis, Jaffe sees the Ethiopian population's health crisis as directly related to their economic situation. Diabetes and high blood pressure are conditions typical of poor populations in Western urban societies, where a high-carbohydrate diet, lack of exercise, and continuous economic worries combine to raise blood sugar and blood pressure levels. Jaffe is sure that the combination of the high incidence of chronic illnesses and insufficient treatment will eventually take its toll on Ethiopian immigrants in terms of blindness, stroke, heart disease, and early death.

Oxen in a Yoke

WHEN ETHIOPIAN IMMIGRANTS COMPARE their economic situation in Israel to the one they left behind in Ethiopia, they often site two major advantages to life in Israeli society, once the most equitable in the West, was becoming more and more stratified. There was little work available for immigrants speaking broken Hebrew whose last job was driving a team of oxen. Ethiopia: independence and a social solidarity that provided them with a substantial cushion against poverty.

"Even if you think we had nothing, I tell you we were our own masters," is a refrain heard again and again. Everyone—except the victims of war, drought, or natural disaster—had readily available shelter, access to land and water, and at least a few oxen, sheep, or goats. The families' own resources covered nearly everything they needed. If you failed in one area, it was fairly easy to pull yourself up and move to another area, where land was readily available.

Here in Israel, many Ethiopians report feeling like "Oxen in a yoke," stuck in jobs that pay minimum wage, with bosses who think nothing of humiliating them. For unskilled or semiskilled workers with no savings, economic conditions mean that you have to keep working lest your belongings be repossessed, but at the same time, you have no job security. "In Africa, everyone had his own life, his own land, his own will," says Legasa Tezazu, a seventy-four year old from Kiryat Gat, who played a key role in opening up the route to Israel via Sudan. "No one sat on your head. People were sensitive to each other's honor. In Ethiopia, our brains had a role. Now, if we do work, we just wait for someone to tell us what to do."

In Ethiopia, social solidarity networks supported the kind of independence that people now look back on so nostalgically. These circles of support were so real that they "made you feel as if you had what you needed even if you didn't," says Yosef Tazazzu. As in many rural societies, neighbors or extended family would periodically devote a day of work to helping each other—all the neighbors gathering in one person's fields for weeding, plowing, or harvesting one day, and at another neighbor's house the next day. If a family needed a house, a group of relatives or friends would band together and help them build one. Nearly every act of work or consumption carried an element of community. "I remember that every time we slaughtered an animal, we gave a quarter of the meat to our neighbors," says David Meherat. "There was no such thing as eating alone."

(continued on page 59)



Was the Invasion of Iraq A Jewish Conspiracy?

BY GREG PALAST

THERE ARE KOOKS AND CRANKS and conspiracy nuts out there who think George Bush, from the moment he took office, had some kind of *secret plan* to invade Iraq and grab control of its oil. They're wrong.

There were *two* plans. I've got them both. One is 323 pages long, the other 101 pages. How I got them, I'll explain later.

But first, let's try to answer a more pressing question. *Did the Jews do it?* I mean, after killing Jesus, did the Elders of Zion manipulate the government of the United States into invading Babylon as part of a scheme to abet the expansion of Greater Israel?

The question was first posed to me in 2004 when I was speaking at a meeting of Mobilization for Peace in San Jose. A member of the audience asked, "Put it together—Who's behind this war? Paul Wolfowitz and Elliott Abrams and the Project for a "Jew" American Century and, and, why don't you talk about *that*, huh? And ..."

But the questioner never had the full opportunity to complete his query because, flushed and red, he began to charge the stage. The peace activists attempted to detain the gentleman—whose confederates then grabbed some chairs to swing. As the Peace Center was taking on a somewhat warlike character, I chose to call in the authorities and slip out the back.

Still, his question intrigued me. As an investigative reporter, "Who's behind this war?" seemed like a reasonable challenge—and if it were a plot of Christ-killers and Illuminati, so be it. I just report the facts, ma'am.

And frankly, at first, it seemed like the gent had a point, twisted though his spin might be. There was Paul Wolfowitz, before Congress, offering Americans the bargain of the century: a *free Iraq*—not "free" as in "freedom and democracy" but free in the sense of *this won't cost us a penny*. Wolfowitz testified in March 2003: "There's a lot of money to pay for this that doesn't have to be U.S. taxpayer money."

And where would these billions come from? Wolfowitz tells us:

"It starts with the assets of the Iraqi people.... The oil revenues of that country could bring between \$50 and \$100 billion over the next two or three years."

Soldiers and airmen stand as Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz walks into a hangar to speak to military members and their families during a meeting in 2004.

This was no small matter. The vulpine Deputy Defense Secretary knew that the number one question on the minds of Americans was not, “Does Saddam really have the bomb?” but “What’s this little war going to cost us?”

However, Wolfowitz left something out of his testimony: the truth. I hunted for weeks for the source of the Pentagon’s oil revenue projections—and found them. They were wildly different from the Wolfowitz testimony. But this was not perjury. Ever since the conviction of Elliott Abrams for perjury before Congress, neither Wolfowitz nor the other Bush factotums swear an oath before testifying. If you don’t raise your hand and promise to tell the truth, “so help me, God,” you’re off the hook with federal prosecutors. How the Lord will judge that little ploy, we cannot say.

But Wolfowitz’s little numbers game can hardly count as a Great Zionist conspiracy.

That seemed to come, at first glance, in the form of the secret 101-page document, the plan for the occupation of Iraq, devised, I later learned, in late 2001. Notably, it wasn’t written by Iraqis; rather, it was promoted by the neoconservatives of the Defense Department, home of Abrams, Wolfowitz, Harold Rhode and other desktop Napoleons unafraid of moving toy tanks around the Pentagon war room. And the godfather of the plan? Ariel Cohen of the Heritage Foundation.

Nose-Twist’s Hidden Hand

THE NEOCONS’ 101-PAGE confidential document, which came to me in February 2001, just before the tanks rolled, goes boldly where no U.S. invasion plan had gone before: the complete rewrite of the conquered state’s “policies, law and regulations.” A flat-tax cap on the incomes of Iraq’s wealthiest was included as a matter of course. And this was undoubtedly history’s first military assault plan appended to a program for toughening the target nation’s copyright laws. Once the 82nd Airborne liberated Iraq, never again would the Ba’athist dictatorship threaten America with bootleg dubs of Britney Spears’s “... Baby One More Time.”

It was more like a corporate takeover, except with Abrams tanks instead of junk bonds. It didn’t strike me as the work of a Kosher Cabal for an Imperial Israel. In fact, it smelled of pork—Pig Heaven for corporate America looking for a slice of Iraq, and I suspected its porcine source. I gave it a big sniff and, sure enough, *I smelled Grover Norquist*.

Norquist is the *capo di capi* of right-wing, big-money influence peddlers in Washington. The devout Christian Norquist channeled a million dollars to the Christian Coalition to fight the devil’s tool, legalized gambling. He didn’t tell the Coalition that the loot came from an Indian tribe represented by Norquist’s associate, Jack Abramoff. The tribe didn’t want competition for its own casino operations.

I took a chance and dropped in on Norquist’s L Street office, and under a poster of his idol [“NIXON—NOW MORE THAN EVER”], Norquist took a look at the confidential 101-page plan for Iraq and practically jumped over my desk to sign it, filled with pride at seeing his baby. Yes, he promoted the privatizations, the flat tax, and the change in “intellectual” property rights law, all concerns close to the hearts and wallets of his clients.

“The Oil” on Page 73

BUT THERE WAS, WITHOUT DOUBT, one notable item in the 101-page plan for Iraq which clearly had the mark of Zion on it. On page seventy-three the plan called for the “privatization....[of] the oil and supporting industries,” the sell-off of every ounce of Iraq’s oil fields and reserves. Its mastermind, I learned, was Ariel Cohen of the Heritage Foundation.

For the neocons, this was The Big One. Behind it, no less a goal than to bring down the lynchpin of Arab power, Saudi Arabia.

It would work like this: the Saudi’s power rests on control of OPEC, the oil cartel which, as any good cartel, withholds oil from the market, kicking up prices. Sell-off Iraq’s oil fields and private companies will pump oil in their little Iraqi patches to the max. Iraq will crank out six million barrels of oil a day, bust its OPEC quota, flood the world market,

demolish OPEC and, as the price of oil fell off a cliff, Saudi Arabia would fall to its knees.

"It's a no-brainer," Cohen told me, at his office at Heritage. It was a dim little cubby, in which, in our hour or two together, the phone rang only once. For a guy who was supposed to be the mastermind of a globe-spanning Zionist scheme to destroy the Arab oil monopoly, he seemed kind of, well...*pathetic*.

And he failed. While the Norquist-promoted sell-offs, flat taxes, and copyright laws were dictated into Iraqi law by occupation chief Paul Bremer, the Cohen neo-con oil privatization died an unhappy death. What happened, Ari?

"Arab economists," he hissed, "hired by the State Department...the witches brew of the Saudi Royal family and Soviet Ostblock."

Well, the Soviet Ostblock does not exist, but the Arab economists do. I spoke with them in Riyadh, in London, in California, in confident, wry accents mixing desert and Oxford. But their authority only reflects the royal families of Houston petroleum.

Wolfowitz Dammerung: Twilight of the Neocon Gods

AFTER TWO MAD YEARS OF HUNTING, I discovered the *real* plan for Iraq, the one that keeps our troops in Fallujah. Some 323 pages long and deeply (continued on page 61)

Is the Israel Lobby Really That Powerful?

BY STEPHEN ZUNES

AS U.S. MIDDLE EAST POLICY has become increasingly controversial in the United States, more and more attention has been given to the political influence of the American Jewish community, particularly the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and its allied political action committees. The March 2006 publication of John Mearsheimer and Steve Walt's article "The Israeli Lobby" in the *London Review of Books* received enormous attention from supporters and critics alike.

Just how important are American Jews in general, and the Israel lobby in particular, in influencing the direction of U.S. Middle East policy?

Despite the efforts of some to blame broader U.S. Middle East policy, including the disastrous invasion and occupation of Iraq, on the Israel lobby, the United States' interest in the greater Middle East—particularly in its oil resources—pre-dated and is of greater significance in formulating broader U.S. policy. It is indeed bizarre to insinuate that U.S. policy makers would knowingly pursue policies that run counter to what they see, however incorrectly and short-sightedly, as being in the best interest of the United States. President George W. Bush is perfectly capable of doing stupid things himself without the Israel lobby forcing his hand.

Even in regard to U.S. policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, however, the role of the Israel lobby has often been exaggerated.

How Powerful is the Israel Lobby?

THERE IS LITTLE QUESTION that mainstream and conservative Jewish organizations have mobilized considerable lobbying resources, financial contributions from the Jewish community, and citizen pressure on the news media and other forums of public discourse in support of the Israeli government. At times, they have even created a climate of intimidation against those (myself included) who speak out for peace and human rights and support the Palestinians' right of self-determination.

It is wrong, however, to assume that members of Congress so stridently support the policies of the Israeli government because their careers would be at stake if they did otherwise. Indeed, the majority of the most outspoken congressional supporters of the Israeli government are from some of the safest districts in the country and need no support from pro-Israel PACs or Jewish donors in order to be re-elected.

A number of cases are often used as examples of the supposed power of the Israel lobby to defeat incumbents who dare challenge U.S. support for Israeli policies, but upon examination, these cases prove to be less clear cut than they are often presented to be.

For example, Illinois Republican Congressman Paul Findley was indeed targeted by pro-Israel PACs in his unsuccessful re-election bid in 1982, but he was also targeted by pro-union, pro-environmentalist, pro-feminist, and pro-Democratic PACs. Findley represented a rural district when farm prices were low and was running in an off year election as the nominee of the incumbent party in the White House. Not surprisingly, a number of other Republican incumbents from the Midwest, who were not targeted by pro-Israel PACs, were also defeated that year.

Similarly, when Georgia Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney was defeated in the Democratic primary for re-nomination in 2002, some pro-Israel PACs had contributed to the campaign of her challenger. The bulk of her challenger's contributions, however, came from downtown Atlanta business interests and right-wing groups incensed at McKinney's outspoken opposition to the Bush administration in a number of other areas. Georgia is one of the few states that allow cross-over voting, and thousands of Republicans in McKinney's district voted in the Democratic primary that year providing the margin of her defeat. Though McKinney herself—who recaptured her seat two years later—has acknowledged the diversity of interests responsible for her defeat, there are still those who blame her defeat, like that of Findley, primarily on the Jews.

In any case, Congress only rarely plays a crucial role in the development of America's foreign policy, and recent decades have seen international relations become increasingly the prerogative of the executive branch. During this period, Congress has played a limited, and largely reactive, role in foreign policy decisions. Indeed, it is naive to assume that foreign policy decision making in the United States sufficiently pluralistic enough for any one lobbying group, particularly one associated with a small ethnic minority, to have so much influence.

Blaming the Israel lobby also assumes that U.S. policy towards the Middle East should somehow be more enlightened than it is towards other third world regions where the United States has strategic interests. For example, no Moroccan-American lobby has been needed to convince the United States to support Morocco's thirty-year occupation of Western Sahara, and no Indonesian-American lobby was responsible for successive U.S. administrations backing Indonesia's brutal quarter-century occupation of East Timor. Unfortunately, the United States government is perfectly capable on its own of supporting allied governments that invade, occupy, colonize, and oppress weaker neighbors without a domestic ethnic lobbying group somehow pulling the strings.

The Israel lobby appears powerful because its agenda largely corresponds with perceived American strategic priorities, which are routinely at odds with moral and legal concerns. While it is true that the lobby pushes the United States to support policies that conflict with basic standards of human rights and international law and that undercut arms control and nonproliferation efforts, when and in what region has the United States *ever* consistently pursued policies that have supported human rights, international law, arms control, and

nonproliferation? If AIPAC and its allied PACs did not exist, would U.S. policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict be any more enlightened than U.S. policies have been in recent decades regarding conflicts in, for example, Central America or Southern Africa?

Furthermore, U.S. presidents have taken on the lobby directly when they believed it was in America's interest to do so and have generally won handily—for example, President Eisenhower in 1956 during the Suez crisis, President Carter in 1978 following Israel's first invasion of Lebanon, President Reagan in 1981 over the AWACS sale to Saudi Arabia, and the first President Bush in 1991 in regard to the proposed loan guarantees for Israeli settlements.

Throughout most of the 1950s and 1960s, it was widely assumed in Washington that there could never be diplomatic relations between the United States and Communist China because of the supposed power of the pro-Taiwanese "China lobby." However, once President Nixon, Secretary of State Kissinger and other national security elites realized it was in the national interest to open up to "Red China," there was little the pro-Taiwan lobbyists could do about it. Similarly, if there ever came a time when those in power in Washington decided a major shift in policy toward Israel was necessary, they could effect one as well.

