

# Tikkun

POLITICS+SPIRITUALITY+CULTURE

(tē-kün) To mend, repair, and transform the world. SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2006

2006 CONFERENCE  
**The Spiritual  
Left Speaks Out**  
(Page 29)

## A Moral Failure

### Why Israel Can't Find Peace

ZEEV MAOZ | JOEL SCHALIT | MITCHELL PLITNICK | MICHAEL LERNER



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**Breaking All the Rules: Queer Jews | iPod Politics  
Eco-Democrats | High Holidays Supplement  
Dan Sieradski on Anarchism | Zippy the Pinhead**



George Galloway is a left-wing version of Pat Buchanan. Though highly critical of capitalist globalization, his response to it is similarly populist. Instead of reaching out to white British voters like the BNP (British National Party) and breaking down their reactionary responses to economic injustice, Galloway appeals to the lowest common denominators in the UK's Islamist community by uncritically affirming its anger about anti-Muslim racism and the War on Terror.

T.C. MARKS  
Miami, Florida

## CATHOLIC COURAGE

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for Matthias Beier's excellent article on Pope Benedict's first year in office in the July/August issue. I found Beier's

piece to be highly judicious in its criticisms of the Pontiff.

Without engaging in the simplistic kinds of moral criticisms of the pope one finds in American Left publications, Beier seemed to speak to the pope's political problems from the perspective of someone who was clearly a student of Catholicism.

MARTINO D'ALESSI  
Rome, Italy

## GLOBAL MARSHALL PLAN

WITH RESPECT TO GEORGE VRADENBURG's column "The Contrarian" in the July/August issue, I believe that if he does not presently know what a "caring" foreign policy is, he will never know. A "caring" foreign policy is simply one in which the American government shows as much respect and concern for the needs

and wants of other countries as we do for our own. For 100 years, Americans have not given much attention to this concept, choosing instead devoting all our attention and efforts to protection of "our own interests" (most of which are financial, of course) to the detriment, if not abuse, of the welfare of other nations and their citizens.

Of course, I think that it is fair to recognize the concerns to which Vradenburg refers; I think that some solutions can be found in the following:

(1) Instead of U.S. military domination of the globe as the only means of restraining "lawless people", use a strong United Nations peace-keeping force to intervene when appropriate. This would require that the U.S. stop its unilateral interventions and end its non-

cooperation with the UN. Honest and open support of the UN without constant insistence on "our interests" being foremost would make the UN far more effective.

(2) The idea that past foreign policy has "failed" glosses over some "inconvenient truths," namely, that foreign aid was *very* successful using the Marshall Plan model, and became *very* unsuccessful when we started to distribute *military* aid to dictatorships that we naively thought would otherwise become communist. We also undermined the possibility of success with foreign aid programs by turning a blind eye to the Israeli use of our *military* "foreign aid". Furthermore, we can better promote the success of our foreign aid programs by arranging for the distribution of the funds

# Tikkun

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LERNER

An international Middle East Peace Conference should move beyond restabilizing the Israel/Lebanon border to impose a lasting and just peace settlement on all parties. Here's how. Plus a Spiritual Progressives' Questionnaire for the 2006 elections. (see page 8)

### Cover Image:

Photo by  
Pavel Wolberg/  
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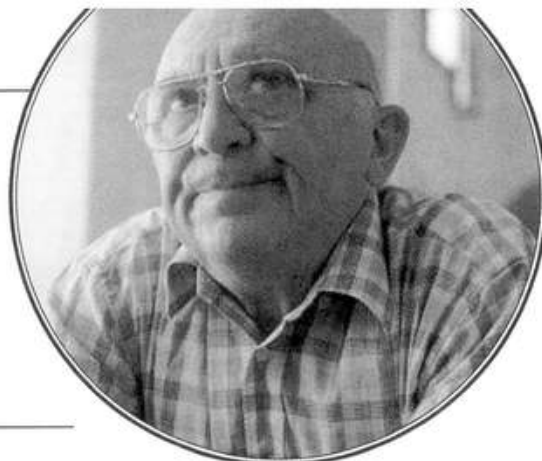
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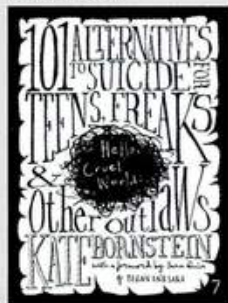
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**HELLO CRUEL WORLD: 101 Alternatives to Suicide for Teens, Freaks and Other Outlaws**

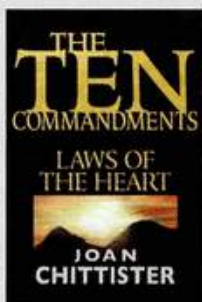
by Kate Bornstein. Seven Stories Press, 2006

LEAVE IT TO TRANSEXUAL AUTHOR and performance artist Kate Bornstein to write the definitive book on suicide prevention for today's teenager. Outraged by her discovery that teenage suicide rates had risen a whopping 300 percent since 1970, Bornstein applied her remarkable combination of insights as an outsider intellectual to craft this breathtakingly savvy catalogue of recommendations detailing every conceivable kind of stopgap measure to prevent young people from taking their lives. Guaranteed to piss off anyone who believes in inculcating kids according to a "family values" ethos, *Hello Cruel World* is a badly needed alternative view on childrearing in James Dobson's America.

**THE TEN COMMANDMENTS: Laws of the Heart**

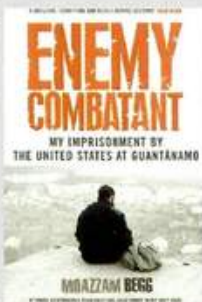
by Joan Chittister. Orbis Books, 2006

ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST RESPECTED feminist theologians, a Benedictine Sister in the Catholic Church and a co-chair of the Network of Spiritual Progressives, Joan Chittister here presents a brilliant interpretation of each of The Ten Commandments so that the reader sees how, if understood through her lens, they can powerful guides to daily life. The commandments, she cautions, are not about restrictions, they are about the things that make us whole. "God is a loving God who uses the commandments as a concrete way to ensure that 'the love that sustains the universe should never die.'"

**ENEMY COMBATANT**

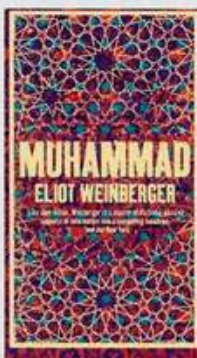
by Moazzam Begg. New Press, 2006

IN WHAT COULD EASILY BE CONSIDERED *The Gulag Archipelago* of the War on Terror, U.K.-born Moazzam Begg recounts his three-year imprisonment by the U.S. at its most infamous detention facilities. Secretly abducted in Pakistan by American agents, Begg is incarcerated first in Afghanistan and then placed in solitary confinement in Guantanamo Bay. The author's description of his captors' capacity for cruelty is truly heartbreaking. Co-written with former *Guardian* correspondent Victoria Brittain, *Enemy Combatant* is the single most literary indictment of America's abuse of human rights to emerge from the present conflict.

**MUHAMMAD**

by Eliot Weinberger. Verso Books, 2006

NEW YORK POET AND TRANSLATOR Eliot Weinberger is best known for his 2005 National Book Critics Circle Prize-winning history of the Bush administration, the frightening and caustic *What Happened Here: Bush Chronicles*. In *Muhammad*, Weinberger changes literary gears, delivering a book-length prose poem biography of the founder of Islam. Relying on the history of Muslim writings about the Prophet for his source material, *Muhammad* is as much a montage as it is a sincerely loving account of the life of an individual whose impact upon world civilization at present could not be more hotly disputed.

**MIDDLE CHURCH: Reclaiming the Moral Values of the Faithful Majority from the Religious Right**

by Bob Edgar. Simon and Schuster, 2006

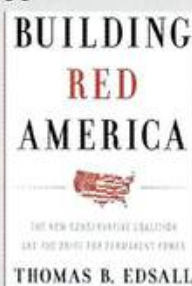
**ALL RISE: Somebodies, Nobodies and the Politics of Dignity**

by Robert W. Fuller. Berrett Koehler, 2006

**BUILDING RED AMERICA: The New Conservative Coalition of and the Drive for Permanent Power**

by Thomas B. Edsall. Basic Books, 2006

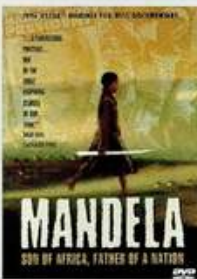
THREE BOOKS WHICH PREPARE US for the complexities of American politics. Each picks up on a theme developed in this magazine: the importance of talking respectfully to Americans who have felt dissed by the liberal and progressive world. Read together, they become a powerful supplement to *The Left Hand of God* in helping to understand the underlying psychological and spiritual needs of Americans that are so often left out of the strategizing of those who seek social change, peace and social justice.

**MANDELA**

Directed by Jo Menell and Angus Gibson.

DVD Edition Palm Pictures, 2006

SOUTH AFRICA'S NELSON MANDELA needs little introduction. One of the most influential political leaders of the twentieth century, Mandela is one of those rare figures deserving of the myriad forms of beatification bestowed upon him throughout global popular culture. A proponent of non-violence in the tradition of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., and a revolutionary on a par with Che Guevara, Menell and Gibson's documentary about the former ANC leader does a brilliant job at capturing the vibrancy and continued relevance of the world's most renowned antiracist.



# Readers Respond

## WALTER BENJAMIN

I WAS GREATLY PLEASED TO read two articles on Walter Benjamin in the July/August issue. It's refreshing to see him being discussed at length in a non-academic context. I do want to point out, however, that the story of Benjamin's death with which Michael Lukas begins his review of *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*—the apparent starting point for the Brian Fennell-hough opera *Shadowtime* reviewed by Charlie Bertsch as well—has come under attack in recent years. Stephen Schwartz's (June 11th, 2001) piece in *The Weekly Standard* suggested that Benjamin was actually murdered by Soviet agents eager to prevent the work he was carrying from reaching the light of day.

Since Schwartz has long been on a mission to discredit the legacy of communism in Western intellectual life, his motives are suspect. But even commentators who doubt the veracity of his account have acknowledged that something isn't right in the established account Lukas recapitulates. A number have remarked it odd that the group Benjamin was with supposedly escaped

through a mountain pass in the Pyrenees only to end up in the seaside town of Port Bou that is far more easily reached by a coastal route. And the fact that the briefcase Benjamin was purportedly carrying during the journey is completely missing from some eyewitness reports also raises questions.

Interestingly, while the excitement that Schwartz's narrative initially generated has given way to increasing skepticism, the philosopher Slavoj Žižek nevertheless invokes it at the beginning of his new book *The Parallax View*, referring to it as a "story"—he doesn't mention Schwartz at all—without calling its truthfulness into question.

D.L. WOOD  
Pacific Palisades, CA

## KEEP NOT SILENT

I AM DISAPPOINTED THAT you did not see the opportunity to link two of your most interesting stories in the July/August issue of *Tikkun* by a sidebar or editor's note.

The concluding sentence of Shai Ginsburg's review of *Keep Not Silent* misses a point that is implied in Roger Gottlieb's story "Pluralism Ain't as Easy as It Looks." The key concept linking the rights of homosexuals in many parts of the world and pluralistic Jews in Israel is that neither can marry.

There is no concept of secular marriage in Israel;

only orthodox Rabbis have the right to marry Jews in Israel. Obtaining this right for Reform and Conservative Rabbis in Israel will go a long way in obtaining rights for homosexuals as well.

GEOFFREY SILVERSTEIN  
Bloomfield, NJ

## GEORGE GALLOWAY

I WAS EXTREMELY SURPRISED to see the profile of the controversial British MP George Galloway in the July/August

issue of *Tikkun*. Though Mr Galloway has fought the good fight on many issues of progressive concern, his ethnic politics have always been bad, and are getting worse as the war in Lebanon wears on. Crying out "We Are All Hezbollah," during demonstrations in London this past week, Galloway sent shivers throughout the UK's Jewish community, most of whom feel extremely ambivalent about Israel's recent military conduct.

# From Tikkun.org

TO JOIN IN THE DEBATE, VISIT [WWW.TIKKUN.ORG/LETTERS](http://WWW.TIKKUN.ORG/LETTERS).

I wish to add comment to Rabbi Lerner's statement on gay marriage.

This issue has been introduced as the "only" issue for gays by folks who want us to be just like straights, and as a tool for homophobes, both inside and outside of the homophile community.

My lover and I do not need or want any endorsements of our lovemaking. It's nobody else's business but our own. We don't need blessings from anyone else, nor do we want it, nor this "movement" for it.

The issue isn't "gay marriage" but the principle of "taxation with representation" that we fought an American Revolution to have, which means that all taxpayers are entitled to equal treatment under the law. Either we have our rights, or the bigots should pick up the tab.

That the Left is as homophobic as the Right, is the issue needing to be discussed, not judging or giving blessing to same-sex relationships. Quality of life and love comes in many forms, including supporting those who aren't monogamous by choice with consenting adults.

—BOB KUNST

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

through NGOs instead of through "governments".

(3) Diverting military funds to foreign aid need not leave the U.S. militarily vulnerable. According to the U.S. Defense Department, we currently have over 600 military bases on foreign soil. It is totally unreasonable to believe that all of them are absolutely essential to our protection. After all, five-sixths of the world is water, and we don't have "foreign bases" in China, the former Soviet republics, or the United States, and that greatly reduces the land mass available for such bases. A huge amount of money can be made available for caring foreign aid simply by reducing the excess military bureaucracy, which "establishes" bases but never

"dis-establishes" any of them. (There are also some U.S. military bases in the center of our country whose ability to "defend" us from foreign attack is subject to question.)

PETER M. KOPKOWSKI  
San Diego, CA

**George Vradenburg responds:**

*We have no difference in defining a "caring foreign policy," but we do differ on how that policy can actually be executed. The UN is, by its nature, a secondary and supporting player, not a primary player, in executing such a policy. Its structure does not allow for an effective peace-keeping force capable of preventing genocide or crimes against humanity, as has been painfully obvious in Rwanda, the Congo, Kosovo, Bosnia or Darfur—even when*

*the U.S. has forcefully advocated UN intervention. In Southern Lebanon, for example, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was put in place to "assist the government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area."*

*While UN forces have been in place in Lebanon for over twenty years, UNIFIL has not carried out its mandate, allowing Hezbollah to become the "effective authority" in Southern Lebanon, with adverse consequences for peace that are now tragically obvious. As for foreign aid, it can be effective where tied to effective, democratic, governmental reforms—as it was in Germany and Japan following World War II and as it is now as a result of the Bush administration's policies. Money*

*alone, without governmental structures that require its effective application to the real problems of real people on the ground, cannot address problems of poverty or disease.*

**ERRATA**

A central section of Nan Gefen's article "Why Pushkin?" in the July/August 2006 issue was inadvertently omitted. The full text can be found in the online edition of the July/August *Tikkun*. (requires archival subscription)

**Online Archive Update:**

Given the pace of this summer's events in the Middle East, Tad Dailey's "Nuclear Irony" (July/August) has been updated by the author and posted to online edition of the July/August *Tikkun*. (requires archival subscription.) ■

## Examining the Times



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# Current THINKING

THE ONLINE MIDDLE EAST

## Lost in the Supermarket

As the war in Iraq continues to deepen and the Arab-Israeli crisis spirals further out of control, Americans are growing increasingly dissatisfied with the quality of information they are receiving from their own media sources. U.S. news periodicals are experiencing a parallel crisis in readership, and there are some important reasons for why that is.

Given the proliferation of European, Asian and Middle Eastern news sources available on the Internet, cable and satellite TV, and the increasing domestic presence

of British print periodicals like *The Economist* and even the *Financial Times*, Americans are starting to get a better sense of how impoverished their news media is because, for the first time, they have something to compare it to. However, for many, the flood of alternative sources of information can indeed be too much.

This is a complaint we hear over and over again from our readers, who, throughout the summer of fighting between Israel and Lebanon, repeatedly called our office asking us to direct them to what we rely on as the best sources for news

and analysis on the Middle East. To that end, we've compiled a short list of news sources that, like many members of our journalistic community, we rely on—some would say—religiously:

**Ha'aretz:** Israel's finest newspaper—and arguably one of the best newspapers in the world right now. For excellent op-eds, up-to-the-minute news, and first class feature articles that break nearly every Diaspora Jewish taboo on discussing all things [Israel].

The pissy readers' comments published in *Ha'aretz* say it all: (<http://www.haaretz.com>).

**Al-Hayat:** This London-based, Saudi-owned, button-pushing periodical is rapidly becoming the best source for opinion editorials in the Arabic-language newspaper world. Peruse their articles and you'll learn about a well-informed and vibrant intellectual community that you likely wouldn't be exposed to elsewhere: (<http://english.daralhayat.com/>).

**The Guardian:** You shouldn't have to just visit the websites of Middle Eastern periodicals to get the real deal. Sometimes distance can also grant

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#131 Heavy gunfire between IDF troops, Hezbollah in Bint Jibati (Haaretz)

**Four peacekeepers killed in IAF strike on UN base Nasrallah: We will hit targets south of Haifa**

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**Only Online**

IDF troops surround Hezbollah stronghold of Bint Jibati

**Responses: 200**

The IDF is becoming big, rich and dumb

**Responses: 178**

This war is not a just war and morality is not on our side

**Responses: 319**

UN official accuses Hezbollah of cowardly operating with civilians

**Responses: 66**

Zin Barbiel: The road to peace runs through Shabaa Farms

**Responses: 101**

Dr. David C. Gussman / October

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**Hezbollah: Strong Israeli response surprised us**

Group admits 27 of its members have been killed in clashes with IDF; Israeli claims number much higher.

**Some 90 rockets hit northern Israel; girl, 15, killed in Galilee**

Haifa man suffers heart attack, dies during damage; 11 others wounded; lower city significantly damaged.

**Annan: UN base was 'apparently deliberately targeted'**

Israeli ambassador to U.S. demands apology; victims listed as Austrian, Canadian, Chinese, Irish.

**Seven Palestinians killed in IAF**

An IDF soldier holding a bag of explosives near an artillery piece firing from southern Lebanon near Israel on Tuesday. (AP)

**More Headlines:**

**Analysis: Is the criticism of IDF's military intelligence justified?**

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# "But I Never Said I Would"

Here's one parents have all heard before: You tell your kid to clean up their room before dinner. They nod. At dinnertime, you return and the room is a mess. "I told you to clean up your room," you say. "But I never said I would," they reply. You perhaps get a bit angry. "You did. You nodded your head." "Yes," they reply, "but I never *said* I would."

As usual, we now find out that our president, George W. Bush, has ingeniously adapted the behavior of a young child to his work in the Oval Office. Congress sends him a bill. He signs it. But then he doesn't follow its provisions. What happened? Well, he replies, "But

I never *said* I would follow all the provisions."

It turns out that Dubya has been signing little statements accompanying bills he doesn't like that essentially say, "I don't havta do this if I don't wanta."

John Dean, who knows something about lying to Congress (having decided to tell the truth himself), describes the signing statements this way:

Rather than veto laws passed by Congress, Bush is using his signing statements to effectively nullify them as they relate to the executive branch. These statements, for him, function as directives to executive branch departments and agencies as to how they are to implement the relevant law.

([www.findlaw.com](http://www.findlaw.com)—posted Friday, January 13, 2006)



All presidents act a little childish sometimes. The President that Dean worked for, Richard Nixon, signed a few of these statements himself. But Bush has given himself deniability on Congressional bills over 750 times, including the Patriot Act Renewal bill.

The American Bar Association doesn't think that's right. On July 24, a bipartisan panel of the ABA declared that the signing statements are a serious threat to the Constitution's system of checks and balances. ABA President Michael Greco, a Massachusetts attorney, declared, "We will be close to a constitutional crisis if this issue, the president's use of signing statements, is left unchecked." (quoted in the *Washington Post*, July 24, 2006, story by Michael Abramowitz).

Bush has an alternative to the signing statements. It's called the veto. Of course, to use a veto, he'd have to show some respect for Congress. More importantly, he'd also have to be willing to stand up in public for his own ideas. He'd have to tell us why he shouldn't have to clean up his own mess.

perspective. To look at how a foreign newspaper ought to cover the region, from its news reporting to its editorials and guest blogs, this UK

paper sets the standard: (<http://www.guardian.co.uk>).

**The Daily Star:** Throughout the second Lebanon war, this outstanding Beirut daily

has been the single best source of information on what is transpiring in the country. Featuring the op-ed writing of Michael Younge

and Rami Khouri, the *Daily Star* provides an inspiring example of independent journalism during wartime: (<http://www.dailystar.com>). ■

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# When Will They Ever Learn?

## *How to Overcome The Middle East Mess*

BY MICHAEL LERNER

**A** PART FROM THOSE OIL COMPANIES WHO FIND themselves with windfall profits each time the price of petroleum rises, and who have thus been enriched whenever Middle East conflict tells the global capitalist market that there is a risk of oil shortages and thus encourages them to raise prices, and apart from Christian fundamentalist fanatics who actually celebrated when the war between Israel and Hezbollah broke out in July, 2006, imagining that this was a sign that the ultimate war of Gog and Magog was closer and hence the Apocalypse and second Coming of Jesus was around the corner, who in their right mind would want this struggle between Israel and its Arab and Muslim neighbors to continue for decades to come?

Only extremist nuts, who should not be allowed to prevail.

And yet, that is precisely what will happen unless the international community broadens its current concern with enforcing a cease-fire, and working out new border arrangements between Israel and Hezbollah that would prevent either side from encroaching on the other. What is needed is for the world to impose on Israel and the Arab states a permanent, sustainable, and just settlement so that the peoples of that troubled region can stop fighting and start cooperating to build a thriving economy and cooperative and safe neighborhoods for all of its peoples.

Why impose? Because there are extremists on all sides of this struggle who would prefer to keep it going for the next hundred years rather than give up their maximalist fantasies of decisively defeating the other sides. Extremists in Israel, Syria, Hezbollah, Hamas, and Iran each have the capacity to commit provocative acts that would give extremists on the other sides apparent justification to escalate into new wars and violence—thereby thwarting the wishes of the majorities in Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria who would prefer peace to endless war.

The terms are clear:

- Creation of a Palestinian state encompassing all of the West Bank and Gaza, with minor border alterations to allow Israel to

incorporate some of the settlements directly adjacent to its borders, and the Jewish and Armenian quarters of the Old City in Jerusalem, in exchange for an equal amount of land to be given to Palestine from what is now Israel. Simultaneously, there must be unequivocal recognition of the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state (in the same way that there are many Muslim states in the region) as long as there is documentable anti-Semitism facing communities of Jews around the world, and as long as Israel, apart from offering special immigration rights to Jews fleeing from elsewhere because of reasonable fears of persecution, offers fully equal rights to its minority populations. Palestine will offer similar special immigration privileges to Palestinians from around the world, and similar rights to its minorities (including any Jewish settlers who choose to remain in their settlements as law-abiding citizens of Palestine).

- An international consortium to fund reparations for Palestinian refugees who lost property or livelihood from 1947–2006, and for Jewish refugees from Arab lands, who lost property or livelihood from 1948–2006.

- An international force to work in close cooperation with Israel and Palestine to provide security from terrorists, and to protect both countries from each other and from any other outside forces that might seek to attack or control either country.

- International supervision of the regional media, education system, textbooks, and religious institutions to ensure that there is a total ban on teaching or encouraging hatred or denigration of the other.

- A Truth and Reconciliation process similar to that which took place in South Africa. And referral to an international war crimes tribunal for any who do not publicly confess their acts of violence and human rights abuses.

So why doesn't this happen? Because the political realists who shape public discourse in most countries focus our attention on the tiny little steps they imagine can be achieved in the short run, rather than supporting the dramatic changes that are needed to save the Middle East from endless war, or, for

that matter, the changes that are needed to save our planet from nuclear war and environmental catastrophe.

What is needed is a new discourse that teaches Jews, Arabs, Muslims, Americans, Europeans, Chinese, Japanese, Russians, and everyone else on the planet that we need a New Bottom Line and a new way of thinking about politics, starting with the following three guidelines: 1. Our wellbeing as Americans depends on the wellbeing of everyone else on the planet. Policies that seek to privilege one group without taking into account the needs of others are reckless and irresponsible. We are one family of humanity; we are all in this together. And so our economic, social, political, environmental, education and religious policies and practices must reflect this fundamental truth of the oneness and interconnectedness of all human beings on the planet with each other and with the planet on which we live. 2. The path to peace must in fact be peaceful. Non-violence is not just the goal, but also the means. 3. Every human being is equally precious. There can never be "moral equivalence" between any unnecessary death and any other—because every human being on the planet is infinitely precious.

So what could the U.S. and Israel do to change the whole dynamics of politics in the world? First, acknowledge that we have pursued policies that have, either intentionally or unintentionally, hurt many people and done damage to the world, publicly repent and ask forgiveness for those whom we have hurt (including the families of those who have been killed by the war in Iraq and the war in Palestine). Second, lead the G8 countries in a massive "Global Marshall Plan" in which we dedicate 5 percent of our Gross Domestic Product each year for the next twenty to elimi-

nating global poverty, hunger, homelessness, inadequate education and inadequate health care, delivered in ways that assure that the monies reach the people and cannot be skimmed off by governmental or economic elites, and implemented in ways that are culturally and ecologically sensitive. Third, have our elected leaders spend the next two years visiting the households of people in Iraq, Haiti, Palestine, Lebanon and Israel whose lives have been lost because of our policies, to personally ask for forgiveness. Fourth, reject the notion that everyone is out to hurt us, and instead talk to the world of a Spirit of Generosity that will from now on be the guiding principle in our foreign policy.

If Israel implements the peace plan and the U.S. starts the Global Marshall Plan, within five years there will be a decisive shift in the way that the majority of people of the world respond to us. Within ten years, that shift will be significant enough that terrorists will have a much tougher time recruiting volunteers to destroy themselves. In fact, this approach is actually far more likely to work than any policies currently being proposed by anyone in the self-described "realistic" versions of politics that dominate most of the currents of discourse on Left, Right and center in American and Israel. Our job is to spread this vision, reject the idolatry of "cynical realism," and reaffirm that the world can be built on love and generosity—a message even more realistic today and even more needed. When will the powerful ever learn that the ancient wisdom of the prophets and spiritual teachers of the past 4,000 years are more pressingly needed today? It's pointless to wait for some magical candidate or orator—this is OUR mission, and you and I, dear reader, have to take it seriously.

# The November Elections

**W**HILE TIKKUN NEVER ENDORSES CANDIDATES or parties, members of the Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP) Clergy Cabinet suggested another vehicle for having an impact: follow the tactic of the Religious Right in circulating to every church (and in our case, synagogue, mosque, ashram, university, community center, union, and professional organizations) the responses we get to a questionnaire given to all major candidates in any particular electoral race—and let people who read it decide for themselves.

Of course, many organizations already do this. But what the NSP Clergy Cabinet suggested was to *not* repeat the standard questions asked by every liberal and conservative group, questions that allow the media-driven consensus about "what the issues are in this election" to shape the questionnaires, but instead to use a questionnaire to shift the attention to issues that we think ought to be discussed in public life. So the goal

of the questionnaire becomes educational—not to impact the election but to educate not only the candidates, but also the media and even the people to whom you show the questionnaire, dear reader! And that is our goal: to shape a new way of thinking in our society, one that is aware of the impact of the values that people learn in the world of work and economic life on the way we then think about our personal lives and our social policies.

So read the questionnaire as though its goal were to shape a new way of thinking, and maybe you'll decide that you'd like to get these questions in front of some of the candidates in your own local area. You are also invited to help the NSP refine these questions and add others so that by the 2008 elections we have an even more useful form of this questionnaire. In the meantime, you can copy them from the magazine or you can download them from [www.spiritualprogressives.org](http://www.spiritualprogressives.org) (and in the process, you might want to consider joining the NSP at that same website or by calling (510) 644 1200. ■

# NSP Questionnaire for Political Candidates

Dear Candidate:

The Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP)—a growing national interfaith movement of religious, spiritual, and secular people who want an America rooted in love, compassion, generosity, and ecological sensitivity—invites you to respond to a questionnaire on issues that are important to NSP members. This same invitation is being sent to your opponents in this race.

A public service of the NSP, which neither supports nor opposes any political party or candidate, the questionnaire will be used for educational purposes only, providing voters with the information they need to vote responsibly. We will share your response with our members and make it as broadly available to the public as possible through churches, synagogues, mosques, community centers, colleges and universities, and media. Local chapters of the NSP have been invited to add other questions that apply to the specifics of your intended role in government. The NSP will not endorse candidates, but it will distribute this information widely, including information about which candidates did or did not respond.

The first 100 words of your response to each question will be reprinted verbatim. We may choose to summarize the rest. Use additional paper as needed and mail your response by October 1, to the address below, or e-mail to [Nichola@tikkun.org](mailto:Nichola@tikkun.org).

Please return a copy of your answers on this and subsequent sheets of paper that you may add. Your opponents in this race are also being sent this questionnaire. Send to our national office: [Nichola@tikkun.org](mailto:Nichola@tikkun.org) by email or NSP Questionnaire c/o NSP, 2342 Shattuck Ave, Suite 1200, Berkeley, CA 94704

Let us know how this works for you.

**1. WAR IN IRAQ:** Do you believe the U.S. should have a timetable for bringing the troops home from Iraq, and that full withdrawal/redeployment occur within calendar year 2007?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Why or why not?

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**2. NEW BOTTOM LINE:** The NSP is calling for a new bottom line in America, by which organizations, corporations, social and governmental practices, and legislation would be judged rational, efficient, and productive not only to the extent that they maximize money and power (the old bottom line), but also to the extent that they increase our capacities to be loving and caring, kind and generous, ethically and ecologically sensitive, able to see others as embodiments of the sacred and able to respond to the universe with gratitude, awe, and wonder. Would you work to implement this "New Bottom Line"?

☐ Yes ☐ No

How would you implement it?

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**3. STRONG FAMILIES:** Do you agree that strong families will be supported if we reward institutions and social practices that promote love and caring in our work places, economic policies, government and corporate practices, and our educational system?

☐ Yes ☐ No

How would you promote such institutions and practices?

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**4. HEALTH CARE:** Do you support the call for a federal government-sponsored single-payer national health care program?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Why or why not?

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**5. EDUCATION:** Would you support legislation aimed at restructuring educational priorities, so that in addition to teaching basic academic skills, schools would give high attention to teaching students to be socially, ethically, and ecologically responsible, caring toward others, kind, generous, loving, non-violent in their behavior and their speech, and responsive to and grateful for and in awe of the grandeur of the universe?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Why or why not?

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**6. GLOBAL POVERTY:** Would you support a plan to allocate 5 percent of our gross domestic product (GDP) each year for the next twenty years to ending global as well as domestic poverty and inadequate health care and education?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Why or why not?

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**7. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AMENDMENT:** Do you support legislation that would require every large corporation (income over \$50 million/year) to get a new charter every ten years, with the charter being granted only to those corporations that could prove a satisfactory history of social responsibility to a jury of ordinary citizens?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Why or why not? To what practices would you want such a jury to give particular attention?

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**8. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IMPACT LEGISLATION:** Would you support the SRI—legislation that would require than any corporation applying for public funds in excess of \$100,000 to file a Social Responsibility Impact report describing the steps they've taken to increase social responsibility in the way that they treat their employees, the choice of products they produce or services they provide, and their impact on the ethical and ecological climate of the communities where their products are advertised or bought? In awarding the contract, the government office would take into account their history of social responsibility as presented by them, and also as described in SRI

reports filed by their employees and by community organizations in the communities affected by their activities.

