

Tikkun

POLITICS+SPIRITUALITY+CULTURE

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

MAY/JUNE 2008

**GOD WITHOUT
GOD**
ATHEIST SPIRITUALITY?



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ISRAEL AT 60

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FLUORICO/TRIANGLE

BOYCOTT THE OLYMPICS

This is probably one of the few actions countries of the world, corporations and individual citizens could take that might have an impact on Chinese policy toward Tibet and Darfur. In Tibet, Chinese intransigence and repression continue unabated. In Darfur, China remains the major obstacle preventing the U.N. from taking more decisive action to protect innocent civilians from genocide. Whether or not the boycott would change China's policies, we at *Tikkun* believe it could be a powerful way for the people of the world to stand together in solidarity with the people of Tibet and Darfur.



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and you will question his answers.*

by SWAMI BEYONDANANDA

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The POWER of FORGIVENESS



Kenneth Briggs

Based on a film by Martin Doldorier

The Power of Forgiveness by Kenneth Briggs, the companion book to the PBS documentary examines the mysterious and powerful force of forgiveness at work in the world. Includes stories of remarkable instances of forgiveness as well as compelling interviews with ordinary people.

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An imprint of Augsburg Fortress

1-800-328-4648 fortresspress.com

Cover Image:

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An oil painting by Samuel Bak
Image Courtesy of Pucker Gallery
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Read More Articles for this Special Issue at www.tikkun.org

Tikkun solicited many more significant and deeply thoughtful analyses for the Israel at 60 issue than we were able to fit into the print edition of the magazine. This section therefore continues on our website. We urge you to go to www.tikkun.org to read some of our best articles. They are by:

Oz Almog
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 Terry Walker and Avi Zer-Aviv

Readers Respond

A note on Letters to the Editor:

Our magazine is a bimonthly, so in between print editions we often send out email letters to the people who have signed up for emails or to those of our subscribers or members of the NSP/Tikkun Community who have sent us their email address. You can get on the list for free by going to www.tikkun.org and signing up. We print responses to our emails on our web, but from now on we will also print some of the responses in the print version of the magazine, referencing the fuller article to which the letters respond. We reserve the right to edit, select sections of what you've written, and/or summarize parts necessary (in our opinion) to give context to the part we are printing (when that involves a long summary, we will place those parts that we write in brackets). We will only use letters that come with a full address and email and phone number so that we can verify that the name on the letter is actually the person who sent it. Always place "Letter to the Editor" in the subject line and send your letters to RabbiLerner@Tikkun.org. You may also send hard copies to Tikkun, 2342 Shattuck Ave, #1200, Berkeley, CA 94704.

THE OBAMA PHENOMENON

THIS MAY BE A turning point, a time when Americans can start to once again believe in the possibility of a different type of politics. Even if Obama loses, his presence, success, and integrity have the potential to create a powerful change in American politics; a change in which optimism, hope, and integrity are more than rhetoric; they may become the character of at least some of our leaders.

LOUIS HOFFMAN
Colorado Springs, CO

I AGREE WITH MICHAEL Lerner's statements about how important it is not to "demonize" the Other. In fact, I think the manner of our being towards others will be the most important element for healing our nation. And while I respect his statement that *Tikkun* does not support any particular candidate, isn't it imperative that the next President actually "gets it"? That the next President is capable from his or her very core to genuinely display behavior that *doesn't* demonize the Other?

In his recent book

The New American Story, Bill Bradley describes a weekend retreat back in 1993 where President & Mrs. Clinton explained to Democratic senators how they would get their new health care reform legislation passed. One senator asked what their strategy would be if the legislation didn't pass by the July 4 recess. "You don't understand," Mrs. Clinton replied. "We will demonize those who are blocking this legislation, and it will pass."

Yes, you are right that the Obama phenomenon is about us, not about Obama. But someone will be the next President, and shouldn't that person be authentic to the phenomenon?

MICAH RUBENSTEIN
Gambier, OH

YOUR DECISION TO stay neutral so far in the Obama vs. Hillary race is wise.

I voted for Hillary in the Ohio primary. They are 98 percent for the same issues, but Hillary stands a better chance to win in November. She will have more contacts with Congress, the Pentagon, and the corporate elite.

REMEMBER US IN YOUR WILL

Tikkun and the Network of Spiritual Progressives survives because of the generosity of people like you. Write us into your will. For information on how to make a bequest, contact Rubian Moss: Rubian@mosscca.com. By the way, you don't have to consider yourself "old" to create a Will.

The White/Black divisions going back to 1619 cannot be resolved in 2008. It requires a long-term commitment to historical, moral, ("spiritual" is too vague for me), sociological, economic and political education. The votes in the Electoral College are key to any short-term gains for 2009.

ROBERT WHEALEY
Athens, OH

AMONG THE MANY great contributions of the British psychoanalyst Melanie Klein, her insights into the nature of evil hold a special place. With ancient Biblical and Christian thinkers, Klein held that envy always underlay such sins as greed and destructiveness. More original was Klein's distinction between envy, which is always directed at another person, and jealousy, which is directed at what another person possesses. This distinction gave Klein her special under-

standing of the nature of evil. Evil, she taught, was not directed at victims in general but was always actually aimed at a particular object: that which seems innocent, inspires hope, and is perceived as a source of goodness, fecundity and newness. Only when Klein's thought is appreciated at these deeper levels can one full appreciate Hillary Clinton's determination to soil, eviscerate, and destroy Barack Obama and the movement around him.

ELI ZARETSKY
New York, NY

OBAMA AND ISRAEL

I THINK YOU ARE being deceived by Obama. He has too many connections with people who are anti-Semitic. G-d told Israel, "It is not what you say, but what you do that tells me where your heart is." That should be your guide in accepting

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Obama. When you look at him and what he proposes in international relationships, it makes you not only wonder, but get chills, about what might happen to the United States, as well as to Israel.

Although I have never been there, I love and support Israel and want to see someone in the Oval Office who feels the same.

I pray that you will do some serious thinking and praying about your approval of him.

DAVID PAYNE
via e-mail

POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY demanded that Barack Obama openly refute the ideas espoused by his former spiritual leader, Reverend Wright. Obama said, "They weren't simply a religious leader's effort to speak out against perceived injustice. Instead, they expressed

a profoundly distorted... view that sees the conflicts in the Middle East as rooted primarily in the actions of stalwart allies like Israel, instead of emanating from the perverse and hateful ideologies of radical Islam."

I suggest that it is Obama's view that has been "profoundly distorted" by the overwhelming pressures of the political campaign. He is incapable of resisting the forces that demand fealty to the colonial, expansionist Zionist project. Unable to recognize Jewish supremacy—which is, after all, exactly the ideology upon which the "Jewish State" was founded—as the evil it is, and unwilling to appreciate the disastrous role of U.S. hegemony in the region, he is left to adopt the acceptable paradigm that thrusts all responsibility for the conflicts of the Middle East onto "the perverse and

hateful ideologies of radical Islam." He speaks as if such ideologies developed in a vacuum, divorced from the realities of massive injuries to human rights: by Israel in the Occupied Territories and by the United States throughout the region.

Thus, the lines of acceptable discourse, precluding any discussion of the illegality and immorality of Israel's actions, are drawn. They are designed to distort the debate so that it sharpens the focus on how best the United States should confront the "hateful ideologies of radical Islam" and blurs the focus on the real issues: the Israeli Occupation, the U.S. government's unbridled support for it, and the criminal actions of the U.S. government throughout the Middle East.

JOEL FINKEL
Chicago, IL

ON DENIAL OF RACISM

READING SENATOR

Barack Obama's address on race delivered in Philadelphia, and watching his subsequent drop in national polls, made me reflect upon the depth of America's denial of racism both past and present, but also the double standard to which we hold African American leaders. If it was James Joyce who said, "History was a nightmare from which he was trying to awake," white America is very content to slumber away.

Perhaps the poster boy for racial denial should be Thomas Jefferson. It is baffling to learn that in his initial draft of the Declaration of Independence, he listed the institution of slavery as one of the evils created by the English crown that justified war. This written by a man that owned over 500

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slaves. In his own mind, he was a lifelong abolitionist arguing against that institution most powerfully in 1884 in his "Notes on the State of Virginia," and as president, he even signed a bill in 1807 abolishing the slave trade.

But upon his death, he freed only five slaves and sold the rest, including two of his children by Sally Hemmings, a slave and his wife's half-sister with whom he had six children. The original Great Emancipator.

White America doesn't want to recognize it, but American history, even of the twentieth century, is inexplicable without accounting for brutal racism. President Wilson refused to invite black Civil War veterans to the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg even though 600,000 served, with 40,000 losing their lives. President Truman was a member of the Klu Klux Klan as an adult, and President Reagan chose to announce his campaign for president in 1980 in Philadelphia, Mississippi, a city only symbolically meaningful as the location of the murder of three civil rights workers in 1964. And, of course, we can all remember George Bush's desperate rush to Bob Jones University, an institution that until recently forbade interracial dating, to save his flailing campaign in 2000 by throwing himself at the feet of that divisive icon.

Racism in America is not ancient history. It is still swirling around us; lurking below the cover of decency. And like the patio stones my

children lift in my backyard to see the worms and spiders beneath, its gruesomeness is there for those who have the will to look.

And we wonder why Reverend Wright is angry.

But I think the double standard is even more troubling. White America was outraged by Reverend Wright's claim that the destruction of the World Trade Center was explainable by U.S. foreign policy, and more specifically, our policy towards the Palestinians. But is that any more outrageous than the claims of Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell, who claimed the bombing was the result of our toleration of "gays, abortionists, and People for the American Way," who took God out of our schools? Yet, for any Republican worth their salt, they come fawning, and craving their support. And no one bats an eye.