The Military-Industrial Complex

PLACING SO MUCH EMPHASIS ON AIPAC and its allied groups ignores other special interests and ideologues of various stripes who also play a role in backing U.S. support for the Israeli government. These include fundamentalist Christians who believe a militarily dominant Israel is necessary for the Second Coming of Christ, older liberals who maintain an overly sentimental conception of Israel, and the large numbers of anti-Arab racists and Islamaphobes who simply hate Palestinians.

The most important special interest pressing for strong U.S. support for the Israeli government is the arms industry, which contributes more than twice as much money to congressional campaigns and lobbying efforts as do AIPAC and other pro-Israel groups. The military-industrial complex has a considerable stake in supporting massive arms shipments to Israel and other Middle Eastern allies of the United States and can exert enormous pressure on members of Congress who do not support their agenda. It is far easier, for example, for a member of Congress to challenge a \$60 million arms deal to Indonesia than the more than \$2 billion of arms sent annually to Israel, particularly when so many congressional districts include factories that produce this military hardware.

This benefit to American defense contractors is multiplied by the fact that every major arms transfer to Israel creates a new demand by Arab states (most of which can pay in hard currency from oil exports) for additional American weapons to respond to Israel. In one telling incident, Israel announced in 1991 its acceptance of a proposal by arms control advocates to freeze arms exports to the Middle East. For Israel, this made sense from the point of view of its defense needs: it had clear qualitative superiority in weapons and was the only Middle Eastern state with significant domestic arms production capabilities. However, the United States, the very country that claimed most adamantly to be concerned for Israel's defense, effectively blocked the proposal.

In late 1993, a bipartisan group of seventy-eight senators wrote President Clinton insisting that U.S. military aid to Israel must be maintained despite significant advances in the peace process. They justified continued aid on the grounds of massive arms procurement by Arab states, neglecting to note that 80 percent of those arms transfers originated in the United States. If these senators, who represented more than three-quarters of the upper house of Congress, had really been concerned about Israeli security, they would have voted to block these arms transfers. However, it appears that the priority of both the executive branch and Congress in recent decades has not been safeguarding Israeli security, but rather maintaining the flow of American arms exports. These distorted American priorities have even influenced the Israelis themselves: for example, Israel did not actively oppose the 1992 sale of seventy-two highly sophisticated F-15E jet fighters to Saudi Arabia. The reason was simple: in return for



Steps Toward a Jewish Urban Theology

Unlocked Gates

By Jill Jacobs

MY LOVE AFFAIR WITH CITIES BEGAN when I was eight. Walking through Manhattan during a family vacation, I was struck with the realization that people lived here—that most of those rushing through midtown were not tourists like my family, but bona-fide New Yorkers. The lives of these strangers, in their business suits and heels, seemed vastly more glamorous than my own third-grade existence in Framingham, Massachusetts.

Accordingly, I attended college in New York City and, since then, have spent time in Washington, DC, Jerusalem, and Chicago. Eventually, I settled back on the Upper West Side, only nine blocks from my first Manhattan home.



The encounter with those different from ourselves is the basis of Jewish urban theology.

A few decades ago, many would have pronounced the city dead. In the 1950s and 1960s, the convergence of a series of federal policies and new social norms conspired to draw my grandparents and other members of the middle class into the suburbs. My parents moved even farther west, to a town whose residents commuted not into Boston, but into even more distant suburbs. Many of my high school classmates had never even been to Boston. The city was an afterthought; life was in the suburbs.

Today, cities have experienced a renaissance. Instead of conjuring up images of violence, the word “city” now carries a sense of vibrancy. More families are choosing to raise their children in the city, and many empty nesters are buying apartments in central cities. Urban poverty persists and, in many cases, has been exacerbated by gentrification. But while urban problems have not gone away, earlier declarations of death have proven premature.

As a rabbi, I naturally am hungry for a Jewish religious context through which to understand and deepen my commitment to urban life. While Christianity has developed a sophisticated urban theology, in which city ministry becomes a means of restoring the body of Christ and of fulfilling God’s plan for creation, Judaism has no parallel tradition of urban theology. This article will take the first steps toward creating a Jewish urban theology by addressing the following questions: What differentiates urban space from other places? How should our environment affect or intersect with our way of being in the world? Is there a religious purpose to strengthening the city?

New Jerusalem

FIRST, A DEFINITION IS IN ORDER. To paraphrase Justice Potter Stewart, most of us would say that we know a city when we see it. We associate cities with tall buildings, crowded streets, and perpetual activity. Not all cities, of course, fit this image. In the United States, a city is usually defined according to its governmental structure—cities have mayors and councils, while towns are run by town meeting or selectmen.

Rabbinic sources offer a few clues toward a definition of a city. Most directly, the Mishnah (the first layer of the Jewish oral law) defines a city as “[a place] in which there are ten *batlanim* (people of leisure). If there are fewer than this, it is a town” (m. Megillah 1:3).

In his commentary on the Mishnah, Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) defines the term *batlanim* as “ten people in the synagogue who have no work other than attending to the needs of the community, reading Torah and watching over the synagogue.” In other words, a city is a place with the capacity to maintain communal structures and to employ people to tend to residents’ physical and spiritual needs. The necessity of employing people to serve these communal needs reflects two simultaneous realities: the needs of a city are too great to be fulfilled through volunteer labor alone; and, the nature of a city as places where migrants gather means that residents may not be able to rely on nearby family for support. At the very least, according to these texts, a city must support the level of communal organization necessary to satisfy the needs of residents. Until recently, the reality that cities were uniquely capable of sustaining the physical and spiritual needs of residents prompted most Jews to cluster in areas with sufficient Jewish population density to support a kosher butcher, several synagogues, and other essential services.

The idea that a city must provide for the well-being of its residents is reflected also in the writings of the biblical prophets, who envision the restored Jerusalem as an idyllic city. While the prophets speak specifically about the rebuilding of Jerusalem, we can extrapolate from their comments some ideas about the ideal character of any city. Isaiah, for instance, describes a time when:

The voice of weeping shall be no more heard in [Jerusalem], nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more there an infant of days, nor an old man who has not filled his days... And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. (65:17–24)

This passage amounts to a comprehensive social service agenda: in the rebuilt Jerusalem, neither war nor disease takes people before their time. Every person enjoys adequate housing and a reliable food source. Weeping ceases, presumably because people are able to live in comfort and without fear. We might also assume that the absence of visible pain speaks to a city in which residents hear and respond to the needs of others.

While this ideal city may seem unreachable, traditional texts offer some guidance for creating cities that provide for their inhabitants. The Talmud prohibits scholars from living in cities that lack “a court able to give out punishments, a *tzedakah* fund [that is distributed appropriately], a synagogue, a bathhouse, a toilet, a doctor, a craftsman, a butcher, a teacher for children,” and, according to one opinion, certain kinds of produce (Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 17b). To this list, Maimonides adds a scribe and available fresh water (*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot De’ot* 4:23).

Per these texts, a city, at the very least, should attend to residents’ health and hygiene, as well as to their essential material and religious needs. A city should also provide services for the poor and should enact a justice system that maintains order and protects innocents.

Rabbinic law further mandates that residents of a community contribute to the health and upkeep of that community:

[A person must reside in a city] thirty days to become liable for contributing to the soup kitchen, three months for the *tzedakah* fund, six months for the clothing fund, nine months for the burial fund, and twelve months for contributing to the repair of the city walls? (Talmud, *Baba Batra* 8a)

According to the hierarchy of responsibility outlined in this text, even a brief sojourn in a city confers responsibility to care for the immediate needs of the poor. One who stays slightly longer must also care for the less immediate needs (continued on page 61)

Migrating Thoughts

BY ARYEH COHEN

IN THE YEARS BETWEEN the two world wars, Yiddish-speaking European Jewish Socialists often spoke of *doikayt* or “here-ness”—a slogan proclaiming that Jews should work to alleviate immediate social inequalities in their own land rather than focusing their yearnings and messianic ideals of justice on a country elsewhere. *Doikayt* was often set against Zionism. In retrospect, history did not treat those who stayed in Europe well. The ideology of *doikayt* itself, however, has very deep and important roots in Jewish consciousness.

Advocating “here-ness,” the prophet Jeremiah said: “And seek the well-being of the city in which you dwell, and pray to God in its behalf, for in its peace you shall find peace” (29:7). Rav Yehudah, almost a thousand years later in the Babylonian Talmud (Tractate Ketubot 110a), said: “One who lives in Babylonia, it is as if he lives in the Land of Israel.” Rav Yehudah went even further, however. He is also credited with saying (Tractate Ketubot 110a): “Anyone who ascends from Babylonia to the Land of Israel has transgressed a positive commandment.” This latter statement transforms the idea of

exile as a transitory state of punishment into Diaspora—an obligation and a mission.

We can understand the Babylonian diaspora as setting the stage for the rest of Jewish history. The Jewish community is now heir to and bearer of a diasporic, migrant tradition. Since the Temple's fall, Jews have lived in at least two languages and two cultures. For the most part, this dual identity has enriched both Jews and the peoples with whom we have lived. Whether we migrated for economic or political reasons, whether we migrated to Europe, Africa, parts of Asia, or the Arabian Peninsula, Jews have created a living civilization in this two thousand years of displacement that is one of the treasures of the world.

This diasporic history lays a claim on us. We know that borders can mean life or death. We are aware of the artificiality of the lines on the map that separate prosperity from poverty, security from oppression. Our history commands us to recognize the humanity of migrants and their reasons for migration.

And so, I was very troubled at the May 1 march for immigrants' rights in Los Angeles. Where were the Jews? There was a small contingent from the Progressive Jewish Alliance and a token contingent from the Sholem Community. We were a drop in the bucket amongst the four hundred thousand demonstrators. This, in itself, was not necessarily bad—it was good to be reminded that there was a Latino community and culture which defined Los Angeles at least as much as the Anglo culture did—but I would have expected to see a much larger Jewish turnout.

During the march I walked next to a woman who had immigrated years before from Mizoram in the state of Asam in Northeastern India. She was a history professor at a local college. We talked shop for a while—tests, research, end of the semester. Then she mentioned that many of her friends were killed during the insurgency, which has been taking place for the past fifteen years. Her mother was forced to flee to neighboring Manipur, where she now lives. I had no idea that there was a Mizoram, let alone an insurgency. My new companion is one of the few who are recording oral history in the Mizo language and translating it.

During the four miles of the walk, I thought about how much we don't know about those with whom we share space. This is what the French Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas refers to as "being half asleep and half awake." Levinas uses the biblical model of a city of refuge to describe our contemporary large urban areas. The Torah commanded that six cities of refuge be set aside as sanctuary for those who had killed by accident, so that the relatives of their victims would not avenge their deaths. These are people who are subjectively innocent but objectively guilty. They did not intend to murder, but someone was killed as a result of their actions.

Levinas writes that this is the situation in large urban areas. These are places where actions I take will inevitably impact people whom I have never met. In order to approximate a humane urbanism—an urban society based on a notion of justice—we each must strive to be as awake as possible to what we do. We must be aware of our obligations to those who also live in our cities. The Sages (in Tractate Baba Bathra 8b) define residency in a city in terms of obligation, not rights. One can draw from the welfare fund even if one is only passing through. However, when one establishes residency, one incurs the obligations of contributing to the welfare fund.

I fear that the Jewish community has lost the edge that comes from having stood outside the gates of the city and then crossed over legally or illegally (as my grandfather did). Today's Jewish community lives inside the gates, established, prosperous, and satisfied. We are now the ones who watch the gates from the inside wondering who is coming in. Perhaps, as Bob Dylan wrote, "this is what salvation must be like after a while." How sad. How depressing. ■

Aryeh Cohen is associate professor of Rabbinic literature at the University of Judaism. He is the author of Rereading Talmud: Gender, Law and the Poetics of Sugyot. He is also the immediate past president of the Progressive Jewish Alliance.

Jewish Seminars for Justice

BY OR N. ROSE

THIS PAST JANUARY, I had the privilege of serving as a scholar-in-residence for the American Jewish World Service (AJWS) rabbinical student delegation to El Salvador. Thirty seminarians and staff traveled to this small Latin American country to meet with Christian activists, work with peasant farmers, and live with rural villagers for ten days. The aim of this annual trip was, to quote AJWS president Ruth Messinger, to help cultivate a cohort of “global rabbis”—clergy who understand the complexities of fulfilling the Jewish mission of *tikkun olam*.

One outcome of this trip was the creation of a new network of Jewish seminarians working together on social justice issues. Rather than beginning by creating an organizational structure, we organized around a compelling issue: the genocide in Darfur. Everyone agreed that as Jews we have a particular responsibility to speak out against ethnic cleansing. We also knew that AJWS was a major player in the national Save Darfur Coalition and that it could provide us with much needed guidance. And so, *Jewish Seminars for Justice* was born.

Our work has already begun. We brought a delegation of fifty rabbinical students to Washington, D.C. for the Save Darfur Rally (April 30, 2006) and followed that with a set of activist trainings on faith-based organizing, media relations, and genocide intervention. Seminarians are now engaged in a range of follow-up activities, including *Darfur Yomi* (a play on *daf yomi*—the custom of studying a page of Talmud every day), a program in which students are calling or writing various governmental officials daily, urging them to help the people of Sudan.

As we discussed the future of this nascent group, we spoke openly about the challenges of holding together a fragile coalition of seminarians with different religious and political views. Nonetheless, the delegates pledged to continue to work together to discover points of commonality. In a Jewish community fractured by infighting, and in a world plagued by religious intolerance, this is a promising beginning. ■

Or N. Rose, a regular contributor to Tikkun, teaches at the Rabbinical School of Hebrew College in Newton, MA. He recently served as a scholar-in-residence for the AJWS rabbinical student delegation to El Salvador.



Help the People of Darfur

Urge the president and other international leaders to:

- Provide sufficient humanitarian aid to Darfur and ensure that it reaches those in need.
- Allocate funding for and provide support to an international peacekeeping force in Darfur.
- Ensure that those responsible for the atrocities are held accountable, and that the survivors of the genocide are compensated.

To learn more about the genocide in Darfur, please visit:
www.ajws.org, www.genocideintervention.net, and
www.savedarfur.org.

(continued from page 36) culture of death with a culture of life.

Bringing Liberation Theology Home

AS A RESULT OF THE MEETING OF 200 liberation theologians at the 2005 World Social Forum, which Boff attended, Father Luis Carlos Suzin, a Franciscan Friar, is traveling around the world, creating an international network of liberation theologians.

Theologian Jon Sobrino has challenged people of the developed world to "take responsibility for being a part of the structural problem that contributes to third world poverty" [and] at least learn about what is happening in other countries."

If indeed on the basis of the story of Jesus, Christians can conclude that God's glory is that all of creation should live and prosper, then much is still to be done in order to be true to the Spirit of Life.

In Layo, Peru, Sister Margarita takes me into the library and shows me shelves of books recently published in Spanish on liberation theology. She tells me how local representatives of the church stood alongside *campesinos* last year in a protest against the pollution and land expropriation of a multinational mining company.

"For me the theology of liberation is not a doctrine or a theory, it is a way of life."