☐ Yes ☐ No

Why or why not?

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**9. MODELING PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY:** Do you support the NSP's call for elected officials and their staffs to give a few hours during each work week to hands-on service to the needy, for example in a soup kitchen or homeless shelter?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Why or why not?

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**10. HUNGER FOR MEANING:** The NSP holds that people have a need for meaning in their lives, which is as important to them, if not more so, than their economic needs. In what ways would you give priority to the need for meaning and what role might government play in this process? What higher meaning and purpose would be given higher priority if you had power to influence the shape of our economic life beyond the goals of accumulation of wealth and material goods?

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**11. GLOBAL WARMING:** What specific policies do you support to save our planet from ecological degradation and to dramatically reduce and reverse global warming?

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**12. VALUES IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE:** What values do you think should be encouraged by our government, schools, and social policy? How would you exemplify those values as an elected official? Or do you believe that the introduction of any values is a slippery slope toward undermining the first amendment separation clause? Explain your views on the separation of church and state and the role of values in the public sphere.

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# Israel's Gamble in Lebanon

BY GEORGE VRADENBURG

ISRAEL'S MASSIVE STRIKES THROUGHOUT LEBANON, an attempt to weaken Hezbollah's military capability, is mounting pressure on the international community to try to find a way to secure Israel's northern border. If the border cannot be secured, and I fear that it may not, Israel will either have to permanently re-occupy southern Lebanon, or be prepared to defend themselves again and again against a potentially stronger enemy. Either case leaves Israel in a potentially more vulnerable position than its pre-war status.

In my view, Israel reasonably perceives itself facing a long-term existential threat from Iran and Syria, which is being waged by proxy through Hezbollah and Hamas. By striking a decisive blow against Hezbollah, Israel hopes to compel a moderate government in Beirut to assert sovereignty over southern Lebanon.

The success of that strategy depends on replacing the vacuum created by Israel's campaign in southern Lebanon first with friendly, effective buffer arrangements, and then by a Lebanese government ready, willing, and able to assert sovereignty over the country's south. If not replaced, Hezbollah's military wing will simply regroup, stronger and bolder.

I fear that Israel has miscalculated its ability to disarm Hezbollah and to execute a replacement strategy.

First, international buffer forces are difficult to mobilize in the face of strong local resistance. One only needs to look at Lebanon itself, where the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was put in place in southern Lebanon in 1978 "to confirm Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, restore the international peace and security, and help the Lebanese Government restore its effective authority in the area."

A well-trained NATO-led force might be stronger than UNIFIL. However, given Hezbollah's strong position in the southern Lebanon, and its supply links to Syria, a NATO force would be positioned for failure; it would have to become a hostile occupying force, with the kind of checkpoints, roadblocks, border patrols, house inspections, and personal searches that made Israel's eighteen-year occupation of southern Lebanon a failure. That risk highlights the difficulty of organizing such a force in the first place.

Second, the extension of the central Lebanese government's authority into the south, over the objections of Hezbollah, would be confronted with all the nation-building challenges we have seen in Iraq, and as Israel experienced during its occupation of south Lebanon.

Israel has made the situation even more difficult through its extensive air strikes and artillery bombardments. Those actions have weakened the Lebanese government in the eyes of its own people, saddled the country with hundreds of thousands of displaced citizens, and has burdened the Lebanese economy with the gigantic task of financing the rebuilding of the country's infrastructure. Not to mention the anger toward Israel felt by Lebanese citizens, whose support Israel needs in order to isolate Hezbollah.

Israel has taken a major gamble and may well have seriously miscalculated the ability of the United States and the international community to support Israel's position.

None of this is to say that Israel should not act affirmatively to address the threat Hezbollah still poses. Israel has a responsibility for the defense of its people and must act to protect itself.

Israel could have acted with moderation, limiting its intervention to Hezbollah's military installations immediately across the border and thus avoiding the humanitarian crisis it has created for the entire country. Israel might then have engaged the Lebanese government, perhaps with international backing, to address the economic and social needs of the country's Shi'ite community in a manner that would, over time, weaken its strong ties to Hezbollah. This is an environment where the consequences of dramatic actions are highly unpredictable, and one that demands humility among those who try to predict outcomes.

Arab hostility to the very existence of Israel remains real. Israel cannot eliminate that threat simply by moving against Hezbollah. If it fails in Lebanon, Israel risks emboldening those more powerful regional forces who wish Israel to be wiped off the face of the earth. The catastrophic threat of a Middle Eastern war hangs in the balance. ■

*George Vradenburg is copublisher of Tikkun.*

# What is an Act of Terror?

BY JO ELLEN GREEN KAISER

**W**HEN HEZBOLLAH BEGAN BOMBING ISRAEL this summer, U.S. politicians and pundits were quick to call the action an “act of terror.” It was not. It was an “act of war.” The difference is not semantic.

What makes a bombing an “act of terror”? Terror is violent and unexpected, but so is war itself. We don’t call either the bombing of Hiroshima or the bombing of Pearl Harbor acts of terror, though both were terrifyingly destructive.

War itself is terrifying. Horror, panic, an intense fear of danger to come—that defines the experience of war. What makes “acts of terror” different from “acts of war” is that the danger we fear is unknown. We don’t know who has attacked us, or why, or how to find them. They operate outside our known political universe.

Since 9/11, however, the terms “terror” and “war” have been collapsed. The Bush administration pursues a “war on terror,” as if the unknown could be brought permanently to bay. Yet even as he suggests terror can be tamed, Bush increasingly populates the realm of terror, casting ordinary enemies of the state as terrorists. We saw this in the lead-up to the current Gulf War, in which Iraq itself was almost never named. Instead, the enemy was the evil, cartoon-like Saddam whose motives were unclear and whose weapons unknown—as if the state of Iraq and its long history did not exist.

It’s not an exaggeration to say that the Bush administration was able to persuade Americans to make preemptive war against a sovereign nation-state through the power of the rhetoric of “terror.” In the Bush worldview, the “American way of life” is not only the best possible way to live but the only possible way. It is an extraordinarily myopic worldview that suggests those who espouse any other ideological position must simply not know any better. Those who are introduced to the “American way” and yet still reject it are seen as beyond reason. Like Saddam, they operate on the “outside,” in an unfathomable and unknowable ideological space. One cannot understand them, cannot negotiate with them, can only attack and hope to destroy them. They are terrorists.

The rhetoric of terrorism supplies the logic for unending

war. While we hope for a messianic age “when the world will be one,” for the foreseeable future, humanity will continue to be divided by radically different understandings of how we must live in the world. There will always be those who oppose the values we share with their own. If we insist on characterizing our ideology as the only one possible, we will have created the necessity for the terrorists—the outsiders—we so fear.

The alternative is to understand the human world as a complex web of competing ideological positions, some of which are deeply oppositional. We need not accept the validity of these positions. There are even times when our ethical duty is to go to war over ideology, as in the U.S. Civil War or World War II. Yet acknowledging that there are acceptable ideologies other than our own invites mutual recognition and negotiation over differences.

Such a stance will also help us recognize those who desire to be seen as terrorists—those who not only refuse to recognize the validity of any position other than their own, but who do not wish to be known themselves—in short, those who desire to be on the “outside.” Osama Bin Laden stands there; Saddam Hussein did not.

As the United States formulates a strategy for Lebanon and for Iran, we must be wary of references to “terrorist” states and “terrorist” leaders. Iran is not an unknown quantity, nor for that matter is Hezbollah. Radical as it is, Hezbollah operates within a field of differences, its political arm participating in the multiethnic parliament of Lebanon. Arguing that Hezbollah is not a terrorist organization does not imply support—Hezbollah’s launch of rockets into Israel was an act of war, to which Israel had the right to respond. It only implies that Hezbollah is not “outside” the world in which we operate.

Terrorism is a strategy of fear. Calling enemies terrorists only plays into those fears, implying that we can only protect ourselves by clinging more tightly to what is ours and rejecting more clearly that which is outside. We will be stronger, and better able to confront the threats that we face, when we can characterize our enemies as people like us, with their own beliefs and fears. ■

*Jo Ellen Green Kaiser is senior editor of Tikkun.*

# Two Very Different Wars

BY MITCHELL PLITNICK

**W**HEN HEZBOLLAH INITIATED THIS LATEST round of madness in the Middle East, they had to know that Israel was going to respond with massive force. After all, Israel had just done the same in Gaza.

But the war in the north, which Israel has waged mostly against civilians, has obscured the ongoing attacks on Gaza in the south. It is not clear whether or not this was Hezbollah's intent, but it certainly has been the result.

There are important similarities between the two fronts on which Israel found itself fighting during the month of July, as well as some important differences. Both engagements began with ambitious attacks on Israel Defense Force posts inside of Israel. Both were humiliating episodes for the IDF. And both were followed by massive Israeli bombardments of Lebanese and Palestinian civilian infrastructures.

These similarities, however, threaten to overwhelm the crucial differences of each Israeli campaign. For example, whatever one thinks about the attacks on the IDF outposts, despite the withdrawal from settlements last year, the situation in Gaza remains one of occupation and conflict. Israel maintained control of all entrance and egress from Gaza and used that control to stifle the Palestinian economy (to "put the Palestinians on a diet," as former Israeli government spokesman Dov Weisglass put it). Moreover, Israel was routinely firing artillery shells and creating sonic booms in Gaza during the months leading up to the Palestinian attack. The Palestinians, in turn, were regularly firing Qassam rockets at Sderot. While these rockets usually landed harmlessly in the Negev, some did not, and the frequent attacks created terror among the town's residents. In short, Palestinians and Israelis were engaged in conflict and an ongoing condition of occupation. This was not the case with Lebanon and Hezbollah.

Hezbollah's act was clearly criminal, and its justifications for carrying it out are flimsy.

For instance, the three prisoners they refer to as being the reasons for taking this action include two who were imprisoned

long before Hezbollah existed and one who is actually an Israeli citizen, not Lebanese.

In both cases, Israel's response was unjustifiable. Israel devastated Lebanon's civilian infrastructure in a military offensive they knew would not result in freeing soldiers or preventing further attacks by Hezbollah. Hamas can credibly claim that they could not have anticipated the scope and scale of Israel's response. But, Hezbollah, having just witnessed Israel's attack on Gaza three weeks earlier, cannot claim the same ignorance. Many Lebanese were not pleased that Hezbollah decided to engage Israel, knowing the devastating effect this would have on their country. Others in Lebanon echo much of the rest of the Arab world in praising Hezbollah as the only Arab entity able and willing to stand up to Israel. But all of Lebanon is united in its anger at Israel and, thus far, Hezbollah has become more popular than it was before—much like Hamas.

This brings us to the final similarity between the two fronts of this war: *the solution*. Israel is pounding a civilian population in Lebanon with the hope that this will "convince" the people of Lebanon that Hezbollah is disarmed. It is, of course, having the opposite effect. Israel must have known this would be the case, as it has been proven time and again that this tactic always backfires. Still, it would not be unreasonable for Israel to demand the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1559, which calls for Hezbollah's disarmament and deployment of the Lebanese army in the south. It is fair and right that this happen.

On the other front, the way out is equally clear. Implement UNSC resolutions regarding Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders. Sharing Jerusalem can be worked out and the resulting atmosphere might even be one in which the two sides can find a mutually satisfactory resolution to the Palestinian refugee problem. In Lebanon, Gaza, and the West Bank, adherence to international law, and the use of constructive international diplomacy hold the keys. The steps to a better future have been laid out. It is time for Israel, the United States, Lebanon, and the entire world to take them. ■

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

# SPIRIT Matters

Selections from forthcoming books, articles, and talks



## TRANSFORMING OUR ATTACHMENTS TO OUTCOMES

*Excerpted from The Engaged Spiritual Life: A Buddhist Approach to Transforming Ourselves and the World, by Donald Rothberg. Available October 15, 2006. Reprinted with permission of Beacon Press.*

In contemporary Western societies, and particularly American society, there is clearly a *very strong social and cultural predisposition to be attached to outcomes*. Social theorists from Max Weber to Jürgen Habermas have identified the ways in which in modern secular societies we often become fixated on getting things done, on being pragmatic, often without paying much attention to the deeper value or meaning of what is getting done.

These theorists speak of this tendency as resulting from an overdevelopment of our instrumental rationality, of a means-end rationality in which we focus on finding the best means to achieve a given end or outcome. Much of our everyday work in society is almost exclusively instrumental, focused on figuring out how to achieve a given outcome: attempting to make more money, helping our corporation increase its sales, researching better ways to kill pests, or developing a plan to invade another country. In itself, this thinking about outcomes is a necessary part of our intelligence, helping us to plan, to study cause-and-effect relationships, and to attempt to achieve intended results. However, when this form of rationality becomes predominant, a number of problems arise.

For instance, we may continually focus on short-term outcomes, attempting to meet our desires of the moment but finding eventually that continually following such desires, although sometimes quite useful for the growth of the economy, does not lead to a life of wisdom. Or we may spend our entire lives preparing for what comes next and how to get there, preoccupied

with planning for immediate outcomes but never arriving anywhere because we are always planning, always concerned with the next plan, the next outcome, always in the future. Most of our lives become an attempt to complete our to-do lists, expecting that some day we will somehow succeed and then relax and do what we really want to do. Our lives may consist of continual, ongoing preparation and, as Yeats once noted, *planning for something that never happens*. We get good grades so we can get into good schools, so that we can get good jobs, so we can have enough money to raise our children and send them to good preparatory schools, so that they can get into good colleges, so that they can find good jobs, so that they can have enough money to raise their children and have a comfortable retirement . . . and die, just like us, having been successful in achieving all the desired outcomes—except, of course, for death.

Or we may, in our work, meetings, and actions, become preoccupied with attaining *outcomes* at the expense of attention to the *process*—to how we treat others and to our own and others' actual experiences at any given moment.

Or we may sometimes be so preoccupied by the means and the immediate outcomes that we never reflect on the ends and whether they are the right ones.

Bearing in mind how these social and cultural forces strongly condition our attachments to outcomes, we can go on to identify the concrete ways in which such attachments manifest themselves in our experience, whether more individually or in our relational and collective lives.

What are some of the particular types of attachment to outcomes? Here, I identify three basic forms: (1) being attached to specific outcomes, (2) trying to control outcomes, and (3) owning an outcome as "mine."

### BECOMING ATTACHED TO SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

When we act, we typically want and expect particular outcomes and don't want other outcomes. I want to

arrive at my meeting this evening, rather than have my car or the bus break down. I want my protest to have an effect on other citizens and even on those in power, rather than have them ignore us. I intend my work to help bring about a new environmental law that will succeed, rather than fail.

Of course, our lives are full of experiences in which we see that our intended outcomes, small and large, don't happen, or they don't happen the way we want them to happen, or unwanted outcomes *do* happen. In our training in committed action with non-attachment to outcome, we begin by noticing our reactions in relation to these kinds of situations.

The teaching of the Eight Worldly Winds suggests how we get attached to outcomes. As we saw in chapter six, attachment for the Buddha is a compulsive and often unconscious state in which we grasp on to (or push away) a person, an object, an experience, or a view, somehow believing that doing so will bring us long-term happiness. How do we practice with the Eight Winds? First, we need to be as mindful of their presence as possible, particularly when they appear with some force. Second, when one of the winds appears, we can explore its nature, textures, and where it leads. What is the experience of loss like? What occurs when I am praised or when others hold me in disrepute? Third, we can examine those situations in which we experience suffering because of the winds or find ourselves acting somewhat unethically to ensure an outcome. How do I sulk for hours, disappointed in not having accomplished a particular task?

How do I become attached to the meeting's ending with this or that result or that successful vote? How do

I become depressed when my local legislature doesn't act the way I wanted them to, despite my having lobbied them for a year?

## TRYING TO CONTROL OUTCOMES

Our attachment to a particular outcome typically leads us to attempt to control situations, other people, and ourselves. We may find ourselves becoming manipulative and insensitive to others, maneuvering to obtain what we want. We may, when we look carefully, see that we have imagined ourselves, in our work as activists or helpers, as all-powerful controllers.

Justine Dawson speaks of how, in her work at a home for women and children in transition, she has had to examine, through mindfulness and reflection, such a self-centered tendency to find security in control, especially in difficult situations:

Ironically, direct service work can sometimes become very egocentric; it can center on *me* as the responsible one, the one who responds. I can believe, "I've always got to do everything. I've always got to do this or that. I, I, I!" I've learned to ask myself a lot of questions.

Sometimes, it's helpful to ask, "What is happening right now?" I'll walk into a room to find a total circus—the kids are going crazy. I'll say to myself, "Oh, here's the circus." Then I try to be aware of my own tendencies, like "I have this great need to change and control the situation." I often go through a kind of internal debate: "Well, on the one hand, I'm legally responsible for these kids. And there is a standard in the household that we want to maintain. On the other hand, it's just a circus."

I ask myself: "What is triggering me in this situation?"

## EXERCISES

### IDENTIFYING AND WORKING WITH YOUR ATTACHMENTS TO OUTCOMES

What are the main ways in which you get attached to outcomes? Reflect in particular on how you are influenced by the Eight Worldly Winds. In what parts of your life (for example, your personal life, your spiritual practice, your relationships, your work, or your social change work) are the attachments to outcomes easiest to notice?

Reflect especially on moments of suffering in these domains, for usually such suffering can be traced to attachments to outcomes.

Reflect also on how you attempt to control outcomes, or how you take credit for outcomes. Devote a week to examining attachment to outcomes in a specific part of your life. Take notes and produce an inventory of your various attachments. Explore what

it might mean to "let go" in some of these areas.

### COMMITTED ACTION: WHAT MAKES IT DIFFICULT? WHAT MAKES IT POSSIBLE?

Reflect on the ways in which you have difficulty acting fully, in a committed way. What makes such committed action difficult for you? To what extent are you acting out of your deeper intentions? To what extent are you doing too many things? What qualities of mind and heart (perhaps despair, confusion, self-judgment, or distraction) undermine your ability to act fully?

Think of when you have acted most fully, with the most commitment.

What was such action like? What were some of the inner and outer conditions that made such action possible?

What is it bringing up personally? How do I need to work with the 'internal' material that is coming up in order to respond more appropriately to the 'external' situation?"

### "OWNING" PARTICULAR OUTCOMES

The Eight Winds, particularly those of praise and blame and fame and disrepute, remind us of a further complication: identifying a particular outcome, consciously or unconsciously, with our self-images and identities. Of course, such a link goes back to very early conditioning in the family context, in which a child's given behavior is typically defined as good or bad and often made the basis of the child's very "goodness" or "badness." Over time, such conditioning connects deep aspects of our identities with praise and blame (and more broadly fame and disrepute), and we come to internalize the standards of praise, so that external praise and blame may scarcely be needed.

Hence, to examine closely attachment to outcome is for most of us also to carry out a deep and penetrating investigation into the very contours of our constructed selves and self-images, including the areas where we are confused and wounded. Such practice over time has the potential to deconstruct such identities and images, freeing our action from the pressures, constraints, and distortions that arise when they implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) carry the objective of confirming and sustaining our identities and images.

We can notice such ownership of actions in various ways. We may notice thoughts in which we congratulate ourselves, or how we subtly shift the conversation so as to receive praise or confirmation. We may exaggerate or inflate our relationship to a given outcome, much as the beaver does in telling the muskrat by the Hoover Dam: "It's not that I built it. They just picked up one of my ideas."

When we do this in the context of transformational work, whether that of individual spiritual practice or social change, the contradictions can be particularly poignant. One of the most difficult issues in any community or organization is how credit and ownership of actions, particularly successes, are given, both from inside and outside. In our current historical setting, with its strong tendencies to identify charismatic leaders and stars, in which, we might say, the prevailing ideology is that ownership of outcomes is desirable, some individuals often receive public credit in ways that can be in significant tension with attempts to expand leadership,

question prevailing models of power, and empower communities and individuals.

### SHYING AWAY FROM COMMITTED ACTION

Attachments to outcomes often register in a very obvious way in our psyches, notably as suffering when our preferred outcomes don't occur! The complementary imbalance, of a lack of committed action expressing our deeper intentions, is often harder to discern and more subtle in its manifestations. Yet we also need to bring to light the various ways in which this imbalance appears in our lives.

### LOSING SIGHT OF OUR DEEPER INTENTIONS

In a society so structured by attachment to immediate outcomes, it is easy, as we saw, to forget more fundamental intentions and aspirations, especially as we move into the adult world of jobs, family, and planning for retirement. In other words, we may be quite active and busy while *not* expressing our deeper commitments. We may even speak of this process as a movement to "maturity," understood as the outgrowing of one's youthful and surely naive idealism.

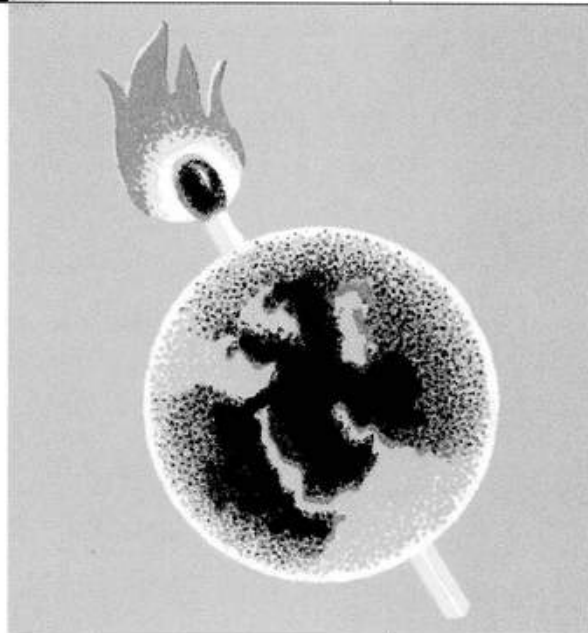
When I was teaching at Kenyon College in the late 1980s, I would often ask soon-to-graduate seniors whether they would accept a very modest, basic middle-class salary if they could do the kind of work that they most wanted to do. Most, but not all, said that they *would* happily choose such an option (a minority were more interested in making a lot of money). Then I asked, "How many of you actually have that option?" Almost no one raised a hand; they all felt as if their options were severely constrained, and that they could not do work that matched their deeper intentions. No doubt within a few years, many or most forgot those original intentions, which moved beneath the surface of consciousness, often only to appear, if at all, in a midlife crisis (or during other types of crisis) or even later in life, perhaps at the time of retirement.

Even when we are more consciously attuned to our deeper intentions, it still remains a great challenge to keep them alive in the midst of the details, deadlines, pressures, busyness, and sometimes tedium of daily life. This is why it is so crucial to find activities—such as a daily spiritual practice, periods of reflection, community gatherings and rituals, travel, and periodic retreats—that cut through the dulling of consciousness that can occur amid the repetitions of daily life, to reinspire us, to renew our visions and intentions. ■

**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](mailto:rabbilerner@tikkun.org).

# A Meaningful Democratic Platform on Climate Change

by Benjamin Goldstein and Paul Wapner



WHEN JOHN KERRY WAS ASKED about environmental issues in the second presidential debate leading up to the 2004 election, he initially changed the subject. Kerry has one of the strongest environmental records in the Senate, but instead of highlighting his environmental commitment, he chose to talk about welfare reform, supporting a balanced budget, and his commitment to national security.

Why? Kerry was following the Democratic Party's favorite strategy of appealing to the putative "center." Today's Democrats hesitate to talk about what they really care about because it



may alienate potential swing voters who, we are told, care only about national security and the economy.

Karl Rove wasn't far off in calling this a flip-flop strategy. On the one hand, Democrats conceal their commitment to environmental issues from centrist voters for fear of being identified with the "Left." On the other hand, they send the message to their base that "yes, we care about environmental issues, but we cannot say so too loudly lest people think we are environmental fanatics." This Janus-faced strategy is condescending to many voters and plays right into Rove's flip-flopper critique. Rove understands that Americans don't like being played for dummies. Doing so alienates the very center Democrats are trying to win.

The more serious danger, however, is that by giving up on a deep, open commitment to a "Left" issue like the environment, the Democrats are missing out on an opportunity to energize environmental progressives and create an opening for more visionary environmental leadership.

Al Gore, now the most outspoken Democrat on environmental issues, learned this the hard way. Having written one of the most insightful books on the environment before joining the Clinton White House, Gore chose to demote his environmental commitment as vice president and during the 2000 presidential election, all for fear of being called "ozone man." As a result, he did little to advance Democratic environmental governance while in office and appeared spineless on the campaign trail.

Many politicians find their backbone when they're out of office. This seems to be the case with Gore. His new movie and book, *An Inconvenient Truth*, are focusing widespread attention on climate change in a way that is striking a chord with the public. Part science, part politics, part (yes) comedy, and a good dose of morality, Gore's message is exactly the kind of approach the Democrats need to communicate on environmental issues.

## Climate Change as a Moral Issue

CLIMATE CHANGE IS THE MOST DAUNTING contemporary environmental challenge. The buildup of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is trapping heat around the planet—causing ice caps to melt and sea levels to rise, more intense heat waves and more powerful storms, desertification, loss of biological diversity,

vector-borne disease proliferation, and a host of other nasty consequences. Global warming is already undermining the quality of life for many and, in the extreme, threatening the fundamental organic infrastructure that supports life on earth. Any Democratic environmental agenda must develop a meaningful response to climate change.

When most of us think about climate change, we focus on its dire conditions and frame our concern in terms of doom and gloom. What we forget is that responding to climate change invokes ethical choices of the highest order. It has to do with our sense of obligation to humans and other species, the kinds of people we wish to be, and a vision of the good life toward which we want society to aim. As such, it dovetails with many traditional concerns of the Democratic Party, including labor and employment, public health, *real* national security, economic and environmental justice, human rights, and a sane foreign policy. When situated in relationship to these other concerns, climate change is transformed into an issue that invokes opportunity rather than pessimism; hope rather than fear; moral probity instead of technocratic wizardry; and a host of proactive responses.

Scholar Leslie Thiele explains that environmentalism is fundamentally a moral movement. It involves extending moral concern across space (to fellow human beings), time (to future generations), and species (to other sentient creatures). Many people, on both the political Left and Right, resonate with this. And yet, the Democrats rarely speak in moral terms. When they do, in fact, address environmental issues, they almost always talk about the economic, technical, and ecological dimensions as if these can stand on their own.

Democrats too often turn immediately to technocratic proposals to address climate change—proposals like capping carbon emissions, trading greenhouse gas credits, and increasing Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards. These are certainly worthwhile initiatives, yet without locating them within a larger value system, they epitomize what authors Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus call a type of “policy literalism” that often proves unpalatable and uninspiring to the American public. They also perpetuate stereotypes of Democrats as advocates of burdensome regulations and proponents of “big government” (no matter how Orwellian these phrases have become these days).

## Conservation and the Spirit

BY WILLIAM H. MEADOWS

**N**ot too long ago I was up on Capitol Hill speaking with a Senator about an upcoming wilderness bill and mentioned that people would support the legislation, in part, because of their spiritual values. He stopped abruptly, looked me in the eye and said, “We can’t talk about that.

Those discussions don’t mean a thing here and don’t have the power that social or economic arguments have.” That is the unfortunate truth, but one I hope we can change together.

Together, the American people own 623 million acres of land, which is under the stewardship of the federal government. The crown jewels within the boundaries of these federal landscapes are specially designated sites called wilderness areas—wild places our nation has decided are too special to touch; places where we restrain humanity’s influence and simply leave nature alone. Freedom from roads. Freedom from human structures. Freedom from resource extraction and mechanical devices of any kind.

People often ask me why we need such places. What is the value of

wilderness? Simply put, it sustains our lives and spirits, teaches us to be better human beings, and is a living conservatory of our national soul. The Bible tells of Moses, John the Baptist, and Jesus withdrawing to the wilderness to face themselves and their demons—to return cleansed and ready to serve. We seldom build massive cathedrals in the town squares of twenty-first century America anymore, but we can still preserve our wilderness, which in itself is a monument to the sacredness inherent in all creation.

When we can temper our egotism, stand humbly before creation, and let nature take its own course, we are learning to live cooperatively with the planet and ultimately with each other. Wilderness teaches us this truth about ourselves—and serves to safeguard a portion of our collective soul, embodying both our history and our future.

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William H. Meadows is the President of The Wilderness Society. These remarks were presented at the Spiritual Activism conference. Read the full text at: [www.spiritualprogressives.com](http://www.spiritualprogressives.com)

Couching climate change in the dry language of technocracy narrows the range of sensibilities that people use to relate to public issues and thus undermines the ability of Democrats to fashion a coherent climate change policy grounded fundamentally in moral vision.

## Environmentalism as a Morally-based Movement

MANY SECTORS OF AMERICAN SOCIETY base their environmental concerns on strong moral foundations. This is true across the political spectrum. For example, in January 2006, the Evangelical movement released the Evangelical Climate Initiative—a call to action to fight global warming. Signed by over eighty-five leaders in the Evangelical movement, the Call expresses a religiously-based moral concern for the socially, economically, and geographically marginal people most vulnerable to climate change—be they in New Orleans' Ninth Ward or the Bangladeshi flood plains—as well as the rest of "God's creatures." Part of the Initiative says, "Love of God, love of neighbor, and the demands of stewardship are more than enough reason for evangelical Christians to respond to the climate change problem with moral passion and concrete action."

One sees a related expression among deep Greens who have a mixed relationship with the Democratic Party. Social ecologists, ecofeminists, bioregionalists, environmental justice advocates, and the like constantly emphasize how environmental issues relate to broad injustices, and fight for a greener world partly because such a world would be more peaceful, less exploitative, and more humane. The Democratic Party has largely failed to speak to this small but nevertheless crucial sector of the public (remember what happened in 2000 when Nader's Green Party took critical votes from the Democrats?). By neglecting to address the moral element of environmental issues, the Democrats shun those who might ordinarily support the party.

Not focusing on the moral dimension of environmentalism also undermines efforts to galvanize the party faithful. Carl Pope, executive director of the Sierra Club, claims that the Bush administration has been systematically rolling back the most significant environmental legislation of the past 100 years. Aside from rare instances, like the fight over the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, we hear only a mere whisper of opposition from the Democrats. It is as if they are rudderless when it comes to environmental issues—battling circumscribed affronts without a coherent environmental orientation. Democrats could find such a framework by situating and formulating environmental policy within a moral discourse.

## Three Elements of a Moral Environmental Discourse

A MORAL DISCOURSE ON CLIMATE CHANGE has three elements. First, it involves caring about our fellow human beings who are less endowed and thus more vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Today, Chinese farmers are losing crops to desertification, residents of small island states are being displaced by rising sea levels, and forest dwellers throughout the world are finding it harder to survive due to biological impoverishment. The poor are on the frontlines of climate change; most of us reading this article, because of our affluence, are safely in the rear.

We saw this same pattern with Hurricane Katrina. Those in the Ninth Ward, for instance, felt the impact of Katrina much more directly than those in other areas. Their homes were less structurally-sound, uninsured, and exposed to rising flood waters. Moreover, many of them lacked the means to evacuate the city and protect themselves from swift and severe displacement. A moral orientation sensitizes us to the plight of the less fortunate. This responsibility becomes even more poignant as we realize that, in driving our cars, firing up our furnaces, and lighting our homes, many of us contribute more than our fair share to greenhouse gas emissions.

Second, a moral orientation to climate change involves concern for future generations. Almost every climate model suggests that we are just beginning to gear up for substantial climate disruptions. This is a moral dilemma: future generations will suffer the most severe consequences of climate change even though they themselves did not contribute to it. Environmentalists often say, "We don't inherit the earth from" (continued on page 58)

## A MEANINGFUL DEMOCRATIC PLATFORM ON CLIMATE CHANGE

(continued from page 24) our ancestors; we borrow it from our children." Caring about our children and their progeny is part of what makes us human.