Even in this election, Senator John McCain actively sought and received the endorsement of Rev. John Hagee of Texas, who stated that Hurricane Katrina was an act of God due the sinners of that city, and in the past even joked that his church should have a "slave sale" to raise money for his youth program.

So while white America continues to be offended by Reverend Wright's accusatory anger, they cannot dismiss it as a relic of the distant past.

As a white man who was born in the 1950s, having witnessed many wonderful changes, I can only hope for the future and say thank

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Donations to Tikkun and the Network of Spiritual Progressives are tax-deductible: we are a 501c3 non-profit. We use your money to help pay for staff, to organize our campaign to change the bottom line from money and power to love and caring, to promote the idea of homeland security through generosity and a Global Marshall Plan, and to publish the magazine. More info: 510 644 1200, or send your contribution to Tikkun or NSP at 2342 Shattuck Ave, #1200, Berkeley, Ca. 94704.

God for our children and their color blind ways.

STEPHEN S. BOWMAN
Syracuse, NY

FORGIVENESS: WHAT, WHEN AND WHY?

I AM WRITING THIS letter in response to Professor Griswold's article "Forgiveness and Apology" (*Tikkun* March/April, 2008) and the discussion between Dr. Griswold and Father William Meninger. I believe that ultimately the victim must let go of the rage born from moral hatred to become a survivor. By letting go, the individual can begin the healing process and become psychologically and spiritually whole again. In my opinion, to hold onto this vengeful rage indefinitely is emotional suicide. In addition, embracing the cornucopia of emotional toxins contained in this lethal mixture of rage, hatred, and revenge may lead to physical deterioration as well as psychological despair. Thus, the individual may be at risk for serious and life-threatening illnesses, including high blood pressure and heart disease, and various psychological disorders such as clinical depression. Furthermore, the medical problems are often exacerbated by the concomitant psychiatric

disorders.

Yet letting go of this venomous rage is not necessarily forgiveness. I agree with Professor Griswold who states: "But not every manner of giving up moral anger or revenge counts as forgiveness." Furthermore, I agree with his conceptualization of forgiveness as distinguished from excuse or condonation. If forgiveness is excuse, we do not "hold the perpetrator responsible." And if forgiveness is actually condoning, we may "enable continued wrongdoing."

Unconditional forgiveness may be problematic in the treatment of traumatic patients who have been physically, sexually, or emotionally abused. Victims of abuse who forgive their abusers unconditionally may be placing themselves at risk for further abuse. "An abused spouse 'forgives' the offender every morning for beating her the night before." Unless the abusers undergo intensive therapy, learn and practice stress and anger management coping techniques daily, and demonstrate cognitive, emotional, and behavioral changes, they will continue to be walking time bombs and lethal threats to the abused. I strongly recommend that my patients who have been

abused in the past or in the present ensure their own safety and the safety of their children, if they are parents, before considering even conditional forgiveness.

One patient I am treating has contact with the father of her children who savagely beat her decades ago, knocking out her front teeth and disfiguring her face. The abuser was incarcerated and subsequently received residential treatment for drug abuse after his release from prison. However, there is no proof he received intensive therapy for anger management. Yet after completing his drug treatment program, he confessed his love for my patient and asked for her forgiveness. My patient says she has forgiven him and admits she still loves him. I am helping her explore the dangers of unconditional forgiveness.

I have emphasized the importance of conditional forgiveness and the dangers of unconditional forgiveness. Are there any circumstances in which unconditional forgiveness is needed, possible, and the ideal? I do not recommend forgiving the unrepentant. But perhaps we can forgive perpetrators who are dead or unknown. Within the context of psychotherapy (and perhaps, in other settings), victims can have imaginary dialogues with their abusers, in which the abusers acknowledge responsibility and regret for wrongdoing and ask for forgiveness. At that point, patients can let go of retributive rage. During the therapeutic process, conditional forgiveness can become unconditional forgiveness.

Perhaps unconditional forgiveness is a "gift." Father Meninger points out that "in Christian sources the gift (referred to as grace, which means a free gift from God) is given to the victim, not to the perpetrator. When the victim tries to open his mind and heart to the love he is called to have for all men, including his enemies, this is referred to as a grace."

While unconditional forgiveness may be dangerous at times, I suspect there are other occasions in which it represents a higher state of consciousness.

MEL WALDMAN
Brooklyn, NY

HAMAS, ISRAEL, AND VIOLENCE

Editor's note:

In an email sent to our subscribers and NSP members, we "unequivocally condemned" the murder of students at the Yeshiva Merkaz HaRav. We also contextualized that act in response to the killing the week before of some 120 people in Gaza, most of them civilians with no connection or contact to Hamas. We had many letters, some appreciative, others accusing us of bias. For example:

ONCE AGAIN, ACCORDING to you, the Jews of Israel are to blame for the acts of those who want to kill them. This is one of the oldest lies of history, and you have bought into it. Apparently, the only "politically correct" thing Israelis can do that would satisfy you is die. Your standard line of calling terrorist murderers who fire rockets into Israeli towns "victims" and the

Israeli citizens who are killed by those rockets "oppressors" is getting tiresome indeed.

MICHAEL KOLKER
Seattle, WA

THANK YOU FOR THE sensitive, caring, and intelligent article you wrote regarding the killing on all sides, including the United States in Iraq and the violence and destruction of human lives all over the world.

SYLVIA MANHEIM
Long Beach, CA

YOUR "PROGRESSIVE Middle Path" is one-sidedly pro-Israel. In your recent emails, not a mention of the twenty-two students killed last week when Israeli tanks tore through school buildings. Not a mention of the newborn infant shot in the head and killed while in her mother's arms. Not a mention of the twelve-year-old girl gunned down in her own home by a rooftop Israeli sniper firing through windows. And, I wish to question the bemoaned "2000-year exile" claimed by those whose ancestors never set foot in what used to be the Holy Land, now destroyed by Jews whose only claim to it is via something they wrote in what is now called "the Bible."

MARY SPARROWDANCER
via e-mail

EDUCATION TODAY

I ABSOLUTELY DISAGREE with Svi Shapiro's article "It's Time for a Progressive Vision of Education" (*Tikkun* January/February 2008).

It seems he is not in touch with today's schools.

What he describes is education when I went to school in the 1940s and 1950s, when students sat at their desks in rows and learned things by rote and where no time was spent on developing children's self-esteem, sharing, caring, tolerance and sense of community.

In the San Francisco elementary schools, where I have been substitute teaching for eight years, and which are similar to most public schools in the country, the children do learn the above things. Further, they learn respect and appreciation for one another, conflict resolution, appreciation of different racial and ethnic groups. I have seen children helping kids with special needs, e.g., wheeling wheelchairs and accepting kids with deformities. The students' desks are in groups of four, facing each other, making it conducive to their many cooperative and creative activities. Students have choices in some assignments and express themselves through writing journals and stories. Older children serve as "reading buddies" to younger children. Students also learn about human emotions and morals through literature. Urban children also have gardening classes and learn respect for the environment.

Although standardized tests may not be such a good practice, they do test thinking abilities and problem solving rather than only memorization.

LINDA LEWIN
San Francisco, CA

Israel and Me

BY GEORGE VRADENBURG

A STORY WAS TOLD TO ME BY MY FATHER-IN-LAW about Louis Brandeis, a graduate of Harvard Law School, a member of the New York Bar and, ultimately, a Supreme Court Justice at a time of explicit quotas and overt discrimination against Jews in the legal profession. On the occasion of a speech before the New York Bar Association (a quite inhospitable environment) Brandeis took the podium and said, "I am sorry I was born a Jew." His remarks were greeted by stunned silence, then scattered applause, which turned into an enthusiastic ovation. As the applause quieted, Brandeis continued, "I'm sorry I was born a Jew, but only because I wish I had had the privilege of myself choosing to be a Jew."

I chose to be a Jew.

I fell in love with a beautiful Jewish girl who intensely identified with Judaism. And when I did, I began to study her religion. I studied Jewish history, philosophy and religion, Jewish holidays and rituals, and Jewish food and culture. And it became my religion as well. Does God not have a purpose in sustaining a people and religion whose roots can be traced back over 5000 years? Is there not an expectation that these people should have a particular mission, an obligation, to do justice and to make the world a better place? Is there not something deeply satisfying to know that a Jew can walk into a temple anywhere in the world and find the same language, prayers, and shared history?

But becoming a Jew and publicly embracing the Jewish people is not a step taken lightly. History has not been kind to the Jewish people. For the last 2000-plus years Jews have been systematically expelled from nation after nation: Palestine in the first century; England in 1292; Spain in 1492; Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century. And in the twentieth century, Germany, with the active collaboration of other European countries, sought to eliminate the Jewish people. Virtually every country that had invited Jews into their political, economic, and cultural life turned on them and sought to expel or annihilate them.

Was America different? Perhaps, but history sends to every Jew a warning sign that the social compact of today may dissolve tomorrow.

I decided to convert to Judaism; the power of the Jewish

mission to bring justice and healing and the embrace of Jewish community proved compelling. Yet, I took steps to convert through an Orthodox Jewish process that, I believed, would allow me to claim my right to immigrate as an Israeli citizen under the Law of the Return, should America follow the path of liberal Spain of the fifteenth century or liberal Germany of the twentieth century.

Israel offered to me, as a Jew, a survival lifeline—a promise of hope and safety in what might prove a world of existential danger.