Tomorrow she will begin another day of work, of praxis, teaching that a just god does not want poverty or oppression by class, sex, or race. ■

Lisa Garrigues is a writer who lives in Argentina. She can be reached at lisagarrigues@yahoo.com.

WHY PUSHKIN?

(continued from page 40) The male night nurse, an Israeli Arab, entered with a tray of pills and immediately shut the window. "Bats at night," he said in Hebrew. My roommate and I looked blankly at him, and he began to pantomime bats flying around the room. "Don't open it," he said sternly, shaking his finger at us. "No bats."

When he left the room to continue his rounds, the Russian woman resolutely opened the window again.

A little later Jonathan and his daughters returned from dinner and the room hummed with the friendly, life-affirming sound of their Hebrew chatter. By this time the Russian woman had dropped off to sleep.

A slim, young doctor, apparently her Russian nephew, came into our room and briskly shut the window that had remained open. Gently awakening her, he slipped the privacy curtain around her bed and began to speak in Russian. Suddenly the woman's voice rose in alarm: "Nyet!" she cried out. We heard the softer voice of her nephew explaining something to her, continuing patiently when she interrupted him in a tearful, frightened voice.

"What's he saying?" we asked Jonathan, our only hope at understanding.

He strained to hear. "I think he's telling her that she needs to have another heart operation. The last one failed."

"Oh, no," we said as one.

"She has to stay in the hospital," Jonathan continued. "It sounds critical. He says the chances of success aren't very good."

The voices behind the curtain subsided and the nephew left the room, nodding at us solemnly on his way out. In a few minutes we heard the Russian woman begin to wail, a desperate, piercing sound. "What can we do?" I asked.

Nobody answered. We could witness her pain but not heal it.

We sat together in silence, listening as she continued to weep. All the sorrows of the world seemed to be expressed in her tears. I thought about life's inevitable move toward death and how we try to stop it by holding onto those things that are familiar. The Russian woman's beloved Pushkin. The ritual laws of the Lubavitchers. Even my pride in being self-sufficient. But sometimes the veil is lifted and we glimpse what lies beyond. In these moments, the truth is revealed and we know that there is nothing we can do except embrace death as we embrace life.

But none of us can stay with this knowledge for long. Soon the Russian woman's weeping subsided, she blew her nose, and pulled back the privacy curtain. Her face was mottled and red, but she nodded at Jonathan, her obvious favorite in our crowd. He smiled kindly back at her. "Pushkin?" he said.

She was silent for a moment, then drew in a long, determined breath. "Da!" she answered with increased vigor. ■

Nan Fink Gefen was the founding publisher of Tikkun. She's the author of two books about Jewish spirituality and is currently the president of Chochmat HaLev, a center of Jewish meditation in the Bay Area.

THE ART OF LIVING

(continued from page 46) Here in Israel, help from the extended family can be expected in times of extreme crisis—a house burns down, a kidney transplant is needed. Ethiopians know how to respond to emergencies: when the extent of the famine in parts of Ethiopia became known last year in Israel, the poverty-stricken community raised over 300,000 shekels in contributions of 10 or 20 shekels a person. But on the day-to-day level of economic hardship, few are in a position to help others with the unending cycle of bills. Still, organizations modeled after patterns of self-help that existed in Ethiopia—everything from free loan societies to neighborhood watch groups—are beginning to emerge in Israel. "Self-help groups were out of fashion for a long time," says Shula Mola, "because they were considered to belong to *there*. Now they are coming back into vogue, as is everything Ethiopian."

The Children's Israeli Eyes

IF FAMILY CONNECTIONS REMAIN at least a symbolic source of strength for the Ethiopian community in Israel, the link between generations is its greatest source of vulnerability. The younger generation of Ethiopians, those growing up in Israel,

THE ART OF LIVING

don't share their parents' pride in knowing how to make do with little. What parents see as survival tactics, children interpret as miserliness. "The children have Israeli eyes," says Tezazu. "They want what their friends have, what they see on television. What hurts most is when I can't give my children what I know they should have—money for a school outing, for extracurricular activities, or to buy a computer and connect to the Internet."

"In Ethiopia, your economic situation did not affect your children's ability to develop, to learn, or to have a future. Here it does. That is a most significant difference between Israel and Ethiopia," says Meheret. "Ethiopian children who realize that they are not getting what they should—what other children are getting—feel alienated from society." Mola adds that "they attribute not having what other children have to being Ethiopian."

Living on Medicine

HAVING SPENT SOME TIME IN ETHIOPIA myself, I think it is possible that Ethiopians in Israel are exaggerating the ease and pleasure of life in the Ethiopian village. "Where were people healthier?" I ask Lagasa Tezazu, his cousin Yosef, and Yosef's wife Tefato. "In Ethiopia," they all agree emphatically, "people were as healthy as oxen." "But weren't there infectious diseases that killed you there?" I insist. "Yes, there were," answers Tefato. "But if you died, you died, and if you lived, you lived and were healthy. There weren't people who lived all the time on medicines, like half of the Ethiopians here, with high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes."

"And famine?" Here I turned towards Lagasa, the eldest of the group. "Weren't their times of drought and terrible famine?"

"Not where the Jews lived," he insisted, implying that the mere presence of Jews brought blessing to the region. "Wherever the Jews lived there was always enough rain."

Eskimos, the linguists tell us, have fifty words for snow which describe all the subtleties of textures and settings. We have a poverty of language about poverty. As streams of immigrants arrive from distant lands, jobs that were once necessary become outdated, and money is hoarded and monopolized in new ways, we need to develop a vocabulary through which we can recognize the situations and conditions that are created. We need a word that describes people who pay all their bills on time because they are afraid of having their possessions taken away. We need a special word for those who survive with dignity on 2,500 shekels a month. We need one that means "nostalgia for the independence and togetherness of the rural village." And we need a word for people who don't consider themselves poor—until they think about their children. ■

Micha Odenheimer is a writer, rabbi, and activist living in Jerusalem. He is a frequent contributor to Ha'aretz. This article is an updated and expanded version of an article that first appeared in Eretz Acheret in 2004.

WAS THE INVASION OF IRAQ A JEWISH CONSPIRACY?

(continued from page 49) confidential, it was drafted at the James A. Baker III Institute under the strict guidance of Big Oil's minions, the culmination of a committee including Ken Lay, key players from the Council on Foreign Relations (who began their work in December 2000), a State Department invasion-planning session in Walnut Creek, California, in February 2001, and the gathering of oil chiefs with Dick Cheney in March 2003, where the map of the oil fields of Iraq was carefully reviewed.

Once discovered, several of the players agreed to speak with me (not, to the chagrin of a couple, realizing that I rarely hold such conversions without a wire). Most forthright was Philip Carroll, former CEO of Shell Oil USA, who was flown into Baghdad on a C-17 to make sure there would be no neocon monkey business in our newest oil fields. It had been a very good war for Big Oil, with tripled oil prices meaning tripled profits. In Houston, I asked Carroll, a commanding, steel-straight chief executive, about Cohen's oil privatization plan, the anti-Saudi "no-brainer."

"I would agree with that statement" Carroll told me, "privatization is a no-brainer. It would only be thought about by someone with no brains."

Bush world is divided in two: neocons on one side, and the Establishment (which includes the oil companies and the Saudis) on the other. The plan the Establishment created, crafted by Houston oil men, called for locking up Iraq's oil with agreements between a new state oil company under "profit-sharing agreements" with "IOCs" (International Oil Companies). The combine could "enhance [Iraq's] government's relationship with OPEC," it read, by holding the line on quotas and thereby upholding high prices.

So there you have it. Wolfowitz and his neocon clique—bookish, foolish, vainglorious—had their asses kicked utterly, finally, and convincingly by the powers of petroleum, the Houston-Riyadh Big Oil axis.

Between the neocons and Big Oil, it wasn't much of a contest. The end-game was crushing, final. The Israelites had lost again in the land of Babylon.

And to make certain the arriviste neocons got the point, public punishment was exacted, from exile to demotion to banishment. In January 2005, neocon pointman Douglas Feith resigned from the Defense Department; his assistant Larry Franklin later was busted for passing documents to pro-Israel lobbyists. The State Department's knuckle-dragging enforcer of neocon orthodoxies, John Bolton, was booted from Washington to New York to the powerless post of U.N. Ambassador.

Finally, on March 16, 2005, second anniversary of the invasion, neocon leader of the pack Wolfowitz was cast out of the Pentagon war room and tossed into the World Bank, moving from the testosterone-powered, war-making decision center to the lending office for Bangladeshi chicken farmers.

"The realists," crowed the triumphant editor of the journal of the Council on Foreign Relations, "have defeated the fantasists!"

So much for the Big Zionist Conspiracy that supposedly

directed this war. A half- dozen confused Jews, wandering in the policy desert a long distance from mainstream Jewish views, armed only with Leo Strauss' silly aphorisms, were no match for Texas oil majors and OPEC potentates with a throw weight of half a trillion barrels of oil. ■

Investigative Reporter Greg Palast is the author of the bestseller, The Best Democracy Money Can Buy. This essay is adapted from his new book, Armed Madhouse: Who's Afraid of Osama Wolf?, China Floats, Bush Sinks, the Scheme to Steal '08, No Child's Behind Left and other Dispatches from the Front Lines of the Class War (Dutton, 2006).

IS THE ISRAEL LOBBY REALLY THAT POWERFUL?

(continued from page 52) many groups on the Left, Peace Action is more prone to complaining about the power of "The Lobby" and its affiliated PACs than to lobbying or making support of a more moderate U.S. policy a condition of their own PAC contributions. Similarly, over the years such prominent liberal lobbying groups as the Coalition for a New Foreign Policy, National Impact, and Demilitarization for Democracy have refused to include Israel in their otherwise ambitious lobbying agendas to publically link arms transfers with a lack of respect for human rights.

A lobby may appear a lot more powerful than it really is if there is not an effective counter-lobby. Indeed, the myth of an all-powerful Israel Lobby is so pervasive that it has scared off funding for progressive organizations that could conceivably challenge it.

For those of us with white, Protestant backgrounds, there is a tendency to project our own failings through a usually subconscious anti-Semitism. Rather than making the effort to overcome our own timidity, we instead complain that Jews are "pushy." Rather than getting our own financial house in order, we instead complain that Jews are "money-grubbing." Similarly, rather than successfully organizing to change U.S. policy on Israel-Palestine, we adopt this fatalistic attitude that the Israel lobby is too powerful to overcome.

While the lobby may certainly make things more challenging for those of us working for a more enlightened U.S. policy toward Israel and Palestine, it is inaccurate to blame them for the overall direction of U.S. policy. In many respects, the forces pushing America's policy toward Israel and Palestine are even more powerful and entrenched. But popular movements for peace and justice have overcome such obstacles before.

Current U.S. policy is not only bad for the Palestinians, who are currently bearing the brunt of it, but ultimately for Israel and the United States as well. And therein lies the hope of creating a popular movement strong enough to overcome the powerful interests that have until now led U.S. Middle East policy in such a dangerous and self-defeating direction. ■

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UNLOCKED GATES

(continued from page 55) of the poor. One who indicates an intention to settle there, either by staying there for a year or, according to another text, by buying a home there, assumes full responsibility for the safety of the city's residents. A person who moves into a new city cannot say, "I came from somewhere else. I have no relationship to the people among whom I am living, and therefore no responsibility toward them." Rather, residence in a city automatically forces one into encounter with people different from oneself and makes one responsible for these people's well-being.

Unlocked Gates

ONE MEDIEVAL TEXT FURTHER DEVELOPS this idea of cities as places that force strangers into contact with one another and responsibility for one another.

In the *Shulhan Arukh*, the central code of Jewish law, Joseph Caro classifies public space as follows: "[The streets and markets of a public space] do not have walls and even if they have walls, these are interrupted by gates." (Rabbi Moshe Isserles adds: "and their doors are not locked at night").

While the gated communities of America's suburbs protect residents from chance encounters with people of different classes, backgrounds, or life experiences, the public space of the city is open to all. Per the addition of Rabbi Moshe Isserles, a younger contemporary of Caro, whose glosses appear in the text of the *Shulhan Arukh*, the gates of public spaces are not locked even at night, when residents might be especially scared of intrusion. Living in a city in which the gates are not locked, and in which large numbers of people come in and out, forces residents to learn both to trust strangers, and to take responsibility for contributing to the safety of others.

The openness of the city can be difficult for many to accept. During my time in Chicago, for example, I witnessed an effort on the part of residents of the predominantly white and wealthy Lincoln Park neighborhood to evict a shelter housed in a local church and occupied primarily by African-American men. In the words of one neighborhood resident, "I want my children to be exposed to city life—just not in our backyard."

Contemporary fears of the city reflect biblical depictions of cities evil enough to warrant divine destruction. Early portrayals of Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the *ir hanidachat*—the city that has been overtaken by idolatrous practice—may dissuade us from believing that cities can ever be holy places. However, as internal biblical and rabbinic commentaries suggest, cities become evil when their residents become blind to the humanity and the needs of others. Rabbinic interpretations of the story of the tower of Babel describe a place in which residents cared more about the building of a tower than about the well-being of the residents. In an intra-biblical comment, the prophet Ezekiel defines the sin of Sodom as "pride, fullness of bread, and careless ease... she did not strengthen the hand of the poor and needy" (16: 49). In the *ir hanidachat*, residents replace worship of God with worship of idols and,

Israeli acquiescence, the senior Bush Administration offered yet another increase in U.S. arms transfers to Israel.

The disproportionate amount of U.S. foreign aid going to Israel is not indicative of the power of the Israel lobby. In reality, the vast majority of U.S. military aid to Israel goes to powerful American arms manufacturers, and most of the economic aid goes to pay interest to American banks for previous loans for arms purchases. Furthermore, for every dollar of U.S. aid to Israel, Israel has to pay two to three dollars in personnel costs, training, and spare parts. In short, most U.S. aid to Israel is not a favor given to the Israeli people as a result of the lobby but is instead essentially a subsidy for powerful American corporations.

Why Blame the Israel Lobby?

THERE IS SOMETHING QUITE CONVENIENT and uncomfortably familiar about the tendency to blame an allegedly powerful and wealthy group of Jews working behind the scenes for the overall direction of an increasingly controversial U.S. policy. Indeed, like similar exaggerated claims of Jewish power at other times in history, it serves as a means of getting those who really have the power off the hook by diverting the blame to a convenient scapegoat. This is not to say that everyone who expresses concern about the power of AIPAC is an anti-Semite, but the way in which this exaggerated view of Jewish power parallels historic anti-Semitism should give pause.

Another noted professor of international relations, A.F.K. Organski, observed how "The belief that the Jewish lobby... is very powerful has permitted top U.S. policy makers to use 'Jewish influence' or 'domestic politics' to explain the policies... that U.S. leaders see as working to U.S. advantage, policies they would pursue regardless of Jewish opinion on the matter." He goes on to note how when Arab leaders have raised concerns about U.S. policies, "U.S. officials need give only a helpless shrug, a regretful sigh, and explain how it is not the administration's fault, but that policy makers must operate within the constraints imposed by powerful domestic pressures molding congressional decisions." My interviews with half a dozen Arab foreign ministers and deputy foreign ministers have revealed that indeed U.S. diplomats will routinely blame the Israel lobby in order to get the U.S. government off the hook.