Finally, a moral discourse about climate change must include our feelings toward the other-than-human world. Climate change is now the number one cause of biodiversity loss, which robs humanity of potential resources and tampers with the ecosystem that helps keep human beings alive. While this is bad enough, it also should tug at our sense of morality. Environmentalists, religious communities, and others often reference our responsibility to be stewards of the Earth. Stewardship entails the ability to make conscious choices for the good of all creatures, and the responsibility to halt the current biological holocaust. Our apathy towards stemming climate change is a moral failing of the highest order.

Such moral sensitivity resonates with many Americans and, if embraced, could form the basis for a meaningful Democratic platform on climate change, environmental protection in general, domestic social and public health issues, and a sane foreign policy.

### Toward a Meaningful Climate Change Policy

RECENT ADVANCES in alternative energy technologies have, for the first time in post-industrial revolution history, made a renewable energy paradigm realistic and profitable. Combining wind, photovoltaic, hydroelectric, biofuel, and other sources of renewable energy, there are ample means through which to drastically reduce the carbon footprint of our society. Moreover, investments in these industries would create an immense number of high-wage, high-skill jobs in manufacturing, installation, and maintenance of renewable and efficient energy technologies (which provide more jobs per unit of power than do fossil fuels), and boost jobs in the farm sector with the production and refinement of biofuels and operation of windmills on farmlands. Investments in hybrid car technology could salvage a struggling American automobile industry that has been consistently losing market share to foreign automakers who dominate hybrid and efficient vehicle production. Such targeted government investments in the energy sector, along with a recalibration of energy subsidies and taxes, would help the Democrats rejuvenate the eroded American manufacturing and small farm sectors that once formed the American middle class and the base of the Democratic Party.

Facilitating alternatives to fossil fuel consumption would also reaffirm the Democratic Party's commitments to public health. Oil refining and vehicle and power plant emissions are the number one cause of air pollution in the U.S.—increasing childhood asthma rates and the infamous smog alerts now commonplace in cities like Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. Additionally, unsafe coal mining operations have killed many miners in West Virginia; and the environmental toll of these strip-mining operations pollutes local drinking water and spreads films of carcinogenic dust for miles. Concern for those

most vulnerable to environmental pollutants associated with fossil fuels is fundamentally a moral orientation—and a traditional Democratic Party value in need of reaffirmation.

Replacing our fossil fuel addiction with a clean energy paradigm would also have ramifications for American foreign policy. Instead of permitting international energy geopolitics to dictate where America focuses its diplomatic, military, and economic resources, our government could employ these resources in the service of poverty alleviation, humanitarian assistance, food aid, democracy, and human rights. A foreign policy based on generosity and compassion, rather than self-centered energy pursuits, would be an effective tool in the battle against extremism and hate so prevalent in the modern world.

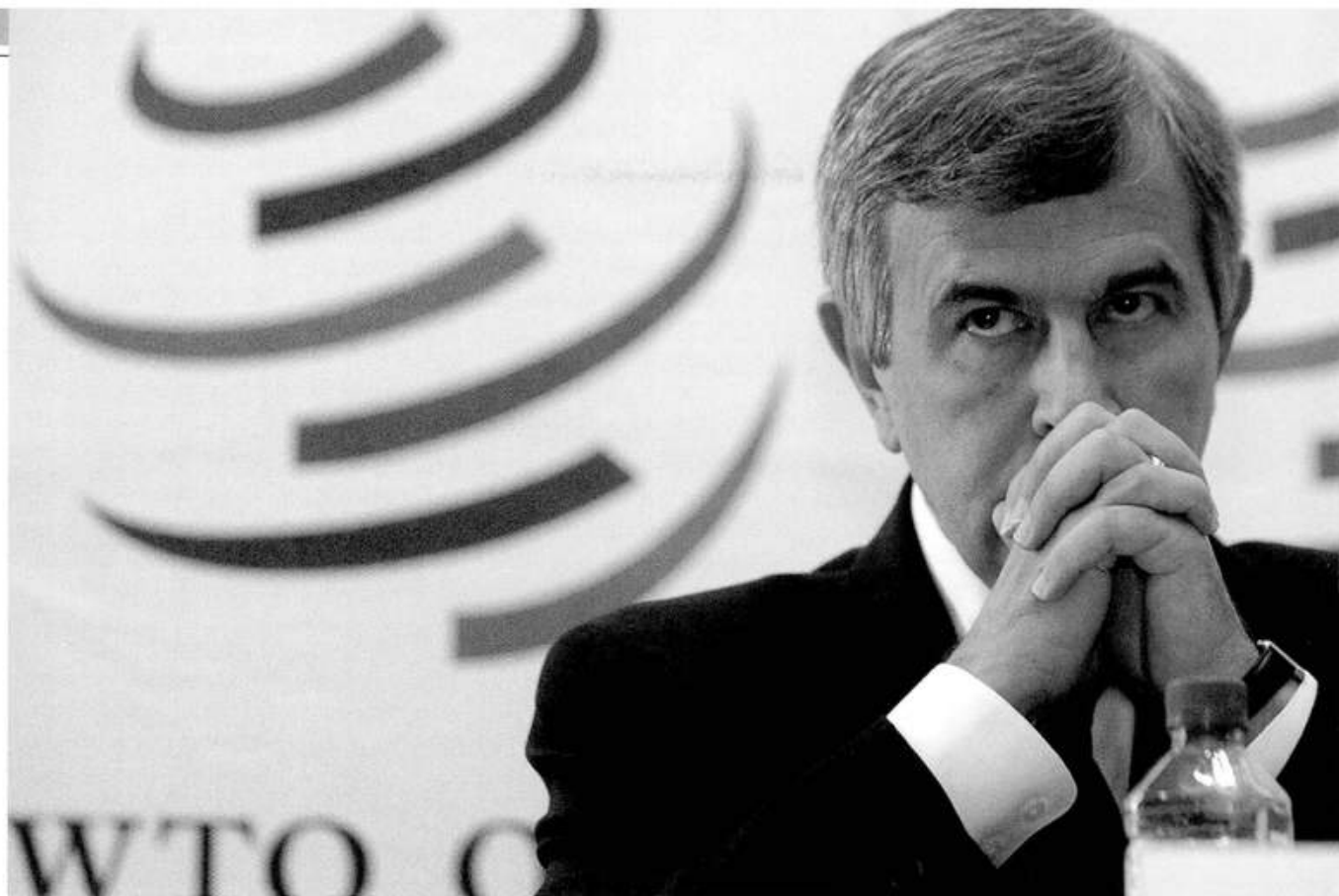
Moreover, engaging the issue of climate change through international agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol (and beyond) would recommit America to the goal of international cooperation rather than isolation and unilateralism. As with many global challenges, addressing climate change will require a type of concerted, multilateral action currently shunned by the Bush administration. By taking the lead on global warming, America could regain a position of respect and influence—which has been eroded by the current wave of militarism and economic hegemony based partly around geopolitical energy interests—in the international arena.

As Gore makes clear in his book and movie, the broad, necessary components of a post-fossil fuel economy—one that would avoid the most severe consequences of climate change and lay the foundations for a safer, more peaceful and just world—are well-known. A key obstacle to their realization is Republican control of all branches of government. Democrats often campaign on the hope that, once in office, they will then initiate their own visions of a better future. The problem is, without articulating those visions as part of a campaign strategy, they continue to find themselves shut out of office for lack of a coherent and morally arresting platform for governance. Moreover, the lack of such vision undermines the ability to fashion a long-term political agenda.

The Democratic Party is now confronted with a historic opportunity to embrace action on climate change as a core component of its party platform. The best way to do so is to develop a collective vision that resonates across diverse sectors of American society and integrates the multitude of public priorities. The Democrats will find this by cultivating a moral orientation through which to address climate change and the broader challenges facing America and the world. ■

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*Benjamin Goldstein holds a BA with honors from the University of California, Berkeley and a dual MA in International Affairs, and Natural Resources and Sustainable Development from American University and the United Nations University for Peace. Paul Wapner is Associate Professor of Global Environmental Politics in the School of International Service at American University. He is the author of Environmental Activism and World Civic Politics and coeditor of Principled World Politics.*



# The WTO's Unholy Scam

BY PHIL BEREANO

"Thou shall not defraud thy neighbor, nor rob him; the employee's wages shall not abide with you overnight until the morning" (Lev 19:13)

**T**HE JEWISH TRADITION speaks powerfully to workers' rights in a section of Leviticus often termed the Holiness Code. The Holiness Code stresses that economic relations are also power relations and that it is incumbent for the party with the most power—the employer—to act responsibly. Just as a moral person would not defraud a neighbor, they must not withhold wages from their employee, even if only overnight.

As with so many of the "you-shalls" in the Bible, this one at first appears both commonsensical and minor, the sort of policy point that gets incorporated into a local statute. However, the concern behind the admonition is much more global as is explained later in Deuteronomy. There we learn that economic justice is also about spiritual well-being: "On his day give his wage, and let not the sun set on it; for he is poor,

US Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns listens during a press conference after a ministerial meeting at the WTO headquarters in Geneva.

and he sets his soul on it" (24:15). But our era is rampant with the abuse of economic power.

We must listen to the concerns of people whose labor produces the goods the United States consumes. Their complaints usually focus on policy issues concerning the global economy, and the actions of economically powerful countries (i.e., the U.S. and EU). Often their analyses involve the implementation of the WTO; I hear them complaining that the WTO has broken the Holiness Code.

## WTO: When Economics is the Only Mission

THE WTO IS AN ORGANIZATION most people know nothing about.

The theory behind the WTO is that a country will be willing to give up the sovereign right of controlling what enters its borders regarding trade in order to participate in the resultant general economic prosperity. That prosperity, however, has been an empty promise for many.

According to a recent *New York Times* editorial (May 15):

Back in 1947, when 23 nations agreed to start an international organization to promote trade and arbitrate disputes, the needs of poor countries mattered little. Industrialized nations were rebuilding after World War II, and they remained the economic masters of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Over the next 50 years, that club, now known as the World Trade Organization, aggressively dismantled barriers against trade in industrial goods and services—the areas in which its members hold a comparative advantage. That same club dragged its feet on dismantling barriers against trade in agriculture and textiles, where poor countries have an advantage.

If the WTO has traditionally favored developed nations, why have less developed countries been eager to join? For starters, their small leadership strata and governmental bureaucracies have been educated at U.S. and EU universities, have been subjected to sophisticated programs of persuasion, and, lured by the perks extended to them, have absorbed the dominant ideologies of American capitalism. And some are naïve; a statement from the nation of Benin in 2004 suggested hopefully that “many people in sub-Saharan Africa believe that the rules of the multilateral trading system were written by major countries for the benefit of major countries. However, we believe that the WTO system can and will recognize the impairment of rights suffered by least-developed countries.”

At recent trade talks in Geneva, negotiators were moving toward a deal that—as described by Susan Sechler and Ann Tutwiler, two directors of trade and development for non-profits, in a *New York Times* Op-Ed piece (June 26, 2006)—would give almost 60 percent of the \$54 billion in benefits to high-income countries (which already get 80 percent of the world's income), about 40 percent of the benefits to middle-income countries (who receive 20 percent of world's income), and less than 2 percent of the benefits to the poor nations (registering only 1.2 percent of current world income). So much for talk of “development.” On this past July 24, these talks collapsed, and the Doha round was indefinitely suspended.” According to the Indian negotiator, they are “somewhere between intensive care and the crematorium,” although he expects they may get restarted “anywhere from months to years” from now.

The United States has been unwilling to lower its agricultural subsidies. These can be grouped into four categories, all trade-distorting and all supported by Republican and Democratic administrations alike (both chanting the mantra of the so-called “free” market):

**Domestic subsidies** (more than 80 percent of the total)—e.g., paying to plant or not to plant;

**Export subsidies**—e.g., credits against shipping costs, taxes, etc;

**Price supports**—e.g., guaranteeing that the government will buy up the product at a certain price if the market slips below it; and



## The United States runs an international shell game, a scam on the poor.

**Artificial markets**—such as the U.S. food aid program, which involves buying domestic grains and shipping them abroad, a far more expensive and inefficient method of delivering nutrition compared to what the EU and Japan do—give money so recipient countries can buy food; as a Zimbabwean farmer put it to me several years ago, “What is being presented as an act of charity is in fact nothing more than an act of marketing.”

The results of all of these subsidies are that U.S. corn is cheaper in Mexico than Mexican corn, U.S. rice is cheaper in Thailand than Thai rice, and U.S. wheat is cheaper in India than Indian wheat. Over 40,000 Indian farmers have committed suicide since 1997 in despair at their inability to earn enough income to repay their debts for high-tech inputs (GE seeds, pesticides, etc), no less a capacity to feed their families. The laborers are not getting paid at all. The laborers are losing their souls.

### Pro-Globalization, Anti-WTO

MOST OF US WHO PROTESTED THE WTO in the streets of Seattle at the 1999 Ministerial are, in general, not against “globalization” in the literal sense. Neither are we antitechnology Luddites, pining for some mythic simpler time. We fly to the far corners of the globe to lobby, educate, strategize, and negotiate. We are in daily contact by email. We use the internet for research. We eat foreign foods, may drive foreign cars, and certainly drink wine and beer from far-off places! What we are against is the increasing dominance of corporations—“artificial persons”—who once were accountable to the populace through strict charters and regulatory oversight, but who

now have been given enormous powers to maximize their short-term profitability (the hallmark of modern capitalism) to the exclusion of all other values.

At the Cancun WTO meeting in 2003, activists put up posters noting that in the United States the average cow receives something like \$2,500 per year while the average person in Africa earns closer to one-twentieth of that. The problem is not globalization. The problem, as the *International Herald Tribune* noted after last December's Hong Kong Ministerial, is "the ability of global elites to make the rules."

To go further, the problem is the global elites' failure to make rules that adhere to the principles of the Holiness Code. The WTO approach denies that (continued on page 59)

# Cheerleading for Anticapitalism

BY MARISA HANDLER

**I**F THE RADICAL CHEERLEADERS have anything to do with it, it'll be a cold day in hell when Perrier gets to build a bottling plant at Lake Michigan.

"Ready?" hollers the head cheerleader at the ragtag assembly, arms akimbo.

"Let's go!"

"We don't want to privatize, corporations don't rule our lives!"

"We won't sacrifice our health, just to add to corporate wealth!"

Reliable entertainment at any anticorporate event, the radical cheerleaders—men and women alike—don fishnets, short skirts, wigs and pigtailed to make their statement. "Privatize this!" they yell, slapping their asses and leaping about in general hilarity. The crowd laughs, applauds, wolf-whistles. No movement survives long without a sense of humor.

In transcending national governments, transnational corporations have effectively surmounted any real limits upon their power. As barriers between national economies have been dismantled, and as transnational corporations currently have an unprecedented amount of global power and reach, there is no countervailing global force to regulate them. Global economic institutions like the World Bank, World Trade Organization, and International Monetary Fund, created expressly for the purpose of regulating the world's economy, have become champions of a global free market that ultimately benefits only global capital and the wealthy, while fleecing everyone else and damaging the environment. International civil society, through its endlessly resourceful construction of alternatives, and its creative antiglobalization protests, has been the most effective institution in raising awareness around corporate hegemony.

The rising tide of resistance against the policies of the WTO, IMF, and World Bank is slowly but inexorably converging around shared goals, strategies, and visions. In November of 2003, migrant workers, direct action antiglobalization activists, NGOs, and American labor organized a series of vibrant protests against the Free Trade Area of the Americas agreement, which proposed to extend NAFTA. The day before labor's massive march, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney came to the convergence center (continued on page 60)

# Spirituality and Culture

by Joan Chittister, OSB

**T**WO PIECES OF RELIGIOUS LITERATURE INDICATE with special clarity the essential connectedness of spiritual maturity and cultural consciousness. The first call comes from Exodus 3:18, "On Horeb," the scripture tells, "the angel of YHVH appeared to Moses in the shape of a flame of fire, coming from the middle of a bush." There was the bush, blazing, but it was not being burnt up. "I must go and look at this strange sight," Moses said, "And see why the bush is not burnt."

Now YHVH saw him go forward to look and God called to him from the middle of the bush. 'Moses,' he said. 'Come no nearer. Take off your shoes, for the place where you are is holy ground.'

And then YHVH said, "I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt. I have heard their appeal to be free. I am well aware of their sufferings. I mean to deliver them. So, I'm sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people out."

The message is a dramatic one: Just at what would seem to



be the moment of Moses' total immersion in the presence of God, God stops Moses—to teach him that his holiness depends on finding holiness where he stands and then by taking that energy to other people for their liberation.

Moses learns that holiness is made of virtues, not of visions; that holiness depends on being for the other; that holiness depends on being about something greater than the self, and; that holiness is being present to the Presence, everywhere it is and even where it seems it isn't.

The second story of culture and spirituality comes from the tales of the Hasidim:

A the story goes, an old rabbi of great wisdom whose fame had spread beyond his own congregation to villages and rabbis far on the other side of the mountains, one day suddenly died. The young rabbis were bereft: "Now," they asked, "what shall we do when our people look to us for guidance? Without the old master, where shall we get the answers to the great questions of life?" So they decided among themselves to pray and fast until the old man's holiness and wisdom would be infused into one of them.

And sure enough, one night in a dream, the old man appeared to one of the younger rabbis.

"Master," the young teacher said, "it is good that you have returned. Now, with you gone, the people look to us for answers to the great questions of life and we are still unsure. For instance, master, they demand to know: On the other side, of what account are the sins of youth?"

"The sins of youth?" the old man asked. "Why, on the other side the sins of youth are of no account whatsoever."

And the young rabbi said: "On the other side the sins of youth are of no account whatsoever?! Then, what has it all been about? On the other side, what sin is punished if not the sins of youth?" And the old man answered, slowly and clearly, "On the other side, that sin which is punished with constant and unending severity is the sin of false piety."

The point is clear: Piety is cultural. Holiness depends on our choosing the pieties proper to the times. Culture and spirituality, in other words, are of a piece.

As Moses and the old master both knew: The function of spirituality is not to protect us from our times; the function of spirituality is to enable us to leaven it and stretch it, and bless it, and break it open to the present will of God.

And what does all of that mean to us today? It means that the question for religious and spiritual people now must be: What cultural realities are challenging the will of God now and how can the word of God best challenge the culture if we are to be a progressive people, a spiritual people, a holy people?

The history of spirituality identifies three basic spiritual responses to culture: the intellectual, the relational, and the performative.

An intellectualist spirituality, the scholars define, is a spiritual life that is creed-centered. People who are creed-centered are concerned with a checklist of beliefs and committed to union with God—hopefully here, but definitely somewhere else.

An intellectualist spirituality is very good at drawing denominational lines, maintaining orthodoxy, identifying heretics and having personal mystical experiences. The intellectualist wants to stay and contemplate the bush, draw it to size, define its properties, dogmatize its meaning and describe the distance to and from it, at which point it becomes a mortal or a venial sin.

A relational spirituality, on the other hand, is committed to the development of human bonds as the preeminent model of the spiritual life.

The relationalist talks a lot about love and is willing to stay in Egypt, if necessary, bush or no bush, to keep the slaves company in their pain. Relational spirituality comforts the oppressed but does little to stop the oppression.

Finally, performative spirituality is action-centered. Performers in the spiritual life are "Our Father" people. They pray every day: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done," and then they do something to bring it.

Performers want to reform Egypt; they don't want to destroy the old system. They

just want to make it better by carrying the burning bush back there to create a bright new world in the shell of the old whether the old world wants it or not.

The questions for us, then, are: What is our cultural situation now? And which type of spirituality is most needed now? And how do we build it? And what does that have to do with being either spiritual or progressive today in an era when for the first time in polling history the military superseded the church as “the most trusted institution,” 55 to 25 percent?

Let’s look briefly at the cultural situation of the Western world from 1960–2006: the era that has formed the spiritual life of most of the world today.

1. In this period, we experienced major shifts in the Western belief-value system. Family patterns changed; sex roles changed, and governments that talked freedom, justice and human rights have been riven with one corruption after another and so became less and less credible.

2. The most dramatic transformation of world view that has ever taken place in human history took place in this period: John Glenn, the first American astronaut, took from outer space the first picture we’d ever seen of our planet.

Up until that moment the human view of earth and its place in the universe had never been anything but theory and speculation and educated calculations. Up until that moment you and I knew where we lived only on the basis of artistic guesses. Now for the first time in history we could really see ourselves—in all our grandeur and in all our smallness.

3. This generation has seen scientific “progress” that is often more threat than a benefit. In these few years, science changed life and death, changed family and sex, and changed war from struggle to annihilation. It changed human conception and human communication and changed human creation from critically unique to specifically cloned. Finally, science has managed, in our generation, to change the very meaning of “meaning.”

4. In this era military security has become our highest priority, our greatest expenditure, and our scarcest commodity.

5. Thanks to our “military security,” indeed, we have created the end of the world and we are storing it in the cornfields of Kansas.

6. In this age, too, we have seen new interest in the wisdom of the East as the wealth of the West lost its power to save.

7. In this same time frame integration—Black, Hispanic, Indian, Inuit—challenged white supremacy. Feminism challenged the white male system and even the white male God.

8. Great poverty exists in the midst of great affluence: of the working poor, 20 percent can’t find full time work; six million work jobs without full time pay and benefits. This challenges all the American myths ever made about fair play, blessing, the Protestant ethic, and “freedom and justice” for all.

9. All of this has happened in a society where 10 percent of the world, Western Europeans and North Americans, consume, hoard, waste or control two-thirds of the resources of the world. No wonder this 10 percent buy so many guns.

Indeed social consensus on values and beliefs has broken down. An annual survey of college freshmen finds that this decade’s students are less concerned about pollution, more approving of abortion, less opposed to the death penalty, less committed to the elimination of racism, less intent on environmental controls, less obligated to help others, considerably less concerned about developing a philosophy of life and more interested in being affluent.

And all of this, while our government has spent only 20 cents of every disposable dollar on human resources: education, employment, job training, social services, health and fiscal assistance, and over 50 cents of every disposable dollar on the military—all of this in “peace time.” We have traded a peaceful future for a bloody and brutal present. Indeed, we need spiritual-cultural revitalization. Indeed, the consensus of old values has broken down.

Indeed, the spirit is dying in the most church-going nation in the world. Indeed, the current spiritual-cultural dilemma looms large: Individualism runs rampant to the

**S**ALAM ALEICHEM. The progressive Muslim community worldwide is not prepared to cede the great religion of Islam to the militants, the extremists and the barbarians who would do awful things in the name of God. Furthermore, the American Muslim community is not prepared to cede the great country of America to the barbarians, the militants, and the extremists of this country.

I want to exhort you to reach out to the Muslim community, particularly the progressive Muslim community. Right now in America there are three faces of Islam: the bearded, heavily-accented brown guy; the woman in a hijab, with hair and body covered; the white convert.

I want to ask you to reach out to the non-bearded Muslim guy, to the non-hijabed woman, to the gay Muslim guy, to the woman singer who is not allowed to sing in the mosque. Reach out to them because they are equally authentic voices of Islam. Don't reach out only to those people who have been designated by CNN and by mainstream Muslim organizations as the authentic voice of Islam. Reach out to all Muslims.

—PAMELA TAYLOR, *Board Member  
Progressive Muslim Union*

point of the pathological—at a time when global community is urgent if both this planet and its peoples are to be saved.

Our current spiritual dilemma, then, lies in how to link the personal with the public dimensions of life; how to make private spirituality the stuff of public leaven in a world fiercely private and dangerously public at the same time.

The fact is that simple spiritualities of creeds, community-building, and social reform are no longer enough. We need now, surely, a spirituality of contemplative co-creation, a spirituality of progressive vision and prophetic action.

Genesis insists that the function of humanity is to nurture, cultivate, and care—to sustain, not consume creation. Carrying on God's work in the world is, in other words, "the spiritual life."

And how can people like us possibly manage to do that in a time as confused and divided as this? We may need to step back from issues for a minute and think about the nature of social change and its meaning.

The anthropologist Anthony F.C. Wallace teaches that major transformations of thought and behavior happen in a society when it discovers that a once-common set of religious understandings have become impossible to sustain.

At that point, Wallace says, society begins to undergo a "revitalization movement" of four major stages. Stage one is a period of serious individual stress. In this stage, people begin to question past values and start to establish new patterns of thought and behaviors. They don't think about things as they once did. What the generation before them took for granted—

divorce, mixed marriage, birth control, segregation, homosexuality, capital punishment, in vitro fertilization, cloning, stem cell research, the role of women—they begin to debate and discard.

In stage two, there is alienation everywhere. Wide-reaching social stress becomes apparent. What we once called "our culture" is now barely recognizable. And people begin to decide that their problems aren't personal. Others feel the same. Groups form, organizations grow. Their problems, they decide, are a result of failure in the institutions they had always depended on for stability and direction. The churches are out of tune with their needs, they say; the schools remote from their life questions, they feel; the government corrupt and corrupting. There is political rebellion in the streets and schism in the churches.

People set out to do it themselves: join with others to ban the bomb, save the whales, eliminate the death penalty, put women in Congress, and join Voices in the Wilderness or the Network of Spiritual Progressives!

In stage three of a revitalization process, though people as a whole agree there is a problem, they can't agree on how to cope with this new social situation. Some want to change the system, to wipe it out and begin again. Others want to send in the troops and get the old system back in order. And the two groups quarrel and divide and blame authority.

Then, inevitably, in stage three a revitalization movement, a nativist, or traditionalist movement arises. Nativists argue that the danger has come from (continued on page 61)

# A Public Policy of Meaning

BY PETER GABEL

**H**OW CAN WE FRAME traditional progressive platform issues in a way that gives them the spiritual reverence they deserve? Here are some examples of how we can begin to do this.

**1. Health Care:** According to a spiritual progressive worldview, health care is about caring for each other's health and the health of each other's families, not insuring each other's bodies. But you can't convey that compassion by just saying, "I'm for universal health care," or "I'm for single payer health care." I hate the term "single payer health care," because even though I'm in favor of it, the language itself doesn't express the idea of protecting one another against physical illness, against loss, against being alone—of feeling that we are all equally deserving of human recognition and affirmation.

We must be able to argue for health care in a way that carries this higher and deeper meaning. I don't have a second's doubt that we would have universal health care if leaders emerged who spoke to the issue in this way, because it would draw people toward what they want the most—to be taken care of solely on the basis of their humanity, to care for their children, and to participate in caring for others, with others.

**2. Social Security:** The liberal line on Social Security was like its line on affirmative action, "Mend it, don't end it." Remember that one? Did that really grab you? Do you think Martin Luther King, Jr. would have gotten behind "Mend it, don't end it"? That's not the same as "Black man and white man, Jew and Gentile, Protestant and Catholic, all walking together," is it?

Thus, in the case of Social Security, the position that "There's enough money, our seniors don't have to worry," is really not a position. It's not a way to talk about one of the greatest government-based experiments in human history, in which our society as a whole demonstrated that we would care about each other—intergenerationally—through a government program. We need to focus on the profoundly idealistic meaning of Social Security and the way that it spiritually connects us, and inspires us to create of a better world. Do you see the difference between this approach as opposed to only talking about whether there's enough money in the lock box?

If we don't speak to it, then the idealist becomes George Bush, who talks about, "the ownership society: everyone will be able to invest their own money. You won't be dependent on government bureaucrats." Remember that? Bush hasn't won that argument. But he seemed to be proposing some kind of meaning, some kind of idealism connected with investing your own money and the ownership society that we can all be a part of and connect by being owners together. The Democrats, on the other hand, could not speak to the loving impulse that's at the core of Social Security. Speaking to it would have decisively affected the national conversation about the purpose of government entitlement

programs, and the goal of establishing a community of meaning and social connection among us all.

**3. Education:** A spiritual progressive educational platform is not just about expanding access to public education, and having standardized testing for all. In reality, children are the carriers of their parents' highest ideals and hopes. We need to advocate for an education platform that ensures parents that these values will be spoken to in their children's experiences. That they're going to learn how to overcome bullying in their schools, and learn about conflict and how to overcome it in a way that connects people to each other and creates a loving environment in the schools; that treats openness to nature, and a child's relationship to nature as central element to what education should be.

**4. Foreign Policy:** The way to address the threat of terrorism is to recognize the humanity of the Muslim peoples. That means—as Michael Lerner has spoken about so eloquently—treating them with love and generosity. That means instituting a global Marshall Plan to rebuild poor areas in the Middle East without anything in return for it, since we have the wealth to do it. That's different from the “stop-the-war” position. It's more than “stop the war.” It addresses the realities of mutually paranoid relationships based on distorted non-recognition of each other's humanity.” And having an affirmative economic, cultural and spiritual program to bring into visibility the humanity of the other and show them generosity of spirit.

If the United States engaged in a systematic attempt to do that, it would draw away people who are humiliated and impoverished and who are quite naturally attracted to nationalistic fantasies. If people are disgraced and degraded, they are going to get very angry, and they're going to join with people who treat them with dignity and respect. Hamas does that. I don't agree with the Hamas's policies, but I understand the reasons why Palestinians elected Hamas; it offers a humiliated Palestinian people a sense of pride, a sense of worth, and a sense of meaning for who they are as human beings. We have to treat them with the same level of respect, and not demonize them.

When you treat people as the carriers of demons, you're projecting your own hollowness out onto them, out of fear that they're going to expose you for being hollow. Where-

as moral presence, treating the humanity of the other in an authentic and grounding way, is a means to draw people to you, to reduce their level of rage, and to push closer to the margins those who advocate violence and counter-violence.

There are many other ways in which we must respect the humanity in others. We need a senior's policy that doesn't treat older people as wasting assets who need to be propped up with insurance benefits, one that instead treats them as worthy of respect, of elderhood. There's a small country-wide program underway called Story Corps, in which young people document the stories of older people, creating a DVD file that preserves the memories, heritage and life experience of the older generation. That is a spiritually progressive senior's policy, as opposed to one that only focuses on their insurance benefits. You want your insurance benefits, but you don't really want to live out your life alone in your house as a wasting asset. That's not sufficient way to recognize what elders authentically carry in their humanity.

**W**HAT WE ALL HAVE in common is biophilia—the love of life. Life is not something neutral. We're here to fall in love with life; to make love with life. How do we move a culture, a civilization, a politics, from a domineering consciousness to a partnership consciousness where life can truly flourish and celebrate itself through us and the other creatures?

We should begin with awe because from awe flows reverence and gratitude. And when we've got that energy going again from every level—awe, reverence and gratitude—we have begun the necessary reinvention of our species.

—MATTHEW FOX, *Founder and President Emeritus of Wisdom University*

What I'm saying is that we can apply these principles to every single issue that's of importance to us. Think about how the positions you take intensify the experience of social connectedness—authentic social connectedness. ■

*Peter Gabel is associate editor of Tikkun.*

# The New Evangelicals

BY GLEN STASSEN

I WANT TO EXPLAIN SOMETHING that is happening among evangelicals that should give you a lot of encouragement. A movement that calls itself “centrist evangelical” is emerging that is really saying something different than what the Religious Right has been saying. It is a truly major development. Here are some examples:

1. The Evangelical Environmental Network is succeeding in getting most evangelical leaders signed up in a campaign to “Care for Creation.” Note the term: care for creation, that is, God’s creation; that is, it’s biblical. The drama of creation in the first chapters of Genesis is not the invention of new-age religion; it is thoroughly biblical. Care for creation is our term.