For that reason, Israel's security is, in a real sense, my security. Israel is surrounded by hostile neighbors, and thus so am I.

I, personally, will feel safer if Israel is able to build a durable peace with its neighbors. Knowing history, I am wary of temporary accommodations.

I am also wary of government mixing with religion, knowing that those governments can turn against my religion. In Israel, that creates a dilemma. For if Israel is to be a homeland for the Jewish people, shouldn't its government be Jewish? Yes, but for which Jews? Those in government who now define who is Jewish and who is not may not recognize me as a Jew. The safety I sought through an Orthodox conversion process may not be "enough" to make me a Jew in the eyes of my Jewish homeland. So, I watch with anxiety the delegation to a few within the government the power to determine my "Jewishness."

The suffering of the Palestinian people at the hands of my Israeli Defense Forces causes me to question whether the need for the survival and security of Israel is weakening the justice-seeking values of the Jewish people. Does my sympathy for Israel's need to defend itself weaken my own Jewish values and identity? No, it does not. Is Israel just another State like "other" States now that it must defend its territory? No, it is not.

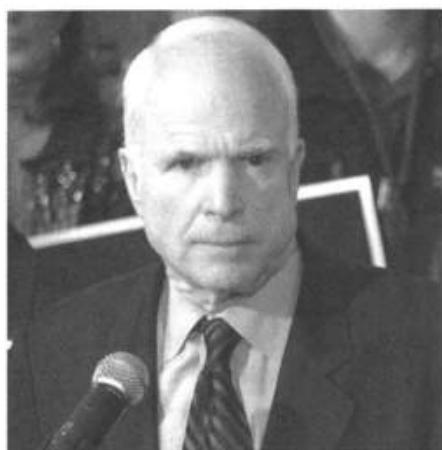
To this day, over forty years after my becoming a Jew, Israel feels like my refuge and the home of my people—a place of safety and of justice.

I'm grateful for the privilege of having been able to choose to become a Jew. ■

George Vradenburg is publisher of Tikkun, and often disagrees with our editorial opinions.

Iraq and the 2008 Election

BY MICHAEL LERNER



MANY LIBERALS ARE SCRATCHING THEIR HEADS wondering how it could be that Republican candidate John McCain has been doing better than either Senator Clinton or Senator Obama in recent polls. Their answer is to blame the Democratic candidates for their attacks on each other. While such attacks have certainly not helped the Democratic Party's chances of winning the 2008 elections, liberals remain puzzled why the crashing economy hasn't produced a wild charge away from the Republic Party? Chanting the old Clinton-team mantra "It's the economy, stupid," the Democrats and the media are at a loss to understand the sudden resurgence of the Republicans.

They would do better to focus on the one issue that McCain has promised to make central: the War on Terror (Iraq today, Iran tomorrow?). The huge opposition to the war should have produced, liberals believed, a huge majority for any Democrat opposing the war. Some lefties and anti-democrats like HBO comedian Bill Maher respond, "the people are stupid."

We don't think so. For many Americans, the fear of an even bigger blood bath in Iraq, should the United States withdraw, and the ethical concern about making an even deeper mess by a hasty withdrawal genuinely concern many Americans who honestly can't imagine a way out of the mess that Bush has bequeathed to the world. Others are rightly concerned that the charge of liberals "stabbing the American war effort in the back" might be the prelude to the rise of a fascist movement even more dangerous than the extremely hurtful realities of the Bush/Cheney years.

We at *Tikkun* have long advocated for the U.S. to announce immediately that it is seeking an international force—not including U.S. troops or "advisors"—that could take over Iraq security from departing U.S. forces and could supervise a free and fair set of plebiscite elections to determine whether the people of Iraq want one or three different countries, and how to govern such in ways

that would be fair to the minority populations in their midst. If the United States were simultaneously committed to providing funding (but not the contractors and other profiteers) for the rebuilding of Iraq, required all U.S. related corporations to give at least 50 percent of Iraq-based profits to this reconstruction effort, and immediately ceded to this international force all the military bases we've constructed in Iraq plus our huge Green Zone facilities in Baghdad, we would be making clear to the world that we are really getting out but that we really care about repairing some of the damage our invasion and occupation has caused.

If the liberal and progressive forces were to accompany that with a new vision of how to be involved in the world, rather than retreat from it, they could further reassure many Americans who fear that the world will be left to the terrorists if the U.S. government is taken over by the peace forces. We've proposed that the U.S. (together with any other G8 countries willing to join) should launch a Global Marshall Plan to which we commit 1-2 percent of our Gross Domestic Product each year for the next twenty years to once and for all end domestic and global poverty, homelessness, hunger, inadequate education, inadequate health care, and to repair the environment. The plan we've developed (check it out at www.tikkun.org under "Current Thinking" on the home page) provides for careful safeguards to prevent such monies being siphoned off by economic and political elites in the recipient countries, and requires a spirit of humility, based on the recognition that the West's superior economic strength has been based in part on hundreds of years of policies that have contributed to the underdevelopment of third world countries.

The lesson from Bush and Cheney having lost Iraq should be driven home: Homeland security, liberals and progressives should argue, cannot be achieved through domination (not the "hard" kind advocated by militarists in both parties, nor even the "soft" kind of domination through economic and diplomatic means that Democrats sometimes champion). Both kinds of domination start

INTERNS AND VOLUNTEERS NEEDED AT TIKKUN/NSP IN BERKELEY

Summer, 2008 and/or September 2008-June 2009

WORK ON: Soliciting Articles, Proofreading of Tikkun Articles, Business Side, Website and Computer Management, Art and Design, Torah Commentary, Global Marshall Plan, NSP Organizing, NSP Presence at the Democratic National Convention, Healing Israel/Palestine, and/or The Global Marshall Plan. Send self-revealing personal letter about your relationship to the ideas of Tikkun/NSP, who you are at the deepest levels of your being, your skills, which of these areas most interest you, and when you would be able to start, for how long, etc. Though these positions are unpaid, in many instances in the past they have led to paid employment. Open to students, people starting their career path, mid-career rethinking, and retirees. **SEND LETTER TO RABBILERNER@TIKKUN.ORG.**

from the assumption that it is *our* needs that ought to come before the needs of everyone else. Instead, a more appropriate foreign policy for the 21st century must be based on the understanding that our well being depends on the well being of everyone else on the planet and the well being of the planet itself. In that light, homeland security can best be achieved through generosity, caring for others, and humility that acknowledges that our superior economic strength has not brought us superior wisdom or a superior ability to achieve a society based on love and kindness toward each other.

If Democrats are able to adopt this Strategy of Generosity and challenge the Strategy of Domination, they have an answer to McCain and the Republicans. If not, they will try to fight what might well be a losing battle: to try to convince the American public that either Clinton or Obama can be tougher and a better militarist than McCain. Unless they succeed in changing the fundamental paradigm on which foreign policy is based, we may well be in for another four years of Republican rule made in the image of George W. Bush. ■

U.S. House Resolution Endorsing the Global Marshall Plan—H.R. 1078

BY MICHAEL LERNER

U.S. CONGRESSMAN KEITH ELLISON OF MINNEAPOLIS introduced House Resolution H.R. 1078 in support of the Strategy of Generosity that the NSP has been championing, and expresses the sense of the House of Representatives that the U.S. should consider the Global Marshall Plan as an important component of U.S. foreign policy. Congressmen Jim Moran (Virginia) and Emanuel Cleaver (Missouri) have already agreed to cosponsor.

Now it's up to us to get our Congressional representatives to cosponsor or publicly endorse this bill. Please set up a meeting with your Senator and with your Congressperson when they return to your district for the Memorial Day weekend, unless you are

coming to our activist training in D.C. Or ask for a meeting the next time they are going to be in your area—so that you can explain to them the thinking behind the Global Marshall Plan (GMP). To refresh your memory and develop "Talking Points," please read the Q&A that you can find on our home page at www.tikkun.org in the section on Current Thinking (click that and you'll get to the Q&A).

Meanwhile, as a first step, please sign the proposed ad for the GMP and get your friends to sign as well! You can find it by clicking "Endorse the Global Marshall Plan" at www.tikkun.org. Watch the YouTube piece there, and then invite friends, coworkers, neighbors, and members of your professional, union or religious organization to watch it with you and then talk about it in preparation for them signing too! ■

JOB AT TIKKUN MAGAZINE: ASSISTANT EDITOR

We seek an editor with excellent English language skills and passable Hebrew who is well-versed in the *Siddur* and *Tanakh*, as well as in the range of current intellectual issues that are central to public intellectual life both within the academy and in the journals and magazines of contemporary politics and culture, and who shares the NSP/Tikkun perspective as articulated at www.tikkun.org/core_vision, and in the editorials on Israel and on the Global Marshall Plan in this issue of Tikkun. Work includes recruiting authors (including new talented people in their twenties and thirties), editing, proofreading, production of the magazine, advocacy for Tikkun and the Network of Spiritual Progressives, and much more. Send a self-revealing letter about who you are at the deepest level of self-revelation, what you like and dislike in this and previous issues of Tikkun, and when you'd be available to start work should you be hired. **SEND LETTER TO RABBILERNER@TIKKUN.ORG.**

The Emergent Church: Christianity in America is Changing

by Tony Jones



Pastor Doug Pagitt leads Sunday night service at Solomon's Porch Oct. 15, 2006, in Minneapolis. Members of Solomon's Porch meet in a former Methodist Church that from the outside looks like a typical brick church. The inside, however, is far from typical.