Those of us who have lobbied on Capitol Hill for a more balanced U.S. policy have routinely, but always off-the-record, been told by Congressional aides and sometimes members of Congress themselves that they are not to blame for their pro-Likud voting record. Such claims, however, are disingenuous. For example, in 1991, in a meeting with a prominent staffer of Washington Democratic Senator Brock Adams in which I raised concerns about the senator's hard-line anti-Palestinian voting record, the staffer insisted that the only reason that Adams took such positions was to appease wealthy Jewish campaign contributors. He insisted that if we really wanted to change the senator's position, our priority should be to work for campaign finance reform. In early 1992, a major sex scandal forced Senator Adams to abandon his re-election bid and any hope of ever again being elected to public office. In his remaining year as a lame duck senator, however, he continued to vote as strongly as ever in defense of Israeli government policies. In short, Jewish money had nothing to do with Adams' anti-Palestinian extremism.

Still another factor is the failure of progressive movements in the United States to challenge U.S. policy toward Israel and Palestine in an effective manner. For years, many mainstream peace and human rights groups have avoided Israel and Palestine, even while doing exemplary work for peace and human rights elsewhere. Groups that take a progressive position on Israel-Palestine rarely make it a legislative priority. For example, Peace Action, the largest and most influential peace organization in the country, routinely endorses House and Senate candidates who take extreme anti-Palestinian positions and defend Israeli Occupation policies. Ironically, they recently posted a link to the Mearsheimer/Walt article on their website's homepage. Like *(continued on page 61)*

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presumably, prioritize satisfying the desires of these false gods over following divine laws governing human behavior.

One rabbinic text deepens the negative perception of cities, by suggesting a four-part blessing to be said upon entering and leaving a city (Tosefta *Brakhot* 6:16). Cities, according to this passage, are so dangerous that one enters and leaves only through divine provenance. The Talmud's explanation of this text, however, complicates the picture of a city by suggesting that one needs to pray only when entering a city in which there is no legal system, or in which there are no guarantees that an innocent stranger accused of a crime will find someone to plead in his/her defense (Talmud *Brakhot* 60a). Again, cities are not inherently dangerous, but become dangerous only when those who occupy the city fail to protect one another.

The potential, indicated in these texts, for residents of a city to ignore the needs of others resonates with the loneliness and anonymity that many city dwellers experience. It is easy to live in a high-rise and never meet one's neighbors, let alone share in these neighbors' pain and joy. The constant sight of poverty and suffering can easily desensitize us to the pain of others. What is wrong with cities is their potential to become alienating and dehumanizing places, in which residents become deaf to the needs of their neighbors, let alone those of strangers.

But even the Bible offers hope to city dwellers. In the story of Sodom, God agrees to save the city from destruction if ten righteous people are found there. (This story becomes the basis for the *minyan*—the Jewish prayer quorum.) This bargain speaks to the potential of a few people to save a city from its dehumanizing potential. In our own time, cities can be alienating, but can also be places that encourage “eyes on the street,” to use a phrase made famous by Jane Jacobs, the urban scholar and activist who died this April. Certainly, I feel safer walking home at night knowing that the local *bodega* is open late, and that groups of stoop sitters would witness any attempts to hurt me.

Rabbinic literature defines Rome as the epitome of an evil city. There, one rabbi sees “pillars of marble that were covered with blankets so that they would not crack from the heat or freeze from the cold [and] a poor person with only a thin reed mat below him and a thin reed mat on top of him” (*Vayikra Rabbah* 27:1). This short text lays out the potential danger of a city to become so focused on production and work that the basic needs of the residents become secondary.

However, the encounter within this text between the rabbi and the poor Roman also offers an example of the promise of the city. Within the city, people of different walks of life come together, such that a rabbi and a Roman of the lowest class can meet and have an encounter in which at least one of the parties recognizes and responds to the pain of the other.

This unlikely meeting takes us back to the Shulchan Arukh's definition of public space as open to all. In our own time, the New York City subway may best exemplify this ideal of public space. Virtually everyone, from Mayor Bloomberg to Wall Street bankers to janitors to homeless people, rides the subway; on a daily basis, New Yorkers encounter people different from

themselves and share in the fate of others, whether this fate consists of service delays, breakdowns, surprise skip stops, or terrorism threats. This mixing of people is precisely what the rabbis tell us is what makes a city possible.

A Jewish Urban Theology

AS WE HAVE SEEN, CITIES CAN BE ALIENATING and dehumanizing places, in which the collective obliterates the individual. At the same time, cities can be amazingly creative and protective places, in which people of different backgrounds can meet, learn from, and care for each other. In the words of Michael Northcott, an Episcopal priest and theologian, “[The city is both] a place of human fellowship, centre of religion, trade, creativity and the arts, and. . . [the locale] of those economic and social forces which oppress minorities and the weak, ravish nature and ultimately undermine human flourishing” (*Urban Theology: A Reader* 61-62).

Emmanuel Levinas, a twentieth century Jewish thinker, placed encounter with the other at the center of his religious philosophy. True encounter, Levinas argued, necessarily imposes an infinite responsibility toward the other.

Such encounter should form the basis for a Jewish urban theology. The city naturally forces individuals of different backgrounds into casual encounter with one another. These everyday urban interactions should instill a sense of responsibility toward fellow city dwellers, whom one would not meet if not for the equalizing nature of public space. This type of encounter becomes much harder in suburbs, in which people drive from place to place, and even more difficult in gated communities, in which one need never encounter anyone of a different social class, except within a hierarchical relationship, such as that between employers and employees or between customers and cashiers or waiters.

In the book of Nehemiah, the prophet rebuilds the city of Jerusalem by asking each village to send one tenth of its residents to help populate the city. (11:2) There is no expectation that *every* person living in the surrounding area will move to Jerusalem; there is, however, an expectation that people living throughout the metropolitan area will contribute to the health and sustainability of the city. In the same way, we might expect suburban Jews to recognize the economic interdependence between cities and suburbs, and therefore to invest in the preservation and growth of urban areas.

Reflecting on the human tithe in the book of Nehemiah, the Talmud comments, “R. Yose son of R. Hanina said: Where is the proof that dwelling in big cities is hard? The verse ‘The people blessed all the men that willingly offered themselves to dwell in Jerusalem’” (Ketubot 110b). City life may not always be easy, but the human encounters that characterize city life have the potential to bring blessing. ■

Rabbi Jill Jacobs is the Director of Education for the Jewish Funds for Justice, a national public foundation dedicated to mobilizing the resources of American Jews to combat the root causes of domestic social and economic injustice.

Culture

BOOKS | FILM | MUSIC

All About the Benjamin BY MICHAEL LUKAS

BERLIN CHILDHOOD AROUND 1900.

Translated by Howard Eiland. Harvard University Press, 2006

WALTER BENJAMIN killed himself on September 26, 1940 in a small town on the Franco-Spanish border. Forced to flee Paris in advance of the Gestapo, he had just a few days earlier received an emergency visa from the United States consulate in Marseilles, and planned to travel through Spain to Lisbon where he would then take passage to New York. However, upon arriving at the border, Benjamin and the small group of refugees he was traveling with learned that the Spanish authorities were no longer honoring visas issued in Marseilles. Overcome with exhaustion and hopelessness, Benjamin took his life that night, an act that moved even the border guards to compassion. The next morning, they allowed his traveling companions to pass through to Lisbon.

When he died, Walter Benjamin was, in the words of Hannah Arendt, "known, but not famous." He had been a regular contributor to German literary periodicals, had translated Proust and Baudelaire, and was a member of Theodore Adorno's illustrious Frankfurt (and later New York) based Institute for Social Research, otherwise known as the Frankfurt School. But it wasn't until the publication of his selected works in German, fifteen years after his death, that

Benjamin became known outside a small circle of fellow writers and critics. The English-speaking world had to wait another thirteen years for the publication of *Illuminations*, a brilliant selection of "Essays and Reflections" edited by Arendt.

Although slow on the uptake, Benjamin's reputation became firmly rooted

during the 1980s and 1990s, when both Marxist and postmodern social theorists and literary critics found his work of immense contemporary relevance, and cultural studies became a permanent sub-discipline within the humanities. As the blurb on the back of his second English language collection understates, "Benjamin is a legitimate ancestor of



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much that for the moment is most alive in criticism."

Still, one hesitates to call Benjamin a literary critic. Although he often wrote on literature and its role in society, Benjamin's oeuvre encompasses much more than Goethe and Marx. Whatever his subject of choice—hashish, Kafka, Naples, the philosophy of history, or the secularizing cultural consequences of mass-producing art—Benjamin was a consummate polymath who wrote with erudition, playfulness, and compassion. Throughout the entirety of his work, Benjamin consistently and artfully cut to the very heart of his subject matter.

But perhaps the best description of Benjamin's writing is his own. In a miniature essay called "Polyclinic," he compares the writer to a surgeon:

Deliberately, he unpacks his instruments: fountain pens, pencil, and pipe. The numerous clientele, arranged as in an amphitheater, make up his clinical audience. Coffee, carefully poured and consumed, puts the idea under chloroform. What this idea may be had no more connection with the matter at hand than the dream of an anesthetized patient with the surgical intervention.

Reading Benjamin, you feel like you're right there in the amphitheater, watching a brilliant, self-possessed surgeon press his scalpel into the patient's abdomen. However, upon putting essays such as this down, you blink your eyes against the light and realize that the patient was in fact you.

In *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, Benjamin turns his scalpel on his childhood, Berlin, and the capricious faculty of memory. The book does not lend itself easily to synopsis. To say that *Berlin Childhood around 1900* is about growing up in an assimilated, upper-middle class German-Jewish household at the turn of the century is akin to saying *Mrs. Dalloway* is about a woman preparing for a party or *Ulysses* is about a day in the life of an Irish Jew.

Originally commissioned in 1932 as a four-part chronicle of "the history of his relationship to Berlin," Benjamin

abandoned and revisited this account of his childhood a number of times over the next six years. Many of the individual pieces were published in magazines and newspapers, but the complete work did not appear until 1950 in a volume edited and arranged by Adorno. This version, based on a manuscript from 1932–34, was supplanted in 1982 by the discovery of a much-revised "final version," arranged by Benjamin himself just two years before his death.

MIT professor Howard Eiland, who translated much of Benjamin's four volume *Selected Writings*, as well as his unfinished masterpiece, *The Arcades Project* (both of which are also available from Harvard) here presents his translation of the final version alongside passages excised from the 1932–34 edition. Taken as such, *Berlin Childhood around 1900* offers a unique look into the writing and revision of a masterpiece, the slow, painful process of paring a book down to its most essential elements.

Throughout his life, Benjamin was a prodigious collector, of books, picture postcards, and quotations. As he writes, "Every stone I discovered, every flower I picked, every butterfly I captured was for me the beginning of a collection, and in my eyes, all that I owned made for one unique collection." As such, *Berlin Childhood around 1900* might be described as an expertly-curated collection of memories. But it is no museum. Reading it, one feels less like a passive museum-goer than the collector himself, patiently watching a prized butterfly "flutter towards a blossom."

My butterfly net upraised, I stood waiting only for the spell that the flowers seemed to cast on the pair of wings to have finished its work, when all of the sudden the delicate body would glide off sideways with a gentle buffeting of the air, to cast its shadow—motionless as before—over another flower, which just as suddenly it would leave without touching.

Like the butterfly hunter, the reader stands awestruck as Benjamin flits effortlessly from memory to memory, from his mother's sewing box to the

otter's cage at the Berlin Zoological Garden, seemingly unaware of the catastrophic shadow looming over him.

In Benjamin's hands, the most pedestrian moments of an inward-facing, bourgeois childhood become revelations about discipline and ideology. The ring of the newly-installed telephone, for example, was "an alarm signal that menaced not only my parents' midday nap but the historical era that underwrote and enveloped this siesta." A pair of socks, balled up in his dresser, "taught me that form and content, veil and what is veiled, are the same." A group of park benches "formed a circle of lookout posts within which young children played in sandboxes, digging and turning up the sand, or else standing lost in thought, until bumped by another child or else roused by a call from the nurse maid."

As with Kafka, Benjamin's prose shines most brightly through the language of parable, the clichéd, but somehow unexpected aphorism: "In those days every childhood was still overshadowed by the aunts who no longer left their house." His province is the truth we always knew but could never quite put into words, the eerily reminiscent description: "The light streaming down from the moon has no part in the theater of our daily existence. The terrain so deceptively illuminated by it seems to belong to some counter-earth or alternate earth."

In this "philosophic-poetic mode" of narration, the child protagonist and the reflective old man are folded into one. As such, Benjamin is not unlike the "old Chinese painter" he describes in a passage from the 1932–34 version of *Berlin Childhood*.

[He] invited friends to see his newest picture. This picture showed a park and a narrow footpath that ran along a stream and through a grove of trees, culminating at the door of a little cottage in the background. When the painter's friends, however, looked around for the painter, they saw that he was gone—that he was in the picture. There, he followed the little path that led to the door, paused before it quite still, turned, smiled, and disappeared through the narrow opening."

Though deeply spiritual, at times even messianic, Benjamin did not embrace his Jewish identity.

He was deeply ambivalent about Zionism; he describes celebrating Christmas and Easter with a complete lack of self-reflection; and in one passage he speaks of "The Jews" in a manner that borders on the third person plural.

He slips quietly out of History and into his book.

Benjamin wrote *Berlin Childhood around 1900* looking back over the vast chasm wrought by the First World War, pressed in by the impending disaster of the Second. His forward to the final version begins laconically: "In 1932, when I was abroad, it began to be clear to me that I would soon have to bid a long, perhaps lasting farewell to the city of my birth." The pages that follow are a sad farewell. But, at the same time, they are a triumphant return. As Peter Szondi writes in his introduction to *Berlin Childhood*, "Benjamin's tense is not the perfect, but the future perfect in the fullness of its paradox: being future and past at the same time."

Though deeply spiritual, at times even messianic, Benjamin did not embrace his Jewish identity. He was deeply ambivalent about Zionism; he describes celebrating Christmas and Easter with a complete lack of self-reflection; and in one passage he speaks of "The Jews" in a manner that borders on the third person plural. Indeed, in all of *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, Benjamin only "outs" himself once. In an addendum entitled "Sexual Awakening," he describes the "burning wave of anxiety" and "utter indifference" he feels while skipping Rosh Hashanah services: "The two waves converged irresistibly in a dawning sensation of pleasure, wherein the profanation of the holy day combined with the pandering of the street."