How many of you have heard of the campaign “What Would Jesus Drive?” This was conceived by Jim Ball, an evangelical. Jim even got CBS News in Los Angeles to film me riding my bike to work, and to ask me in an interview, “What would Jesus drive?”

Rich Cizik is the Washington representative of the National Association of Evangelicals, and he is speaking in many places about global warming and the need for conservation to care for creation.

David Neff, the editor of *Christianity Today*, wrote a strong editorial calling on the Bush administration to wake up to the reality of global warming and to the fact that we are running out of oil.

A significant statement was recently signed by most major evangelical leaders calling for strong action to form policies that achieve energy conservation and combat global warming. It was opposed by a few evangelicals on the Right who are afraid of criticizing President Bush.

2. There is a major campaign to alleviate poverty in much of the developing world. Rabbi Lerner calls it a Global Marshall Plan; we call it The One Campaign ([www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org)). And Jim Wallis is leading a campaign to say “the budget is a moral document.” Last night my student, Amy, gave her testimony in class about the thrill of getting arrested with Jim Wallis and Tony Campolo. Ron Sider was there too, as they protested the cuts to the poor, to Medicaid, to Pell grants for college loans, in the new budget plan, while \$300 billion each year is being given in tax cuts for dividends, for capital gains, for

**W**E FUNDAMENTALISTS have a problem. And that is why we fight day and night to prove that the Bible is infallible. And then after we fight day and night to prove that the Bible is infallible, we don't do what it tells us anyway.

When Jerry Falwell says "I believe the Bible," I want to know whether he can believe in the war in Iraq when Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God."

We need to repent.

Without repentance there is no spirituality.

You say, "But that would be humiliating." On the bicentennial anniversary of the United States we used this verse from Chronicles II (7:14) as the verse of the nation: "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves... then I will hear, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." It is only a great nation that is capable of humbling itself.

—TONY CAMPOLO, *Founder, Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education*

the top tax brackets, and tax abolishment for all inheritances above \$1 million.

3. Donna Schaper, the progressive pastor of Judson Baptist Church in New York, recently came to Washington to help protestors chain themselves to the Congressional building in protest against the House's anti-immigration law. She expected 100 protestors, but there were 300, many of whom were evangelicals.

4. The cover story of the February issue of *Christianity Today* was "Why Torture is Always Wrong." It was written by David Gushee, my friend and the coauthor of our book, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*. The best known and most admired of all evangelical pastors, Rick Warren of Saddleback Church in California, yesterday just signed the NRCAT statement against torture. He said to me: "Why would anybody want to defend torture ever? It corrupts the morality of the nation." And he commended Dave Gushee's article. Warren said, "If we condone torture, we yield the moral high ground to our enemies and encourage anyone who hates us to stoop to using that subhuman level against us. We reap whatever we sow." Rick spoke prophetic words. Since then, two U.S. soldiers were found, tortured and murdered.

Jesus was tortured on the cross by the Roman Empire. How can evangelicals support any kind of torture?

The Bible teaches that all of us sin and that power corrupts, especially when dealing with the weak and vulnerable, so evangelicals know we need the restraint of law. Prisoners are the epitome of the weak and vulnerable. They need the protection of international law. Torture violates international law and Evangelicals want us to be law abiding. We want the U.S. to get back to being a law-abiding citizen of the world.

5. Polls show that many evangelicals are upset about the Iraq War. It is causing the deaths of too many people, and is costing too much money, cutting into critical government programs (e.g. the funds for levee repair were cut in half before Hurricane Katrina hit). It is causing international outrage and anger because the U.S. based the war on a lie and broke the law by taking military action without the support of the UN. That anger feeds terrorism; it makes us less secure, not more secure.

Did you know the Pentecostals have formed the Pentecostal Peace Fellowship? And the Baptists have formed a Baptist Peace Fellowship? And the Catholics have formed Pax Christi? And that Every Church a Peace Church has links to about twenty such denominational peace fellowships? It is [www.ecapc.org](http://www.ecapc.org).

The Religious Right is giving evangelicals a bad name. It is even giving Christians a bad name. It is building worldwide resistance against the gospel. Evangelicals care about spreading the good news of the gospel, and the authoritarianism of the religious right is bad news for the gospel.

So the good news is that there is a large group of centrist evangelicals moving away from the Religious Right.

But its leaders do not want to make it an anti-Bush movement. They want to make it a moral values movement. Many evangelical leaders are torn about whether to sign on because many of their constituents still have significant loyalty to George W. Bush.

Bush will be president only two more years. It's not about a person; it's about moral values. Will his successor make some of the right corrections? So we need to get the people in this movement to articulate these moral values, and we need to get political candidates who connect with values.

A major error of this administration has been to take the protection of international law away from prisoners of war. That sends a message that it will wink at torture. Without the protection of law, prisoners are defenseless, and soldiers who have been fired up to fight a war are more likely to victimize them. This has greatly increased the anger of the other side, making them more likely to torture our own soldiers when they are captured, and fueling the recruitment of terrorists. It makes us less safe, and it is morally and legally indefensible.

This administration has pulled us out of eight international treaties, has undermined the authority of the United Nations, has ignored the reports of the weapons inspectors that the weapons were not there, ignored the reports of the International Red Cross that torture and abuse of prisoners were happening, and undermined the international networks designed to stop the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries like Iran and North Korea.

Evangelicals know that because of sin and the abuse of power, we need to be law abiding. Many evangelicals want the United States to support international laws and treaties, rather than putting our trust in the use of military weapons (Isaiah 30 and 31). We need to build security by returning to international cooperation.

Evangelicals have a deep heritage based in religious liberty, nonviolence, and the kind of teaching and persuasion that Jesus practiced. In our gratitude for what the gospel of God's love and compassion means in our lives, we should spread the good news by teaching and persuasion, not by coercion. That's very deep. If you want to enlist evangelicals in the cause, for heaven's sake, don't ask us to renounce our commitment to spreading the gospel by teaching, but also please don't assume that we would want to teach and preach in a coercive way. ■

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# True Spirituality

BY MARY DARLING

**A**T THE PRESENT TIME, neither political party in the United States allows me to incarnate the values of love and justice into the political process. The Republican party appears to be indifferent to crucial social justice issues. For instance, out of the twenty-two industrialized nations, the U.S. is dead last in the amount of money from its federal budget that is allotted to help the world's poor. To put in perspective, on a per capita basis, for every dollar the U.S. assigns to defeating global poverty, Norway assigns seventy.

If you go to an evangelical church, they will talk a lot about tithing: the idea that one-tenth of what we have should be designated to help others. Wouldn't it be great

if our country, which many Evangelicals say they want to be a Christian nation, would set aside 10 percent of its income to help the poor of the world? Until America does that, all this talk about being a Christian nation is empty. Please know that I am not suggesting that this become a Christian nation—I just want to seek greater consistency.

To President Bush's credit, he seems to want to significantly increase money we give to third-world countries, largely under the influence of artist/activist Bono. But his own party has been trying to block his efforts. Instead, they are proposing further cutbacks on education and social welfare, and a tax bill that gives benefits to *only* a small percentage of our population—the very wealthy.

President Clinton responded to this in an interview with Michael Tamasky:

America has been good to me. And I think for somebody to give me a tax cut and then turn around and say, "We've gotta have \$87 billion spent in Iraq, but we're gonna kick 300,000 kids out of after-school programs, 84,000 kids out of student loans . . . 25,000 uniformed police off the street? We're gonna kick a couple of thousand police off the street in New York City who put their lives on the line on September 11, and they're gonna give me a tax cut?" That's class warfare! And I think we ought to say that!

There seems to be a subtle implication of social Darwinism that seems to exist within the Republican philosophy, relating to the survival of the fittest. We've all heard statements like "the people at the bottom are there because of their inadequacies" or "if you take the resources of the rich and give to the poor, all you are doing is nurturing the unfit." Perhaps I'm being too harsh, but we need to think about what is *really* being said when statements like this are made or implied. Especially as all of this comes under the name of "Compassionate Conservatism."

The Democratic Party, on the other hand, leaves me aware of *their* spiritual bankruptcy too. The line "It's the economy stupid" didn't work in the last election and it won't work in the upcoming one either because the American people are better than that—that's what the Democratic party needs to understand.

The Democrats think that all they have to do is cater to our selfish interests and they will get elected. One of the items on the Democratic platform in the next election will likely be that our party will provide more giveaways to everybody, *except* the upper 5 percent—who wouldn't vote for them anyway. Unfortunately, the Democrats don't seem to see that the vision of Martin Luther King still resonates with the American people. That's why we are here at the conference—for a new or renewed vision of what America can be. As King said:

We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of Now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy...Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. ...The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges."

There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied... No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until "justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream."

This kind of vision revitalizes me and it certainly gets my vote! I want a political agenda that creates a sense of community in America in which people have care and compassion for one another; where the *dignity* of *all* human beings is enhanced; where the *environment* is treated as something of value that needs to be protected; where animals are not mistreated, and; where we have *freedom*...freedom from fear. My scriptures say that Perfect Love casts out fear, that there is no fear in love.

It is my intimate times with Jesus that *fuel* my desire to be more involved in social justice issues and those times are what now *inform* my political views.

I believe that if our spirituality does *not* transform us into people with more love and

compassion for those beyond our own personal sphere, then it is narcissistic. And if it doesn't carry us beyond our interpersonal sphere of love and compassion, then our spirituality is watered down and provincial.

True spirituality is very *other* focused; it reaches way beyond others we know *and* others we love, including all of God's creation.

True spirituality makes us increasingly aware of the sacredness of others as created in the image of God. It transforms the ways in which we perceive the poor & oppressed, whether or not we agree on why they are poor or oppressed.

It changes the way in which we perceive those that our government says are our enemies and that's a good change, since my Scriptures say to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.

Because I'm a Christian, this sacredness that I see in others is Jesus, who said, "as much as you've done it to the least of these, you've done it to me."

True spirituality causes us to want our nation to see itself as part of the worldwide community rather than as a self-interested entity. When Jesus calls me to see him in the least of these that means those orphaned by or dying of AIDS and it means those persecuted by religious fanatics throughout the world.

True spirituality energizes us to want to help to do the work that needs to be done to create the kind of world that acts out of love and justice for all, no matter who they are... or are not.

But without intentional spiritual renewal, those who work for justice will either burn out because the work is too hard or too slow, or turn into angry, self-righteous, militant people, because they have bought into a system of thought about justice without the spirit of justice.

It's the absence of this kind of spirituality in politics today that has brought an end to civility in political discussion—and I'm talking about the absence of spirituality in those who claim to be Religious too. I see this in my tradition and I think we can be the most dangerous people when we claim a personal relationship with God, but are anything but loving.

If we are not spiritual, those who oppose us will be viewed as people who ought to be destroyed instead of people who need to be lovingly convinced. Spirituality creates an empathy for the other, so that we can understand not only what the other person is saying, but the deep feelings that created his or her words. It keeps us from seeing the other as an evil entity. It helps us to see in the other Martin Buber's "I-Thou." It helps us to see the image of God in those who oppose us.

We all need this kind of spirituality for any lasting change in our political system and our world.

As it says in the Hebrew Bible (Isaiah 40:31), "...they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

That's why so many of the idealists from the 1960's are no longer with us. They had visions and dreams but they did not have the spiritual dynamism to stay the course.

Please note the progression here. We start off soaring like eagles; after awhile we are running instead; then there comes a time when we are just walking and we need renewal—regularly. It is my times alone with God in an examination of my daily attitudes and actions, in the holy reading and reflection on Scripture, and in my times of yielding to God in silence, allowing God's Spirit to work deep in my spirit that revitalizes me daily.

SO MANY AMONG US are looking for authenticity and relevance in our lives, isn't that so?

Far too often, however, authenticity and relevance are in very, very short supply. Those who seek are finding neither authenticity nor relevance in their religious communities and they simply get tired and walk away.

But if and when these same communities grow in love through concrete acts of love—especially courageous and daring acts of love—and as they engage in authentic spirituality, I'm convinced change will come. People will return, and we will begin to win the struggle for hearts and minds.

—PAUL SHERRY, *Director, Let Justice Roll*

When I don't have these times, I can tell in my spirit, my attitude, and my ability to love.

There *is* a direct correlation between being involved in spiritual exercises and my ability to love more selflessly.

I don't want to imply that no one in my tradition or yours is doing these things. They are. But we need more people to embrace the kind of spirituality that drives them to compassion; there's so much to be done, and for many in my tradition, our work for love and justice in the world needs to be *so* much more than it is.

There are lots of people who have shown us the way in the past. In my Christian tradition we have many saints like St. Francis of Assisi, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Catherine of Siena, John Wesley, and Howard Thurman, to name just a few. Their spirituality fueled their social justice work. We need more people like them today, people committed to an authentic spirituality that informs, inspires, and empowers them to love and work toward justice. ■

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*Mary Albert Darling is currently co-authoring a book with Tony Campolo on the necessary connections between mystical spirituality, evangelism, and social activism. Darling completed a two-year program in spiritual direction (Ignatian spirituality) in 2002. She has an MA in Communication and teaches at the University level.*

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# God Demands Justice

BY RABBI BRIAN WALT

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**I**N THE BOOK OF PSALMS it says, "God is the one who demands justice for the oppressed, feeds the hungry, sets the captives free. God opens the eyes of the blind, lifts up those who are bent down. God loves those who act justly. God protects the stranger and the immigrants." It is this God that we come together to affirm. The God who calls us to demand justice for the oppressed, to feed the hungry, to protect the stranger, to set the captive free. The God who calls us to pray, in our churches and our mosques and our synagogues, and, as Rabbi Heschel said, to pray with our feet, to live God in our real lives, in our families, in our work, in our play, in our bodies, in our society and in our world.

My own understanding of the relationship between spirit, religion, and politics was shaped by my childhood experiences. I was born a Jew in South Africa, seven years after the end of the Holocaust. I live with the memory of walking home from the Jewish school where I had learned about the prophets, and the pain my people had recently suffered. I'd see kids in tattered clothes, their parents selling newspapers at the corner store. Outside that store I'd frequently see the same scene: A police van would arrive and out of it came officers who would ask these men for something. They'd never have what the police were asking for. The police would proceed to violently throw them into the back of their van.

Those men were arrested because they had no passbook to be in Seapoint, the suburb of Cape Town where I grew up. I can still see before me the yellow star and the passbook. And I remember my teachers and my parents painfully asking, "Where were people when this happened?"

How was it possible that a human being could go to church and pray while Jews were being murdered, and not say anything about it? How was this possible? There was a church right by Auschwitz. What happened there on Sunday morning? What does it mean that people drank the wine, ate the sacraments, and testified to a God of love while killing was going on around them?

I later realized that the question was not only about them. It was about me, about us. It was about those kids in tattered clothes, those men who were arrested for pass laws, and the children who died of malnutrition because of a system of racist oppression that denied them adequate food or health care.

As a Jew, my faith has always been connected to politics. What does it mean to be a Jew, observing a religion based upon the story of the Exodus out of Egypt, a real-life political liberation story? A Jew repeats that every day, twice a day.

And yet, in our communities there are people who create walls between houses of worship and what happens outside them.

When I grew up in South Africa, there was a church and a faith tradition that justified the racist oppression of apartheid. There were a few courageous souls, people of all faiths, who had the courage to speak out. Most did not. The majority of people wanted to be comforted by their faiths—they didn't want politics in their places of worship. So if their priest, rabbi, or minister dared to talk about what was going on outside, they would be accused of talking politics.

So today, I work for an organization called Rabbis for Human Rights, which believes that as Jews we care deeply for the state of Israel, for its security and survival. And as much as we care about the future and the security of the state of Israel, and as much as our heart breaks whenever we hear of a tragic suicide bombing, or an attack that kills fellow Israeli citizens, we also believe in God. And God also cares about the life of a Palestinian child who is killed by an Israeli bullet, or the home of a Palestinian that is demolished by a bulldozer at the behest of the Israeli government.

Of course, there are people like Michael Lerner, Art Waskow of the Shalom Center, people at the Reform movement's Religious Action Center, and many others who speak out about such issues. But we need much more. We need a clear prophetic voice in the American Jewish community, one that knows that to be Jewish is to stand for justice and human rights, not only for Jews, but for all people.

We live in the richest country in the world in a time of great prosperity. We need to affirm the awe and the splendor of our lives. How blessed we are at this very moment to be alive. How blessed we are to be here. How blessed we are to have what we have. And, we need, as people of faith, to take sacred responsibility to repair the world in the image of the divine. We must be the voice that cries out for compassion for all. Jews end all prayers with a prayer for peace: May the one who makes for peace in the universe make

THERE IS A STRUGGLE underway right now for the hearts and minds of people of faith in this country. Part of the struggle has to do with world views: is God a God of Law or a God of Love?

Why is it that the God of Love so often, it seems, has to fight an uphill battle against the God of Law? The God of Love is not only nurturing and sustaining. She requires us to face up to three great myths that have damaged and distorted our lives: the myths of white supremacy, male superiority, and American exceptionalism. We have a long way to go before putting to rest the notions of white supremacy and male superiority and, I fear, an even longer road to travel in bringing an end to the idea that the United States is God's gift to the world.

—JIM WINKLER, *General Secretary,  
United Methodist General  
Board of Church & Society*

peace for us all, all of Israel and Palestine, and, as many of us say, for all Ishmael, and for all the world. ■

*Rabbi Brian Walt is the executive director of Rabbis for Human Rights North America and rabbi emeritus of Mishkan Shalom, a progressive synagogue in Philadelphia dedicated to Tikkun Olam. Born in South Africa, he was active as a Jewish student in the struggle against Apartheid.*

# Cynicism

BY MICHAEL BADER

**I**N MY WORK AS A PSYCHOLOGIST and psychoanalyst, I treat cynicism every day. Cynicism is at the heart of what ails most of the people who come into a therapist's office. At the core of most psychic suffering is the belief that the way things are is the way they're supposed to be.

All of us grow up in families on whom we're dependent and that have the power to define both reality (the way things are) and morality (the way they're supposed to be). Further, most children grow up with the tendency to take responsibility for the hurts they experience growing up. Put these two things together and you have the conditions under which we grow up acquiring painful beliefs about ourselves and others, about what makes people tick and what makes the world go 'round, beliefs based on traumatic experiences for which we ultimately blame ourselves.

Thus, the belief that the way things are is the way they're supposed to be is wired into what it means to be a normal child. The problem is that the world changes when we mature, and we hopefully develop all sorts of adult capacities to think things through and get perspectives we never had as children. When we get stuck, however, it's often because the child in us persists and keeps imposing its beliefs and expectations onto our adult life.

This is what I see every day as a therapist, together with great difficulties in imagining a different way to feel about one's self, the social world, and one's future. At the heart of the matter is a belief that the world is fixed, and that ultimately, there's not a lot that one can do, despite one's suffering and wishes for relief.

Thus, whether it's patients who feel undeserving of love, or those who believe that they have to suffer and sacrifice in order to earn recognition and acceptance, or who feel that the world is a hostile place within which survival depends on being aggressive, the heart of all psychological suffering are these painful unconscious beliefs that personal and interpersonal reality is somehow fixed.

This is exactly what Michael Lerner talks about in relation to the wider social and political universe. Beliefs like "reality is what can be verified by sense data," or "ultimately human beings are selfish," or "it's the economy, stupid" are exactly the same as the neurotic beliefs of my patients. And they're just as difficult to change because culture, like a family, has the power to define what is and what's supposed to be.

One of the big difficulties in curing cynicism is that no one actually admits to having this affliction. What do they say when challenged? "I'm not cynical...just realistic." Unfortunately, we know from experience how hard it is to fix something that a person doesn't believe is broken, whether in therapy or political life.

The real reason that my patients often change in therapy is because I'm able to help provide an alternative reality for them by creating a relationship that helps challenge and counteract what they believe is normal in relationships. That's how people get better in therapy. The therapist dis-confirms their expectations, and thereby makes it safe enough for patients to experiment with a new way of thinking about or doing things.

That's what we can do as a movement. First of all, we don't have to be embarrassed about speaking of ideals, love or changing the bottom line. We can explicitly take on cynicism by making cynicism itself the issue, in every way possible. We can also challenge leaders to address the issue. We can put it in sound bites, and we can make the press write about it too.

By making our ideas and spiritual sensibility a public presence, we can figure out a way to be openly spiritual and still win. This is extremely important. We need not to mistake our critique of the self-defeating *win at all costs* strategy of mainstream Democrats for one of avoiding the importance of winning real political power, of real victories that tell people "You can be your highest self and still acquire practical influence, still change people's actual experience."

If we can do that, see, we defeat cynicism on its own terms, as well as demonstrate in practice that *the way things are is not the way they're supposed to be*, and that the past doesn't determine the future. We then stand up for the values that are at the heart of healthy childhood and good mothering: an appreciation of the centrality of love, discovery and human connectedness. ■

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*Michael Bader, DMH is a psychologist and psychoanalyst in San Francisco. He has contributed widely to Tikkun Magazine on issues involving the interaction of psychology, culture, and politics. He is the author of Arousal: The Secret Logic of Sexual Fantasies. Dr. Bader is also one of the founders of the Institute for Change, a leadership development program currently associated with the labor union, SEIU.*

# Don't Give Up

BY REV. JOHN DEAR

ONE OF THE CASUALTIES of this culture of violence, injustice and war is the loss of our imagination. People across the country cannot even imagine a world without conflict, poverty or nuclear weapons. But that is our job. We are like our ancestors, the Abolitionists, who came along and announced a breathtaking new vision: a world without slavery, the equality of everyone on earth. We are their heirs, New Abolitionists, announcing a new world of nonviolence.

You may have heard the true story of church activists who met in a church basement in East Berlin in the dismal days of the early 1980s around the ridiculous topic, "What Will It Be Like 1,000 Years From Now When the Berlin Wall Finally Comes Down—and—What Do We Have To Do Now To Help That Great Day Happen?" They were dismissed as idealistic fools. But their meeting was exciting and energized them, so they decided to meet again, and more people showed up, and they kept meeting, and soon, people were meeting in church basements across East Germany, and within a few years, in November 1989, we watched in

**W**E ARE THE REALISTS. Unsustainable environmental practices, religion based on fear, law without justice, medicine without healing, new weapons and new wars—that is what is unrealistic! We can offer a better alternative than Armageddon.

Nuclear weapons represent the first horse out of the barn of technology running faster than the reins of law and morality. The bombs used on Nagasaki and Hiroshima were equal to 12 and 15 kilotons of TNT, respectively. Those weapons are only the size of the trigger devices on the hydro-nuclear weapons deployed now, which are in the megaton range. If the people of the world knew the level of risk they were living under, they would simply not tolerate it. It is insane.

It is our job to create sane alternative public institutions in which those values that integrate us as human beings can be manifest. Then we will learn a new technology, a technology that can melt the human heart.

—JONATHAN GRANOFF, *President,  
Global Security Institute*

astonishment on TV as hundreds of thousands of people marched every day throughout East Germany and the unthinkable happened, the newly imaginable happened, the Berlin Wall came down peacefully.

Everyone thought it was a miracle, but it was a grassroots movement that had been built and grew over time. My take on all this is that we have to do our thing here—organizing and building a national, global, grassroots movement around such an impossible dream, daring to announce it boldly, even give our lives for it. For me, the key to such a hopeful movement, a new Network of Spiritual Progressives, the end of the war on Iraq, the disarmament of the United States, the transformation of our world, even our journey to the God of peace is—nonviolence.

Everything comes down to violence or nonviolence. Violence is the great heresy, the great idolatry, the great mortal sin of our times that is destroying us. So I say we have to become people of active, creative nonviolence, everyone of us, everywhere, to become teachers and champions and heralds and apostles of creative nonviolence.

How do we keep building such a diverse, inclusive active movement for peace and justice? We have to keep reflecting on that question, learning from history, experimenting with nonviolent action, but here are some thoughts. First, we have to practice nonviolence in every level of our personal lives. We need to be nonviolent to ourselves, our

spouses, our children, our parents, our neighbors, everyone in our local communities, everyone in our religious communities, everyone everywhere. That means looking deep within to renounce every trace of violence within us, to pursue a deep, interior inner nonviolence.

Second, if we really are a spiritual movement for peace and justice, we need to really seek the God of peace and justice, regardless of whether others are pursuing God sincerely or not.

Third, if we go deeper into nonviolence and the search for God, Gandhi says, we will come to a greater awareness of truth and discover the common ground of our shared humanity—that every human being on the planet is equal, that we are all children of the God of peace. And so we will treat everyone with respect and dignity.

Fourth, as people of nonviolence who uphold the unity of the human family, we practice universal love—an unconditional, all-inclusive, all-encompassing, non-retaliatory, sacrificial, welcoming, compassionate love toward everyone everywhere for the rest of our lives.

Fifth, because we seek God and practice nonviolent love, we respect all religious traditions.

Sixth, we take sides, just as the God of peace, justice and nonviolence takes side. We side with peace, justice and nonviolence. And because God sides with the poor and oppressed and disenfranchised in order to embrace and liberate us all, we too side with the poor and oppressed and disenfranchised.

As we keep breaking down these barriers, bridge these divides and reach out to join hands with one another, we can stand up together and speak out together. We can denounce every form of violence and injustice and announce a great new vision of peace and justice. ■

*Rev. John Dear is a Catholic priest, peace activist, and the author of twenty books including most recently, "You Will Be My Witnesses" (Orbis) and "The Questions of Jesus" (Doubleday).*



## Israel and America

# A Desperate Embrace

by Joel Schalit

**I**N THE WEEKS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS, some of the most frequent guests on American news programs were Israeli diplomats and security consultants who were asked to share their battle-hardened wisdom on the tragedy. Nearly every time they spoke, it was though they were all reading a variation of the same script: *Now America knows what it's like to be subject to Islamic terrorism. Now America understands that we are struggling against the same enemy. Now America understands why it must support Israel in its fight against Arafat—because behind him stands Osama Bin Laden.*

The most disconcerting thing about hearing such testimony was how utterly calculating it appeared to be. America had just weathered its first domestic attack since Pearl Harbor, and “experts” were spinning the event as though it were an opportunity to shore up American support for Israel’s fight against the Palestinians. Behaving as though they’d already bought the argument, networks repeatedly broadcasted scenes of jubilant Palestinians celebrating Al Qaeda’s attacks on the streets of Nablus and Ramallah, as if to document what their Israeli guests were saying.

For conspiracy theorists searching for evidence that Israel disingenuously goaded America into invading Iraq, such examples provide a triumphant degree of validation. However, what’s more important is asking why Israelis were so quick to link their own struggles to those of the United States. Despite Israel’s longstanding strategic alliance



A displaced Lebanese woman walks past an anti-U.S. banner in the southern port city of Sidon, Lebanon.



with the U.S., it was not in Israel's best security interests to blur the distinction between its own conflicts with the Arab world with those of its patron. In 2001, Israel's conflicts were relatively contained and far more localized than those being fought in the region by the United States. At peace with neighboring states, Egypt and Jordan, and having just withdrawn from Lebanon in the summer of 2000, Israel needed to keep its focus on the second Palestinian uprising. Certainly, the last thing Israel needed was to add to its already impressive collection of enemies. Especially when it was trying to get rid of them.

### Israel's Alliance with the U.S.

NEVERTHELESS, ONE DOES NOT NEED a doctorate in Middle Eastern political psychology to understand why certain members of the Israeli establishment promoted this problematic position. The fact that the September 11 attacks were carried out by Arabs, and were primarily a response to American foreign and military policies in the Middle East—particularly since the first Gulf War—represented an ideal opportunity to reinvigorate a strategic alliance that had benefited Israel enormously since the Six Day War in 1967. Indeed, irrespective of one's political positions on Israel's relationship with the United States, it would almost be impossible to conceive of Israel's continued existence over this period of time without American military and economic support.

September 11 offered Israel an unparalleled opportunity to maintain the high level of intimacy that had existed between the two countries during the Clinton years and that Israelis feared was threatened by a new, potentially less friendly Republican administration. What better opportunity to renew the emotional bonds between the two countries (and to maintain the military and economic ties Israel needed) than to point out to the American public that both countries faced a growing Islamist threat? Israelis were happy to tell Americans that the anger directed against them was not the fault of American-led sanctions on Iraq, American support for authoritarian regimes, or American control of Middle Eastern oil: the problem, Israel could say, was one they shared—a history of ethnic conflict that cast both Jews and Americans as reviled Westerners.

What went unspoken, however, was how much Israel needed U.S. political support. Though Israel's conflicts with neighboring states were contained, its struggle with the Palestinians was raging in 2001. The Israeli security apparatus had seen Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 as a rehearsal for leaving the Occupied Territories—and was stunned when the Oslo peace process failed. With the second intifada, Israel saw itself as having no choice but to hitch its wagon to American efforts to combat Islamic terrorism and impose a new regional Pax Americana. The model was America's victory over Iraq in 1991, which helped push the Palestinians and Syria toward the negotiating table. In this model, whatever was not accomplished by negotiations would be imposed by force—the force of Israel's counterinsurgency campaign against the Palestinians, and that of the United States waging an all-out war on any regional powers providing material and financial succor to the new Palestinian resistance.

Called upon as America's most militarily powerful ally in the Middle East, Israel did everything in its power to support the Bush administration's new strategic doctrine in the region. The problem with the position that Israel took, however, was that it gave little thought to the possibility that America would not prevail politically or militarily over its adversaries as it had in the first Gulf War, and, most importantly, in the Cold War. Nor did Israel take into account the possibility of how its alliance with the United States would constrain Israel's ability to make decisions on its own behalf, without having to prioritize U.S. interests over its own.

The renewed relationship between Israel and the United States that developed in 2001 was in fact a desperate embrace, in which each party's attempt to gain strength from the other has only led to a deeper collapse. Every new crisis created by the War on Terror managed to encourage their most illiberal political tendencies to come to the fore, to the point that in each of the ally's misfortunes, they would look for opportunities to advance their respective political ambitions. The problem is that none of the analyses that identified these openings reflected the military and economic realities that have emerged in the Middle East since President Clinton first assumed office.

## Lebanon

THE RESULTS OF THIS ALLIANCE are to be found in the second Lebanon war. Responding to a cross-border attack in which eight Israeli troops were killed and two were taken prisoner, Israel decided that it was time to destroy the Shi'ite militia organization Hezbollah once and for all. After Israel conducted massive air and naval bombardments of its installations and missile sites, followed by the introduction of Israeli ground forces into the southern part of the country, Hezbollah responded by firing thousands of missiles at northern and central Israel. By the end of the second week of the conflict, half a million Lebanese civilians were refugees, more than 600 were dead, and over one thousand reported wounded. On the Israeli side, fifty-two combined military and civilian deaths had been reported and hundreds of residential homes and buildings had been damaged. According to news reports, almost half of the country's northern population fled southward.

The most notable military aspect of this war was its unprecedented brutality. For the first time in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, a conventional war was directly waged on each side's civilian populations. Instead of just targeting Israeli military forces, Hezbollah's gunners fired rockets and missiles at dense urban areas. Instead of assaulting military installations, Israeli fighter-bombers and artillery aimed their fire at apartment buildings, houses, bridges, cars, and telecommunications hubs. Hezbollah offered no rationale for delivering their payloads onto civilian targets other than that they were acting in self-defense. Israel conversely explained that it was impossible not to cause civilian casualties because Hezbollah had dispersed its infrastructure and weaponry in urban areas and villages throughout the country. Nevertheless, the IDF and Hezbollah appeared to be operating according to the same set of principles. Functionally, everything was fair game.