IN LATE FEBRUARY, THE PEW FORUM ON RELIGION AND PUBLIC LIFE RELEASED the groundbreaking results of a massive survey of religiosity in America. Asked to sum it up in a word, Pew Forum research fellow Gregory Smith told the *USA Today*, "Churn. Churn. Churn. The biggest news here is change." In other words, Christians have less and less allegiance to their denominations every year. When asked, people no longer affiliate themselves strongly as "Presbyterian" or "Methodist." Instead, they choose their congregations based on myriad factors, like the children's ministry or the worship music. Like most other things in the free market economy that is America, people have lots of choices, and they're happy to oblige the market by taking advantage of those choices.

Into this landscape of flux has risen the "emergent church movement," a conversation

among younger Christian leaders who are reconsidering both the practices and the beliefs of Protestant Christianity. In my new book, *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* (Jossey-Bass, 2008), I do my best to articulate the characteristics of this nascent movement.

Emergent Christianity is hard to pin down because it's fluid, and because it has not developed along the bureaucratic lines of denominationalism but within the open source structures of the Internet. There is no ideology, except maybe an ideology that gives no quarter to ideologies. In other words, you won't find a doctrinal statement of the emergent church, nor will you find a headquarters.

A decade ago, some evangelical leaders were looking for the next generation of megachurch pastors. They looked to men (yes, it was almost all men) ten or fifteen years their junior who could attract the missing GenXers to their suburban churches. But instead of being interested in making big churches bigger, the emergents were interested in a shifting theological conversation—what was alternatively called postmodernism or pluralism or globalization. Others called it the “rise of the cultural creative class” or the victory of the right-brainers.

New churches started to spring up in urban areas around the United States. Pews were pulled out and couches were moved in. An old Lutheran ideal, the “priesthood of all believers” is radically practiced, and the sacred duties of serving communion and preaching sermons were opened to everyone in the community. And, notably, justice has become a major concern among the emergents.

So here's the rub: the emergents practice their faith like liberals (they're activists), but they believe like evangelicals (they're biblically orthodox). Mainliners become uncomfortable at all of the Jesus talk around the emergent movement, and conservatives don't like the politics. And if both sides are frustrated, then the emergents are happy.

The problem with American religion, at least from an emergent perspective, is that both “sides” are so utterly predictable. We know just where the lefties and the righties will fall on the topic of Israel or abortion legislation or the inerrancy of the Bible. Those positions have been staked out and claimed by a generation of religious leaders. It's the new questions that animate the emergent movement, the questions of globalization and technology and church structure. To the Episcopal quandary about a gay bishop, an emergent will ask, “Why have bishops?” There's very little talk in emergent circles about TV preachers on the Right or the Jesus Seminar on the Left. These seem, quite honestly, to be arguments that are out of gas.

But there is one thing that stands out: emergents have what Christian theologians call a “hope-filled eschatology.” That is, contrary to many American evangelicals, emergent Christians don't tend to think that the world is getting worse and worse until it gets so bad that Jesus has to come back. Instead, emergents think that God's Spirit is moving in the world, and our job as Christians is to cooperate with what God is up to. So you're less likely to hear emergents arguing about the hot topics of the day, and more likely to find them hard at work, trying to participate with God, so that it might be “on earth as it is in heaven.”

Answers have been the order of the day in modern Christianity. But for emergents, it's the questions that count. ■

*Tony Jones is the national coordinator of Emergent Village (www.emergentvillage.org) and the author of *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier*. You can reach him at www.tonyj.net.*

Complaining to God

by Richard Rohr



THERE IS ONE STRONG FORM OF BIBLICAL PRAYER THAT HAS been almost completely overlooked by the Christian tradition, maybe because it feels more like *pre-prayer* than what we usually think of as prayer. Let's call it lamentation or grief work, and it is described almost perfectly in the Mary Oliver epigraph (below left).

Lamentation prayer is when we sit and speak out to God and one another—without even knowing what to pray for—stunned, sad, and silenced by the tragedy and absurdity of human events. It might actually be the most honest form of prayer. It takes great trust and patience to remain in this state, so I think it is actually profound prayer, but most of us have not been told that we could, or even should, “complain” to God. The Jews have been very good at it. I suspect we *must* complain like Job, Judith, and Jeremiah or we do not even know what to pray for—or how to pray. Without

this we do not suffer the necessary pain of this world, the necessary sadness of being human.

Walter Brueggemann, my favorite Scripture teacher, points out that even though about one third of the Psalms are psalms of “lament,” these have been the least used by Catholic and Protestant liturgies. We think, perhaps, they express sinful anger or negativity, when grief and loss are actually something quite different. We think they make us appear weak, helpless, and vulnerable, and most of us don’t want to go there. We think, perhaps, they show a lack of faith, whereas they are probably the summit of faith. So we quickly resort to praise and thanksgiving, even when it is often dishonest emotion. We forget that Jesus called weeping a “blessed” state (Matthew 5:5). We forget that only one book of the Bible is named after an emotion: Jeremiah’s book of “Lamentation.”

Until I did my research for *Adam’s Return*, the book I wrote on male initiation, I did not realize that grief work was a key element in many, if not most, male initiation rites. As George Santayana writes in his 1925 work *Dialogues in Limbo*, “A young man who could not cry was a savage,” incapable of empathy and solidarity with the larger world. If he did not learn sympathy early in life, he would be damaged goods by the end of life, incapable of smiling—because “an old man who cannot laugh is a fool.” A man incapable of tears would be a toxic member of any social unit. How different from our modern world which considers weeping in males to be weakness.

In our community in New Mexico, we have created the Men’s Rites of Passage. This experience is not about religion, but about spirituality, about age-old traditions that guide us into manhood, about coming to trust that there is something much greater at work in our lives than we could ever imagine. One of the central rites in the program is a grief ritual, which very

*In the open mindedness
of not knowing enough
about anything.
It was beautiful.*

...
*How quietly, and not
with any assignment
from us, or even a small
hint of understanding,
everything that needs to
be done is done.*

—Mary Oliver,
“Luna” from *Why I Wake*
Early: New Poems

often is the central event that moves men into liminal space and a readiness for transformation. Robert Bly, author of *Iron John: A Book about Men*, insists that grief work is the privileged and powerful entrance way for most men out of their controlling heads and finally into their bodies and hearts. Remember Pat Conroy's book and movie *Prince of Tides*? Until the tidal wave of loss is felt and suffered by most men (and women), they quite simply do not understand the reality of the spiritual world or their own inner world.

I remember my own unsettled and shapeless state after the death of both of my parents. I felt I was living in a different world for some months. Everything looked and felt very, very strange. I felt emotionally askew for a long time, and I was ready for almost anything to fall apart and disappoint me. It did not make me angry or isolated, as much as humble, open, ready for help, so appreciative of the kindness of strangers and friends. Very small things actually delighted me, although I was afraid to smile or really enjoy them. I lived in a "holy tentativeness," which made the listening and learning curve very high during that time. Their deaths occurred right before I received my own temporary death sentence from malignant melanoma in 1991. My ego structures were very permeable, very open to both deep darkness and lovely light.

The entire afterword to my book *The Quest for the Grail* was written in the weeks following my Mother's death in early January of 1994. There I had to resort to haiku and poetry, but even my prose became more poetic. My writing was coming from a much deeper and truer place. It was the gleaming and generous state called lamentation, even though it did not feel very "gleaming" at the time. The afterword reads:

"Her dying, crooked body taught me sacrament,
Built a swinging bridge
Between mud and mysticism
On which I will henceforth walk
And weep—and wonder" (Jan 11)

"Back in the air,
On the road,
But more under the earth
With her (with Christ?)" (Jan 23)

This suggests a very new and needed liturgical style. A prayer form for people longing for peace and justice in church and country, but without any need to blame, accuse, or give answers. We need a liturgical setting that could be lay led, circular, and without closure, or even final "blessing." It will take practice, but then we can be sent back into our world honest and shared, emotionally cleansed, heartfelt and soulful, out of our controlling heads, ready for guidance, and not even *needing* to know the shape or the time of resurrection. Again I resort to Mary Oliver from her poem, "At Black River": *Then I remember, death comes before the rolling away of the stone.*

I think perhaps we have rolled away the stone too quickly, with our happy alleluias and too easy appreciations. As a result we are neither softened nor solidified by all of our losses. Our pain, sadness, and tragedies are not teaching us but only deafening us and blinding us. And they are our greatest teachers, even though we are never quite sure what it is that they have taught us. We only know we are larger, deeper, and ready to live without the stone. ■

Fr. Richard Rohr is a Franciscan priest of the New Mexico Province and founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque. For more information please visit www.cacradicalgrace.org.