Such equivocation was by no means unique among assimilated German-speaking Jews of Benjamin's generation. With the relatively blissful, cosmopolitan world of early twentieth-century Europe crumbling at their feet, anti-Semitism on the rise, and thousands of

Eastern European Jewish refugees flooding into the West, these bourgeois, urbane Jews were faced with a choice between two ideologies: the "Jewish Fascism" of Zionism and the "Red Assimilationism" of Communism. Benjamin himself vacillated between these two ideological poles. He dabbled in Hebrew, and more than once considered the move to Palestine, but ultimately tended towards a heterodox Marxism imbued with extremely strong doses of Jewish messianism.

This decision, if one can call it that, was based not on self-hatred or self-delusion, but on a profound suspicion of belonging in general. Nor were Benjamin's suspicions unique. As Arendt writes in her introduction to *Illuminations*:

What was decisive was that these men did not wish to "return" either to the ranks of the Jewish people or to Judaism, and could not desire to do so—not because they believed in "progress" and an automatic disappearance of anti-Semitism or because they were too "assimilated" and too alienated from their Jewish heritage, but because all traditions and cultures as well as all "belonging" had become equally questionable to them. This is what they felt was wrong with the "return" to the Jewish fold as proposed by the Zionists; they could all have said what Kafka once said about being a member of the Jewish people: "... My people, provided that I have one."

It would be easy to brush aside the ambivalence that these assimilated German Jews felt towards the religion of their fathers, and, in certain instances, towards Zionism, if they had not had such a monumental effect on history. From Sigmund Freud and Karl

Marx to Albert Einstein and Leo Strauss, German Jewry had an enormous—and radically disproportionate considering their relative numbers—influence on twentieth-century life. The main reason why figures such as Walter Benjamin remain so thoroughly relevant and subject to continuous retranslation is because their iconoclastic politics and ideas prefigure much of what constitutes the best of American Jewish culture in the early twenty-first century. Though there are important differences between Berlin in 1900 and New York or Los Angeles in 2006, the affinities are even more striking. What better mirror than Walter Benjamin's carefully-constructed, sublime collection of memories? ■

A graduate of Brown and the University of Maryland, Michael Lukas just recieved a Fulbright Scholarship to Turkey, where he will be teaching English and working on a novel about the end of the Ottoman Empire. His website is www.michaeldavidlukas.com.

[BOOKS]

Above the Law

BY RAYMOND HELMICK



SCARS OF WAR, WOUNDS OF PEACE: The Israeli-Arab Tragedy, Shlomo Ben-Ami. Oxford University Press, 2006;



THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS, 1999-2001: Within Reach, Gilead Sher. Routledge, 2006.

THESE TWO BOOKS BY the principal Israeli figures in the Camp David and Taba peace negotia-

tions put a capstone on our knowledge of the peace process. Gilead Sher was chief Israeli negotiator throughout the talks. Shlomo Ben-Ami, who was Minister of Public Security at the start of the negotiations, stepped in for Foreign Minister David Levy at Camp David and, when Levy resigned, became full Foreign Minister by the end of the negotiations.

Sher's offering is strictly a chronology of his experience of these few years, detailing the anxieties and crises of the negotiations. Ben-Ami ventures a wider picture, offering a historical analysis that spans from the beginning of the Zionist Movement, the Yishuv, and the State of Israel through all the wars and peace efforts, in order to give context to this last frustrated effort to reach a settlement. Sher's book was published in Hebrew in September 2001, shortly after the negotiations took place; its appearance in English was strangely long delayed. Ben-Ami's book, which represents a much longer research project, was published much later.

One cannot question the tremendous effort Sher made to reach a settlement, or his disappointment at its failure within this period. But for all his sincerity, it is clear throughout that Sher saw this pursuit of peace as an exercise in power.

He was not opposed to the Palestinians winning a state, of sorts, but his primary concern was always the security demands of Israel. He is extremely sensitive to the experiences and fears of Israelis, but deaf to the corresponding concerns of Palestinians. His outlook resembles that of the Israeli mass movement, Shalom Akshav (Peace Now): desirous of peace but, in contrast to more consequential anti-Occupation movements like Gush Shalom, always seeing the limits of possibility in "what the Israeli public will bear," as if there were no law that bound them, and no international obligations for which they were responsible.

Sher is critical of America's diplomatic efforts, endorsing Clayton Swisher's excellent book, *The Truth About Camp David: The Untold Story About the Collapse of the Middle East Peace Process*, which attributed the failure of the Camp David talks to the bungling performance by the American team. But while Sher recognizes American negotiator Dennis Ross's fundamental antipathy to Arafat (Ross once told Colin Powell never to believe a word Arafat says: "He's a con man!"), he never acknowledges Ross's constant aversion to Saeb Erekat (detailed in Ross' own book, *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace*). Such lacunae indicate that Sher too often operates with limited information.

In the negotiations, Sher relied on the power of President Clinton, who had mastered every detail of the conflict and was equally committed to supporting the needs of both Israelis and Palestinians, to force Arafat and his team to simply accept what the Israelis were willing to offer them. When Clinton lost his temper and shouted humiliatingly at Abu Ala early in the negotiations, Sher realized that Clinton had forfeited Abu Ala's confidence in the entire process. But Sher fails to draw the consequent

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conclusion that it was this constant browbeating of the Palestinians that forced them to dig in their heels and resist efforts to impose an Israeli/American solution upon them.

When a negotiation process is marked by such a disparity of power as this, the weaker side has to recognize that any solution based on that power dynamic is a *Diktat*, and will never have legitimacy. Even if the offer at Camp David had been better than it was (although Palestinians acknowledged that it did break important taboos and led in the direction of better conditions), it would have failed had Arafat or Mahmoud Abbas or any other Palestinian leader signed it under such conditions. Because Israel's demands, backed by the full panoply of American power, were exclusively paramount in this process, the negotiation was essentially between Israelis and other Israelis: Israelis who wanted to give something, others who wanted to give more, and yet others who wanted to give little or nothing at all.

The Palestinians were never party to these negotiations, but were expected to take what they were offered without objection—as if it were a gift.

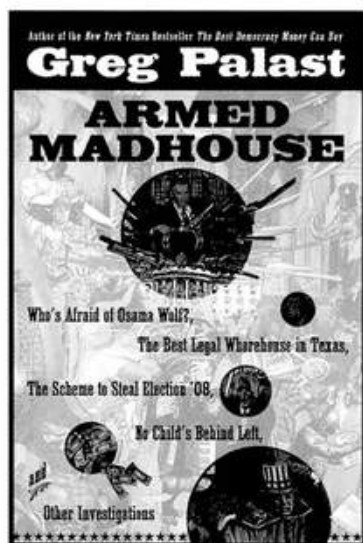
The only escape from this dead end is to premise the whole peace process on the rule of international law, under which the rights of both parties would be equally protected. Sher, committed as he was to achieving peace, never comes anywhere near acknowledging this essential insight. In fact, he prides himself on having formulated, in 2002 with General Yehoshua Saguy, the Comprehensive Disengagement Plan—the unilateralist approach to removing settlements from the Gaza Strip. The plan, which precluded Palestinian involvement, later became the hallmark of former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's administration. In fact, Prime Minister Ehud Barak took a unilateral approach immediately after Camp David. As early as August 2000, in an effort to corner Arafat, Barak had Sher threaten him with unilateral withdrawal as the only

alternative to what the Israelis offered him. Astonishingly, Sher equated his unilateral approach with Yossi Beilin's Geneva Accord, and the Ayalon-Nusseibeh People's Voice plan, as a peace initiative.

SHLOMO BEN-AMI, painting his broad canvas of *The Israeli-Arab Tragedy*, reveals both his enormous devotion to Israel and his despair at its habitual and destructive militarism. No Israeli government, he tells us, has ever had control over the military, which has always precipitated situations dire for Israel itself by its massive over-reaction to every provocation. Even in the crisis of 1967, when prime Minister Eshkol courageously opposed the army's determination to wage a preemptive strike to destroy Egypt's armed forces, there was serious talk among the officers of launching a military *coup d'état*, led—surprise surprise!—by Ariel Sharon.

Ben-Ami has patent sympathy for the plight of Palestinians in their successive

From the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*



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and the funniest."

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—*The Baltimore Chronicle*

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—Noam Chomsky

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nakhbas, although his understanding of their politics and motivations lags far behind the meticulous research he has done on the Israelis. In the 1990s, he clashed with Gilead Sher, being ready to go further in his meetings with Palestinians than Sher himself and here he concedes that Camp David "might" not have been the deal the Palestinians could have accepted. Yet Ben-Ami, interestingly, omits mentions of his clash with Sher in this book, and on balance, while recognizing its shortcomings, he remains highly defensive of the Barak team's effort.

In a lengthy, scorching passage before he comes to Camp David itself, Ben-Ami argues that the antipathies and distrust between the two sides were so radical, Arafat's "perfidy" so extreme, and Shimon Peres' vision of a transformed Middle East led by the economic domination of Israel so entirely unacceptable to any of the Arab parties, that it was sheer wishful thinking to believe that any agreement could ever be reached. On the basis of this pessimism, Ben-Ami concludes that anyone who complains of the Barak offering can be classified as "the extreme Left" and dismissed. To bolster this argument, he blames the Palestinians for the failure of January 2001's Taba talks, and makes this instead the "generous offer" which they were remiss not to have accepted. This view contrasts with other accounts of Taba that show both Israelis and Palestinians were so close to agreement that they could almost touch it, and failed only for lack of time.

As the second Intifada begins, Ben-Ami does criticize "the disproportionate response to what had started as a popular uprising with young, unarmed men confronting Israeli soldiers armed with lethal weapons," seeing the military's response as fueling the Intifada and turning it into an all-out war: it is, he writes, "one more case in Israel's history where the overreaction of the military ended up defeating the national agenda in terms that the politicians never planned." Yet, even after passages like this, Ben-Ami still continues to strive to

reclaim for Israel the role of victim and underdog, powerless in the face of international opinion. He describes even the Ben-Gurion conquests of 1948 in terms of the "poverty of the territorial solution," because it did not bring to Israel the Western Wall and Temple Mount.

In *Scars of War* and the *Israeli-Palestinian Peace Negotiations*, we can see the urgency of Israel's effort to find peace at Camp David and Taba, in Ben-Ami's case far more generously than in Sher's. But

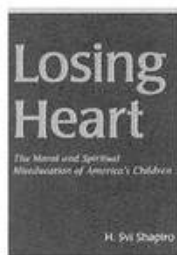
both books ultimately fail because they similarly misunderstand the necessity of negotiating a final settlement from within a culture of law, which could have, and may still yet provide, the necessary solution to the century-old conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. ■

Raymond G. Helmick is an American Jesuit priest and professor of conflict resolution at Boston College. He is the author of Why Camp David Failed (Pluto Press, 2004).

[BOOKS]

A Crisis of Meaning Holding Culture Accountable for Education

BY SUE BOOKS



LOSING HEART: The Moral and Spiritual Miseducation of America's Children, by H. Svi Shapiro. Erlbaum, 2006

IN *LOSING HEART*, education scholar Svi Shapiro draws on Jewish teachings to develop a critique of schools and schooling as we know them. He traces educational problems back to their source—a culture that is morally adrift—then points the way forward without either denying the depth and breadth of the challenge of cultural transformation or settling for putting Band-Aids on open wounds.

Losing Heart focuses on two crises. The first, according to Shapiro, concerns the effects of the educational reform efforts of the last two decades, which have culminated in the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The second is a broader social crisis, in which material prosperity overshadows spiritual well-being. "We live in a time of unmatched material wealth," writes Shapiro, "but one that is being emptied of the meanings that can offer us spiritually rich and sustaining

lives." Shapiro challenges educators and the public not only to recognize these twin crises, but also to respond to them by affirming our culture's most humanizing traditions and beliefs. His agenda for educational reform transcends the limitations of current educational practice by asking us to attend to the moral dimensions of schooling and to align policy and pedagogy with our highest ideals.

Shapiro begins with a sharp critique of public school practices and the dangerous educational reform agendas fueling them. Under the Bush Administration's No Child Left Behind Act, the standards and accountability movement has come to dominate public schooling with yearly testing, annual "progress" requirements, and public reporting designed to "out" schools that fall short. Not surprisingly, in disproportionate numbers, "failing" schools are underfunded, overcrowded, and located in poor communities. Through the schools' relentless emphasis on competition for "rewards"—top grades, honors designations, and scholarships as well as social status and recognition—students experience never-ending judgment, which produces feelings of inadequacy,

worthlessness, and sometimes rage. Increasingly fact-based curricula lend themselves to standardized testing, which facilitates ranking and ordering of students but does not foster meaningful learning. The result is that schools discourage young people from raising critical questions about a world ridden with poverty, injustice, and exploitation. By emphasizing instrumentality (the purpose of second grade is to prepare you for third grade; of third, to prepare you for fourth; and so on), schools actively inculcate feelings of disengagement and alienation in today's youth.

Schools do not simply bore students with chalk-and-talk lessons linked to a regimen of anxiety-producing high-stakes testing, Shapiro argues. They also fail to cultivate the imagination necessary to envision a world in which no one has to compete for a sense of dignity and worth, no one suffers unnecessarily, and democratic ideals truly shape our political relationships. Instead, schools uncritically promote the free market's ethos of buying, selling, and consuming to students who yearn for something different: a community where their worth and dignity is a given, and where they can bring their own imaginations to bear on the urgent problems of our time.