The question is why both parties chose to risk such a conflict at this point in time. Being willing to offer up their respective civilian populations to such dire risk clearly meant that both Israel and Hezbollah perceived much higher stakes at play than a simple border skirmish. It gradually became clear that Israeli officials were conducting the campaign against Hezbollah as part of a much larger regional struggle. Israel pointed to evidence that the weaponry the Shi'ite militia was using was supplied and manufactured by both Syria and Iran (and in certain instances, operated by Iranian personnel). Israeli politicians and journalists began to piece together a picture of a war initiated by Tehran through Hezbollah, and fought on behalf of its interests, with Syria playing the role of facilitator. Israel was not fighting just to weaken Hezbollah, and found itself on the frontline of a new regional struggle being fought against a global Jihad aimed at Western liberal interests. Israel was fighting a vicious war at least partly on behalf of its U.S. patron.

The tragedy of this situation is how long it took for the rhetoric of Israeli security conservatives during the aftermath of September 11 to finally meet reality. For the first time in the country's history, Israel found itself in the position of being attacked as a surrogate for America by an Islamic guerrilla organization also acting on behalf of the interests of a foreign power. As easy as it might be to argue that such scenarios have always played themselves out during the Arab-Israeli conflict—first the United States versus the Soviet Union, now America versus Iran—there was never a time when the use of Middle Eastern countries in a game of strategic chess played by third-party states was so utterly transparent. Why? Because as the costs suffered by both Israel and Lebanon so clearly show, neither country had anything to benefit by going to war. The only winners would be those rivaling nations needing to keep one another's ambitions in check by promoting regional turmoil.

For neoconservatives in the West agitating for an American-led confrontation with Iran, the war in Lebanon was part of a larger strategy. Tehran had finally shown its hand and was actively engaged in the destabilization of the entire region, far beyond the confines of Iraq. Using fundamentalist Lebanese guerrillas as their proxy, it had finally opened up the front against Israel that it had been threatening ever since the elevation of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to Iran's presidency in June 2005. And Israel, the United States' most loyal ally, had risen to the occasion and was conducting the war for America.

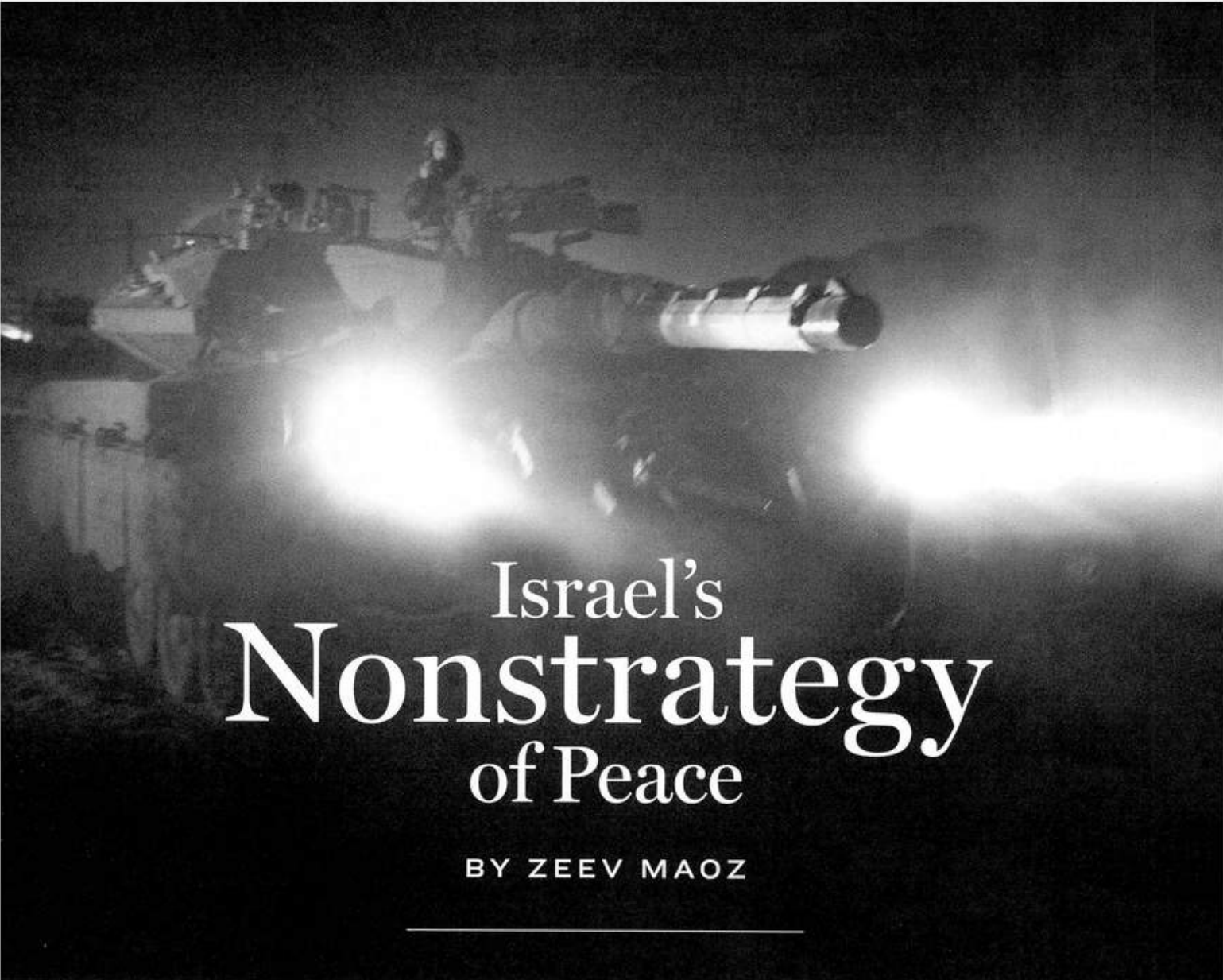
Perhaps the greatest irony of this conflict, however, is what a picture of powerlessness it paints of the United States during its fifth year of war. Unable to contain Iran's ambitions to expand its regional hegemony, incapable of quelling a civil war caused by its own invasion of Iraq, America has had to entrust Israel with the final responsibility for restoring its lost power of deterrence in the Middle East. Mirroring the Israeli failure to anticipate how a failed U.S. policy in the region might impact Israel, America has returned this trust to the Israelis for its own protection, with little to no acknowledgment of how Israel's war with Lebanon might further erode U.S. opportunities for regional dominance.

But America's prospects don't look good. Given the kind of shockwaves the Israeli-Lebanese fight has sent throughout the Middle East, it may just be a matter of time before Arab states that are allied with the United States, and distantly, Israel, experience rising levels of public discontent that they did nothing to prevent the immolation of Lebanon. U.S. forces will undoubtedly find Iraq more ungovernable than ever. Further, with Iran gaining regional power, it remains possible that whatever gains the Americans have made by occupying Iraq and Afghanistan, they may now undergo a process of reversal at the hands of an Iranian-sponsored regional uprising.

For the United States, Israel's friendship comes with a high price. As for Israel, it clearly has earned a great deal of respect from the U.S. by assuming such a remarkable burden. But maybe, just maybe, the price of being America's best ally has become a little too high. ■

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*Joel Schalit is managing editor of Tikkun.*



# Israel's Nonstrategy of Peace

BY ZEEV MAOZ

**I**SRAEL HAS A WELL-DEVELOPED security doctrine, based on a number of simple (some would even say simplistic) percepts. While some aspects of its security policies and the core structure of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) have changed considerably over time in the face of political, technological, and economic developments in the region and in Israel, the underlying assumptions on which Israel's security posture is based along with its main canons have withstood the test of time.

In contrast, Israel does not have a peace policy. The amount of systematic thought and analysis the Israeli government invests in developing a practical peace policy is in reverse proportion to its investment in military strategy and the empty peace rhetoric of its leaders. There is no shortage of peace proposals in the Israeli media and academic circles—but there appears to be no sincere effort on the part of Israeli officials to develop a comprehensive peace policy.

In many cases Israel has been dragged—sometimes kicking and screaming—into peace negotiations, such as the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, the Madrid Conference of 1991, and the Oslo peace process, which began in 1993. To the extent that Israeli leaders dared to make concrete diplomatic proposals, they generally offered only gradual, incremental, and limited gestures. In many instances, the Israeli security establishment was instrumental in derailing or deterring the government's diplomatic initiatives. In short, Israel's history of peacemaking has been largely reactive, demonstrating a

Israel stands little to lose and a great deal to gain from defining what it is willing to give up and what it requires in the context of a comprehensive peace agreement.

pattern of hesitancy, risk-avoidance, and gradualism that stands in stark contrast to its proactive, audacious, and trigger-happy strategic doctrine.

Prior to the Six Day War in June 1967, Israel could justify such an approach on the grounds that it lacked sufficient territorial margins or other significant bargaining chips it could offer its enemies in exchange for peace. Yet, this was no longer the case after the war. The Eshkol government's bold decision to offer the Sinai and the Golan Heights in exchange for peace with Egypt and Syria was quickly retracted following the "three nays" of the Khartoum Conference the following September, in which Arab leaders specified that there would be "no peace," "no negotiations," and "no recognition of Israel" until all occupied Arab lands were regained. Since then, Israel's peace policy has been characterized, more or less, as a set of reactions to external proposals. For years, Israel has been answering (often negatively) the phone calls from the Arabs and from the international community—it has not been making such calls on its own.

Paradoxically, Israel's pattern of "peacemaking" has prevailed even after two of its main enemies—Egypt and Jordan—signed formal peace treaties with Israel and after thirty-two years of de facto peace with Syria along the Golan Heights (a status that survived the blatant and unprovoked Israeli attack on Syrian forces in Lebanon in 1982).

Despite skeptics' criticisms of Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000—which, given this summer's fighting, no doubt serves as proof to security conservatives that the "land for peace" formula is dead—its successful outcome vindicated the action and led the world to expect a more proactive peace policy in the Middle East. Instead, the only formal Israeli-Palestinian peace plan currently on the table, as far as the Israeli government is concerned, is President Bush's Roadmap for Peace—Israel seemingly has nothing in the way of a plan to resolve the conflict that has taken the lives of over 1,000 Israelis over the last six years.

What are the reasons for the lack of a well-defined peace strategy? Are they still valid today? The official script is that the absence of identifiable Arab partners renders a reactive policy necessary. If such partners existed, they would find in Israel a willing and cooperative partner, just as Egypt's Anwar Sadat, Jordan's King Hussein, former Syrian Prime Minister Hafez Asad, and the late Palestinian Authority President Yasir Arafat once did. Moreover, the official argument suggests that the Arab-Israeli conflict is largely a story of unmitigated hatred, hostility, and violence of Arabs against Jews. In discussing peace, the Arabs demand tangible, strategically risky, and politically painful territorial concessions from Israel. On the other hand, they commit to a piece of paper that has little or no tangible value. Thus, the

burden of proof regarding the presence of a sincere and long-lasting desire for peace is always placed on the Arab side.

There is some validity to this position. However, it is also misleading in important ways. First, it assumes that Arabs should take for granted Israel's image as a peace-loving nation. Second, it implies that Arab perceptions of Israel's desire for peace and its willingness to make concessions in order to obtain it are fixed and unaffected by Israel's actions. Consider Israel's settlement policy. Why should the Arabs believe that Israel wants peace if it systematically colonizes those territories that are supposed to be the bargaining chips in negotiations for an Israeli withdrawal?

Third, the "no partner" argument presupposes that an Israeli peace plan would have no effect on Arab willingness to make peace. On the contrary, it may suggest that Israel's offer comes from a position of weakness. Alternatively, Israelis fear that a peace plan would become an opening position in negotiations and a basis for Arab demands for further concessions.

Finally, as former IDF intelligence chief and prominent scholar of the Arab-Israeli conflict Yehoshafat Harkabi points out, Israel stands little to lose and a great deal to gain from defining what it is willing to give up and what it requires in the context of a comprehensive peace agreement. Not only would a well-articulated peace strategy



guide government policy on such issues as the settlements, separation barriers, and the treatment of an occupied population, it will also define realistic expectations for the Arabs about what it is they can hope to gain or lose from making peace.

There are, however, more profound reasons for why Israel lacks a peace policy. Firstly, by its very essence, a peace policy commits Israel to defining its final boundaries. Unfortunately, such a definition is believed to be too risky to commit to in terms of domestic politics. The quasi-official Allon, Dayan, or Sharon peace plans were never publicly discussed, largely because of the government's motive to avoid a political crisis. Moreover, there is no official Israeli position on the Golan Heights, and even during critical points in the Israeli-Syrian negotiations the Israeli government avoided any discussion of a peace plan. Actual negotiations were handled by a handful of politicians and diplomats.

Secondly, Israelis are still reluctant to define the precise identity of their state. Neither the Israeli government nor ordinary Israeli citizens have found a proper balance between being a predominantly Jewish society *and* a truly democratic country. And they have yet to translate this balance into a final territorial definition of Israel's boundaries and the demographic structure that follows from such a definition.

Finally, Israel's military exerts undue influence over its foreign policy, rendering the formulation of a concrete peace strategy a difficult task. The security establishment, for all of its preoccupation with doctrinal affairs, has not been willing or able to determine the security-related value of the Occupied territories. Nor has it determined the security-related value of non-territorial security arrangements (such as demilitarized zones, reduced force zones, or arms control agreements) versus territorial control of areas inhabited by a hostile and rebellious population. Without such a clear determination, formulating a detailed peace policy is a practical impossibility.

The consequence of all of this, of course, is Israel's tendency to take steps that tie its hands before it finally realizes that its assumption about a lack of serious Arab partners is not valid. At this point, the measures that have been taken to safeguard the territories and colonize them have become a huge—perhaps even insurmountable—barrier to peacemaking. Add to this the sunken costs of futile investments in the infrastructure of the settlements (roads, military fortifications and outposts) that will be dismantled once these territories are transferred to the Arab states in the context of peace agreements—a lack of policy that is the pinnacle of folly.

The domination of security considerations over political ones is clearly reflected in the recent conflagrations between Israelis and Palestinians in Gaza and between Israel and Lebanon. Whenever a crisis breaks out, Israel immediately resorts to military options—no matter how ineffective they may be—and considers diplomacy as a fallback position. Since the military establishment is virtually the only organized institution that offers both military and political assessments at times of crisis, its analyses are typically taken on face value by Israeli politicians, regardless of how biased and flawed the IDF's analyses have turned out to be in the past. The military is essentially the only government organization that offers policy options—typically military plans—at times of crisis. Israel's foreign ministry and diplomatic community are reduced to public relations functions, explaining why Israel is using force instead of diplomacy to deal with crisis situations.

The senseless bombing of Gaza and Lebanon solved nothing, and has only aggravated Israeli-Arab relations, emphasizing the trigger-happy tendency of the Israeli political establishment. It also suggests that the continued reliance on force in lieu of diplomacy brings with it increased cost to Israel's population. Even if these policies were to reduce the immediate threats to Israel—which they arguably do not—they only offer temporary relief, and thus cannot be mistaken for a long-term solution.

But could this pattern of passive and reluctant peacemaking be changing? Israeli Disengagement from Gaza appears to have been more than a tactical ploy to preserve the West Bank. Sharon's rhetoric during his last two years in office focused on the demographic threat of 3.5 million Palestinians to Israel's identity as a Jewish and democratic state. He also talked about the burden of Occupation and its adverse ramifications for Israeli society. Willing to confront his party leadership and defy its rank and file, Sharon finally broke out on his own to form Kadima. His successor, Ehud Olmert, then announced his so-called "realignment" plan that envisions an Israeli withdrawal from substantial portions of the West Bank. Moreover, Olmert's extension of Sharon's plan allows for negotiations with the Palestinians (with Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas, not with a Hamas government) on implementation of the Roadmap as a prelude or even as a substitute for realignment.

The Gaza Disengagement and the realignment plan have some positive elements in that they reduce the extent of Israeli Occupation and—as Olmert put it in his speech before the Congress on May 24—the friction between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank. The offer of negotiations is also a positive turn, one that did not exist previously during the Sharon era.

But these steps are not a peace policy; they reflect the same old maxims of Israel's diplomacy and have all the characteristics of Israel's nonstrategy of peace. They stem from a notion that there is no real partner for peace on the Palestinian side. And they essentially ignore the long road that the Palestinians have taken over the last two decades toward recognition of Israel, their acceptance of the two-state solution, and even willingness to allow Israel to annex clusters of densely populated settlements in the West Bank. Olmert's offer of negotiations with Abbas is based on the Roadmap plan that entails yet another gradual and incremental process of the sort that failed under the Oslo accords. Additionally, this is an American and European plan that leaves the contours of a final settlement wide open. Finally, the evolution of the Disengagement and realignment ideas reflect the Israeli leaders' improvisational manner of thinking about these issues.

Above and beyond all the talk about peace and realignment, Israeli settlements in the West Bank continue to grow. A Peace Now survey published in August 2005 suggests that the Jewish settler population has reached the 240,000 mark (excluding the East Jerusalem Jewish neighborhoods). In addition, there are over 100 illegal outposts. So far, with one exception, none of them has been demolished, despite the government's declared intention to start removing them by July. At the same time the IDF continues its policy of targeted assassinations and incursions *(continued on page 63)*

## The Queer Path of the Boundary Crosser *Shatnez* and Civilization

by Jay Michaelson



**I**S THE LIMINAL SACRED, OR TERRIFYING? BOTH, according to most anthropologists and scholars of religion: Rites primitive and modern imbue times and spaces of transition with holiness precisely to sanctify what would otherwise be a foretaste of death. In the moment of in-between, that point of inflection between what was and what is only now becoming, we are neither what we were nor what we will be. We are nothing, in other words, if only for the briefest of moments—and in the extinction of nothingness, of *ayin*, we approach divinity.

Yet the extinction of nothingness does not build homes or till the earth. Civilized religion, as it domesticates the wild and artificially bounds the unbounded, is precisely about the yoking of chaos. In the biblical story, God creates order out of the primordial

With only a few exceptions, there are no in-betweens in Jewish law. What of those, then, who find themselves astride one or another boundary—a transgendered woman, say, or a man who wishes to be made love to by a man?

chaos, the “tohu ra’vohu” in which some scholars detect echoes of the Babylonian Tiamat, defeated and divided by Marduk. Now rules are established, beginning with the most basic of taboos governing sexuality and establishing sexual order (almost always, in our culture, patriarchy). Now civilization can begin.

Surely, then, mainstream Judaism is a religion of civilization. Yes, it has its occasional vestiges of the Dionysian, such as David dancing before the Ark and folk festivals of orgiastic love. But from its founding moments, Jewish tradition is about the tablets of the law, not the golden calf; Moses’ descent to the people, not his ascent to the ineffable. It’s so odd, and yet so quintessentially Israelite, that our sage ascends a Divine mountain, but what we learn (in the biblical text, at least) is not the majestic theophany itself, the very body and face of God, but what that God tells Moses about life down here on Earth. Imagine one of our latter-day prophets announcing a “message from God” about tort law.

In such a religion, in a culture devoted to the cultivation of civilization, the notion of boundary is absolutely essential. One does not organize clans, tribes, and nations without a healthy respect for hierarchy, law, and propriety; and within the Jewish tradition, this respect for boundaries reaches its apotheosis. God mandates law—not only civil law, but even law that imprints itself upon God’s own creation. Following Mary Douglas’s reading of the Bible, for example, we can see the Jewish dietary laws as reflecting the idealized plan of Genesis itself, dividing water creatures from air creatures, air creatures from earth’s, and abhorring any transgression of the boundary. God saw that it was good—because now it was ordered: dark from light, the chosen from the others, everything neatly divided into binaries of either/or.

In contemporary queer theory, binaries are the enemy. They are false, they are social constructions—and they invariably administer power to the powerful, subjecting the weak to the rule of the strong. It’s not just that dyads such as them/us, black/white, and female/male are incorrect—it’s that the former term is consistently subordinated to the latter one. In fact, as latter-day Jewish philosophers Emanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida have shown, even the basic dualisms of self/other and presence/absence contain within them the seed of oppression, marginalization, and subjugation. As soon as we divide, we begin to conquer.

But in Jewish tradition, binaries are necessary; they are needed; they are holy. We can talk all we like about God encompassing all—uniting good and evil, joining self and other—but that’s God. The only Jews who efface such boundaries are heretics: Saboteurs, Frankists, and others. For the rest of us, our rabbis draw infinitely small distinctions to better divide and comprehend the world. Each minute that ticks by on these digital clocks of law carries its own special significance. With only a few exceptions, there is no in-between.

Where, then, are the boundary-crossers, those who defy the either/or, live apart from the conventional structure of family and tribe, and undermine the binaries that underlie the civilizing thrust of Judaism?

Those who find themselves astride one or another boundary—a transgendered woman, say, or a man who wishes to be made love to by a man—find themselves in an inextricably complex relationship to the social, traditional Judaism of the halachic mainstream. So do interreligious couples, or single parents, or others following (or creating) alternative models of Jewish sexual-social life. And so does anyone who sees himself/herself/themselves as both rather than either/or.

In our public conversations, we may all be the same; for all the hubbub in the media, there’s nothing more ordinary than two men or women standing under the chuppah to get married. This liberal, assimilationist discourse on homosexuality is important—not just because it’s convenient for lesbian couples to file joint tax returns, but also because moments of intimacy are not the business of the secular state (this is the essence of the

“right to privacy”), and because privilege, however constructed or inapplicable it may be, should still be allotted to all who’d like to seek it, rather than restricted only to some. Maybe to some people, marriage is dyadic, limiting, and intrinsically heteronormative—but let me have it too if I want it.

In our most intimate moments, however, we are not all the same—and the more one is attuned to the inflections of intimacy, the more apparent the differences become. A queer man uniting his inner masculine and feminine is different from the union of a man and a woman. Intimacy between women is different from phallocentric assumptions about penetration and control. And for religious traditions, unlike for (continued on page 63)

# The De-Centering of American Judaism

BY SHAUL MAGID

**I**N THE PAST FEW MONTHS, the Jewish Conservative movement has been rocked by two events that further illustrate the loss of an authoritative center in the American Jewish landscape. First, the Jewish Theological Seminary chose a non-rabbi, Professor Arnold Eisen of Stanford University, as its next chancellor, passing over consummate insider Rabbi Gordon Tucker. Second, the outgoing chancellor, Rabbi Dr. Ismar Schorsch, delivered a graduation address highly critical of the entire trajectory of the Conservative movement, criticizing its rabbis, lay leaders, liturgical music, and even its newly published Pentateuch translation and commentary, *Etz Hayyim*.

These are not merely incidents internal to the Conservative movement, but further illustrate an upheaval in the world of rabbinic seminaries and Jewish educational institutions in America. The past two decades have seen:

(1) The rise of an alternative progressive Modern Orthodox rabbinical institution *Hovevei Torah* in New York and the growth of progressive Orthodoxy in America including the Edah community and the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA);

(2) The rise of the University of Judaism in Los Angeles as a progressive and independent alternative to the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York;

(3) The emergence of the first non-denominational rabbinical school housed at Hebrew College in Newton, Massachusetts;

(4) The decision in the Reform Movement to grant ordination in all of its three American campuses; and

(5) The growth of the de-centered rabbinical program through Aleph, the main artery of Jewish Renewal.

To this must be added the rise of numerous non-denominational Jewish high schools across the country and the continued rise of independent *havurah*-style communities with no affiliation to any Jewish denomination.

What is happening? It’s not that the center is empty, as Schorsch argues, but that the “rabbinic” center is disappearing. The hegemony that rabbinical institutions

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once held has given way to a veritable "liberation movement" in American Jewish spirituality. The lay community is taking Judaism into its own hands, and that means that the role of the rabbi is changing. It is therefore quite fitting that the next titular head of the Conservative movement is not only a lay leader but a scholar of lay American Jewry.

Rabbis are not losing their centrality to Jewish religious practice because of a lack of commitment or passion or rigor (this may be partially true but is neither the root cause of the problem nor its symptom). The rabbinic center is disappearing because it has not adequately addressed the needs and passions of its constituencies, nor has it been able to translate critical scholarship into a meaningful spiritual message. In this sense I agree with Rabbi Schorsch.

In the 1970s, the answer for many disaffected Jews (particularly Conservative and Reform Jewish youth) was Orthodoxy through the Baal Teshuva movement. (I was among them.) This movement has waned in recent years. The next phase was the rise of Jewish Renewal (beginning with Bnei 'Or in Philadelphia, Havurat Shalom in Somerville, MA, the Aquarian Minyan in Berkeley and *The Jewish Catalogues* in the 1970's) as a spiritual alternative to the existing movements that lacked creativity and courage. (I was also among them.)

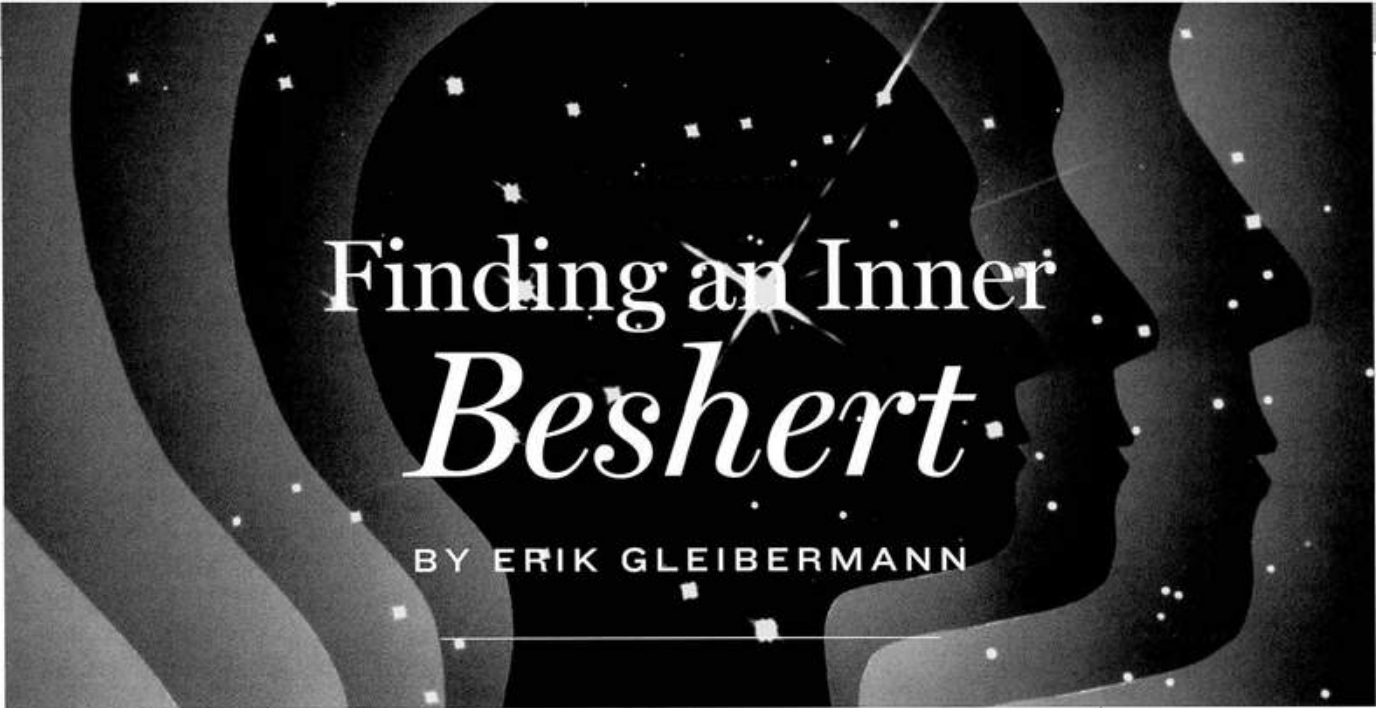
Renewal remains strong but will always be marginal because of its countercultural personalities and proclivities. It has many weaknesses including a tendency towards anti-intellectualism, which Schorsch justifiably decries. However, the de-centeredness of Renewal's vision has had a powerful influence on American Jewry and is beginning to haunt the largely colorless halls of the American Jewish centers of higher learning. Some of the "crypto-Renewalists" are rabbinical students, while many are lay leaders, activists, or simply Jews seeking a spiritual life that fits the contours of their own ethical sensibilities. Whoever they are, they are changing the face of progressive American Judaism.

Jewish rabbinical centers in the twentieth century emerged on the American landscape as much-needed catalysts for Americanizing an immigrant population and modernizing a community of first-generation Jews. They created the denominational structure that is now in transition. But to a large degree the rabbinical infrastructure has not stayed ahead of the curve nor predicted the power that emerges from an informed laity. Without constantly revisiting the mission, education all too easily yields to the obsolescence of the educator. The centers have not made a compelling argument as to why they are still necessary and, as a result, the periphery is beginning to show signs of autonomy.

Progressive Jews are arguably more literate, more knowledgeable, more informed, and more active in global causes than they were a generation ago. But one of the things they have absorbed from the subterranean influence of Jewish Renewal is the desire for a de-centered spiritual universe that is, in fact, integral to American spirituality.

I read Schorsch's speech as I was finishing the new book by David L. Holmes, *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers*. Holmes argues that the most influential forefathers of the United States were moderate to committed Deists and not very committed to the religious institutions into which they were born and baptized. In Schorsch's call back to the past, I heard echoes of British-born colonists before the Revolution demanding allegiance to the Anglican church of England and to the King. But there were other voices: Franklin, Jefferson, Adams, Madison, and Monroe who were calling for a new spirituality and a new republic. In the end, those voices were more compelling. ■

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# Finding an Inner *Beshert*

BY ERIK GLEIBERMANN

**B**EFORE THE ONSET of the High Holy Days, a time when Jews perform *teshuvah*, a turning back to evaluate our past actions, I recently found myself recounting conversations from the year with my many friends still persevering in the quest to find romantic partnerships. All of us—whether older, younger, gay, straight, partnered or single—wrestle with the same questions. Why is it often so difficult to find the right one? How do we know when we have found *the one*? Am I healthy enough to build a partnership even if I do find the one? Is the person I already chose really the one?

This issue of the one, the soul mate, the *beshert*, is a deep challenge that extends well beyond the quest for romantic partnership. I find that the idea of *beshert* has a deeper resonance as much with the broadest Yom Kippur themes of love and atonement as with who shares my bathroom and my bed.

Tremendous expectation surrounds romantic partnership in the Jewish tradition as well as in modern culture at large. The hallowed primacy of coupling has its roots right in the opening of our Torah story. What are the first words God speaks to Adam and Eve? *P'ru u'rvu*, "Be fertile, increase, and fill the earth."

The rabbis traditionally uphold Isaac and Rebekah's arranged pairing as the loving ideal, but word from the street is that more of us prefer the damp heat of Jacob and Rachel's lustful attraction. Jacob breaks into tears of infatuation and steals a kiss off Rachel about five seconds after first seeing her. He indentures himself for seven years to receive her hand, and when he doesn't get quite what he bargains for, sacrifices another seven. I guess that's what you do when convinced that you're destined to be with someone.

The Jewish idea of "chosenness" resonates deeply in our identity as a people, and resides too in our beliefs about finding a mate, as though love partnership might reflect in miniature the chosen collective destiny. How beautiful. But I wonder if the hope for such exalted connection doesn't set us up for disappointment. I have an ex-girlfriend who said when we broke up that she didn't experience us as soul mates. She wasn't judging the relationship. Our bond just didn't have that wordless ethereality she craved. I wanted to ask her, "Do you ever wonder if instead of needing a soul mate you just need someone you can love?"