Karma and Dharma: New Links in an Old Chain

by Arvind Sharma

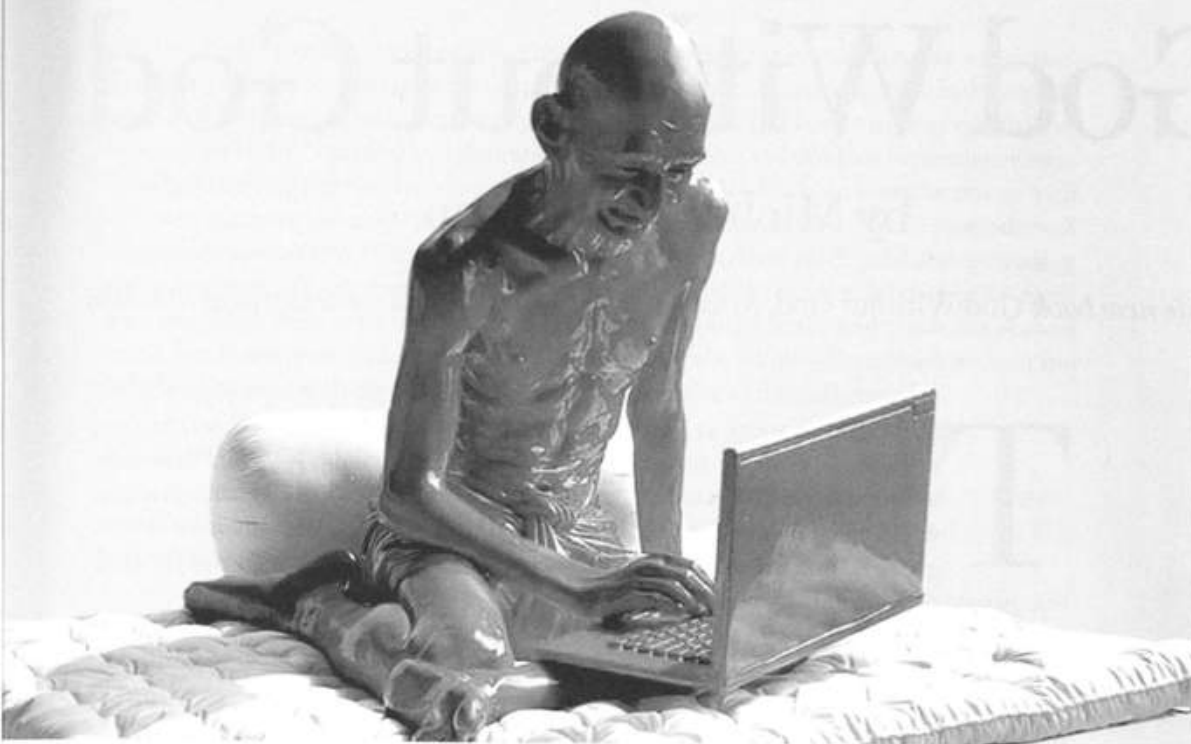
MOST PEOPLE IN THE WEST HAVE HEARD THE TERMS “KARMA” AND “DHARMA,” but many associate them with a static reading of Hinduism. What’s exciting today is that there is growing energy among Hindus for a renewal of these categories in ways that make Hinduism a less static religious tradition. Let me explain.

Karma and dharma constitute two key terms in Hindu religious and moral discourse. Both terms have multiple meanings and are virtually untranslatable, but it is possible to indicate the manner in which they orient our thinking in accordance with the concepts they encompass. The word karma is derived from a root that means “to act” and emphasizes the link between an action and its result. Some one-liners help highlight the concepts underlying karma: “One reaps as one sows,” “What goes around comes around,” “Life is the sum of our choices,” or that “karma is unfinished business.” The word dharma is derived from a root which means “to uphold” and so denotes the course of moral action which upholds our personal, professional, moral or religious integrity, as the case may be. The famous statement of Rabbi Zusya: “In the world to come I shall not be asked why I was not Moses. I shall be asked: Why I was not Zusya,” captures one semantic flavor of the word dharma admirably.

The relation between karma and dharma within Hinduism is particularly fraught and possesses several dimensions, both historically and potentially. One way in which they are related in classical Hinduism is that our past karma determines our present station in life, for which a particular dharma or moral lifestyle is deemed appropriate. It is of course true that moral choices made in an earlier life are responsible for our present station in life, which decides our present dharma or web of duties, but classical Hinduism was backward-looking rather than forward-looking in this respect. It focused more on where we are and how we got there, than on where we can go from where we are now. In this respect, the response of classical Hinduism was conventional rather than creative, inasmuch as it encouraged us to perform our duty in the position we found ourselves in. Perhaps such an approach is to be expected in a society which tended to be static and in which the circumstance of birth determined the basic contours of one’s life.

We now live, however, in a more dynamic world, in which longevity and geographical mobility combine to ensure that one can be reborn within a lifetime; that is to say, one can compress several lives in one as it were. This permits the reformulation of the karma-dharma link from a backward-looking one into a forward-looking one, and makes the relationship between the two capable of a radical reformulation in our increasingly morally complex world. The key to this reformulation consists of the recognition that in modern life we confront genuine moral dilemmas of greater range and intensity than perhaps was the case earlier.

Now what does it mean to say that modern life presents us with genuine moral dilemmas? This is best understood by contrasting this position with that represented by fideism



India Shining I (Gandhi
and the Laptop)
Sculpture by
Debanjan Roy

and rationalism. Fideism represents the view that all moral dilemmas would be resolved if only we possessed enough faith. Rationalism would represent the view that all moral dilemmas would be similarly resolved if only we possessed enough reason. The view that we confront genuine moral dilemmas implies that we rarely if ever have, will have, or even can have, such faith and such reason, so that in life one will have to make agonizing moral choices. Hindu ethics has always recognized this fact. This is one reason why Hindu texts constantly wrestle with the question of dharma—of what is the right thing to do in a specific set of circumstances. It also accounts for the fact that Hinduism has never confused a search for truth with a search for certainty, on account of its awareness of the claims that multiple values can lay upon us, and the matrix of multiple possible paths this generates, including the less traveled ones.

Let us suppose a Hindu woman has an unwanted pregnancy. In the classical Hindu way of looking at it, this would be attributed to bad karma of the past and the present dharma would consist of giving the child up for adoption, as abortion was considered un-dharmic. If, however, we take a more creative and progressive view of the matter in keeping with modern developments, then one would weigh the moral or dharmic choices concerned as involving either abortion, or carrying the child to term. Then one could either give the child up for adoption, or bring it up as a single mother. She will of course have to live out the consequences of whatever decision she takes. This new range of choices was not available earlier and this fact enables us to propose a more forward-looking linkage between the two concepts of karma and dharma. Because the range of moral choices or dharma was expanded, the concept of karma can be reinterpreted as the consequence which flows from the moral or dharmic choices which are made, which reverses the earlier flow from karma to dharma, into one from dharma to karma.

Hinduism does not have a pope or a “decider” to rule on what reinterpretations of the tradition are legitimate and which are to be discarded. So as the new understandings of karma and dharma become more widely accepted, Hinduism renews itself as it has throughout its history. ■

Arvind Sharma is the Birks Professor of Comparative Religion at McGill University in Montreal, Canada and currently engaged in promoting the adoption of a Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the World's Religions.

God Without God

by Michael Hampson

In his new book God Without God, Michael Hampson reconciles theism and atheism

THE ATHEISTS HAVE ALL THE BEST ARGUMENTS. THEY FIND THE RELIGIOUS world utterly indefensible, both morally and intellectually. A wave of coherent, well-argued atheism has swept the popular culture of the English-speaking world over recent years, drawing young and old into the denunciation of religion and all its works. Thankfully the God the atheist denies is not the God that people of true faith affirm.

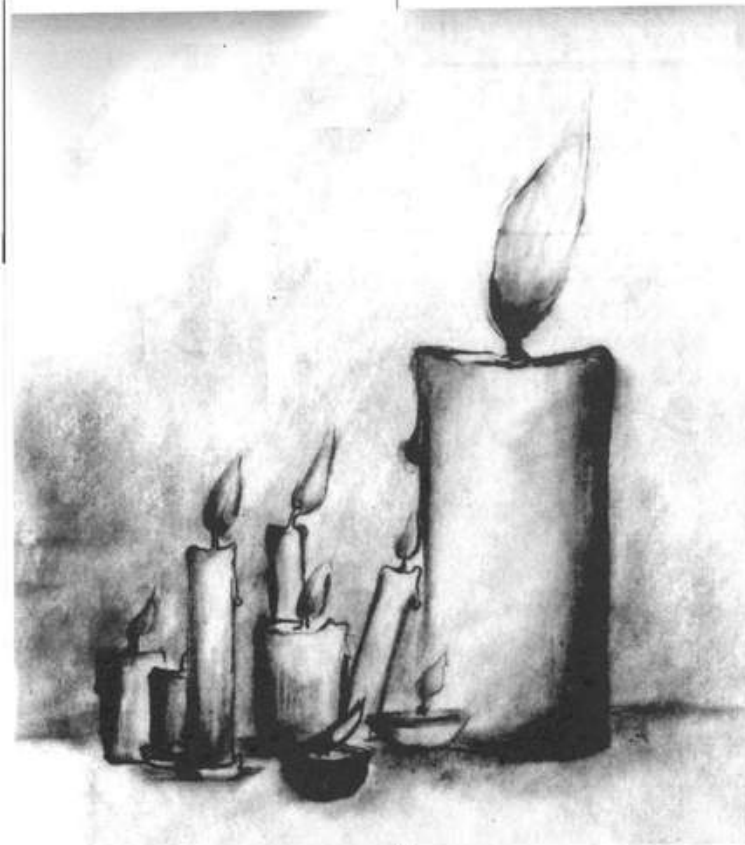
The Case Against God

A SIMPLISTIC THEISM TENDS TO MAINTAIN NOT ONLY THAT GOD EXISTS, BUT THAT GOD intervenes regularly in world affairs, from the global to the trivial, and has the right to demand obedience on threat of punishment. The greater presumption ahead of this detail is

that there is only one such being, and that it has recognizable human attributes such as personhood and will. The whole package might be called not just theism but presumptive monotheism.