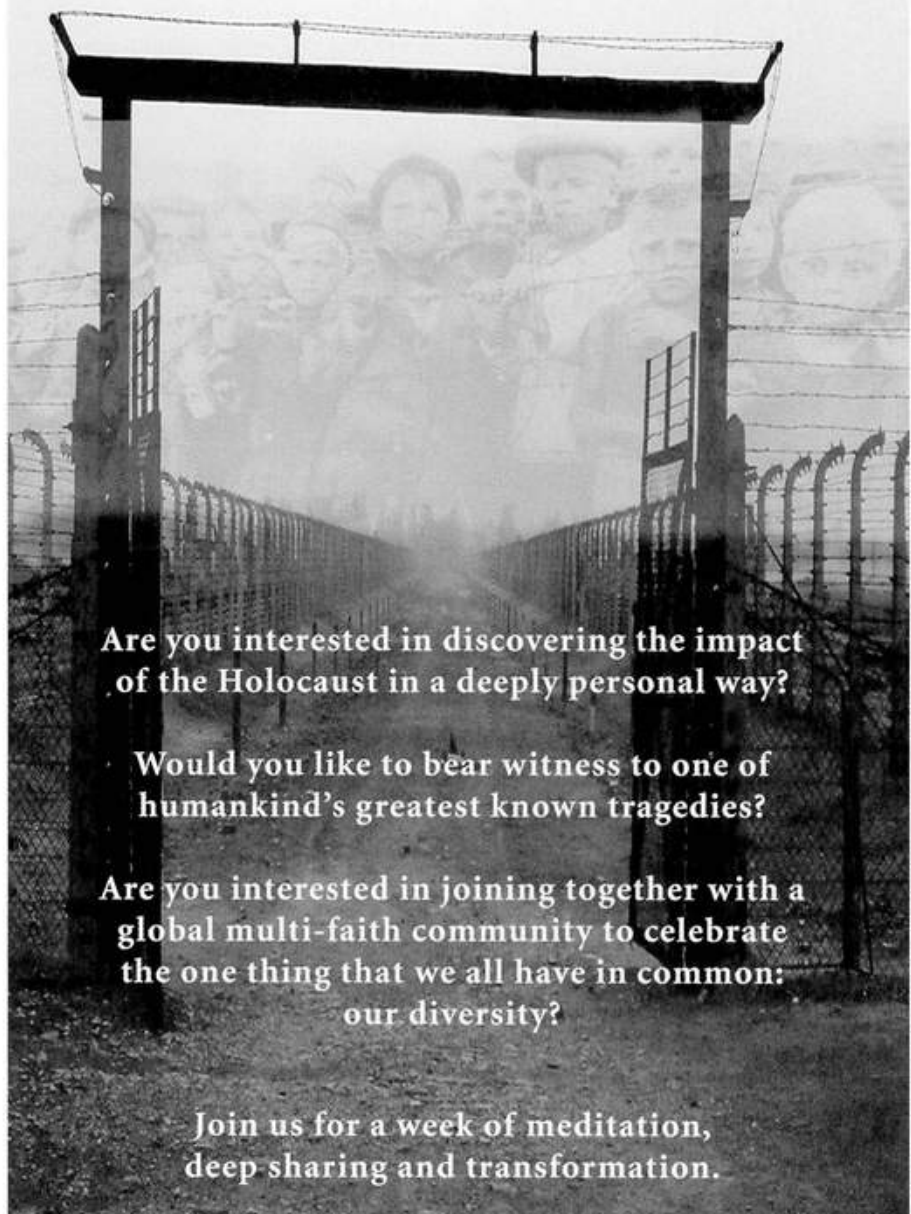
In Chapter 7, Shapiro delineates what he sees as the elements necessary for something better—specifically, a substantive curriculum designed to teach the values of social justice. Such an education would emphasize:

- recognition that “where you stand depends on where you sit”—that is, that “our different social positions in the world . . . produce very different understandings of reality”;
- an awareness that “the dream of peace” is inseparable from “constructing a more just world”;
- consciousness of the fact that social hierarchy creates conflict, leading to depression, resentment, rage, and sometimes suicide;
- an understanding of how “the pervasive influence of the marketplace” threatens our sense of self and “fragments and privatizes our lives”; and finally

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AN IRAQI JEW IN ISRAEL

Nissim Rejwan



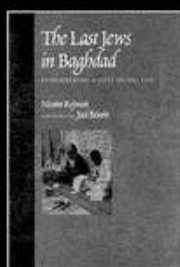
OUTSIDER IN THE PROMISED LAND

AN IRAQI JEW IN ISRAEL

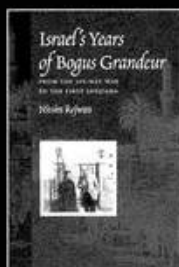
BY NISSIM REJWAN

Beginning with young Jewish journalist Nissim Rejwan's migration from Iraq to Israel in 1951 and climaxing with the tensions preceding Israel's victory in the Six-Day War of 1967, this collection of published and unpublished writings colorfully chronicles Israel's internal and external struggles to become a nation, as well as Rejwan's integration into a complex culture.

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■ *B'Tselem Elohim*—recognition that “there can be no education against violence that does not affirm the infinite and unconditional worth of each human life.”

Although readers will appreciate the way in which Shapiro historically contextualizes his criticisms of contemporary educational practice, those familiar with his previous work will not be surprised. However, what is new about *Losing Heart* is the testimonial quality of Shapiro's writing. Indulging the autobiographical—discussing his Jewish upbringing and its significance in his life as a parent, educator, and social critic—Shapiro frequently draws upon his own life experiences to help ground his arguments. In the first chapter, he writes about coming to terms with the passing of the idealism of the 1960s when everything seemed possible, and learning to accept that the struggle for a better world comes with no promises and sometimes no evidence of success. In Chapter 4, Shapiro recalls having to make a difficult decision as a parent with a daughter approaching middle school. Should she continue in a Jewish day school or be enrolled in public school? Having to make this choice required Shapiro to weigh the promise of an education steeped in Jewish tradition with his own commitment to public education and a broader promise of public life.

Shapiro's reflections on what he learned growing up in a Jewish family bear serious consequence for his thoughts on education. From his own experience, he delineates six elements of a Jewish pedagogy. These include:

- “the shofar of awareness”—the call to live one's life “with awareness, responsibility, and the willingness to be ethically discerning”;
- “rabbinic” truth—recognition that “the truth for each generation has to be won through the hard work of intellectual interrogation and critical reason”;
- “the calendar of survival”—a reminder that “a relentless barbarism has been the underside of history”;
- the lesson of the Passover seder, which fuses “a celebration of survival,

the demand to see the oppressions of our present world, and the imaginary re-envisioning of a world of wholeness and justice”;

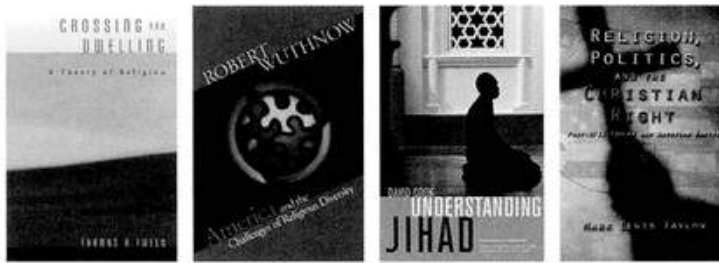
■ recognition of the need to make “education a place of feeling—inspiration, outrage, compassion, and human concern”; and

■ “the sabbath of being”—that is, “the opportunity to be filled with awe and wonder at our universe, and the extraordinary fecundity, diversity, and interconnectedness of life.”

As someone who grew up in the Protestant tradition, I found some of Shapiro's comments about “Christian communities”—used interchangeably with “conservative Christian communities,” “conservative communities,” and “conservative religious communities”—to be a little too sweeping. “Christian communities” encompass groups with enormous religious, social, and political diversity—including those that would justify a far-right political agenda with “what the Bible says,” but also those who have taken Christian teachings to heart and devoted their lives to pacifism and the pursuit of social justice (as Shapiro does note with respect to Quakers). Nevertheless, he writes insightfully about the dangers of fundamentalist thinking, wherever it occurs, and about American culture's entrapment “between fundamentalisms”—freemarket fundamentalism on one hand, and religious authoritarianism on the other.

Overall, *Losing Heart* is inspirational. Shapiro does not lay out a linear argument so much as invite a deeper consideration of the moral foundations of contemporary American society and their implications for education. Shapiro offers a bold and important assessment of where we are as a culture and where we need to be, an assessment grounded in an understanding of the human need for meaning and purpose, of the centrality of community, and of the profound miseducation and sinfulness inherent in materialism and consumerism. ■

Sue Books is an education professor at the State University of New York at New Paltz. Her most recent book is *Poverty and Schooling in the U.S.: Contexts and Consequences* (2004).



Pluralism Ain't as Easy as It Looks

BY ROGER S. GOTTLIEB

CROSSING AND DWELLING: A Theory of Religion, by Thomas Tweed. Harvard University Press, 2005

AMERICA AND THE CHALLENGES OF RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY, by Robert Wuthnow. Princeton University Press, 2005

UNDERSTANDING JIHAD, by David Cook. University of California Press, 2005.

RELIGION, POLITICS, AND THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT: Post-9/11 Powers in American Empire, by Mark Lewis Taylor. Fortress Press, 2005

HUSTON SMITH: The Way Things Are, Hartley Film Foundation, 2004.

DR. DIANA ECK: Pluralism in America, Hartley Film Foundation, 2004

RELIGION, THOMAS TWEED TELLS US, is like a map. It situates us in space and time and gives us a manageable model of where we have been, where we are, and where we might be going. The energetic “flows” of religion—of people, ideas, experiences—shape us as communities at rest (“dwelling”) and in motion (“crossing”).

This useful image of religion as a map animates a useful (if at times theoretically rather pretentious) book and is particularly apt for Tweed’s major concern, which is the way immigrants (in particular Cuban and other Latin American immigrants to the United States) bring religious traditions, artifacts, and rituals with them as they relocate. Tweed points out that religion often understands itself in terms of geographical, communal, or theological stasis, “Here we are, what do we believe?”, as opposed to a model of religion and community in motion: “How has religion guided us on

our strange, often frightening, journeys—and how has our tradition itself been in transit?”

For example, rabbinic Judaism, created in order to facilitate as basic a change in the condition of a community as can be imagined—the destruction of the Temple and the end of a religion based on sacrifice—did not embrace its transitional mode. Instead, rabbinic Judaism represented itself as centered on timeless truths that would never need alteration, anchored to a place, Zion, that most Jews no longer inhabited.

Tweed’s contrast of religion in stasis and in motion helps illuminate the vexing issue of religious pluralism, a theme addressed in different ways by Taylor, Smith, Eck, Wuthnow, and Cook. In a globalized world, almost everyone’s social condition is being altered—technologically, culturally, politically, ecologically, and economically—almost all the time. Adapting Tweed’s metaphor we can then ask: When does a dramatic change or threat of change make us cling to our static map so fervently that we wish to destroy—or at least derogate—everyone else’s?

The liberal response to this fundamentalist posture is usually to view it as theologically primitive, morally intolerable, and psychologically insecure. Fundamentalists simply do not appreciate, as Diana Eck of Harvard’s “Pluralism Project” tells us in an informative and engaging video exploring her ideas, the true nature of democracy, modern citizenship, the wide range of co-existing religions in many places (particularly

the U.S.), or religion itself. If we are to live together in modern democracies, we must recognize the profound commonalities of different faiths as well as engage in honest inquiry and dialogue to understand our differences. Rather than being afraid of our neighbors, we will appreciate difference or at least learn to live with it. Fundamentalism’s attempt to run roughshod over everyone else properly horrifies Eck and the generic “we” for whom she speaks.

One way to overcome fundamentalist intolerance is exemplified by Huston Smith’s view that all religions contain a common wealth of deep insights into the human need for the sacred, including an interest in transcending the ego, spiritual practice, and compassion. Our differences, Smith emphasizes, pale in comparison to this central message of the power of the sacred, which is desperately needed in a post 9-11 world. Smith is sure that the transcendent quality of religious truth provides a real basis for celebrating commonalities and acknowledging, but not being put off by or consumed with, differences.

Without being secular, Smith’s position is modern and liberal, simultaneously deeply spiritual and deeply tolerant (or so it would seem). It allows a sympathetic audience to celebrate its own beliefs and relegate the intolerant fundamentalist to the sidelines of spiritual life. (Or it would, if fundamentalism were not rising in power and influence while the ranks of more liberal religious orientations seem to be shrinking.)

However, as attractive as Eck's and Smith's responses to the conundrums of religious pluralism might be, they are, I believe, woefully inadequate. For, returning to Tweed's metaphor, a plurality of religious maps is easy to accept only under three circumstances, none of which pertain to the current situation.

First, something like Smith's view of underlying religious truth might serve as a kind of meta-map, a map of maps, which could reconcile our superficial differences. In this case people's first order maps, of Islam or Christianity, say, would be superseded by another map of a universal religious truth.

Second, our different maps might influence each other, but only in unimportant ways. Like children at recess in a playground, it might not make any difference where we go or where we stay, and thus differences in our respective maps might be real but wouldn't have much effect.

Third, the different maps might be guiding individuals or groups whose

The inevitable connection of religion and politics means toleration and pluralism are limited by real life. In a sense, we are all fundamentalists.

homes and journeys are totally disconnected. You would follow your map, and I mine, but since our journeys would not touch, it would make no difference to either of us.

None of these three alternatives are applicable, at least in any widespread way, in modern society. As to the first: because each religious tradition is a map in their own right, simple, unqualified appeals for a unifying pluralism will not, and indeed should not, go unchallenged. Saying "At bottom all religions are essentially about a single wisdom tradition" is just as particular, and therefore just as excluding, as saying that "Islam is God's plan for the world." Each can be true only if the other is not.

Similarly, assuming that religion really doesn't matter very much, that it is more like a hobby or lifestyle than a

commitment to a distinct, encompassing form of life, is another quite particular position, one which cannot coexist with the view that religion should actually guide how we live. Few deeply religious people would be able to accept that the differences between them are wholly unimportant.

Finally, the idea that our religious pursuits can be done as individuals or as separate communities might have held weight a few centuries back, but misses the point that today's society is global, with people inescapably drawn together by collective and joint involvement in political life.

"Don't abandon differences, but engage" with each other Eck advises; yet often in social life we have to choose between competing policies which support one map over another. It is theoretically



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possible to have people saying different prayers or reading different holy books, but impossible for women to both have and lack equal rights, to allow or forbid abortion or gay marriage, and to treat the earth only as a resource or to treat it as God's Creation. In these and countless other ways governments—as well as an intrusive media, educational systems, foreign policies, and the economy—set the context in which faiths are violated or reinforced. The net result is that any serious *religious* community necessarily will have its own *political* commitments about how all of these factors should be structured. Theology and morality necessarily lead to politics—and this is as true for liberal Christians who support gay marriage as for fundamentalist Christians who oppose it.

Cook's and Taylor's highly focused, intelligent books make this clear with regard to Islamic and Christian fundamentalism respectively. Cook's exploration of jihad shows that whatever its traditional meaning, its contemporary understanding by violent "radical" Islam expresses not only a particular theology but also a particular view of contemporary politics, from a critique of America's global role to a rejection of women's political equality. This view is a response to perceived threats to Islamic orthodoxy, to be sure, but also to a sense of national or ethnic humiliation and to failed economic development that consigns the benefits of industrialization to a small elite while asking everyone else to bear the costs. It is political as much or more than it is religious.

A similar mix, once more indicating precisely how any serious religion entails a politics, can be found on the Christian Right. Those on the religious right are motivated not only by a view of Christianity, but also of America. They share what Taylor calls a peculiar romance of American life, one which sees America as having a unique moral superiority and a divinely sanctioned right to expand, prosper, and rule. To put these beliefs into political life, however, the religious right has allied with neoliberal foreign and economic policy.

There is nothing inherently Christian, after all, about invading Iraq or ignoring global warming, even though many on the Christian Right see a resonance between those positions and others on prayer in schools, abortion, the traditional family, and so forth. Similarly, there is nothing inherently Islamic about dictatorship. Yet, what is inevitable is that religion will lead to political positions.

Nor is the religious left immune: in part we *define* the religious left in terms of its political positions on issues like gay marriage, environmentalism, and human rights (thus *Tikkun's* use of the term "spiritual progressives" for its new network of spiritual activists). The inevitable connection of religion and politics means toleration and pluralism are limited by real life. In a sense, and quite ironically, we are all fundamentalists.