If *beshert* signifies some sanctified bond destined to be, I don't believe in it. That outlook feels too metaphysically exclusive. I prefer to believe more mundanely, but no less reverently, that love is abundantly available and with the right *kavanah* (intention) it can be created—a consciously crafted rather than wondrously received relationship.

One creative approach to *beshert* might begin with exploring its elements in our existing non-romantic relationships. I am not implying we substitute (continued on page 64)

world, but what the gay Jew's unique destiny is. Was there a class of *kedeshim*, of Israelite sex-priests who offered experiences of Divine communion to men and women alike? Were there Israelite spiritualities maintained by marginal women who lived outside of the familial structure, and in congregations of their own? Scholars tell us that the answers to these questions are probably affirmative, even though we may never reconstruct what these people's lives were like. But as a personal (rather than historical) matter, to include such modes of being within my own identity as a Jew is both thrilling and threatening. Thrilling because it means that I have a history—that God has made gay people for millennia, and they have constructed spiritual lives alongside of, and despite, the orthodoxies of their day. But threatening because this is the path of the outsider.

Notwithstanding the hysteria of the homophobes, there are not enough queer Jews in the world to threaten the foundations of the Jewish community. But in terms of personal identity, one is enough. If the act of boundary-crossing, at once the formative move of the Hebrew (*ivri*, crossing-over) people and the antithesis of normative Jewish life, is to be admitted as an act of devotion to God, then what becomes of the prescribed codes of worship, or the sense of security that comes from fi-

## Was there a class of *kedeshim*, of Israelite sex-priests who offered experiences of Divine communion to men and women alike?

delity to the permitted? The *nomos* gives meaning, and security—what is lost when it is transgressed? Personally, for example, I find that adherence to the dietary laws, even in their arcane details and historical accidents, provides me with a sense of closeness to God. But if I am to truly be a boundary-crosser, is it the love of heaven that keeps my dishes separate—or is it merely cowardice?

One reason that eros is so carefully patrolled by law is that, blessed by the simplicity of love, it is easy to forget distinctions. Labels, binarisms, genders, and transgressions matter little when my partner is in my arms and love is the most natural thing in the world. Yet while such moments of innocence are delightful, they are also infantile. *Shatnez*, the Biblically-proscribed blending of wool and linen, which was prohibited precisely because it was sacred to the Egyptians (possibly like forbidden sexual unions), also looks, from a distance, to be cloth like any other. Only on closer inspection do its transgressed distinctions become apparent—whether as a path to God or to chaos. ■

Jay Michaelson is the chief editor of *Zeek: A Jewish Journal of Thought and Culture* ([www.zeek.net](http://www.zeek.net)) and the director of *Nehirim: A Spiritual Initiative for GLBT Jews*. His next book is *God in Your Body*, to be published in September, 2006.

(continued from page 57) other relationships for primary partnership, but recognize that the nurturing qualities we associate with primary partnership may already live in other connections—with a longtime friend, a close colleague at work, a mentor who helps guide our life in a fulfilling direction.

Maybe we can even find beshert in partnerships we do not always consider partnerships, anyplace where we have chosen deeply. My work as a teacher is beshert. I tried to abandon that profession once, but realized I am irrevocably attached to helping sixteen year olds explore their emerging selves. I also have beshert poems that somehow selected me as a scribe. Maybe you have a beshert painting, song, possession, or article of clothing. That seasoned pair of shoes in which you crossed canyons, passageways, or ancestral cemeteries. Maybe you have worn those soles into beshert.

Beshert ultimately may not really be about someone else, but about myself, places I choose within. It may be like a state of consciousness, an openness to intimacy willing to root in the earth.

I know it's cliché to claim you have to love yourself before you can love another, but I like the idea of beginning with a beshert of self. A friend once told me that if you are in the pain of being single and hear a passionate romantic love song on the radio, don't turn it off. Reinterpret the song as a lyric to yourself or to God.

If you're not into popular love songs try doing this exercise with the Bible. Try *Shir HaShirim*, the Song of Songs. What if we read the poem as a passionate dialogue of *ahavat nefesh*, soul love with the self? *Ani l'dodi v'dodi li* "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine" (6:3). Or try one of the most fundamental commandments of our tradition: "love the stranger as yourself." We might consider the stranger as the stranger within, some part of us we have yet to discover, shamed away or rejected in pain long ago.

When you take this interior approach, the *teshuvah* process can take on a new dimension. We can return to ourselves with forgiveness. Many spiritual paths follow this approach. In the twelve-step tradition, when it comes time to "make amends to those we had harmed," we are encouraged to begin with ourselves. How have I have harmed myself? How might I make restitution from a place of compassion? As this New Year begins I want to say to myself, "Forgive me for those harsh moments this past year when I judged your worthiness or pressured you with unrealistic expectations."

I love the Jewish path because it is a relationship path where all life can be a reciprocal love conversation with the many shattered pieces of the universe. In the quest for beshert, many of us do seek that one single person with whom to share our most intimate longings. But that relationship may also be only the most visible dimension of an intimate fabric transcending any one of us. I am grateful for this kind of interconnected world. It means I receive countless invitations to dance. ■

Erik Gleibermann is a San Francisco writer and academic mentor working in private practice with high school students.

## THE WTO'S UNHOLY SCAM

(continued from page 28) the concept of development, as well as its reality, depends on much more than the economics of trade. Development relies upon such additional factors as protecting environmental resiliency, increasing educational attainments, altering the social and cultural role of women, etc.

As my colleague, Vandana Shiva put it at an environmental negotiation when the U.S. and other governments objected to considering "socio-economic" impacts of genetic technologies (e.g., effects on traditional societies' livelihoods), privileged attention in international affairs is given only to "trade, the socio-economic impact of interest to the wealthy."

Third World farming is being transformed into large-scale agriculture controlled by transnational corporations instead of village councils and indigenous mores. Practices that for millennia were open and communal have been morphed by WTO policies into ones that are privatized and individualistic, dominated by patent monopolies over agricultural know-how.

That is why the mobilization of peasants has become so powerful in national and international agricultural politics—the Zapatistas in Mexico, the MST in Brazil, Jose Bove as a symbol in EU, the Korean farmers who shut down the streets of Hong Kong at December's WTO Ministerial.

## Case Example: Burkina Faso

U.S. COTTON IS CHEAPER IN BURKINA FASO than the locally grown cotton. Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta) is one of the world's poorest countries. Along with three other African lands—Mali, Benin, and Chad—existing *en extremis*, it has been attempting to challenge this situation.

Burkina Faso has a GDP of \$15.74 billion, putting it 116th in the world. Its GDP/capita is about \$300, or roughly a dollar a day. In terms of local purchasing power, this might be equivalent to \$1,200 a year (or \$3/day). The vast majority of its population are farmers and herders.

The US population contains about 3 million farmers (only 1 percent of our total). Farm subsidies are currently running at \$23 billion per year, or an average of an \$8,000 government grant to each farm resident. Thus, the *subsidies* to a US farmer are twenty-seven times what a person in Burkina Faso *earns* all told.

Burkina Faso, Mali, Benin, and Chad are a role call of wretchedness. In Benin, 62 percent of the people live in houses with dirt floors.

They sought, at the Cancun Ministerial in 2003, to get a ruling that would terminate U.S. cotton subsidies so that the Africans could sell their cotton—virtually their only resource. When the meeting collapsed and they were too weak to mount further challenges, Brazil became their champion and won a ruling that the subsidies on cotton should terminate, along with other agricultural distortions, at the end of 2005 and that the United States should pay damages estimated at \$4 billion. However, the U.S. Trade Representative can agree to reducing subsidies knowing that Congress is unlikely to change these domestic programs—which bring legislators political support

in exchange for agricultural support. Now, another deadline, April 30, has come and gone. I have not seen any sign that the indemnity has been paid.

This is how the United States runs an international shell game, a scam on the poor. As an Oxfam report recently noted, "The chances of a trade deal being done this year that helps developing countries are looking increasingly slim. Aggressive demands by rich countries mean that, far from being able to pursue reforms that will lift people out of poverty, poor countries are having to engage in damage limitation."

## Losing Their Souls

IN HONG KONG THIS PAST WINTER, instead of acting on *domestic subsidies*, an agreement was made to eliminate *export subsidies* (only 1 percent of the total subsidies given out by the thirty richest countries) by the year 2013. Let the laborers go seven more years and then we will pay them a tiny portion of their earnings.

As Indian commentator Ashok B Sharma put it last May in "Rich Play, Divide & Rule in WTO," in the *Farm Front* column:

The focus of negotiations in WTO has now shifted to gaining more market access in the Third World. Attempts are being made by the developed bloc to render ineffective whatever available mechanisms are there for developing countries to protect their farm sector.

The issues of drastic cuts in high farm subsidies and tariff barriers of the rich countries have receded to the background. The U.S. has taken the lead in launching a frontal attack on the developing countries' attempt to protect their farm sector.

Often the U.S. government and our media attempt to put the blame for negotiating failures on the EU—which has equally duplicitous policies. However, we are responsible for our own government's ethical standards. As Abraham Joshua Heschel famously put it (in regard to opposing the Vietnam war) "All are responsible although only some are guilty."

When we wonder "why are *they* angry at us" we need to understand reasons that are rarely discussed in the U.S. media (although known by peasants the world-over). It's not so much that they are jealous of our prosperity as that they are outraged at our abuses of power. Farmers are laboring around the world, in cotton fields, rice paddies, and stands of wheat; they and their families often go to bed hungry. Sometimes, it's not just over the night that they go without their just due; sometimes it seems we will never get around to paying them at all. ■

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*Phil Bereano recently retired from the University of Washington, working on technologies and public policies. He continues to do international lobbying and advocacy around issues of genetically engineered organisms, specifically concerning trade, protection of the environment and human health, democratic values and processes, patenting, and international equity. He has been a registered delegate at four of the last five WTO major meetings, called "Ministerials" in Geneva, Seattle, Cancun, and Hong Kong.*

(continued from page 28) of the global justice direct action organizers. "We're delighted to be marching together tomorrow," he told us, as wild cheers arose from his exhausted listeners. "I stand with you here in solidarity."

## Recovering the little "d" in democracy

IN A REAL SENSE, the global justice movement is recovering the power of democracy—not the George Bush flag-waving America-knows-best democracy we hear all too much about, but the old-fashioned rule of the people, by the people, for the people democracy that motivated America's most radical founders.

Protest movements around the world demonstrate that the power of a people united around a cause can prevail. In September of 1999, in response to the World Bank's aggressive campaign for the privatization of state-run enterprises, Bolivia leased the water management of its third largest city, Cochabamba, to Aguas del Tunari, an affiliate of San Francisco-based construction transnational Bechtel. This came out of a closed-door process, where Bechtel was the sole bidder. Aguas del Tunari negotiated a 16 percent rate of return on the contract. Coupled with the \$30 million debt inherited from the previous enterprise—a debt, incidentally, that approximately amounts to the revenues Bechtel earns in *half a day*—this meant the doubling of water rates for Cochabambinos (a conservative estimate: there are instances where prices jumped by as much as 200 percent, and this among one of the poorest populations in the world).

Before the rate hikes took effect, a citizens' movement known as La Coordinadora began coalescing. As Jim Shultz writes in "The Water Is Ours, Dammit!" from *We are Everywhere*, an anthology of essays written by activists, La Coordinadora consisted of factory workers, irrigators, farmers, environmental groups, economists, progressive members of Congress, and a broad grassroots base. Over the next few months, thousands of Cochabambinos took to the streets in a series of strikes. The government responded with arms and tear gas. After hundreds of injuries and a death, the President realized that Cochabamba would not give in. He cancelled the contract. Bechtel sued the people of Bolivia, the poorest country in Latin America, for \$25 million, but dropped the suit in January of this year, following a global outcry over their actions. The victory in Cochabamba resonated around the world, lending hope to all those organizing in resistance to the suffocating policies of the IMF, World Bank, and WTO.

"The other great success of this movement is that we have lost our fear," proclaimed La Coordinadora. "We left our houses and our communities in order to talk among ourselves, in order to get to know one another, in order to learn to trust one another again. We occupied the streets and highways because we are their true owners.... For us, urban and rural workers, this is the true meaning of democracy: we decide and do, discuss and carry out. We risked our lives in order to complete what we proposed, that which we consider just. Democracy is the sovereignty of the people and that is what we have achieved."

## Protecting the Bandits

THE VALUES UNIFYING the global justice movement are the core values of a spiritual politics: prioritizing people over profits. In Lima, Peru, hundreds of activists from Latin America and beyond came to protest the 2004 meeting of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), which is a principal creditor for the debt of many Latin American countries—for example, it is responsible for 10 to 25 percent of Peru's debt, depending on who's counting—and thus it holds a great deal of power over these nations. The IDB meeting was held in the luxuriously-appointed chambers of Peru's Museo Nacional. Gazing at the police lines and the Museo towering far beyond, activist Juan Houghton, an organizer with the Organization of Colombian Indigenous Peoples, expressed what everyone was feeling: "This [the IDB] is not democracy," said Houghton, "This is protecting the bandits."

The bandits have been busy. In Ecuador, Texaco spent twenty years extracting oil from "Block 1" in the northern Amazon, with little thought for the environment or the indigenous peoples living on their ancestral lands. Block 1 now holds 300 miles of roads, 339 wells, 600 toxic waste pits, and 18,000 miles of seismic trails, cut to set explosives every hundred yards to sound for oil. Luis Yanza works for the Ecuadorean nonprofit Frente de Defensa de la Amazonia uniting farmers, human rights organizations, environmental groups, and communities in a lawsuit against ChevronTexaco. "People in Block 1 are sick," says Yanza. He is a small man, soft-spoken and reserved with me. "They are still drinking contaminated water. Their animals are dying. They cannot cultivate the land."

In Bhopal, India, just after midnight on December 3, 1984, forty metric tons of lethal methyl isocyanate leaked from a factory owned by the Union Carbide Corporation. None of the plant's safety systems were working, so no warning was sounded. White clouds enveloped Bhopal. People awoke to gas burning their eyes, noses, and mouths. They fled, vomiting, coughing up blood, losing control of their bowels. Some fell dead. Others were trampled. Hours later, thousands of dead bodies were strewn in the streets of Bhopal. In an out-of-court settlement in 1989, Union Carbide agreed to pay \$470 million for damages. Only a small part of this money actually went to the survivors. About a decade after the disaster, survivors received settlements that averaged \$580 each.

Bhopal and Block 1 are the kinds of stories that make headlines. They are tragedies of heinous proportions; but there are humbler tragedies that seldom make headlines, that are beyond the bounds of the mainstream media's stunted attention span. Six million children die every year as a result of hunger. According to the World Health Organization, 5,000 children die each day due to consuming water and food polluted with bacteria. According to UNESCO, over a billion people lack access to clean water, and 2.4 billion lack access to basic sanitation services.

Market rule is an example of the banality of evil. Yet, this evil is not simply the fault of the CEOs, or the speculators, or our leaders, although these people may play very powerful roles within the system. In a hoax, a man claiming to be a Dow representative stated, on the BBC, that the company had agreed to

clean up the Bhopal site and compensate Bhopal's victims. In twenty-three minutes, Dow's share price fell 4.2 percent—a loss of \$2 billion in market value. We must understand that Dow did not concede responsibility for Bhopal because doing so would have real market consequences: its share price would drop, it would lose investors, become less competitive, and perhaps go out of business—in which case thousands would lose their jobs. This is in no way an excuse for Dow not to assume responsibility. It is simply an illustration of how the system works.

In our participation within the market, each of us suspends a human and life-centered ethics for market ethics. We must recognize that we are the bandits too. Living in a globalized world, our actions have far wider consequences than even a decade or two ago. We buy products manufactured tens of thousands of miles away. We work in multinational conglomerates. Each of us is responsible for the existing system—but that is precisely what gives us the power to change it.

## The Fishnets Matter

OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE market system endows us with the ability to create change. Our actions within a globalized world wield global effects. Positive choices we make have far greater potential today than ever in human history. Recycling, buying organic and fair trade, supporting local businesses, voluntary simplicity, investing with socially and ecologically responsible companies: these may seem small, but when undertaken by many of us, their effects become immeasurable. Market rule is weakened by choices made in the interest of life instead of profit.

Many dismiss us global justice activists with our giant puppets, radical cheerleading, and odd costumes. But we make a difference. In September of 2003, the World Trade Organization ministerial in Cancun, Mexico collapsed when the poorest nations walked out on the talks, refusing to bend to pressure from the United States and the European Union to open markets yet further without any concessions on their part. "This meeting is over," said the Kenyan delegate, on the last day. "This is another Seattle." An email that circulated through activist inboxes read: "A woman from Swaziland turned to a colleague of mine and told him that the African countries could not have stood firm against the WTO, the U.S., and the EU if it had not been for the activists in and outside of the convention hall. She said that our actions, our words, our pressure—particularly as they reached the press—gave her and her fellow African nations the strength to take this historic stand."

There are countless ways to make a difference, to create the reality we desire, and each of us has a unique propensity to do so—in our own way, a way that feeds the soul, intrigues the mind, and prods the imagination like no other. Even if that means sometimes wearing fishnets. ■

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## SPIRITUALITY AND CULTURE

(continued from page 32) the failure of the people to adhere more strictly to old beliefs and values and behavior patterns. They want to do more of the same-old, but do it better. They want the "old time religion" and they find scapegoats aplenty: the economy would be all right if it weren't for unions, they argue; marriages would be all right if it weren't for feminism, and; the country would be fine if it weren't for liberalism. Or Blacks or Arabs or immigrants or Koreans or Khaddafi or Hussein or Gloria Steinem or whoever or whatever is the convenient scapegoat today.

In the fourth and final stage, Wallace points out, comes the emergence of a new world view and the restructuring of old institutions to enable it. But how do we get there?

In simpler societies, the leadership for this rebuilding of the society usually came from a single charismatic person: "And Moses intervened," Psalm 89 reminds us, "And you, O God, turned aside your destruction."

In more complex cultures, like our own, multiple spokespersons—many leaders, a chorus of voices—are needed to lead the people to new understandings about old values.

The role of these spiritual leaders is not to repudiate the older worldview entirely, but to shed new light on it so that it can be remembered that God's spirit always manifests itself in new ways to meet new needs.

Then, more flexible people begin to understand and experiment with the new consensus and cultural transformation—the movement from death to life—of an entire people begins to happen.

Finally, Wallace points out, it will not be the older generation, the spiritual wanderers who brought with them the old ideas, goals, values and designs from one desert to another, who will lead today's institutions—it will be the new generation!

As Wallace says, it will be the generation that "grew up with" the emerging insights, who never lived in the old world; who spent their life wandering in a social desert, and knew no other, who will come to maturity.

Then, the old institutions find themselves with new leadership. And the institutions are restructured. But that will happen only provided that they listen, if someone brings them up with the new questions and the new insights.

And how do we know it can happen?

Because in this country alone we have seen one generation withdraw their allegiance to a king; the next abolish slavery; and one after that regulate businesses; and the last empower laborers. And this one, now, is beginning to struggle for liberation, equality and survival.

"And Moses intervened," the psalm teaches, "and you turned aside your destruction." We need to intervene for the future of the whole human community of the globe.

What God saves, God saves through us. We need, in other words, to intervene for one another. We need a new worldview that puts the old one "in new light."

But how? And where will this "spirituality of contemplative co-creation," this progressive spirituality come from?

In what way can the spiritual leaders of our time help to build

this bridge from privatized piety to public moral responsibility?

I suggest that we must all begin again to look at the bases of social brokenness and see the spiritual link between the personal and the political. I'm suggesting that we look again at what ancients called the seven capital sins/signs of social brokenness, but this time on two levels: the level of the personal as well as the global. Remember with me: envy, pride, anger, lust, gluttony, sloth, covetousness.

Envy, for instance, on the personal level is certainly a lack of acceptance of self, which leads in its sinful form, to a rejection of others.

But globally, isn't this ethnocentrism as well? When we create and uphold criminal governments for our own good—such as in Iraq—rather than recognize the needs of the people of the country; when we impose our system and structures in return for trade, isn't that the failure to accept a thing for what it is?

Pride is, of course, the need to dominate and coerce others on the personal level. But on the global level isn't it also the mania for national superiority, for being "numero uno," for having the best of everything (e.g., strawberries in winter, whatever the cost to the pickers?).

Lust is clearly the exploitation of another for the sake of physical satisfaction.

We are beginning to recognize it when it's date rape or pornography. But is there yet enough conscience in us to also see lust as the national passion for the instantaneous gratification that justifies the exploitation of whole peoples so that we can have the cheap cash crops and conveniences we demand while raping their lands and looting their futures? Isn't it the exploitation that comes from lust that leads to the feminization of poverty and the loss of feminine resources and values in a world that is reeling from the institutionalization of masculine values? Two-thirds of minimum wage workers are single mothers with three children. Lust is child labor at 6 cents an hour: economic pedophilia.

Gluttony, the over consumption of food, leads to waste and bloatedness, and the misuse of resources on the personal level. But it is also surely at the base of the lack of distribution of surplus to the dying in Somalia and the destitute in Haiti.

Someone wrote of this culture: "We do not have a war on poverty; we have a war on poor people." And what are we religious people doing about it as we say our prayers and publish our theology papers, and repeat our rituals week after week?

We speak of covetousness as a lack of a sense of "enough" and we know that on the personal level that leads to the sinful brink of hoarding or an inordinate desire for unnecessary possessions. But what is the difference between that kind of covetousness and the demon that fuels militarism and the continual quest for superiority?

Anger we recognize as the cultivation of an eschatological sense of righteousness and judgment; of putting ourselves in the place of the patient justice of God. But what has happened to the national moral fiber when whatever evil we say of the other is counted as virtue? What about the sin of demonizing

our enemies, or our refusal to sign arms accords or submit to an international military tribunal?

We abhor sloth as its assumption that anyone has the right to live off the efforts of others as laziness and lack of responsibility.

But where is spiritual leadership in the building of a new worldview about the sinfulness of multinational corporations that live off the backs of the poor, that give unjust wages and benefits, that take the unequal treatment of women for granted, and absorb women's lives at lesser pay for the convenience of others, and then moralize about that kind of domestic servitude as "God's will" for us?

So we go on blindly in our search for goodness: we counsel and educate for individuality and autonomy and control and independence in a world that needs community and mutuality and cooperation interdependence and human responsibility and contemplative co-creation and spiritual progressives.

We build small shelters for the homeless and huge rockets to make people homeless. And we go to church. And we go to church. And we go to church.

Yet 70 percent of the respondents to a survey conducted by the Williamsburg Charter Foundation said that religion has a place in public life. Well, where is that public religion in private life supposed to come from if not from us?

When Jacob saw Joseph in Egypt, He said, "Now that I know that you live, I can die." And God said to Moses, "Stay where you are. Where you are is holy ground."

And an ancient people tell the story of a seeker who asked, "Before I follow you, tell me, Does your God work miracles?" And the master said, "It depends on what you call a miracle. Some people say that a miracle is when God does the will of the people. We say that a miracle is when people do the will of God."

Clearly, the role of the spiritual people today is like that of Jacob's: not to die until we have assured a dynamic and meaningful spirituality for the next generation.

It is like that of Moses: to recognize where we are as the ground of God's grace. It is certainly like that of the Sufi master, who enables the individual to see life differently so that God's miracles can happen in our time, so that the reign of God can finally come.

Templeton wrote, "If we were holier people, we would be angrier oftener." And the Chinese wrote, "Time changes nothing; People do."

My prayer is that we can summon up within ourselves the kind of holy anger that will finally do something to take this country back to its best and glorious self. ■

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*Sister Joan Chittister is an international lecturer and author on issues of justice, peace and equality, in both Church and society, especially for women. She is a member of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, Pennsylvania. She founded and is currently the executive director of Benetvision, a resource and research center for contemporary spirituality. Her thirty-five books include: The Tent of Abraham: stories of hope and peace for Jews, Christians and Muslims; The Rule of Benedict: Insights for the Ages; and Called to Question, a spiritual memoir.*

## ISRAEL'S NONSTRATEGY OF PEACE

(continued from page 52) into Palestinian cities in the West Bank and Gaza, and has never stopped to observe the Hamas-declared ceasefire, which purportedly began in February last year.

The ad hoc nature of these measures is evident from the way in which the notion of Disengagement emerged under Sharon and Olmert. When former Haifa Mayor Amram Mitzna formulated the Gaza Disengagement plan as part of the Labor Party's platform during the 2003 election campaign, Sharon and Olmert vehemently opposed it, calling it a defeatist program. Yet they adopted the very same plan one year later and reaped the electoral fruits of the Israeli public's support for it.

The realignment and the separation barrier in the West Bank are in fact reactionary government responses to grass roots pressure by Israeli citizens seeking some kind of alternative to maintaining the Occupation. Sharon and Olmert's failure to quell the Al Aqsa Intifada through military means forced them to yield to popular pressure and adopt the same plans they had rejected when offered by opposition leaders. At the same time, pressure from below was not enough to force them to devise a more comprehensive vision of the final contours of an Israeli-Palestinian state along the lines of the Geneva Accords or the Ayalon-Nusseibeh formulas—a vision that could offer the other side some ray of hope.

Even these minor steps to reduce the burdens of Occupation have been put to a severe test recently. The election of a Hamas government and the continued firing of Kassam rockets from the Gaza Strip into Israel, and the July attack by Lebanese Shi'ite organization Hizballah have raised skepticism within the Israeli government regarding the desirability of realignment. So far, the government's response to these events was strictly military in nature. The only political and economic measures taken by the Israeli government vis-à-vis the Palestinians was to tighten the economic pressure and use force in the hope of toppling a democratically-elected Palestinian government. Offering a meaningful political negotiation strategy is still not an option.

The Israelis love to say that the Palestinians need to have their own Ben Gurion type of leader, one who would be willing to risk civil war to realize the dream of independence by making painful concessions so that Palestinians could finally control their own destiny. This is certainly an important precondition for a more realistic Palestinian position in the context of peace negotiations. But the Israelis fail to look in the mirror. They need another Ben Gurion who would be willing and able to frame a comprehensive and sensible peace policy and run the domestic risks of carrying it out. Unless and until this happens, the Israeli non-strategy of peace will continue to exact Israeli and Palestinian sacrifices. ■

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*Zeev Maoz is professor of political science and director of the international relations program at the University of California, Davis. His recent book, Defending the Holy Land, critically evaluates Israeli security and foreign policy.*

## SHATNEZ AND CIVILIZATION

(continued from page 55) the secular state, this difference is crucial. Yet it is the erasure of that difference which characterizes the Jewish oppression of queers, who are regarded, halachically, as misbehaving straights.

Contrast the Jewish erasure with the ways in which other traditions have seen queerness as holy. Several Native American traditions believed that people we would now label as gay or lesbian actually possessed two spirits, one masculine and one feminine, and accorded them special significance in society. Some were medicine men (or women, or neither men nor women), some assumed gender roles different from their anatomical sex, some were shamans and warriors. Few were "virtually normal." Likewise the gender variant castes in India, or in the ancient Mediterranean. These histories may not be familiar to us—no one learns their gay heritage at Sunday schools and Seders—but they are there, recorded in histories oral and written, as well as in the prohibitions of the orthodox.

Ironically, this sacred difference of "third-gendered" people derived from their transcendence (or transgression) of distinction. Ordinary life is the place of distinctions; thus those who transcend distinctions likewise transcend ordinary life. As such, in their defiance of conventional boundaries, the gender-variant shamans of the Plains Indians (including Omaha, Sioux, Iban, and Hidatsa people) and Siberia (including the Chukchi, Yakut, and Koryak tribes), the *basir* of Borneo, the male *isangoma* of the Zulu were seen to be in closer contact with the "other dimension"—that of the spiritual.

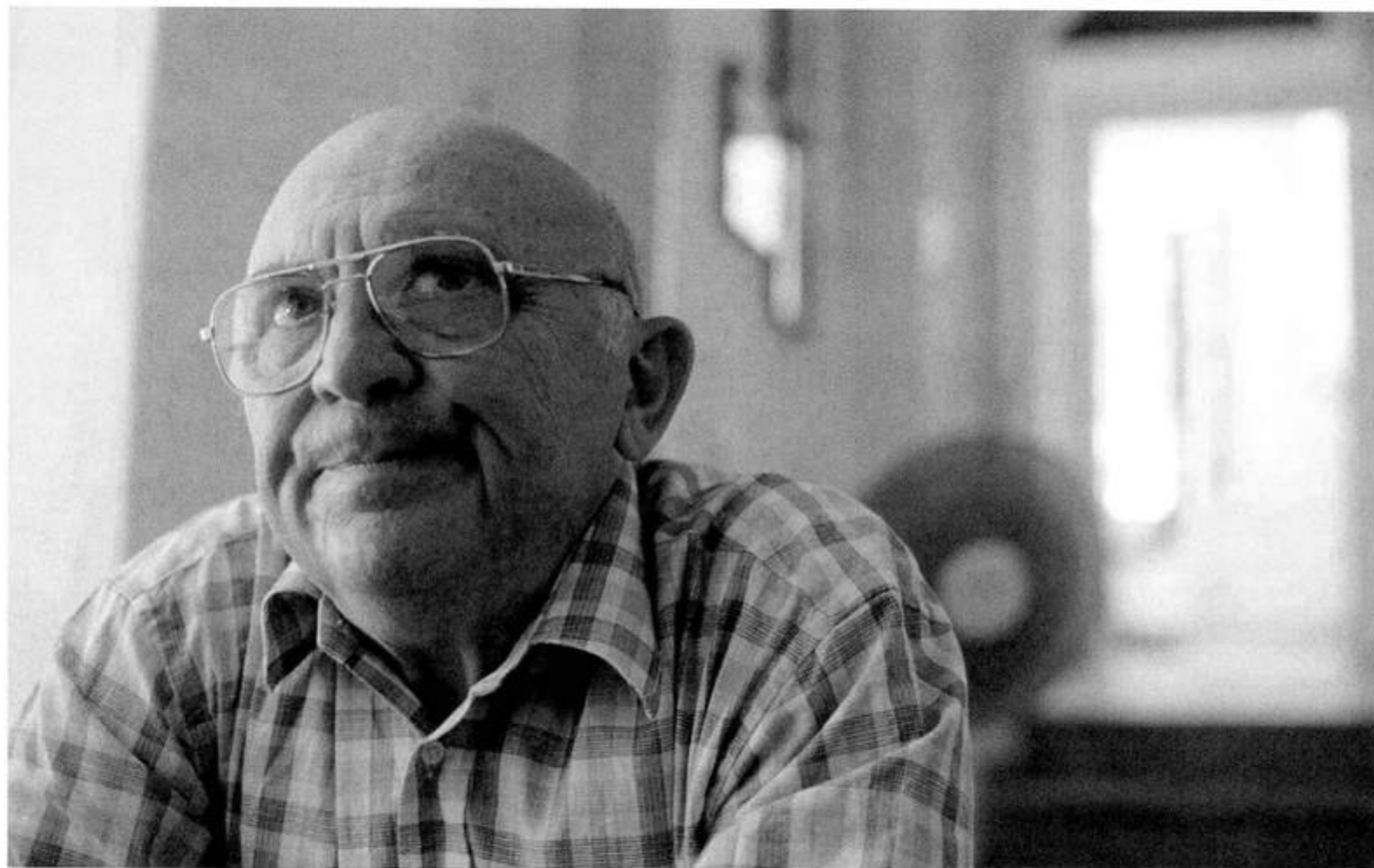
The Jewish tradition, however, doesn't have anything close to this transgressive outsider/insider. Jewish tradition prefers to domesticate the liminal, to find a place for it within ordered society, like the Bacchae buried beneath Athens in Euripides. We honor not the shaman in the wilderness (queer or otherwise) but the *ba'al habayit* at home with his family. The Jewish saint lives in the world, not beyond it. (Even the wanderers of the Bible—Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and the rest—find their way back home eventually; the great exception to the rule, Elijah, is a supernatural—that is, super-human—figure.) So what is the place of the boundary-crosser within even a radically inclusive Jewish community, if it is at all to be worthy of the name?