It is against this presumptive monotheism that the atheist case is made. The atheist argues that there is nothing in the observable universe that requires, or even suggests, the existence of such a God. Everything has been or will be explained by the sciences of physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, sociology and anthropology. The universe is a self-perpetuating, self-organizing system: it needs no God to guide the planets in their courses, turn the acorn into an oak tree, open flowers in the meadow, or plan each human birth and death. It needs no God to make a parent love a child: that bond is a perfect example of the selfish gene looking after its own. Even altruism can evolve, as a population containing altruists is better equipped for survival than a population without. It was fashionable for a while to look for gaps in scientific explanations and place God there, but the gaps will diminish to nothing in time: a God in the gaps has no future. And there is a more emotive and assertive side to atheism: it refuses, as a matter of principle, to acknowledge a God who is all-powerful, yet allows unjust suffering, or who presumes to demand obedience on threat of punishment. Even if such a God does exist, it has no right to our pathetic acquiescence.

The potential theist must come to terms with the truth of the atheist analysis. The wonders of the universe have all been explained, dependent on nothing but the big bang and a few simple constants; and there is no omnipotent God intervening to prevent human suffering or avenge every human injustice, at least not on the terms that we demand. Stripped of its mythology and metaphor, reduced to the bare historic facts of the case, the death by crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth can serve as an icon for the absence of any interventionist God of justice. As we stand in the shadow of the cross, with the blood of the Nazarene dripping on the ground, God has forsaken the Christ, and forsaken us all.



The atheist case is sound, but is not the last word. The case is made against a very particular image of God, the God of presumptive monotheism, a God promoted by European kings and emperors in their own over-glorified self-image: autonomous, all-powerful, autocratic, wrathful, vengeful and demanding, with moments of random benevolence supposedly justifying the rest. For most of its history the papacy has been a secular power with all the same motivations for promoting the same false image of God, but theologians well away from the medieval Vatican, and all who live by faith, have a different understanding and experience of God, outside and beyond those images the atheist rightly rejects. Religion may have been used to justify wars, manipulate individuals, and crush the human spirit, but there remains a profound unity embracing the whole of humankind when the individual stands with open honesty before the mysteries of life and eternity.

Existence or Being

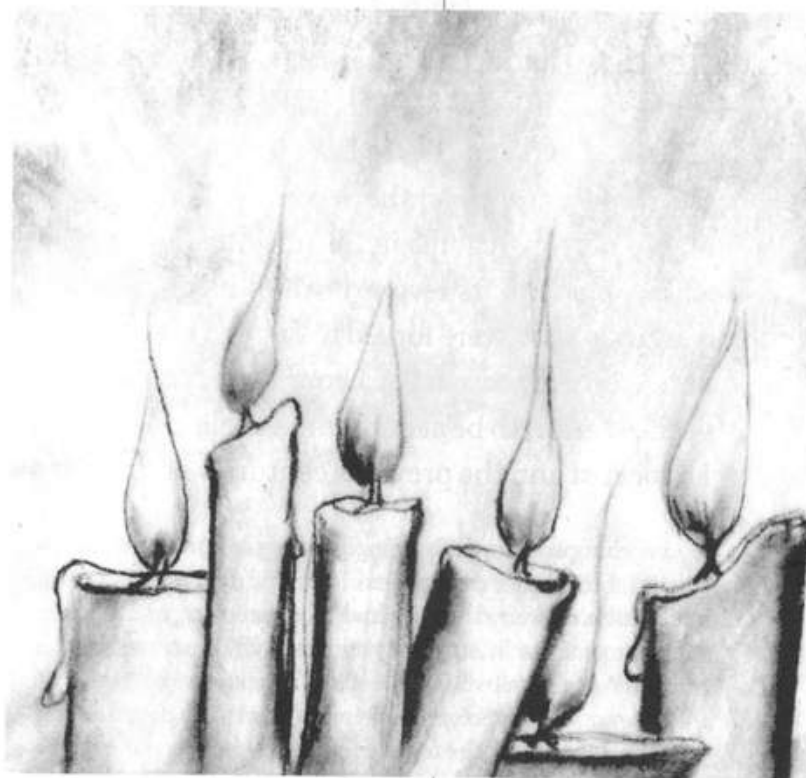
THE CHURCH STILL CLAIMS TWO PROOFS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD, AND THEY ARE entirely compatible with the atheist case against the God of presumptive monotheism. The first is the argument from creation: not that anything in the universe needs God in order to operate, but that anything exists at all, that there is even the space and the potential for anything to exist at all. It points to a mystery beyond the apes, the amoeba, the primeval soup, the complex carbons and the first expansion of the universe, to the ultimate source of all that exists and the essence of existence itself.

The second begins with the experience of being self-consciously alive: the sense of being a conscious observer of, and decision-making participant in, the one particular life that we call our own. It points beyond measurable behavior patterns, observable responses, and evolutionary logic to the entirely personal experience of being self-consciously alive. As fragile and insignificant as it may seem against the vastness of the universe, the mystery of self-consciousness is the most significant experience in each of our lives, indeed the carrier of all our experience and the very essence of life. It points once again towards the mystery of existence itself.

It is to this ultimate mystery that the church assigns first the name Existence or Being, and then the name God. For now the word means only the ultimate mystery of existence itself: the two proofs tell us nothing of the nature of God, but they establish a concept to which we can assign the name, and in doing so, give us a place to begin. The argument has moved on from the existence or non-existence of God to the nature of the ultimate mystery of existence itself.

The value of allowing rather than prohibiting the G-word, as a label for this ultimate mystery, is that it opens dialogue with the faith communities. To reject the G-word outright—'there is no God'—is to close down that dialogue too soon. To ask instead 'what do we mean by the word,' or 'what is the nature of this mystery,' is to open up that dialogue; and the faith communities are already there, acknowledging the mystery, and exploring its nature. The word must be used with caution, even avoided so far as possible, to avoid all manner of presumption, always pausing to consider exactly what it might mean, whenever it is spoken or heard, but the acknowledgement of the mystery is as ancient as the word itself. At the heart of true faith, and in the hearts of those who live by faith, the mystery is fully acknowledged. Daring to use the word makes dialogue and a meeting of human hearts possible, and connects with some of the richest communities and resources of humankind.

(continued on page 90)





Editorial by Michael Lerner

WHEN I WAS A CHILD, ZIONISM WAS THE NATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLE OF THE JEWISH people. While the United States and all other countries—including the Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist countries—closed their doors to Jews seeking refuge from the murder of millions of Jews by the fascists, and while the Palestinian people's leadership used their influence with the British to ensure that Jews would not be able to settle in our ancient homeland both during and immediately after the Second World War as hundreds of thousands of survivors languished in displaced persons' camps in Europe, the Zionist movement championed the need for a state of the Jewish people with its own army and its own territory. For a people who had been stateless for twenty centuries, who were forced to depend on the often-absent "good will" of their hosts in Europe, Africa, and Asia, the prospect of a homeland, prayed for everyday by Jews around the world for two thousand years, seemed to be at once impossible and yet the only imaginable redemption from the trauma of the Holocaust and the previous centuries of suffering and insecurity.

Jews jumped from the burning buildings of Europe into Palestine not because we were servants of imperial or colonial interests, but because we were desperate and because no one wanted us or would protect us. Unfortunately and tragically, we landed on the backs of Palestinians who were already there, and we hurt many of them in our landing. So scarred were we by our own pain—having just witnessed the death of one out of every three Jews alive on the planet—that we were unable to notice or take seriously the pain that we were causing to the Palestinian people in the process. When our army uprooted Palestinians from their homes and villages, it was in the midst of a struggle for survival in which Jews were determined to be as ruthless towards others as others had been towards us.

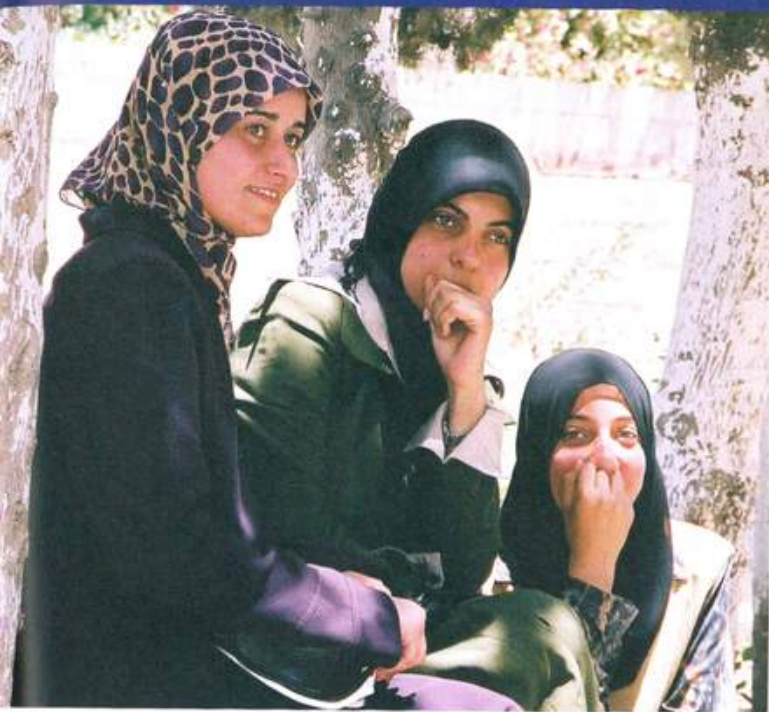
Yet, there were alternatives. We could have remained a minority in an Arab country and hoped for the goodness of the Arab people to prevail. The Zionist movement could have made dramatic overtures to the feudal landlords who owned much of the land in Palestine and who feared that our ideas of socialism would lead to a revolution against their interests. We could have reached out, as Martin Buber and Judah Magnes did, to a growing Palestinian nationalist movement and tried to create a bi-national state. We could have rejected the Histadrut's "Jewish only" policy of

membership in its powerful union and its health care system. We could have put our energies into demanding that the United States open its gates and let Jews settle here.