The very real difficulties inherent in this situation receive a valuable exploration in Robert Wuthnow's book, which surveys the way people in the United States actually think about and practice pluralism. From the conflicts Christian "exclusivists" feel between preaching the gospel and respecting their Jewish friends to the way interfaith couples negotiate with clergy and family, Wuthnow highlights the frequently forgotten fact that pluralism is not just about state support for or opposition to religion, but about how individuals and communities live together in civil society. The stark opposition between "intolerance" and "pluralism" turns out to be much more complicated and to admit of countless variations in personal relationships, neighborhoods, and small towns, much more so than we would expect if we only read abstract accounts from theologians or philosophers justifying one side or another.

If we are to be guided by our own maps, then, there will be limits to how much we can accept those of others. Yet perhaps it is possible for human beings to converse and connect without maps. Perhaps after some great tragedy, when each of us is reduced to his or her most basic humanity, it will no longer make

any difference where we have come from or where we are going. We will just be too desperately happy to know we are not alone. Then all our maps are irrelevant—or at least equally questionable. Whether or not our collective plight of genocides and ecocide will ever constitute such a context and give rise to such an encounter only time—and the mysteries of the human heart—will tell. ■

Roger S. Gottlieb is Professor of Philosophy at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. Two of his recent books are *Joining Hands: Politics and Religion Together for Social Change* and *A Greener Faith: Religious Environmentalism and our Planet's Future*.

[BOOKS]

Capsule Reviews



CONNED: How Millions Went to Prison, Lost the Vote, and Helped Send George W. Bush to The White House by Sasha Abramsky. New Press, 2006

JIM CROW LIVES ON.

Today, over 5 million adult American citizens don't have the right to vote. Among those are Americans currently serving time for a felony crime, and for them, the tradeoff makes sense: you break the rules of society, you forfeit the rights and privileges of being a citizen. Most of these Americans, however, are not in jail. While they once committed a crime, they have paid their debt to society and should be welcomed back.

What many former felons find, however, is that the government welcomes their taxes but not their vote. In Florida, Virginia, Washington, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, and Kentucky, anyone who has even been convicted of a felony is automatically disenfranchised, and in several of these states, the government is making it nearly impossible for citizens to get their vote back.

Conned tells us their stories. In Alabama, Clinton Drake, a Vietnam vet whose

children have also served in Iraq, cannot vote after serving several years in prison on a marijuana conviction. In Virginia, Lloyd Brown, convicted on drug charges in 1988, is now a furniture maker but has not been able to get his vote restored. And in Tennessee, Jamaica S. was disenfranchised after serving time in 2000 because her then-boyfriend robbed a store and forced her to drive him from the crime scene.

Disenfranchisement is often a mask for racism and a cover for swaying electoral politics. Most of the disenfranchised are poor and black; many were jailed as part of the War on Drugs. The number of disenfranchised has been large enough to turn elections in Florida, Washington State, and elsewhere.

What's more, disenfranchisement denies these citizens their dignity, sending the message that they are not as valued as the rest of us. If for no other reason, this attack on people's worth should motivate spiritual progressives to read *Conned* and take action.

—Jo Ellen Green Kaiser



HOW TO CURE A FANATIC,
by Amos Oz. Princeton
University Press, 2006

YIGAL IS A FRIEND OF mine who works as printer in Jerusalem's Romema quarter. He remembers how, as a teenage boy, in 1967 he took his young brother Moshe to see the Western Wall just after it was captured.

Frustrated crowds were pressing to enter the Old City from outside Zion Gate, but the army was only permitting people to file in through a narrow passage, because the area was mined. Suddenly a young religious teenager broke through the barrier and ran around the passage toward the gate. The boy hit a mine and, as Yigal recalled, "went up into the air like an umbrella and came down dead."

Horried, Yigal pulled his brother by the hand and they headed back home. He did not return to see the Wall for

years. "I'm not in love with the Wall," he says, "When I see it, I remember that teenager and think about what caused him to die." He opposes the national religious cult of Wall idolatry.

Yigal is an anti-fanatic and, like Amos Oz, he was born in Jerusalem—a city that not only raises copious fanatics, but also attracts them from around the world. Oz calls himself an expert in comparative fanaticism and offers his book *How to Cure a Fanatic* as his job application for any university that opens a teaching position in the subject. He says, "As a former Jerusalemite, as a recovered fanatic, I feel I'm fully qualified for the job."

Oz would certainly make the hiring short list. The brief book, essentially two talks with a mini-preface by Nadine Gordimer, testifies to both his sanity and his good humor. It argues against religious claims on what is essentially a real estate dispute between two peoples with equal entitlement to the land of Israel-Palestine.

However, Amos Oz's amiable nature and decent neighborliness have never been in question. The rationalism and accommodating attitude he displays throughout this small volume are today part of a growing political center—the current Hamas government notwithstanding—that Israelis and Palestinians have achieved with great pain. It is the irreconcilable political extremes, though, that have driven the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for so long. Sadly, those who believe in the efficacy of violence for social cleansing will neither read nor heed Amos Oz. —Joe Lockard



BLACK MARKS by Kirsten
Dinnall Hoyte. Akashic
Books, 2006.

IDENTITY CRISES SURE aren't what they're cracked up to be. Usually invoked in terms of crises of personality, (or, with increasing frequency, gender) the phenomenon is often oversimplified as though it were a pivotal moment of evolution in some-

one's life, or an inevitable rite of passage to maturity. But what happens when such an event is far more complicated? What happens when it is both sexual and economic, ethnic and national? Such are the probing questions about the hard road to becoming American raised by Kirsten Dinnall Hoyte's jarring debut novel, *Black Marks*.

As the book opens, Georgette Collins wakens from an alcohol-induced blackout, unable to remember her past. Making the decision to quit drinking, Collins attempts to piece together her identity, memory by memory, all the while trying to remain on the wagon. Both a second generation West Indian-American, and a bisexual, recovering her identity is not the least bit easy. Nevertheless, *Black Marks* bears all the traits of a classic immigrants' tale of integration, albeit with thoroughly contemporary twists. Just as much as working hard and buying a house, to become an American also means to find a home for gender difference.

The most compelling aspect of Collins's crisis is how utterly overwhelming it is. Using her character's alcoholism and amnesia as metaphors for social alienation, Hoyte artfully indicts America's ethos of assimilation by portraying Collins' struggles as though they're symptoms of an unspoken demand that immigrants erase every aspect of their individuality. Employing a fragmented, collage-like narrative to describe Collins' efforts to piece together memories of her previous life, at times *Black Marks* reads as though it were a postmodern treatise on identity and how it's fashioned out of disparate recollections and disconnected discourses about gender and nationality.

Black Marks is as timely as its analysis is complex. For a country undergoing extremely reactionary debates about immigration and the meaning of citizenship, Georgette's painful fight to determine who she really is should serve as a profound reminder of how hostile America is to embracing the radical diversity of its remarkable citizenry.

—K.E. Silva

[TELEVISION/FILM]

Orthodykes

BY SHAI GINSBURG

KEEP NOT SILENT, Directed by Illil Alexander. Distributed by Women Make Movies, Israel, 2004/US, 2006, <http://www.wmm.com>.

IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, A GROWING number of Israeli filmmakers have sought to explore the complexity of life in Jewish ultra-orthodox communities. In addition to feature films such as Amos Gitai's *Kadosh* (1999) and Gidi Dar's *Ushpizin* (2004, reviewed in the last issue of *Tikkun*,) a number of documentary filmmakers have become impatient with the one-dimensional manner in which the orthodox experience is traditionally portrayed by Israeli directors.

Frequently reducing ultra-orthodox life to a stereotypically oppressive, unthinking existence devoted to the demands of tradition, this cinematic

representation of Israel's haredim has recently been challenged by films such as Anat Zuria's *Purity* (2002) and *Sentenced to Marriage* (2004), and Illil Alexander's *Keep Not Silent* (2004). Emphasizing the perspectives of women and their place within orthodox *halachah*, community and family, Alexander's *Keep Not Silent*—winner of 2005's Israeli Academy Award for Best Documentary—best exemplifies this change in representing Israel's ultra orthodox community.

Following in the footsteps of Sandi Simcha DuBowski's 2001 *Trembling before G-d*, Alexander's film portrays orthodox lesbians who struggle to reconcile their sexuality and their commitment to an orthodox Jewish life, their attraction towards their own sex and the sweeping religious prohibition

on homosexuality. While *Trembling Before G-d* weaves a great number of voices into a rich mosaic of the religious gay and lesbian experience in Jerusalem and New York, the power of *Keep Not Silent* is in its conciseness: it focuses on the stories of just three lesbian women in orthodox Jerusalem.

In *Keep Not Silent*, the passage of time is marked by the Jewish holidays: it starts with the Days of Atonement in September and the expiatory sacrifice performed by one of the three women, and follows all three on Sukkot, Hanukah, Purim, Passover, Lag Ba'Omer and, finally, the Gay Pride Parade in Jerusalem in June. While the parade regularly attracts wide, at times violent demonstrations of orthodox Jews, Alexander's film seeks to reshape the Jewish religious calendar so as to include the gay experience.

What is surprising about *Keep Not Silent* is that it does not paint the traditional Israeli cinematic portrait of an irreconcilable conflict between “non-sanctioned” sexuality and religion.

What is surprising about *Keep Not Silent* is that it does not paint the traditional Israeli cinematic portrait of an irreconcilable conflict between “non-sanctioned” sexuality and religion, a conflict that would necessarily lead to exclusion and banishment from the community. Instead, it offers a much more complex and nuanced picture. Indeed, each of the interviewed women experiences the conflict between their gender orientation and their faith commitments in entirely unique ways.

‘Miriam Esther’ is married and a mother of ten. Shown as a distorted computer image, using a pseudonym, she underscores the very real price to be paid if identified as a lesbian in the orthodox community, not only by the woman herself, but by her family and children as well: “If anyone finds out,” Miriam Esther says, “it’s going to ruin the life of my kids. Children wouldn’t play with my children, they wouldn’t come to my house. I just don’t think they’d even be allowed to stay at school.”

Twenty years before, when she gave herself to be matched, Miriam Esther had decided that having a family and children who study the Torah was more important than having a satisfying intimate relationship with a husband. Therefore, throughout her life, she has striven to suppress her attraction to women. In effect, Miriam Esther has adopted orthodox male precautionary measures: she studies the Torah, she doesn’t look at women or have eye contact with them, and even makes sure not to befriend women to whom she might be attracted. Until now, she has never had an intimate relationship with a woman. Yet, towards the end of the film, Miriam Esther nearly breaks down when she tells Alexander how she has recently befriended and developed a strong attachment to a young woman who is about to make the same decision

she has: to have a family. Miriam Esther is now struck by a great sense of loss.

Judith is the only one who agrees to expose her face and name in the film. A daughter of a rabbi, she is aware of the personal and social price she will pay, but Judith insists that she cannot conceal who she is. In an intense encounter with a rabbi, she discovers that he cannot alleviate her anxiety regarding her sexuality. While Judith contends that “this” is how she was created and born, and to deny it would be to live a lie, the rabbi counters that God has created human beings with divergent tendencies and they should struggle and overcome these tendencies; just as one cannot condone the deeds of kleptomaniacs, murderers and rapists even if it is argued that they what such persons do is natural, the rabbi responds, so should we not condone homosexuality. The problem is that despite the rabbi’s admonitions, Judith does not want to put herself in a position like that of Miriam Esther. She wants to live a life of truth. Defying the rabbi’s attempt to curb her quest for happiness in a homosexual relationship, Judith defies both Israeli civil and religious law, and weds her female lover.

Yet, one cannot sum-up the approach to lesbianism within ultra-orthodox communities as simply a “cold-hearted” and total denial of their sexuality, as the “un-orthodox” story of ‘Ruth’ (once again a pseudonym) shows. The third of Alexander’s subjects, ‘Ruth,’ married and a mother of six, is shot from the back—or through a veil. “At the age of sixteen I became religious,” she tells the filmmaker; “I loved women and I became religious.” Yet, despite the clear dichotomy she perceives between her sexuality and the edicts of her faith, Ruth struggles to be true to both. After the birth of her fourth child, she sinks into a depression and soon realizes that it is because of her yearning for the love of a woman. She ultimately develops

an intimate relationship with another religious woman. When her husband, ‘Boaz,’ who is also interviewed in the film, finds out, he tells her to choose between her lesbian relationship and him, and Ruth cuts ties with her lover.

Nevertheless, after a few months, she discovers that she is unable to give up her need for a relationship with another woman. Surprisingly, her husband accepts this. As Boaz asks rabbis for guidance, he is told that while lesbian relationships are forbidden, one is not obliged to divorce a wife who is involved with another woman. Ruth and Boaz therefore reach an arrangement: she spends the evenings with her lover and then returns home for the night. Twice a week she spends the night with her lover. Towards the end of the film, as the sun sets over the hills of Jerusalem, Ruth and her lover exchange rings and blessings.

Keep Not Silent reveals the divergent ways in which women deal with their sexuality in the ultra-orthodox community, and in which the community both surprisingly—and not so surprisingly—reacts to them. However, what all of these phenomena share is the problem of openness, of exposition. All three of Alexander’s women remain unable to openly realize their sexuality without fear of devastating communal sanctions. Despite the exceptions made for women like Ruth, such dispensation is still granted in secret. To do so openly would be to violate the ultra-orthodox community’s rules governing intimacy and sexuality. As such, the hetero-normative parameters of ultra-orthodox life remain in force.

Yet, is it so different in the so-called “secular” world? Is it really as tolerant and accepting of alternative gender orientations? Or, is the supposed narrow mindedness of the orthodox world, as depicted by *Keep Not Silent*, simply a mirror for secular struggles for official recognition of sexual diversity? The fact that Judith cannot legally wed someone of the same sex under Israeli civil law suggests as much. ■

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[MUSIC]

Bitter Greens

Walter Benjamin Goes to the Opera BY CHARLIE BERTSCH

SHADOWTIME, an opera composed by Brian Ferneyhough. Libretto by Charles Bernstein. NMC Records. April 25, 2006

IS IT POSSIBLE TO FORGET WITHOUT remembering that one has forgotten?" The words ring out clearly, in stark contrast to the ones that precede and follow them, forming an island of sense in a sea of sonic confusion. Even so, they don't sound right. There's a trace of a lisp in the voice. The pronunciation of "remembering" is askew, with a delay on the second syllable, creating an aural hyphen. The strings in the background underscore the vocalist's mannered delivery with a tension that holds no promise of release. If Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* had been properly set to music, this is what his hookah-smoking caterpillar would have sounded like. And this is one of the more accessible moments in composer Brian Ferneyhough and librettist Charles Bernstein's challenging opera *Shadowtime*.

Indeed, it's hard to imagine more uneasy listening. For those music lovers who keep their home or car stereo tuned to a frequency that plays a steady stream of Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven, *Shadowtime* is bound to be off-putting. Whereas the music of the masters creates a bubble of comfort that wards off everyday pressures, Ferneyhough's composition stabs violently into the personal space of its audience, savaging the illusion of serenity promoted within the world of mainstream classical music. But because *Shadowtime* reflects on the life and work of the leftist Jewish thinker Walter Benjamin, noted for the density of his melancholy, and focuses in particular on the tragic circumstances of his passing as he was trying to flee France after the German invasion, the work's edginess is understandable. The burden



of hearing *Shadowtime* serves a purpose. This is art that refuses to let you forget what you should always bear in mind. That means the Shoah, first and foremost, but also loss more generally.