In a sense, the answer to that question depends on how we conceive of Judaism itself. If "Judaism" means the normative practices of the rabbis, interpreting the Bible and explicating revelation for all, then the only option for Jewish queers other than to leave, is to assimilate, find space in traditional communities with textual readings like Rabbi Steve Greenberg's and others, and ask for inclusive liturgy in their synagogues and community centers. No small feat—but not revolution either.

If, on the other hand, one conceives of "Judaism" as describing the practices of the Jewish people—*describing*, not *prescribing*—then the agenda suddenly shifts. Now the question becomes not how gays can be accepted into the same Jewish

# Culture

BOOKS | FILM | MUSIC



## Silence is the Highest Language

*An Interview with Aharon Appelfeld* BY BEN NAPARSTEK

**D**ON'T BELIEVE IN PREACHING," says Israeli writer Aharon Appelfeld. "I'm not a rabbi. I'm not a political leader." In a country whose foremost novelists—A. B. Yehoshua, David Grossman and Amos Oz—are also politically engaged essayists and commentators, Appelfeld is unique in refusing to fulfill the role of social critic.

More often discussed as a "Holocaust writer" than an "Israeli writer," Appelfeld is the author of forty works of fiction, most of which take place in Eastern Europe in the years immediately sur-

rounding the Holocaust. Yet he avoids depicting the camps specifically, lending his novels the ahistorical, universal quality of the dark parables of the Brothers Grimm. Regularly compared with fabulists such as Kafka and Borges, Appelfeld is often mentioned as a likely candidate for Israel's next Nobel Prize for Literature.

He first achieved international renown in 1980 with the English language publication of *Badenheim 1939*, which remains his best-known work. It depicts the frumpies of the bourgeois inhabitants of a

mythic Austrian resort town, who remain stubbornly blind to the encroaching realities of the Final Solution.

Appelfeld's most recent book, *The Story of a Life*, is his first directly autobiographical work. It unfolds as a set of fragmentary recollections rather than a conventional linear autobiography. Appelfeld offers shards of his memory of prewar childhood in Czernowitz, Romania and his years spent wandering through the Ukrainian forests as a fugitive from the Nazis, after his mother was killed and his father deported to a

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concentration camp when he was nine. The memoir follows Appelfeld as he arrives in Israel as a near mute and acquires the new language of Hebrew, in which he sets about becoming a writer.

Last January, I spent two hours with Appelfeld at his home in the Jerusalem suburb of Mevasseret Zion. At seventy-five, he is still a man of few words—a warm, fatherly figure, with a soft, deep voice, and wide, unblinking blue eyes. What follows is an edited transcript of our conversation.

**TIKKUN:** In a 1988 *New York Times* interview with Phillip Roth, you state: "I tried several times to write the 'story of my life' in the woods after I ran away from the camp. But all my efforts were in vain. The result was rather meager, an unconvincing imaginary tale. The things that are most true are easily falsified." Finally we have *The Story of a Life* (Schocken, 2005, trans. Aloma Halter). How did you finally manage to write convincingly about those years?

**AA:** Because I don't speak in chronological terms. My life was interrupted, so there is no continuity you can follow. My parents are only eight years of my life. But they are very important to me. So I have to mobilize my imagination. Imagination is sometimes more true than the truth. Imagination is the depth of your feelings. An Indian prince might give me a fortune because he likes my name. But is it something of my inner life?

**TIKKUN:** You write that the "cells of my body remember more than my mind."

**AA:** Physical matters are stronger than mind matters. If you have an experience—for instance, a terrible cold—your body will remember it forever. Cold is just an abstract word, but if it is in your body, it will always remain. If you have experienced hunger, your body will react to it more than your mind.

**TIKKUN:** You were reunited with your father after twenty years, but you don't write about that in *The Story of a Life*.

**AA:** Maybe one day. Now I'm dealing with something that was a miracle. You need another language (for that).

**TIKKUN:** What was your relationship with your father like from that point on?

**AA:** It was easy and it was complicated, because he had not seen me for twenty years. I was a grown up person. I'd finished university. I had begun to teach.

**TIKKUN:** Have you returned to your native city of Czernowitz?

**AA:** I returned five years ago. It's a different town. No more Jews there. It's a town of Ukrainians. When I lived there, 60 percent of the population was Jewish and most of them spoke German, my first language. I spoke a lot of languages.

**TIKKUN:** Talk about your decision to write in Hebrew rather than German.

**AA:** I was with my mother and father until I was eight. Then I was a motherless kid, and I was separated from my father. So actually I spoke a very poor, childish German. When I came to Israel, I spoke many languages, all badly—oral language, not written language. So Hebrew became—willingly, unwillingly—my adopted language.

**TIKKUN:** You were virtually mute after the war.

**AA:** During the war I tried not to speak. I'd been adopted by Ukrainian criminals, so the best thing was not to speak, but to listen, to observe. When you do not speak for three years, you get mute. I was able to speak, but in a very limited way. A word, two words. But not full sentences.

**TIKKUN:** How long did this last?

**AA:** Many years. Even today I have some difficulties.

**TIKKUN:** Do you see a relationship between the wordlessness of your wartime experiences and the spare nature of your prose?

**AA:** Yes, because I understood that

less is more. Speak less and you'll be less endangered. Language doesn't always reveal; language can be camouflage. Silence, actual silence—this is actually the highest language. You should be very careful with language, because there is a tendency to overload speech with words. Words can help you with systematic thinking. But when you're speaking about feelings, mostly it will not reveal the senses. I liked parts of [Amos Oz's *A Tale of Love and Darkness*] very much, but I thought that there were a lot of details that could have been taken out. Sometimes large epic books have a literary meaning, but you have always a feeling that they are overloaded.

**TIKKUN:** How do you respond to the micro-stories of Etgar Keret?

**AA:** It's not my way, because his literature is more experimental—"how does a man speak who has only one lip?"—I do not deal with experiments.

**TIKKUN:** Talk about your writing process.

**AA:** First you have a narrative and a melody that is a leitmotif. If you're following this leitmotif, you're speaking with melody. You're following that melody. According to the melody, you are changing. All of the arts are connected to music. It's the centre of every good painting, good writing.

**TIKKUN:** Do you listen to music when you write?

**AA:** No. You should be listening to the sentence.

**TIKKUN:** For many years you did all your writing in a particular coffeehouse.

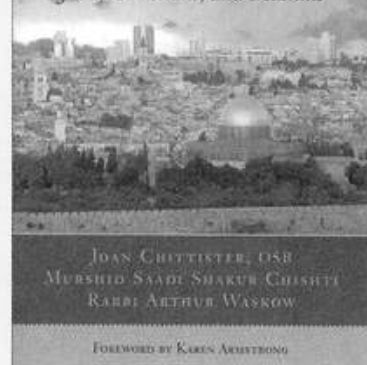
**AA:** Yes, in a coffeehouse in Jerusalem that doesn't exist any more. This was a coffeehouse of all immigrants who came to Israel. I could hear German, which I understood, Ukrainian, which I understood, Romanian, which I understood, Russian, which I understood. I could listen to all of these languages and see the body language of those immigrants.

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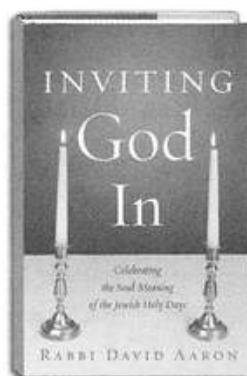
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RABBI DAVID AARON lives in Jerusalem with his wife and their seven children. He is the founder and dean of Israelight ([www.isralight.org](http://www.isralight.org)).



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**TIKKUN:** Do you write mostly at home now?

**AA:** 50 percent at home and 50 percent at the coffeehouse. But I begin my day at home, and end my day there.

**TIKKUN:** How much time do you devote to writing?

**AA:** Between five and six hours a day.

**TIKKUN:** Unlike other Israeli writers, such as Amos Oz, David Grossman and A. B. Yehoshua, you're not a politically engaged figure.

**AA:** A writer should cling to truth. Political language never goes to the truth. You have to compromise. You tend to see the world in white and black, to the left or right.

**TIKKUN:** Do you see a role for didactic fiction?

**AA:** No. I don't believe in didactics. Characters should be human beings. I don't believe in preaching. I'm not a rabbi. I'm not a political leader.

**TIKKUN:** Do you find a lot of Israeli fiction didactic?

**AA:** It's less so now, because Israel [has become] more of a normal society. In a normal society, politicians are politicians, preachers are preachers and a writer should be a writer. When you are speaking of Mozart or Bach, are you asking yourself "What party is Bach affiliated with?" Bach is music. It's less than politics, and it's more than politics.

**TIKKUN:** Your novels are often characterized as allegories and fables.

**AA:** They're not allegories and they're not fables. They're just stories. I'm writing about human beings. They are about real life: about pain, about loneliness.

**TIKKUN:** You rankle at the term "Holocaust writer."

**AA:** I was born into the Holocaust—I was a child—and the Holocaust is part of my body and soul. But because I was a child, I was also happy. I was afraid, true. I'd lost my parents. But the memory of a child is a small memory. He continues to

go on. I'm not writing about the Holocaust. The Holocaust is gigantic. How can a writer write about the Holocaust? I can only write about individuals.

**TIKKUN:** Most of your novels are set in the period either immediately before or after the Holocaust.

**AA:** In the periphery, still, there is life. People love. People hate. They eat. But when you come into a concentration camp, after week or two you are reduced to less than a human being. So I didn't deal in this particular area, which is the heart of the Holocaust, because there, you are a shadow of yourself. In the heart, you cannot argue. There is no reason anymore. The hunger reduces you to an animal.

**TIKKUN:** How do you respond to the works of survivor-writers like Imre Kertész and Primo Levi that focus on this "heart"?

**AA:** They were a bit older than I during the Holocaust. They absorbed the naked facts more strongly. I was a child. Therefore I'm speaking a different language.

**TIKKUN:** Have Israeli attitudes toward your novels changed as Israel's memory of the Holocaust has evolved?

**AA:** Yes, because people came to understand that every third person in Israel is a Holocaust survivor. Survivors' children are also survivors, because their parents transmitted to them what happened during the Holocaust. So a lot of people who came through a very tough Zionist idea—"Forget the Holocaust!"; "Forget the Jewishness!"; "Be normal!"—suddenly discovered that their parents were in the Holocaust, [and that] their grandparents were in the Holocaust. So when young people want to know something about what happened (not in historical terms) they come to my books.

**TIKKUN:** Do the responses of the second and third generation survivors to your books differ significantly to those of the first generation?

**AA:** At the beginning, survivors were

very afraid of my work because they felt that I was disclosing something about their inner world. They dismissed it for not being evidence, but fiction. They used to say about the Holocaust—"there cannot be fiction, only testimony."

**TIKKUN:** Did the injunction by your fellow Jews to be a typical "Israeli" and forget your Jewishness feel like a betrayal?

**AA:** I was a child when I came to Israel. I wanted to be a man. I wanted to be a soldier. I wanted to take part in the life here. It took me years to understand who I am. For many years, I was disoriented. The Holocaust made me a Jew and understand that I'm Jewish. I saw young Israelis in the kibbutz and thought, "They are the real men, I should be like them." But then I realized that a lot of my soul belonged to Europe. When I came here in the Forties and early Fifties Israel was anti-Jewish—"No more spiritual matters! No more religious matters! Be normal!" I could not accept this because this was not I.

**TIKKUN:** Much of your earlier work—none of which is available in English—focused on the Israeli experience. Later you made a transition to writing novels set in Europe in the years surrounding the Holocaust.

**AA:** When I came to Israel, I was writing mainly about people who survived the Holocaust and immigrated to Israel. Their lives are divided into two parts, and they cannot get rid of their memories. Then there was a turning point when I began to write books about my parents in order to understand their assimilation. I've written some books about my grandparents too, who were still believers, living in the Carpathians. But I began with the survivors, because I was a survivor, trying to see what was around me.

**TIKKUN:** You tend to brush out the historical background of your novels. In *Badenheim 1939*, for instance, you never mention the date of 1939 or the Nazis.

**AA:** The reader will assume that there was a Hitler who wanted to kill all

the Jews. I'm not dealing with history. I'm dealing with an idea. The idea of *Badenheim* is self-delusion. Around you there is a sanitary department and they are preparing to trap you. But you're so absorbed with music, with friends, so you're not seeing what's going on around you.

**TIKKUN:** Is that how you recall the time prior to the Shoah?

**AA:** There was a bit of that. In 1935, I was four years old. All around us was a trap. But an assimilated Jew couldn't see it. He saw himself as European. I still remember my father saying, "Hitler is an episode."

**TIKKUN:** Many novelists who write about historical atrocities talk about being motivated by a desire to speak for those who have been rendered voiceless by history. You, on the other hand, place a high premium on silence, on reticence.

**AA:** I never saw myself as someone who could take all the six million dead Jews on my shoulders and say, "I'm your voice." There were many who felt that they are the six million. Ka-Tzetnik—there are other writers, why name them?

## [BOOKS]

# The Yiddishe Zippy?

BY PAUL BUHLE



TYPE Z PERSONALITY, by Bill Griffith. Fantagraphics Books, 2006

FANS IN DOZENS OF daily papers know *Zippy the Pinhead* as the ultimate postmodern comic strip, with distaff observations from talking roadside icons, nostalgic reflections on vanishing vernacular architecture from the 1920s–40s, and a general glimpse of consumer madness viewed with a kind of logic eerily similar to, but a lot smarter than, our keenest op-ed writers. It may not be a truism, but generally

I felt that this was pretentious, without modesty. You should do what a person can do.

**TIKKUN:** For many years you were better known abroad than in Israel.

**AA:** There was a society—a leadership—that wanted to create a new nation. But people began to see things in more than just ideological terms. In the Eighties, it was clear that Israel was no more than its occupants. It's a society of people who are joyful, who experience pain. Some of them are lonely, and some of them are rich.

**TIKKUN:** It's often remarked that you return to the same basic story, just examining it from different angles.

**AA:** Every writer has a leitmotif. I cannot write about everything. I can only write about my experiences. And they are experiences that I try to see from different angles. ■

*Ben Naparstek is a literary journalist, broadcaster, and law/English student at the University of Melbourne. He writes for the Financial Times, the Sydney Morning Herald, and the Jerusalem Post.*

only those fully imbued with mass culture can make a penetrating and downright hilarious critique of the omnipresent subject. Snobs just don't get it.

Artist Bill Griffith has long been a prophet and editor-savant of underground comics. He's also a Levittown, Long Island escapee whose mother was a minor science fiction writer. Griffith grew up into a "Jewishness" that resonated with any self-conscious avant-gardist around New York who made bitter jokes about the malls and sprawl. (He later married fellow comic artist Diane Newman, which helped, too.) When Griffith abandoned his art school

self-identification as an abstractionist and headed for post-Summer of Love San Francisco, he had already developed the vernacular sensibility that he needed. Mister Toad, a fast-talking Ernie Bilko character, and Zippy, whose perceptions captured the “Zen of Stupidity,” were practically walking, breathing Bay Area characters by 1972.

A few years later, the underground comics scene was rapidly falling apart. “Head shops” that sold dope paraphernalia as well as comics were being shut down by the cops, a plethora of inept comics became a drag on the quality material, and the whole Sixties counterculture was in sad shape. At that improbable moment, Griffith and Art Spiegelman launched *Arcade*, the grandest art anthology of satirical American comics since *Mad Comics* in the early 1950s, and arguably the grandest to date. *Arcade* managed seven glorious issues before it folded. Spiegelman himself followed with *RAW Magazine*, a more European-minded and self-consciously art-world publication, which struggled through ten years before disappearing. When the smoke had cleared in the mid-1990s, R. Crumb, Art Spiegelman, and Griffith were practically the only ones among the generation of underground comic artists who were making a living with their art. Griffith did it by going at it daily, producing at a ravenous pace that would be murderous to most talent.

The center of alternative comics gravity, in the meantime, shifted eastward to New York. Dozens of younger comic artists began emerging; today, it seems the time has finally come for comics to be taken seriously as an art form. Too easily we forget how much the medium owes to the small handful who stuck it out and brought the younger artists along.

*Type Z* is a year's worth of *Zippy* dailies, some of the center pages delightfully in color, the rest in familiar form. Rather than becoming tedious through repetition, they grow stronger in close proximity to each other. Giant muffler men, animated concrete donuts, talking hands, and above all the doggie of San

Francisco's Doggie Diner that Griffith (before moving back East) saved from the wrecker's ball, are all wiser and wittier than, say, Thomas Friedman or the still creepier David Brooks. They understand Marx's theory of commodity fetishism because they *are* commodity fetishes. Zippy and a small cast of fellow lunatics (often including Griffith himself) are bemused and befuddled but never the sneering savants of the elite or the phony populists of Fox News and the talk shows.

Some close readers say—and they're

not far wrong—that 9/11 had a devastating effect on Zippy, pretty much as it had on us all. Humor seemed hard to come by for a good while. Griffith the artist, Griffith the humorist, Griffith the bearer of the world-old ironies that Yiddish literary comics once brought to bear, is back in form. That's good: we need him now more than ever. ■

Founder and publisher of *Radical America*, “an SDS journal of American Revolution,” Paul Buhle teaches at Brown.

## [BOOKS]

# God as a Verb

BY RAMI SHAPIRO



**JEWISH WITH FEELING**, a Guide to Meaningful Jewish Practice, by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi with Joel Segel. Riverhead Books, NY, 2005

THE JEWISH SECTION in the Nashville Border's bookstore is not heavily trafficked. So when I see someone browsing the shelves I often strike up a conversation. This afternoon I watched as a twenty-something young man picked up a copy of *Jewish With Feeling* by Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Joel Segel. I had watched him pick up a number of books, flip through a few pages, and return the book to the shelf. But when he flipped through the opening chapter of Reb Zalman's new book he slowed down, leaned against the ladder that was propped up over the Islamic section, and read a few pages.

"It's the theology, stupid," he said to no one in particular.

"Excuse me?" I said, pretending he had said this to me.

"Oh, sorry, man. I was just thinking out loud."

"It's the theology, stupid?" I said.

"Yeah," he said. "You know James Carville's line to the 1996 Clinton campaign, *It's the economy, stupid*. I think

when it comes to Jewish books the key thing is the theology. Do they deal with the idea of God in a way that makes sense to me, or not. To me it is all about God."

"Me too," I said, and introduced myself. He told me his name was Stephen and that he was an undergrad at Vanderbilt majoring in "I'm not sure yet." He then grew silent, shifted his gaze back to the bookshelf where he had picked up *Jewish With Feeling*, and, pointing to several of my books, asked, "Is this you?"

"I wrote them," I said. "I noticed that you even picked up one of them, but didn't read it."

The boy blushed. "Yeah, I am looking for something specific."

"It's the theology, stupid," I said.

"It is," he said. "And I think this guy gets it."

This guy was Reb Zalman. Born Meshullam Zalman HaKohen Schachter on August 17, 1924 in Zholkiew, Poland, Reb Zalman was raised in Vienna. His father, a liberal Belzer Hasid, trained Zalman in both Zionist and Orthodox Judaism. In 1938 his family fled the Nazis, moving through Belgium, France, North Africa, and the Caribbean, before settling in New York in 1941. During his time in Belgium, Reb Zalman associated with Hasidim of the CHaBaD Lubavitch school, and

he enrolled in their yeshiva in New York, from which he received rabbinic ordination in 1947. Reb Zalman continued his studies, earning a Master of Arts degree in the Psychology of Religion from Boston University in 1956, and a Doctor of Hebrew Letters from Hebrew Union College in 1968.

I invited Stephen to the café for tea, and we talked about Reb Zalman's vision of Judaism and his founding of the Renewal Movement, which brought us back to this book.

"It seems to me," Stephen said, "that God has taken a backseat in Judaism for two thousand years. It is all about Talmud, study, and mitzvot. That is why *Jewish with Feeling* caught my eye; Reb Zalman spends a third of the book talking about God."

"I think you're right," I said. "Early Judaism was God-centered, as was prophetic Judaism. But priestly and rabbinic Judaisms substituted Temple and Talmud for God, respectively. As long as the Temple stood, this was not a problem; when it fell in 70 CE, the people still had the rabbis and their Talmud to lean on. Two thousand years later, however, the authority of the Talmud is crumbling."

"The rabbis claimed that the Oral Law came from God," Stephen said, "but we know that isn't true. They invented it. It was a necessary invention given the needs of the people at the time, but once you admit that rabbis rather than God wrote it, its authority collapses."

"Maybe," I said, "its authority shifts more than collapses. It shifts from God to history, from commandments to community. You do what the Talmud teaches not because God wants it but because the community requires it. The community took the place of God, but it can do so no longer."

"I know I feel that way," Stephen said. "I mean I can't let the group dictate my behavior, but I don't know why."

"Because you are an American," I said. "America is rooted in the revolution of the sovereign self: the individual rather than the community is the ultimate authority, especially in matters of religion and spirituality. You decide

what is true for you regardless of history or theology."

"Yeah, right! I mean it sounds a bit weird, but it is true: regardless of what my rabbi says, I decide how I am going to be Jewish, or even if I am going to be Jewish. But I can't make it up all by myself. That is why I look for books to help me."

Judaism is just beginning to come to grips with Americans like Stephen. American Reform Judaism was, in its early years, a true American Judaism. The individual determined the extent of his or her observance. Today Reform is retreating from its own radicalism. Given its history, however, it cannot take refuge in the Talmud and the Talmud's God, both of which it rejects. Instead, liberal Judaism appeals to neo-tribalism: keep kosher because this is what Jews do.

The fact is, however, that most Jews don't keep kosher. If Judaism were really about what Jews do, our dietary laws would revolve more around Chinese food than kashrut.

Nor can I, like my young friend Stephen, believe that theology can be subsumed under sociology. I grew up with the neo-tribalist idea that Judaism was God's religion. God, no less than my father, put on *tefillin* every morning. God, no less than we, prayed. God, no less than I, albeit far more fluently, spoke Hebrew. God was a Jew, and an Orthodox Jew at that.

I can't believe that anymore either.

For me, Judaism is a way to God—a way, and not *the* way—and to the extent to which it works for me I will follow it. But not exclusively. If Sufi Zikhr leads to God, I will do that as well. If sitting cross-legged and counting my breath or contemplating my *koan* or chanting my *mantram* also leads to Absolute Reality present in, with, and as everyday reality I will do that as well. I will follow the whim of my soul rather than the will of my community. I will dance from one divine encounter to another and never set down roots in any one tradition. I will be a spiritual dilettante.

I am obsessed with God and dabble

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in mitzvot when it suits me. And therein lies the danger of post-tribal Judaism. It can become a religion of dabblers.

This is where the Copernican revolution of Reb Zalman's theology is most clear. Just as Copernicus proved that the Earth circles the sun rather than the sun circling the Earth, Reb Zalman's theology has Judaism circling God rather than God circling Judaism; instead of neo-tribalism or academic theology, he offers a heartfelt and heart-opening theology rooted in his personal encounters with God.

Reb Zalman offers a new way to understand God, and a new way to keep the mitzvot. He suggests that much of our difficulty with the word "God" is grammatical. "One problem with the word god is that god is a noun.... By defining "God" exclusively as a noun we "thingify" or objectify God in our minds, no matter how often we protest that God is free from all the properties of matter, beyond time and space, and so on....

"I have for many years encouraged my students to think of God as a verb. Imagining God in terms of action, of process, opens up new ways of connecting to the infinite. We can begin to imagine a "god-ding," a process that the universe is doing, has been doing, and will continue to do—at least on our scale of comprehension—forever."

Because God is a verb, Reb Zalman's God isn't Jewish. She may put on *tefillin*, but then goes on to say Her rosary, spin Her prayer wheel, repeat Her *mantram*, and recite Her Ninety-nine Names. And, if we are to play this out fully, may well spend a bit of eternity doubting Her own existence.

Reb Zalman's love of God in all forms lays the groundwork for a truly post-modern American Judaism. He writes in a time when Jews are hyphenated: Ju-Bus, Hin-Jews, Jew-fis—only Christianity still stands beyond the pale for most Jews, but that too will change as Jews reclaim Jesus as a favorite son, even as they deny him as God's Only Son.

Reb Zalman speaks to this hyphenated world and offers all Jews a way to plug into Judaism. He is not concerned with adhering to fixed forms; his Judaism is

not imitative of the past. He is concerned with reclaiming, reviving, and renewing Judaism as a living and therefore fluid, open, and changing path to God. It is God that matters, not Judaism, though I imagine that for Reb Zalman this claim insures Judaism's survival by keeping it a living path to the living God.

Stephen smiled, and I realized our

discussion had become a monologue.

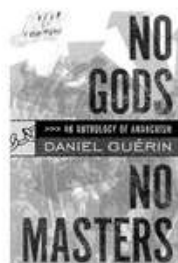
"It is a great book," I finished. "You should buy it and read it." He did. So should you. ■

*Rabbi Rami Shapiro is President of the One River Foundation and author of numerous books including The Sacred Art of Lovingkindness.*

## [BOOKS]

# Interrogating Anarchism

BY DAN SIERADSKI



**NO GODS NO MASTERS:**  
An Anthology of Anarchism,  
edited by Daniel Guérin,  
translated by Paul  
Sharkey. AK Press,  
2006 Edition

THERE IS ONLY SO much one can stand reading about European anti-Semites who wished to liberate the world by killing everyone who disagreed with them. Ignorant of the anti-Semitic conditions that forced Jews out of artisan trades and into mercantile professions (and with no small thanks due the self-hatred of Karl ben Herschel Mordechai Marx), Mikhail Bakunin once referred to the Jewish people as an "organic collective parasite," a sentiment echoed by Pierre Prodhoun, who once proclaimed Jews "a parasitic race, enemy of work, devoted to financial speculation and bank usury."

Perhaps I'm embittered by the fact that modern anarchists generally place the demand of assimilation only upon Jews. Or it could be that I'm a fake anarchist—as I've often been derided—preferring the post-Leftist anarchy of Crimethinc, the Curious George Brigade, and even the Luddism of John Zerzan to the insurrectionist rhetoric of Bakunin and terrorist apologia of the likes of Sasha Berkman. The truth of the matter is that I'd rather work in a sweatshop than sit through a reading of Emile

Pouget's dialectical materialist critique of trade unionism.

"The trade association," Pouget writes, "is, in fact, the only focal point which, in its very composition, reflects the aspirations by which the wage slave is driven: being the sole agglomeration of human beings that grows out of an absolute identity of interests, in that it derives its *raison d'être* from the form of production, upon which it models itself and of which it is merely the extension."

Oh, for chrissakes, someone throw a brick already!

That said, had one the stomach and the wherewithal to consume nearly 700 pages of often dull and sparsely inspirational writing from anarcho-hypocrites, one could not find a better resource than Daniel Guérin's *No Gods No Masters*.

A history lesson unto itself, Guérin's classic anthology of essays, letters, and speeches (released now for the first time as a single volume in paperback) reads, in some respects, like "A People's History of the USSR," deconstructing communist mythology through the eyes of socialism's truest revolutionaries. From the rugged individualism of Max Stirner to the disconcerting militancy of Buenaventura Durruti, *No Gods No Masters* offers countless challenges to Randian Objectivists who would falsely proclaim socialist economics incompatible with personal autonomy, while providing still-relevant critiques of both capitalism and

**A history lesson unto itself, Guerin's classic anthology of essays, letters, and speeches (released now for the first time as a single volume in paperback) reads, in some respects, like "A People's History of the USSR," deconstructing Communist mythology through the eyes of Socialism's truest revolutionaries.**

bourgeois social democracy. In effect, the anarchists featured herein have shown to hold no loyalties, smashing capitalism, communism, conservatism, and liberalism along with every other imaginable -ism, including anarchism itself.

But despite my cynicism, it is anarchy to which I aspire, and there is inspiration to be found in this work, as no political rhetorician can outdo classic anarchists in the realms of both ethos and pathos.

Putting aside my contempt for Bakunin, I would be hard-pressed to offer a finer articulation of the anarchist ethic than in his proclamation: "I am truly free only when all human beings around me, men and women alike, are equally free.... I only become truly free through the freedom of others, so that the greater the numbers of free men around me, and the more extensive and comprehensive their freedom, the more extensive and profound my freedom becomes." Word, as the kids say these days.

Likewise, for an observant Jewish anarchist, there are few secular sources that—even in their abhorrence of religion—provide unyielding affirmation of Jewish messianism. In the anarchist struggle for human liberation, one can see the blueprint of *geulah* (redemption) and hear the ring of "*v'ahavta l'rekha kamokha*" (love your fellow as yourself) in one's ears.

The twentieth-century Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta writes, "The liberty we seek, for ourselves and for others, is not that absolute, abstract, metaphysical liberty which, in practice, inevitably translates into oppression of the weak, but rather, real liberty, the achievable liberty represented by conscious community of interests and willing solidarity. We proclaim the maxim: 'Do what you will,' [because] we are convinced that in a harmonious society, in a society without

government and without property, 'each will want what will be his duty.'"

Malatesta's writing presents a striking parallel to chapter twelve of Rambam's *Hilchot Melachim*, wherein it is written: "The Sages and prophets did not yearn for the Messianic Era in order that [the Jewish people] rule over the entire world.... Rather, their aspiration was that [the Jewish people] be free [to involve themselves] in Torah and its wisdom, without anyone to oppress or disturb them, and thus be found worthy of life in the World to Come.... In that era there will be neither famine nor war,

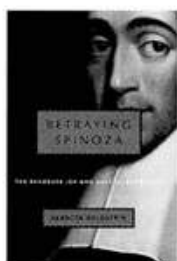
neither envy nor competition, for good things will flow in abundance and all the delights will be as freely available as dust.... 'For the world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the ocean bed.'"

In that, to "be filled with the knowledge of G-d" is to "want what will be [one's] duty." I don't see where we're disagreeing here. ■

*Daniel "Mobi" Sieradski is the editor-in-chief of Jewschool.com, the founder of Radical Torah.org, and the blogger behind Orthodox Anarchist.com.*

[BOOKS]

## An Example to Follow BY ERIC ELSHTAIN



**BETRAYING SPINOZA: The Renegade Jew Who Gave Us Modernity, by Rebecca Goldstein. Nextbook/Schocken, 2006**

ACCORDING TO LENNY Bruce's geographical definition of Jewishness, I was clearly Jewish between 1990 and 1994, when I lived in New York City (in contrast, anyone living in Butte, Bruce says, is "going to be goyish even if [that person's] Jewish"). Raised outside of the five boroughs, as the son of a "lapsed" Jew and secular Lutheran, I could make no Orthodox claim to be Jewish. But I often *felt* Jewish—and the category I decided for myself as a college student was "cultural Jew." I still can't quite say what that category means except that under its auspices Bob Dylan was a Jew, even when he was Christian. Saying I was "a

Jew" just seemed right to me—somehow I'd picked it up, like a kind of Lamarckian trait.