But the Zionist movement was made up of "realists" who didn't believe in the possibility of reconciliation, and the Palestinian people were led by similar "realists" who didn't believe that it would be possible to live in peace with Jews, and hence refused to allow Jewish immigrants (although immigrants of any other religion were welcome). Both sides had embraced nationalist rhetoric, and both sides had left behind the loving messages of their respective religions. Both sides were traumatized by their own history, and by outrageous acts of violence perpetrated by the other. I've detailed this history in my book *Healing Israel/Palestine* (North Atlantic Books 2003). And I'm well aware that partisans on each side have plenty of "facts" to use to "prove" that it was really the other side that caused all the problems, and that there is no "moral equivalency" between, for example, the slaying of Jews in Hebron in 1929 and the slaying of Arabs in Deir Yassin in 1948. The list of atrocities is long on both sides, and only those who wish to "win" for their side continue to insist that it was they who were innocent and the others were "evil" in intent as well as in action.

The expulsion of Palestinians from their homes, some by fear of

60 YEARS LATER



Students at Hebron University take a break under the trees.



A bustling cafe in Jerusalem.

being subject to terrorist attacks consciously planned by Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir, and the terrorist groups that they led, and others by fear of being caught in a war zone (but then, Jews had no such place to avoid the war zone, and for us, that was decisive about why we had a right to stay), intensified angers. But these relationships could have been repaired had Israel allowed the refugees to return home after the armistice was reached in 1949. It did not. Instead it declared those who had left as a "hostile population," and shot as "terrorists" those who sought to sneak over the border in ensuing years to return to their homes. Those actions, particularly the brutal murders by Ariel Sharon and his Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) unit, provoked counter-acts of terror by Palestinians. The story has only intensified in killings of civilians ever since.

Surrounding Arab states have not helped the matter. The decision by the feudal Arab leadership to reject the UN proposal for a two state solution in 1947 (one that would have given Palestinians far more than the Palestinian Authority is now seeking) and to instead invade Israel when the Jewish Yishuv declared itself a state on May 14, 1948, turned into a huge disaster for the Palestinian people. For at least five decades thereafter, those Arab states, with the exception of Jordan and Egypt, rejected every attempt by Israel

to make peace (though Israel's offers never included any serious attempt to deal with the fate of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians living in refugee camps). Except for Jordan, all of those states have been wildly insensitive to the needs of their Palestinian Arab brothers and sisters, and have used the Palestinian cause as a political football to embarrass Israel, hoping to build a worldwide consensus that Israel should be eliminated from the family of nations. It's only in the last decade that most of these states have come to accept that there is no military solution likely to yield a better deal for the Arabs than what they could get through negotiations. Moreover, many of those Arab states have treated Palestinian refugees at least as poorly, and sometimes considerably worse (e.g., in Lebanon) than have the Israelis. Yet, as the example of Egypt and Jordan shows, those states no longer act as a bloc, and even the most extreme among them have finally come to accept the reality of Israel and have given up most of their fantasies that Israel would some day disappear. Only the non-Arab state of Iran still has leadership holding on to that illusion.

When I look back and watch the irrational and self-defeating behavior of both sides, and when I interview people on both sides of this struggle, one concept shouts out to me: PTSD—Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The trauma on both sides has led people to



be unable to think rationally about what is in their own best interests. For the Palestinians that trauma led them to reject the proposal of a two-state solution that was offered them in 1947, and to encourage the surrounding Arab states to reject every offer made by Israel in subsequent decades even after those states were decisively defeated in the 1967 War. In later decades, starting in the 1980s, it was the Jews who rejected reasonable offers for peace, and instead imagined that their military might would allow them to crush the Palestinian national movement. Illusion after illusion after illusion.

Even today, Israel has been faced with an offer by the Arab states for full recognition and peace if Israel would simply return to the pre-1967 borders. However, Israel will not accept, though it knows full well that in the negotiations the Palestinians would allow the Jews to hold on to the Western Wall and the Jewish Quarter of the Old City and would even consider trading some close-to-the-border land to allow some of the major Israeli settlements if Israel gave an equal amount of land back to the Palestinians and made a credible and serious offer to provide reparations for Palestinian refugees. If Israel were to approach this kind of offer in a spirit of open-heartedness, it could soon work out details that would provide Israel with adequate security.

Arrogance of power? Subordination to the religious messianism of the West Bank settlers? Sure, those play a role. But in my view, it is PTSD that is decisive in keeping Israelis from looking at their actual situation: a tiny minority in a world surrounded by Arab and Muslim states whose power will only grow in the coming decades and whose anger at Israel grows in intensity as they watch the state that claims to be the representative of the Jewish people act in horrendous and cruel ways toward Palestinians. Any rational assessment would lead Israelis to accept the terms being offered to them, and to do so in a way that manifested a spirit of generosity and caring for those whom it had hurt, tortured, falsely imprisoned, killed, or wounded. Similarly, it is PTSD that can best explain how Palestinians would embrace Hamas or Hezbollah and fantasize that they could eventually destroy Israel rather than work out an agreement that allows Israel to exist as a Jewish state (that is, as a state that gives affirmative action in regard to immigration to Jews who have a reasonable claim to fear persecution where they are currently living—but not a state that is run by Jewish religious law except in the cultural sense that Jewish holidays are given the same official public priority in that state that Christmas is given in the United States).

How do you deal with two peoples who are suffering from PTSD? Well, we know what you don't do. You don't try to coerce them into situations in which they perceive themselves as vulnerable to re-experiencing the insecurity and pain that caused the trauma in the first place.

This is why I've argued against any attempt to force Israel into accepting solutions that make it feel more vulnerable. It's not that using coercion would be wrong or immoral, but that it will have the

exact opposite of the intended effect. Disinvestment in Israel, for example, would only reconfirm the basic feeling (based on a great deal of historical reality) that "the whole world is against us, but that this time we will not be led like sheep to the slaughter in the way that European Jewry allowed itself to be destroyed" (a false description of European Jewry, but nevertheless the dominant perception in Israel). The Massada Complex remains a central frame through which Israelis experience their reality: the courageous Jews who preferred death to surrendering to the Roman imperialists who were seeking to outlaw Jewish life in what the Romans had named "Palestine." In this case, the Israelis are armed with hundreds of nuclear weapons. There is enough willingness on the part of the majority to use those weapons even if in the process they destroyed themselves..

Thus, the situation cannot be analogized to that which existed in the 1980s and early 1990s in South Africa. On the one hand, the entire world recognized that apartheid was fundamentally evil. There is no such consensus about Israel or its policies. Apartheid meant that there was a legal structure preventing blacks from voting, participating in the same schools or same beaches as whites. There is no such set of laws within the pre-1967 boundaries of the State of Israel. There is certainly deprivation of rights in the West Bank and Gaza, but those deprivations stem from a political assessment of the alleged dangers that Israel faces, not from a commitment to degrade all Palestinians (though this distinction is rapidly losing its force as the settlers become more active in periodic pogroms against Palestinian civilians). On the other hand, the minority of whites in South Africa were not part of a people who had always suffered systematic persecution, and though they had some reason to fear what might happen to them as a minority in a black country, they did not have reasonable claim on the conscience of the rest of the world. Yes, it's true that in the West Bank the conditions of oppression and discrimination are in many respects worse than those which existed in South Africa—but it is not apartheid, and using that word or thinking that one can use the same strategies to challenge Israeli policy has proved to be a dead-end. So while I support boycotts and disinvestment in Western firms that make goods specifically to help the settlers and the IDF be more effective in enforcing the Occupation, I oppose any general boycott of Israel itself. And there are moral reasons to oppose it as well—after all, the amount of suffering that Israel imposes on the Palestinian people pales in comparison to what the United States continues to do to Iraq. Any boycott that doesn't also involve active campaigns for boycotting and disinvestment in U.S. firms (or for that matter, given its behavior in Tibet and Darfur, China) feels like selective prosecution, and something inappropriate for majority Christian or majority Muslim societies that have not yet taken full responsibility for their own role in creating the trauma that is now being played out against Palestinians.

In fact, this last point should remind us of the larger context. Israel has been put into the same position internationally that Jews



"The Roots of Jerusalem" by Elisha Ben-Yitzhak

talking to someone about it would be helpful and not a sign of self-identifying as mentally ill. It was a powerful strategy, and by the mid 1980s we had become so successful that the term "stress" entered the popular vocabulary with much broader meanings than it had ever had before. One of the goals of the Tikkun Community and the Network of Spiritual Progressives is to bring together psychotherapists in the West with Israeli and Palestinian therapists to explore what would be analogous work in those societies.

A central ingredient in any serious strategy will be the task of reassuring people in both societies that they are not hated and demeaned by the peoples of the world, but rather than they are understood in some deep way. That's why in *Healing Israel/Palestine* I try to tell the history in a

often were forced into domestically in Eastern Europe: the public face of a system of oppression that Jews did not control but which they served in part because they received protection from ruling elites. History has shown that this position is precarious, and a bad deal for Jews. But it is Western imperialism and colonialism that set this up, and Jews are only one of many peoples who suffer the consequences along with our Palestinian brothers and sisters. Yet this reality should also remind Jews that placing their faith in the allegiance of the U.S. capitalist class is a terrible strategic error almost certain to backfire. American imperialism around the world, often with the backing of Israel as its sole loyal ally in disgraceful acts of domination, is generating huge amounts of anger that will be passed down from generation to generation among the peoples of the world. It's a story we could have learned from the Book of Genesis in the Torah—Joseph becomes the prime minister of Egypt, comes up with economic schemes that deprive many Egyptians of their livelihood, and in future generations the Egyptians then enslave and oppress the Jews. This is not a rational strategy for long-term survival.