Aside from its atonality, the opera's most salient feature is Ferneyhough's decision to obscure most of the words he asked Bernstein to write. Unless a listener has the separately published libretto in hand while the CD is playing, the majority of the text proves impossible to hear as text. Words are reduced to the same status as other sounds, their meaning under erasure. Asked, in an interview conducted for this piece, how it felt to see his sublimely inventive poetry treated this way, Bernstein expresses

complete support for Ferneyhough's approach, underscoring the importance of, "the different things that you can't hear, that are not audible," and those, "that become audible at the price of other things not being audible. You can't hear everything all at once in crystal clarity." The title of the opera, he adds, derives from the interplay between what can and cannot be discerned. "The idea of the shadow or the echo is crucial to the whole meaning of the opera. And it's played out in this very issue of only partial legibility at any given time. When you move to another mode, you gain something and you lose something."

This formulation provides a way to think more broadly about the aesthetic

that *Shadowtime* exemplifies and its implications for our understanding of Benjamin's approach to culture. While drawing on recent innovations in the use of rhythm and meter, as well as the vocal and narrative conventions of Baroque opera, Ferneyhough's score is first and foremost a tribute to the twelve-tone "new music" developed by Arnold Schönberg, Alban Berg, and Anton Webern in the first two decades of the twentieth century and then vigorously promoted by Benjamin's friend, philosopher Theodor Adorno, well into the post-World War II era. The paradox of this music's novelty is that, while it was already dismissed for being dated when Adorno took up its cause as a music student in the 1920s, it continues to sound more cutting edge than much newer work. To the extent that the musical *avant-garde* is still associated with a kind of sonic punishment, in which the listener is forced to confront the ideological implications of pleasure, the "new music" of 1910 remains the standard-bearer for progress.

Ferneyhough's composition savages the illusion of serenity promoted within the world of mainstream classical music.

It is worth noting that even Schönberg ended up softening his opposition to tradition and, as a consequence, his more popular rival Igor Stravinsky. Over time, the innovations of the "new music" were incorporated into pieces that also made use of traditional octaval melody and harmony. In the work of Kurt Weill and Hans Eisler, the two composers who worked closely with playwright Bertolt Brecht, traces of Schönberg's most radical work give an edge to a sensibility that derives as much from the cabaret as the concert hall. Despite the overwhelming evidence of serious music's need to breed with popular culture, however, Adorno never relented in his insistence that such hybridization represented the worst reactionary tendencies. When he set out to write his own short "song-play" in the early 1930s, a piece based on Mark

Twain's fiction called *The Treasure of Indian-Joe*, he composed vocal parts that refused the conventions of nineteenth-century bourgeois opera and their modern continuation in the work of Sergei Prokofiev, Richard Strauss, and Stravinsky. The two extant songs from this unfinished project sound like a lot like Schönberg, not to mention the Ferneyhough of *Shadowtime*.

This is where things get a bit tricky. Eager for the approbation of his intellectual elder, Adorno sent the libretto for *The Treasure of Indian-Joe* to Benjamin, who managed not to comment on it, despite several requests, until he finally provided his assessment in a letter. Lamenting the text's "reduction to the idyllic," Benjamin compared it unfavorably to Jean Cocteau's novel *Enfants Terribles*. He also indicated his lack of interest in Adorno's struggle to defend the "new music." Benjamin writes that, "the range of material itself—quite apart from the musical question about which I cannot venture any opinion whatsoever—appears to me to be an unpromising one." For someone who wrote so widely on modern culture, it's truly startling how little Benjamin had to say about music. Despite the fact that Adorno repeatedly refers to music in their extensive correspondence, all that Benjamin could muster in response was this rather condescending profession of ignorance.

There's something a little odd, then, about an opera on Benjamin's life and work that largely conforms to Adorno's rigid musical standards. It begs the question of whether a more populist approach might have been preferable. After all, during the same period in which Adorno is writing Benjamin about *The Treasure of Indian-Joe*, Benjamin is praising Brecht in reply, almost as though he wanted to raise his friend's ire. Bernstein remarks that, "in terms of Benjamin's interest in popular culture, there doesn't seem to be a sampling or

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an engagement with certain aspects of what people would consider to be popular music within the Ferneyhough score. That's something many people mention to me, even if they don't say it in those terms." What *Shadowtime* loses, in other words, in prioritizing the "new music" over newer, less pure musics, is this engagement with the popular.

But it also gains something in the process. Bernstein goes on to contrast Ferneyhough to "a John Adams or a Philip Glass or any number of other contemporary composers that are doing opera, who make many more concessions to a certain aspect of popular music." Bernstein continues:

I like popular music quite a lot. And I'm not a composer. Probably if I were a composer I'd be more like Kurt Weill than I would be like Brian Ferneyhough. A lot of people don't like severe, atonal music. But that's what he does. You never hear it on the radio either. Not just Brian's music, but the whole twentieth-century tradition of it rarely comes on the radio, even on the satellite radio shows. It's almost like spinach or something. I love that music. I find it very engaging. There's a lot of stuff that people enjoy and I enjoy too, that gets a lot of mileage in the New York classical and new music scene. And I understand that this is what Ferneyhough doesn't do, which is what a John Zorn, say, does. But, in the end, it seems to me that Ferneyhough's project is a very powerful one and complexly interesting, whereas some of the stuff that we all enjoy seems slighter to me.

Even if *Shadowtime* seems to place Benjamin too squarely on the side of an anti-populist Modernism, people interested in his work might benefit more from the bitter greens of Ferneyhough's uncompromising music than from the artificially sweetened fare we have come to expect in this era of guilt-free collage. That bitter taste in your mouth might just remind you of what you would have otherwise forgotten. ■

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[MUSIC]

Capsule Reviews



CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS by OM. Holy Mountain Records, 2006

THE CONTEMPORARY popular music scene is like a chil-

dren's splash park, where consumers try to cool down without getting soaked. The point is to avoid commitment. The last thing an iPod owner addicted to the play of randomness wants is a song that demands too much time and space. From that perspective, OM's second album *Conference of the Birds* is perversely anachronistic. Although clocking in at only a little over a half hour, like LPs did in the 1960s, the record consists of just two fifteen minute-plus tracks. Slow to build, deliberately repetitive, and lacking in the peaks and valleys, which made the classic rock mini-operas of bands like The Beatles, The Who, and Genesis easier to sit through, "At Giza" and "Flight of the Eagle" reject the casual listener with glass-eyed disdain. If you want to derive any pleasure from these songs, you have to give yourself over to them, suspending the shuffle-mode self in favor of single-minded devotion. This is music that demands full immersion.

OM's principals, singer and bassist Al Cisneros and drummer Chris Hakius, used to be members of the highly regarded San Jose metal band Sleep, whose music was described as "stoner rock." *Conference of the Birds* treads a similar path. But the journey OM invites you to take requires something deeper than drugs. Their lyrics are loopy, yet suffused with a gravity that makes them resistant to the charge of postmodern irony. Although lines like, "grant to me—a light to see—and pilgrimage to mountain of the votaric form," don't make obvious sense, they demonstrate that "At Giza" is about something more than the impossibility of seriousness. OM's retro New Age vibe may be allegorical, but its message is still clear: listen like your life depended on it. —C.B.



FISHERMAN STYLE by The Congos and Friends. Blood and Fire, 2006.

REGGAE'S HISTORY is packed with

endless variations of the same rhythm used by countless artists over the course of hundreds of songs. Each time a track gets repurposed, it ideally is somehow "versioned," or modified, to distinguish its employment in a new piece. Versioning is a practice born out of the recycling of popular rhythm tracks by Jamaican producers such as Lee Perry, who would tailor an old arrangement for a client looking for a good backing track. This laid the foundation for the compositional methodology of early hip-hop and electronic musicians, who, through the use of turntables, samplers, and eventually software, would write new songs using loops of prerecorded music.

As technology has evolved, so has the source material. Now, loop-based recordings often feature original material generated by the very same artists that use loops as the building blocks for larger works. Such has been the core practice of the editors and mixers of *Fisherman Style*, the Berlin duo Rhythm and Sound, Europe's leading interpreters of dub reggae. R&S were commissioned by Blood and Fire to edit and mix a classic one rhythm album, (a full-length album using variations of one rhythm track) using the backing track of The Congos' legendary 1977 song, "Fisherman."

While the repetitive character of the music over the course of two discs might suggest it would be awfully tedious to listen to, the impassioned, literary adaptations of the original vocal track render the sum total of the album anything but boring. Perhaps the essential element in making this record work so well is not necessarily the diversity of its vocals, but the fact that every MC provides an equally political reading of the original song's lyrics. In tandem with the one rhythm foundation of *Fisherman Style*, what results is a transcendent appreciation of the repetitive nature of work. —Joel Schalit

Visitant

Blown off-course here by an errant trade wind, the bird
Perched on a forbidding sign and preened Eurasian
mites

From its barred caudal feathers, onto our soil. In this
Unstable weather we're having of late, the crocus splits
Open in March and spills its bright whites, yellows and
Purples in a late-Winter warmth we'd call unseasonable
If that word didn't sound so archaic now, and borne on
Uncalendared winds these accidentals arrive as trouble's
Sparks spinning in the auto-da-fé we're making of this
Planet. A New World grasshopper dead in one red talon,
The falcon exhibits a perfect equanimity at the Cessnas'
Unsteady landings on the sand-islanded airstrip behind
Its Taxiway perch, as perfection is what the bird's all
About, the balance between energy consumed and
expended

Calibrated on a scale so precise, subject to a killing
Economy, each strand of the swing feathers' dark leading
Edge and pale puffy white bars of the underwing coverts
Is weighed and measured. In answer to the falcon as an
Image of the soul, or of the desiring mind in flight, I
Offer the carved statue of the martyr, Saint Gorgonius,
ca. 1500, a missal in his slightly elevated right hand
As a falcon grips his gloved left fist, forearm held at
A right angle, in the proper position, as the as-yet un-
Decided noble hesitates between our world and the next.
The falcon is the world. If the saint views his prayer
Book's open pages through half-shut, heavy-lidded eyes,
As one trembling for touch shuts down one sense to
make

Another more acute, the bird on his hand has the disked
Pupils of a predator waiting for an error, the pause or
Extra wing beat as a quail panics between escape routes,
Any of the little lapses of attention the falcon preys
On. Once, driving too fast to Vermont to visit a girl-
Friend, my car spun out on a corner of the Interstate's
Iced-over mountain roads, pinballing between
guardrails

At 60 mph instinct and thought whirled uselessly around
The abyss between my stomach and lungs until I
pillowed

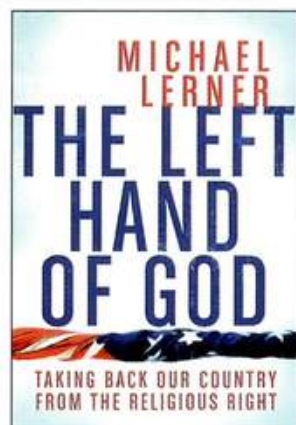
Into a snowbank. So the young aristocrat surrenders to
Historical drift and under the eagle standard of empire
Lets slip the falcon's jess, choosing instead the quail
Life and fate. And his end was terrible, according to
The law which says that who an emperor loves must be as
Broken as the fall from such height dictates. His sides
Were curried with iron combs and the sinews of his left
Leg cauterized. Forefinger roughly knuckling the worn-
Bronze spearpoints on ermine-white breast of his hybrid
Peregrine-gyrfalcon, the falconer said: these birds are
Not pets, disgorging a pellet. Once out of nature, you
Can't get back and are home only in an increasingly in-
Tricate cage. Even among our socks-and-sandals fellow-
Ship of nerdy birders some believe the salt marsh dawn
Provides a requisite opacity, a mistiness which enhances
By obscuring the bird's singularity, as if all beauty's
Best air-brushed; but my 10X42 Zeiss Victory FL's bring
Me to the falcon's perch faster than Keats' imagination
And closer. O phase-corrected, mirror-free prisms! and
O the fully multi-coated lenses' black-blue mid-Atlantic
Depths, gold-suffused and seen through to the falcon's
Pale cheeks, yellowish slate beak, and the pebbled red-
Orange leather of its cere and feet—and between, O it's
Infuriating—its wind-smudged grey breast will not focus
Itself as the bird swoops and stops above the moldering
Suede cattail tips, like a smear on the air's glass all
My expensive German optics can't quite resolve,
although

To see it sharply is all I would ever ask of this world.

—Andrew Feld

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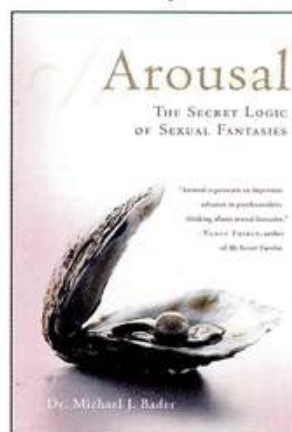
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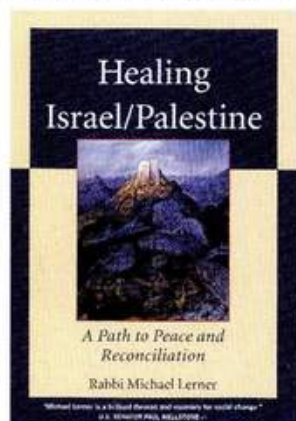
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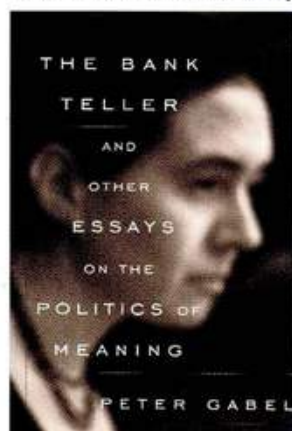
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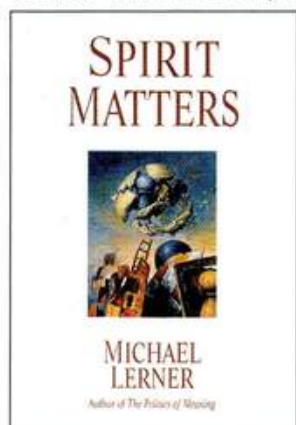
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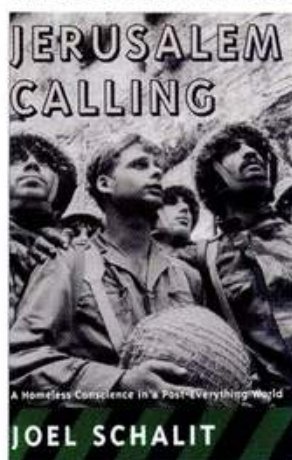
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