I was brought back to this question of identity while reading Rebecca Goldstein's graceful ode to Spinoza: *Betraying Spinoza: The Renegade Jew Who Gave Us Modernity*. The centerpiece of the book, the chapter titled "Identity Crisis," sets Spinoza's biography in the midst of anti-Semitism and intellectual and theological debates among Jews themselves. Goldstein fleshes out the history of the *Marranos* (crypto-Jews), *Conversos*, and, among other figures, the Rabbis Morteria and Aboab, whose seventeenth-century debates pitted rationalistic and classically rabbinic Judaism against an esoteric, kabbalistic approach to the Jewish faith. By providing us with this historical context, Goldstein makes it possible to more fully understand Spinoza's own excommunication from

the Jewish community of Amsterdam for his criticisms of Judaism, and why they were considered heretical.

Indeed, with the deft weft of a novelist, *Betraying Spinoza* takes us through the harrowing and fascinating history of Sephardic Jewry from the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries. Goldstein's retelling of the tragic case of Uriel da Costa—another “renegade Jew” who was eventually “made to lie down across the threshold [of the Portuguese synagogue in Amsterdam] so that every member of the congregation could tread on his prone figure” as punishment for his “heretical” views—helps set Spinoza's own excommunication from Amsterdam's Jewish community in a remarkably new light, and is almost as compelling a story as that of Spinoza.

Equally compelling is Goldstein's way with complex philosophical ideas. For example, “is-ought gaps” and “the Presumption of Reason” are brought forward with the care and lack of condescension of a generous professor eager to make Spinoza's thought accessible to those without a background in philosophy. By showing us the man behind the philosophy, Goldstein frees us, as readers, to take up the necessary task of understanding the philosopher, even if by questioning the legitimacy of Spinoza's work.

This gets to the heart of Goldstein's undertaking, which she poses as a series of questions: “What is it to be Jewish? Is it a matter of creed, of culture, of family or blood—or, as we would not put it, of genes? Just what sort of an attribute is being Jewish, and how significant is it in constituting the personal identity of those who are Jews?” For Goldstein, Jewishness comes down to the question of what it means to be a morally self-conscious individual.

Throughout *Betraying Spinoza*, Goldstein makes much of what she presumes to be the philosopher's honoring *derekh eretz*—respect for parents and teachers—despite his alienation from Amsterdam's Jewish community. From this, along with some provocative tidbits from Spinoza's writing and letters, the

author discerns a highly moral and kind individual whose love of objectivity perhaps came from his denial of “such a thing as a Jewish core.”

With perhaps a little sleight of hand, Goldstein suggests that if there is a core to deny, it must still be definitional. “For what can be more characteristic of a Jewish thinker,” she states, “than to use the Jewish experience [even if, or especially if, that experience includes being exiled by the Jewish community the thinker lives in] as a conduit to universality?” ■

*Eric Elshatn's poetry and reviews have been published in many journals; he is the editor Beard of Bees Press, a poetry chapbook e-press (www.beardofbees.com).*

## [BOOKS]

# Capsule Reviews



**THE NIMROD FLIPOUT**, by Etgar Keret. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 2006

THE COVER OF ETGAR Keret's new short story collection, *The Nimrod Flipout*, depicts a mid-

dle-aged Israeli man in a pink bunny suit. With a smoking shotgun in hand and the shy, apprehensive expression of a child who has just broken an expensive vase, he surveys a field of what looks like dead penguins. Although this scene is not contained in the book, it's hard to imagine a better representation of the strange world his characters inhabit.

In short, uncanny, and often hilarious bursts, Etgar Keret taps into the profound existential absurdity of being Israeli, of waking up every morning in a tiny, battle-torn Jewish state on the edge of the Eastern Mediterranean, of going to work, eating sunflower seeds, and watching TV, all the while wondering, “When will I be blown up?” In the process of excavating this particularly Israeli truth, Keret also unearths the

profound existential absurdity of life in the early twenty-first century, of being alive at all.

But in spite of all this philosophizing, Keret's characters are regular guys: hummus-eating, weed-smoking schlumps, who happen to have stumbled into a Keretian wormhole. There's the guy whose girlfriend turns into “a heavy, hairy man, with no neck, with a gold ring on his pinkie”; the prepubescent boy whose growth spurt causes his parents to shrink; the recently-retired businessman whose fish tells him to leave the country; and the guy who becomes fabulously rich and famous by inventing “olive-filled olives... an olive without a pit, filled with another olive.”

Even in translation, Keret's prose snaps, crackles, and pops. His particular forte is the languid one-liner that swings around and hits you in the back of the head, the curious description that shines a harsh dentist's light on our presuppositions. Although his stories are undeniably concerned with the exigencies of life on the verge of being blown up, the true engine of Keret's writing is the human heart in conflict with itself. All this and a guy in pink bunny drag. What more do you want? —Michael Lukas



**A MATTER OF OPINION**, by Victor S. Navasky. Picador, 2006 (paperback edition)

THE NATION WAS founded in 1865, pledging to “apply reason, logic, criticism, moral criticism, to the key problems of the day,” and from the start the publication lost nearly \$5,000 a month. When Victor Navasky—an author and former editor with the *New York Times Magazine*—joined the weekly as editor in 1978, it was losing \$125,000 a year. In 1995, when *The Nation* was losing \$500,000 per year, he orchestrated its purchase from billionaire Arthur Carter and took on the role of publisher. With Editor Katrina vanden Heuvel and President Teresa Stack, Navasky led *The Nation* to the brink of

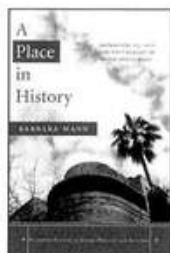
solvency and peak in circulation, if not necessarily its greatest influence.

"It used to be said that book publishing was a gentleman's profession," writes Navasky in his memoir *A Matter of Opinion*. "After sixteen years editing *The Nation*, I could see why nobody ever said that about publishing journals of opinion."

While *A Matter of Opinion* is the rough-and-tumble story of *The Nation* under Navasky's mercurial leadership, it is also an extended meditation on the role of the stand-alone magazine of opinion. Is it any good? For anyone interested in the history, practice, and theory of independent publishing, *A Matter of Opinion* is essential. While Navasky covers *The Nation's* role in all the big fights of his time, from the Iran hostage crisis to 9/11 to the invasion of Iraq, he also delves into the financial nuts-and-bolts of publishing a stand-alone periodical in an age of media consolidation, and makes a convincing case for its ongoing viability.

*The Nation*, Navasky writes, "has survived because its goal was the opposite of the goal of most small-business men and women." They aim for "a liquidity event, an IPO, an initial public offering." *The Nation*, meanwhile, "is a cause more than a business" and survives on the strength of its passion and ideas. If you can look past Navasky's compulsive self-regard and name-dropping (the forgivable hazards of any memoir) you'll find a witty and meandering handbook on publishing as a cause and a leap of faith.

—Jeremy Smith



**A PLACE IN HISTORY:**  
Modernism, Tel Aviv, and  
the Creation of Jewish  
Urban Space, by Barbara  
Mann, Stanford  
University Press, 2006

LAST SPRING, LONDON'S Victoria & Albert Museum hosted a popular exhibit on Modernism from 1914 to 1949. Although it did not claim to be comprehensive, its geographical range was extremely broad. There wasn't, however, a single reference to Tel Aviv—

which arguably could be described as the world's "first" or "most" modern city, as Joachim Schlör details in his superb and lavishly illustrated book, *Tel Aviv: From Dream to City* (1999). Those wishing to further explore the relationships between Tel Aviv and the "modern" will appreciate *A Place in History*, a fascinating study by Barbara Mann, Associate Professor of Jewish Literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Focusing on discrete aspects of Tel Aviv and its unique obsession with its history, almost from its inception, Mann deftly weaves poetry, literature, journalism, art, photography, maps, interviews, and archival sources into her account. In a particularly evocative chapter she juxtaposes the seldom visited but highly significant Trumpeldor Cemetery in contrast to the Workman's Circle in New York and the (existing) Okopowa Cemetery of Warsaw—as well as with the Abdel Nabi, "a Moslem cemetery built in roughly same area as the Trumpeldor Cemetery, and upon which the Tel Aviv Hilton now stands." As Mann excavates Rothschild Boulevard, we learn that "Eclecticism, the dominant architectural style in Tel Aviv in the 1920s, was more a search for a style than an actual school."

Despite its preeminence as "the Hebrew city," Yiddish—while vigorously attacked by Israelis—"remained a marker of Tel Aviv's familiarity and intimacy." Mann discerns the "ongoing tension" between its "historical center and its margins" as possibly "the source of Tel Avivians' notorious nostalgia, even today, for the long-lost Tel Aviv of last year or even last week." Mann brilliantly succeeds in capturing a city riddled with contradictions and "competing visions"—reverberating between the profane and the sacred, beauty and "crass tastelessness." While her love for Tel Aviv is palpable, Mann maintains a critical distance from her subject, which assures *A Place in History* its own place as an authoritative guide to the complex textualities of Israel's largest urban area.

—Michael Berkowitz

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**F**ORTY-FIVE YEAR OLD ANAT Zuria is one of the most compelling documentary film directors to have emerged in Israel in recent years. Raised in a secular home in Ramat Hasharon, she adopted an observant lifestyle following her marriage to an Orthodox man. After attending the Midrasha Art School in Ramat Hasharon, she graduated in 1999 from the Maale School of Television, Film, and the Arts, an institute for religious students.

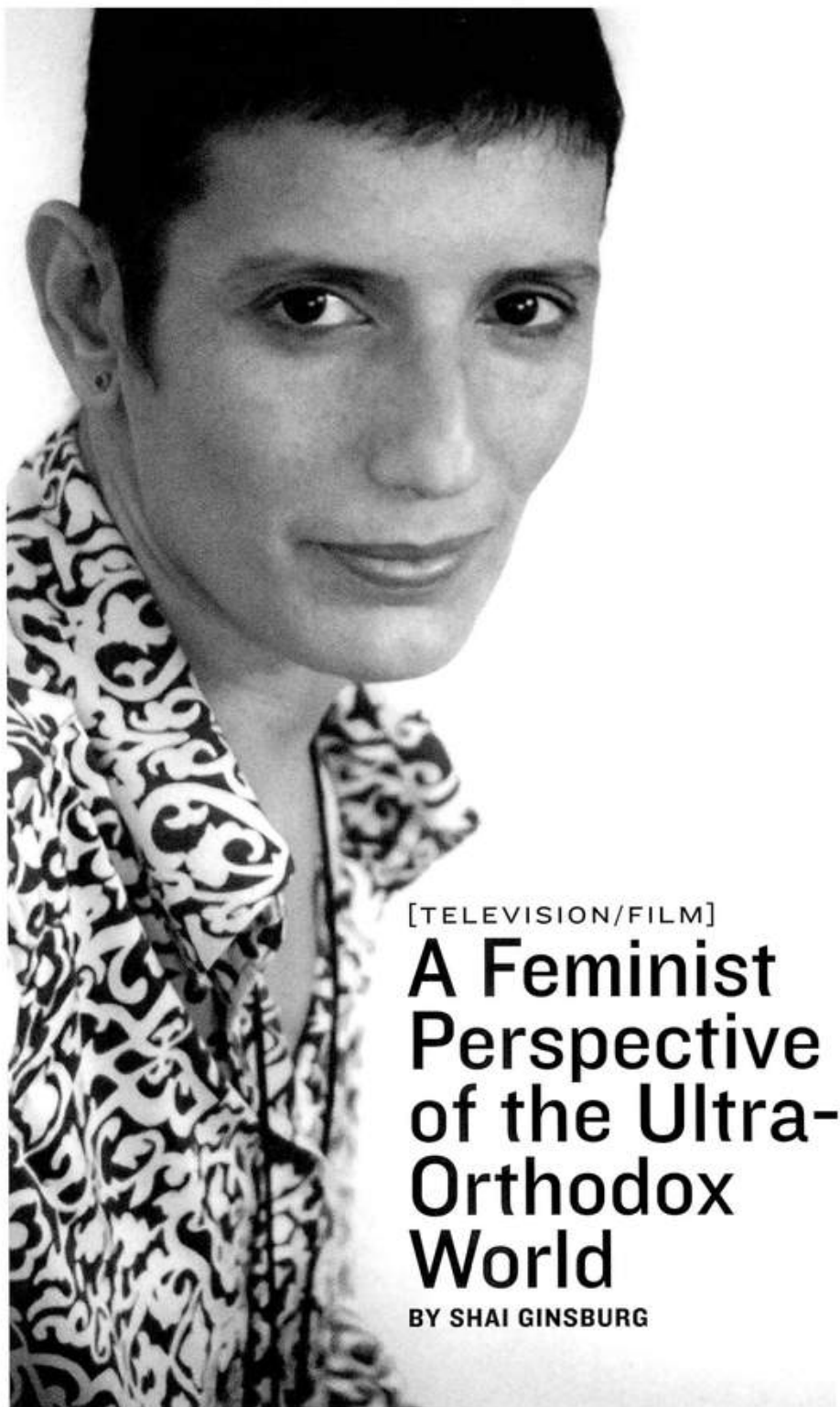
Zuria's first production, the 2002 award-winning documentary *Tehora* (Purity), focuses on the Jewish rituals of family purity. At the core of these rituals is the *niddah*, the menstrual period. According to Jewish law, a menstruating woman is ritually impure (in fact, any bleeding from the womb, including the blood of birth, makes a woman impure) and is forbidden to her husband. Following the destruction of the Second Temple, the rabbis ruled that a woman should wait for seven days after the cessation of menstruation before sexual relations are permitted again. During this time (which averages between twelve and fourteen days), a husband and a wife may not touch each other. At the end of this designated period, a wife must purify herself in a *mikvah* (ritual bath). Zuria's film illustrates how the *niddah* defines how Orthodox women come to grips with their sexuality and social status according to the masculine values of their community.

As a director, Zuria's strength lies in her ability to establish intimate relationships with her subjects who, in turn, allow her audience a rare glimpse into their private lives as Orthodox families. *Tehora* follows the stories of three women chafing against the gendered constraints of their faith commitments. The first of the film's subjects is Nathalie Laftreger, who was married for eight years. Disillusioned with her marriage and with her role as a woman in Orthodox society (shouldering the burdens of both managing her household and raising her children), Laftreger decided she would no longer observe the purification

rituals and thus became permanently forbidden to her husband—a decision that ultimately led to her divorce.

Nathalie's interview clips are juxtaposed with those of Shira, who is just about to be married and initiated to the rituals of family purity by her mother, Shoshana. "As her immersion [in the mikvah] approaches," Shoshana asserts, "a woman becomes excited." Yet, prior to her marriage, Shira is unconvinced. "I am

sorry to disappoint you," she retorts, "it seems that I'll never talk about the mikvah with the gleam you have in your eyes." Following her wedding, however, she sounds much more assured: "It seems as if they want, by design, to have your joint life begin differently; not with a sensual frenzy, but by making this distance that, in effect, makes one closer." Shira now seems reconciled with purity rituals and the way they shape marital life.



[TELEVISION/FILM]

## A Feminist Perspective of the Ultra-Orthodox World

BY SHAI GINSBURG

## Despite her criticisms of the Orthodox world, Zuria remains an anguished part of it, and makes sure that her audience knows it.

Katie Green began contesting purity laws after giving birth to three children. "I wanted comfort," she tells Zuria while affectionately holding her husband's hand; "I wanted him to come home after work and hug me." Unwilling to give up such intimacy, Green and her husband began distinguishing between affection, everyday love and comfort, and sexual intimacy. However, striking this balance became far more difficult after Katie contracted an illness that resulted in frequent menstrual bleeding. At one point, her husband recalls, she bled for six or eight weeks. Unable to be intimate with each other for such long time, Katie and her husband found their marriage severely limited.

Despite her criticisms of the Orthodox world, Zuria remains an anguished part of it, and makes sure that her audience knows it. To this end, in *Tehora*, the interviews are narratively punctured by scenes in which Zuria captures herself on the way to and in the mikveh. "Six weeks after the birth of Abigail, our fifth daughter, I started shooting," she states at the opening of the film; "Six weeks after the birth, I am still impure. You cannot touch me, not even the tip of my hand.... For 2000 years women have been going to the mikvah to perform the ritual of purity. For 2000 years a silent bond. Always at night, in the dark, so as not to be seen. And I, too, do this."

Zuria's second documentary, *Mekudeshet* (Sentenced to Marriage), released in 2004, recounts the stories of women who struggle to receive a *get*—legal authorization to divorce their husbands. Israeli law grants rabbinical courts exclusive authority in divorce matters for the Jewish population. According to the Halakhah, only a husband can grant a divorce, and he must do this on his own free will. Without his consent, a marriage cannot be annulled. Without a *get*, a woman can neither remarry nor have children with another man. If a woman makes such a choice without one, both

her children and grandchildren are considered *mamzerim* ("bastards") who are prohibited from marrying other Jews.

Zuria focuses on three young women (identified by their first names only) who have been denied divorces for a number of years: Tamara, Rachel, and Michelle. All three turn to an organization of female Orthodox rabbinical pleaders, a new phenomenon in rabbinical courts traditionally staffed by men. Zuria gains unprecedented access to court hearings, and the film's depiction of the women's experiences reverses the power relationship that forms the rabbinical court. "In my film," she says, "women are the central players and the men—traditionally the powers that be—are voices heard but not seen, ever present-but-absent."

Tamara, who became religious and met her husband in a Torah class, left him after he physically and psychologically abused her and their children. Despite a civil court order only allowing the husband to see their children under supervision, in exchange for a divorce, the rabbinical court tries to convince Tamara to yield to her husband's wish to see them without oversight. "He's never laid a hand on you," the rabbi judge says. "He testified here that he forced himself on her, and he admitted it himself," retorts Reut, Tamara's rabbinical pleader. "By force? It wasn't really by force..." the rabbi judge continues. "To throw the bed on top of me on the floor, isn't that force?" argues Tamara. "He just wanted to have his way with you, that's all," answers the rabbi judge. "It's obvious to me that he exploited your naiveté, that's all." Out of despair, Tamara is willing to borrow NIS 10,000 (about \$2,200) to buy her divorce from her husband, but he demands \$6,000, which the rabbinical court urges her to pay in exchange for her *get*.

The husband of *Mekudeshet*'s second divorce-seeker, Michelle, refuses to come to court hearings, successfully avoiding repeated attempts to arrest

him, sometimes with the active assistance of the rabbinical court's own clerk. Abandoned by her husband for another woman (with whom he fathers two children), this single mother of three spends four fruitless years trying to obtain a divorce because the rabbinical court refuses to force her husband to grant her one. As in many of these cases, the husband is largely to blame. Arguing that she inappropriately hosted a male friend in her apartment, he convinces the court to forbid his wife from allowing her friends into her home. Michelle thus becomes imprisoned in her own home, effectively barred from meeting other men, and indefinitely bound to a cruel and unfaithful spouse.

Luckily, things work out better for Zuria's third study, Rachel. A mother of four and a producer at a religious radio station, Rachel seeks to divorce a husband who verbally and physically abuses her, has relationships with other women, and refuses to provide Rachel with child support. After four and a half years of legal proceedings, Rachel's husband finally accepts a divorce upon the condition that the court reduces the level of child support required of him. When Rachel refuses, he simply leaves the room. It is only when Rachel breaks down in hysterics—running into the hall screaming—that the court finally forces her husband to grant Rachel a fair divorce.

What makes such powerful portraits of Orthodox life so compelling is not just the director's skill in having captured them. With the right amount of training and education, any good journalist could do that. The crucial difference is how Zuria juxtaposes her own religious and feminist convictions with the struggles of her subjects. The result is not so much an empathetic portrait of religious women suffering under the yoke of clerical patriarchy, but a portrait of a community whose authority is based on the fact that it was made by one of its very own members. ■

*Shai Ginsburg is Tikkun's Television/Film editor. He teaches at Duke University.*

[MUSIC]

# Muffling the Sirens' Call

*The iPod in History* BY CHARLIE BERTSCH

**T**HE FALL OF 2001 WAS SURELY one of the worst times to launch a new “lifestyle” product in the United States since World War II. Still reeling from the shock of seeing their nation’s defenses breached by foreign invaders for the first time since the War of 1812, consumers had sharply curtailed spending on luxury goods. The stock market was doing poorly. And then, just when it seemed like the country’s mood was beginning to stabilize, the discovery of anthrax in the nation’s postal system rekindled the fear of indiscriminate terrorism. It was under these difficult circumstances that Apple CEO Steve Jobs walked on stage on October 23—the same day the Patriot Act was introduced on the floor of the House—to debut a device that could either help revive the Apple brand’s mystique or hasten its slide into irrelevance. But that didn’t dissuade Jobs.

“Music’s a part of everyone’s life,” he stated, “and because it’s a part of everyone’s life, it’s a very large target market all around the world. It knows no boundaries.” As Jobs went on to size up the market for digital music players and then announce the introduction of the iPod, these words continued to resonate, underscoring the ambitiousness of the company’s strategy. “Everyone” is not a niche market. Five years later, Apple still has a long way to go before reaching that lofty goal. But the iPod has also turned out to be a bigger success than most people ever imagined. And it’s become a part of modern society, affecting the lives of even those who don’t actually own one.

Although the car radios that debuted in the early years of the Depression paved the way for all future efforts to take sound on the road; although the Sony Walkman cassette player, released in 1979, seemed



like as big a deal in its day as the iPod does now; and although portable digital music players first appeared on the market back in 1998, the iPod’s significance should not be underestimated. Because, even though it is only the latest stage in a much longer history of mobile audio, Apple has done such a thorough job of colonizing consumers’ minds that many of them have now come to see that history in the company’s terms. What the iPod makes possible stands in for what portability itself makes possible. That is why it has made the leap from newcomer to icon with astonishing brevity and is now close to attaining the lexical status of “Xerox” and “Kleenex.”

It is impossible to make sense of the contemporary culture industry without putting the iPod center stage. Even those music lovers who have no interest in using one, either because they are unsatisfied with its limited fidelity or because they aren’t interested in mobility, must confront the fact that the choices available to them are constrained by the iPod’s influence on the market. Indeed, the very existence of traditional audiophiles is threatened, since the criteria they use for rating both equipment and recording are

no longer a high priority for most listeners. Frequency response, the accuracy of microphones, the virtuosity of musicians—the bread and butter of “serious” music magazines from the late 1940s until the popularization of the MP3 format—have become secondary or tertiary considerations in a context where the most important thing is not how good the music sounds, but how readily it is available to you.

Significantly, when Jobs introduced the iPod back in 2001, he went out of his way to make it clear that Apple was appealing to the casual listener. “The biggest thing about iPod is that it holds 1,000 songs,” he noted. “Now this is a quantum leap, because for most people it’s their entire music library.” Since that first iPod only held five gigabytes of music, barely more than today’s much smaller iPod Nano, the presumption that the device could hold everything in a person’s music library clearly overlapped with Jobs’s earlier comment that, “music is a part of everyone’s life.” When you’re marketing to everyone, you’re interested in what works for “most people” instead of what works best for the people who care most.

This brings us back to the apparent ill-timing of the product's debut. As Apple's recent financial fortunes make clear, the fall of 2001 may actually have been the *best* time to introduce this particular "lifestyle" product. The news stories that were surely a distraction for Jobs's audience that day contributed to a mood that made the iPod seem like the perfect technology for the moment. Because, as his presentation made clear, what the iPod's combination of speed and size was really intended to make possible was the transformation of music into shelter. The prospect of bringing your whole music library with you is only attractive if circumstances prevent you from hearing it at home.

The shifting economic conditions of our high-tech era had already been undermining the distinction between work and home for years before the iPod debuted. Dot-commers in cities like San Francisco could be seen working on projects in the semi-public space of cafés at all hours of the day and night. And service workers at the bottom end of the pay scale spent so much time commuting from one temporary job to another that their commute often doubled as their leisure time. What the post-9/11 era added to the picture for the average American was the prospect of their homes literally coming under attack.

By building on a longstanding belief that music is tightly bound to identity—you are the music you hear—Apple was able to imbue the iPod with the aura of home itself. If the rumbling bass of an SUV blasting hip-hop breaks down the invisible walls that divvy up our personal space in the public sphere, the iPod does exactly the opposite, building new barriers between us. Music may "know no boundaries," but the purpose of the iPod is to protect them. As anyone who has spent some time sitting in a Starbucks can tell you, the customers who work there use iPods to minimize the possibility for social interaction.

Indeed, this is surely the most disturbing aspect of the iPod's success and the larger phenomenon of portable living it represents. In her new book *Pretend*

*We're Dead*, Annalee Newitz, a columnist for *Wired* magazine and AlterNet, writes about how people can be absorbed by the mass media they adore. Commenting for this piece on the iPod, she notes that, "There's something visually and socially creepy about people plugged into devices that are taking over one of their senses. It's as if they've been possessed by technology and their identities transformed into something monstrous."

Although a number of factors contribute to this perception, it's the fact that people are listening to these devices in public that inspires such a reaction. Indeed, it may be the iPod's role in constructing the illusion of a home away from home that is the most monstrous thing of all. As cultural critics are fond of pointing out, the German title of Sigmund Freud's famous essay on the uncanny, *Das Unheimliche*, translates literally as "the un-home-like." That's an apt description of the eerie feeling we get watching people who sit for hours staring blankly into space, ears plugged with music of their choosing, looking like they've lost the passage back to the place they were before. They are out in public, to be sure, but primarily to act out their desire for privacy. Maybe what these listeners want is to be seen wanting both company and solitude.

It's a paradoxical wish, but one that captures the peculiar anxieties of the postmodern era in their most acute post-9/11 form. In the end, the iPod is the ideal product for era of homeland insecurity. You can't take it all with you, but at least you can take your music. It may not be possible to return home to retrieve the rest of your belongings. But at least you will have something of yourself to bring along for the trip. And, if you turn the volume up loud enough, it will even drown out the sirens. The only problem is that, if too many people do the same thing, the fire engines may not be able to reach their destination in time. That would be an ironic end to our postmodern odyssey. ■

Charlie Bertsch (cbertsch@comcast.net) is Tikkun's Music Editor and Assistant Professor of English at the University of Arizona.

## [MUSIC]

## Capsule Reviews



SLAPPERS, by Dani Siciliano. !K7 Records, 2006

DESPITE WHAT all those anti-PC rants would have you believe, sex and feminism *do* go together. Dani Siciliano provides the most compelling proof of that since Madonna discovered the Kabbalah. The partner of radical British producer Matthew Herbert, Siciliano combines the minimalism of dance-floor electronica with the soulfulness of funk in her latest album *Slappers*. No longer relegated to the background, her voice slides in and out of the muddy places in the slippery flow of her beats with supreme confidence, stopping to punctuate lyrics that turn on the body without turning off the mind.

Like much of today's best music, *Slappers* references the inventiveness of the early 1980s. Whereas bands like Interpol channel the metallic post-punk of Joy Division and Public Image Limited, Siciliano looks back to the melting pot of nightclub culture, where fey synthesizer acts from Britain shared the turntable with LL Cool J and the Clash, not to mention Madonna. Her most obvious influence from that era, though, is Prince.

If you ever get nostalgic for *Sign 'O' the Times*, Siciliano's sound will bring you lasting satisfaction. But it's her wordplay that confirms her brilliance. On "Didn't anybody tell you?" she sings, "So here's the fantasy/Get off, get off on me," then turns the tables to declare, "I am wasted energy/Locked-up in your fantasy." But the next song "They Can Wait" takes a different tack: "Hands-up I think you're down with this/Handcuffs to keep you still." By the time Siciliano comes to the record's last track, "Be My Producer," it's clear that the title doubles as a critique of patriarchal DJ culture and a love song to the man with whom she shares her life and work. Needless to say, she produced that one herself. —C. B.

# With Sadie in Umbria

I.

"We crush the grape," he said, bringing his hands together with a crack and wringing them like a washerwoman, like my grandmother in the basement of the house on Pingree when I was seven. All this show for what? I'd asked him to recommend a red wine of Umbria for I was in Umbria. Perhaps the boredom of flogging bad wine drove him to theatrics. After 40 years of living with my grandfather, after a hundred *shabbos* dinners eaten in silence, Sadie announced not another day could she take with that man and left that night for Los Angeles, the promised land.

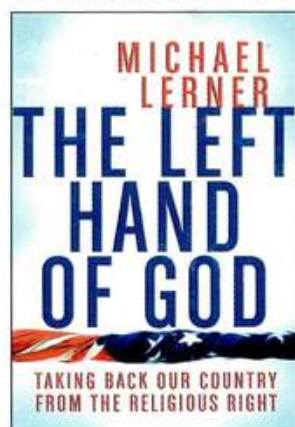
II.

Sadie left for L.A. where she would find Christian Science, pro wrestling, meditation, organic fruits, a Yiddish book club, while in Orvieto in an effort to escape the afternoon I entered the state bodega and asked to sample Umbrian red wine, a modest request. In reply I got slaps and hand-wringing, the grimaces of my Polish grandmother at the end of her patience. Dear Sadie, we are joined together in the shadow of the great white duomo, mother and child, an unholy pair, who take our pleasure in stale bread and old wine in new bottles.

—Philip Levine

# BOOKS BY TIKKUN AUTHORS

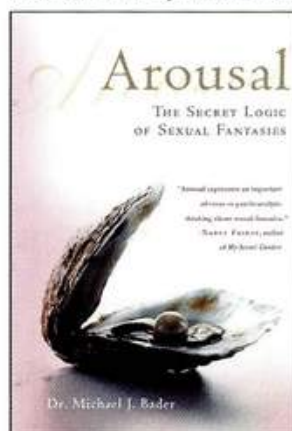
## THE LEFT HAND OF GOD By Michael Lerner



Michael Lerner shows how a progressive spiritual critique of capitalist globalization will split the Right, and provide progressives with the most effective resistance to corporate hegemony. Includes the eight-point spiritual Covenant with America presented to Congress.

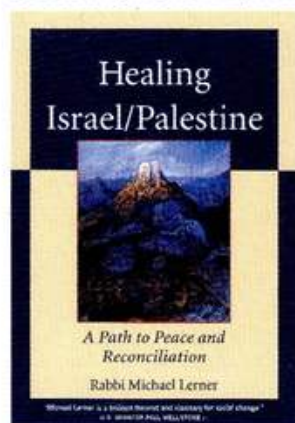
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## AROUSAL By Michael J. Bader



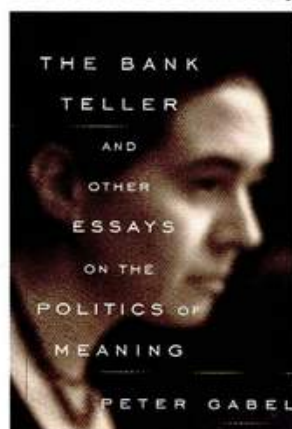
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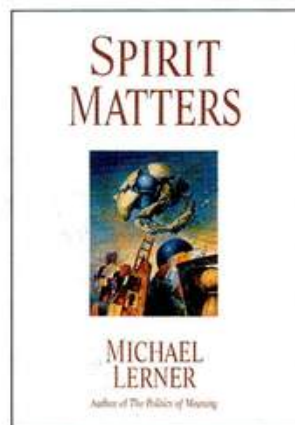
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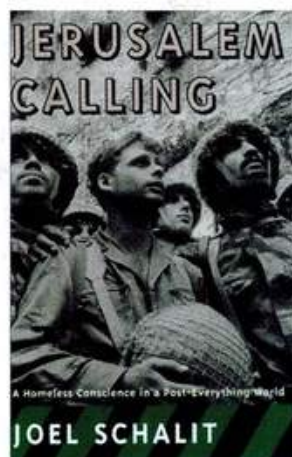
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