The problem with PTSD is that it deprives people of the capacity to think about long-term survival and instead focuses them on the perceived (and usually unrealistic) immediate threats to such an extent that they are unable to act rationally.

What can one do with such a reality? Psychotherapy has proved of only limited impact with PTSD clients, but it has some chance. Not so when trying to build a mass psychology of healing for a whole society, particularly when the society has not elected to undergo therapy! Those of us who know healing is necessary are far from being empowered to develop societal strategies that could begin the healing process. For us, part of the problem is to get the society to recognize that it could benefit from therapy. My own work with the Institute for Labor and Mental Health started on this same challenge with regard to destigmatizing the use of therapy for working class people. We developed a campaign to popularize the notion that everyone is facing stress, that one is not "crazy" if one seeks support for stress-related problems, and that

way that shows that both sides have a legitimate story, both sides have been unnecessarily cruel to the other; both sides need to do repentance and atonement. Sure, the story can be told in a blame-oriented way. But that will only make it less likely that we can heal the two sides enough that they could actually imagine feeling safe enough to make compromises for a real peace. Those who want to advance social healing should begin writing the texts, composing the songs, and creating the T.V. and movie documentaries that have as their goal the presentation of this kind of balanced and non-blaming compassionate perspective.

I don't underestimate the difficulties in this strategy. The very fact of telling the story in a balanced way in the Jewish community in the United States has earned *Tikkun* the reputation of being anti-Semitic, or run by self-hating Jews. The organized Jewish community in the United States, prodded on by the Israel Lobby (see my discussion in *Tikkun* Sept/Oct 2007) has been one of the major impediments to this kind of discourse, or to any peace process that cares equally for both sides. The fact that Barack Obama felt that pressure intensely enough to insert in his speech on race a line about the real problem in the Middle East stemming not from Israel's relationship to its neighbors but only from Islamic fundamentalism, is only the latest example of the incredible power of the Israel Lobby to make questioning Israel's policies in the United States a sure path to political suicide.

So what can we do? We've found that lobbying Congress is a dead-end, because most of the Congressional leaders who agree with our "progressive Middle Path" that is both pro-Israel and pro-Palestine feel scared to say so publicly, and will continue to feel this way until some mainstream political candidate is willing to run for president and make this Middle Path his or her own. Similarly, and for reasons explained above, there's no point in demonstrations that one-sidedly fault Israel, even though Israel, at the moment, has far superior power and hence far superior responsibility to take the first steps to change the situation. Of course, we'll work with the "J Street" project to help create an alternative to AIPAC, but the pressures on that "alternative" to moderate its message in ways that make it less effective will be huge, and the

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tendency to focus only on policy issues and not on the underlying mass psychology that has contributed to AIPAC's power is going to be immense.

What *does* make sense is a politics of compassion and a discourse of non-violence. Those of us who wish to see Palestinians freed from subjugation, and Israel living in peace with its neighbors, have to begin to apply the wisdom of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi to the situation in the Middle East. Efforts to create dialogue, to learn how to express oneself in ways that are supportive and not hostile, to learn how to respond to violence with non-violence, must be coupled with a principled embrace of non-violence and teaching non-violence in our public schools, churches, synagogues, mosques, and religious schools.

But there is a deeper change that is needed to heal Israel/Palestine: a change in our own conception of what brings security. The Network of Spiritual Progressives/Tikkun Community evolved from its primary focus on challenging Israeli policy to challenging the Domination Strategy (the view that homeland security comes from imposing our will on others lest they impose their will on us) in Western societies. This evolution occurred not only because of the moral disaster of the Iraq War, but also because we became increasingly convinced that at the heart of the Middle East struggle was the need to undermine the Domination Strategy that has become the common sense, not only of the post 9/11 Western countries but also of the mass consciousness in Israel and Palestine. In place of that slippery-slope to violence and war, we propose a Strategy of Generosity: that homeland security can best be achieved through acts of genuine caring and generosity toward others, so that we are perceived as (and actually become) a country that recognizes our fundamental interconnection with all other human beings on the planet and with the well-being of the planet itself. It is that thinking which now leads us to give priority attention to the Global Marshall Plan, not only because it is the best way to end global poverty, homelessness, hunger, inadequate education and inadequate healthcare, but also because it is the best way to lead by example and to show both Arab and Israeli peoples the way that could bring them lasting peace.

This, we believe, is the most important contribution we in the West could make to healing Israel/Palestine. If we could build a political movement in Western societies that was committed to the Strategy of Generosity and the Global Marshall Plan, we would help Israelis feel that acting from generosity was not some utopian fantasy but rather a way of thinking that was already legitimated in the politics of the economically advanced societies of the West. In this way we could re-empower the many decent people in Israel/Palestine who today avoid politics, certain that there is no point and that no one would ever be willing to make the compromises necessary for peace. Living in the West, we have an important role, but it is not that of imposing our solution, but rather that of modeling a way of relating to others that could infectiously transform the world's "common sense." Just as the women's movement, first dismissed as "unrealistic," has had a profound impact on

every country on the planet, so a movement for love and generosity, and for a New Bottom Line, such as that detailed in our Global Marshall Plan (click on "Current Thinking" at www.tikkun.org) and our Spiritual Covenant with America (www.spiritualprogressives.org) could have a profound impact on the process of healing the Middle East. To the extent that we can make that happen here, we would be making a huge contribution toward the possibility of lasting peace for Israel.

In future writing I will discuss the meaning of the situation in Israel/Palestine for those who believe in God and who want to keep Judaism alive. For now, suffice it to say that the kind of Zionism that has emerged in Israel is fundamentally incompatible with the highest values of the Jewish tradition, and must be rejected even as we develop a compassionate attitude toward the Jewish people of Israel. For those who wish to see Judaism survive the twenty-first century, a major first step is to separate the religion from its current identity with the policies of a national state that has lots of Jews living in it and that has succeeded in getting many Jews around the world to identify it as "The Jewish State." I personally feel tremendous pride in many aspects of what the Jews in Israel have accomplished in culture, science, and technology, even as I feel tremendous shame at what they have failed to accomplish in human relations, ethics, and environmental sensitivity. Senator Obama, in explaining why he would not ditch his minister, Rev. Wright even though he was deeply upset by some of Wright's teachings, pointed out that connections to one's extended family ought not to be broken because of ideological differences. For me, Israel is part of my extended family, and no matter how I may deplore its treatment of Palestinians, or the culture of day-to-day insensitivity that I've often experienced during the many years that I lived in Israel, I want Israel to survive, to be strong and to be safe. But I carefully separate my sense of family—which for me is tied quite strongly to the people of Israel—from my understanding of what is required of us to serve God and to preserve Judaism in the contemporary period. For that latter goal, we must be willing to apply the prophetic tradition and ask Israel's Isaiah's powerful question: "Who asked you to trample in My Courtyard" and to defile the holiness of God's Torah?

Judaism teaches us to "love the stranger," (the Other). There is no more frequently quoted injunction in Torah than variations on the following theme: "When you come into your land, do not oppress the stranger: remember that you were strangers in the land of Egypt." A Jewish state that has been unwilling or unable to live by that command has no religious foundation and can generate no lasting support from those committed to God and Torah. Such a state, failing that central commandment, is unlikely to provide safety and security for the Jewish people in any long-term way in the twenty-first century.

Like every other people on the planet, Jews have a yearning to live in a world based on love and kindness and generosity. We will respond to those possibilities just as all peoples will if given half a chance. The task of building a Network of Spiritual Progressives is

to convince all peoples that far from being a naïve utopian fantasy, building such a world of open-heartedness, compassion, and caring for others is the immediate survival task of the twenty-first century.

☆ About this Special Issue ☆

Tikkun approached a wide variety of Israeli, Palestinian, and American Jews, Christians and Muslims to write about their thoughts and feelings about Israel at its sixtieth anniversary, and the sixtieth anniversary of the Palestinian "Nakba" from a political, theological, or purely personal perspective. We are grateful for all of the honest, thought-provoking, and heart-felt responses we received from great thinkers from across the world. Due to space considerations we were unable to include all of the articles in the print issue of the magazine. We have created a special section on our website (www.tikkun.org) for all the articles that we could not include here. We strongly urge you to read the web articles as well as those printed in the magazine. ■

Rabbi Michael Lerner is Editor of Tikkun.

I, MAY I REST IN PEACE

by Yehuda Amichai

trans. Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld

I, may I rest in peace—I, who am still living, say,
May I have peace in the rest of my life.
I want peace right now while I'm still alive.
I don't want to wait like that pious man who wished for one leg
of the golden chair of Paradise, I want a four-legged chair
right here, a plain wooden chair. I want the rest of my peace now.
I have lived out my life in wars of every kind: battles without
and within, close combat, face-to-face, the faces always
my own, my lover-face, my enemy-face.
Wars with the old weapons—sticks and stones, blunt axe, words,
dull ripping knife, love and hate,
and wars with newfangled weapons—machine gun, missile,
words, land mines exploding, love and hate.
I don't want to fulfill my parents' prophecy that life is war.
I want peace with all my body and all my soul.
Rest me in peace.

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Destined to be an American, not an Israeli, Jew

by Rebecca Alpert

THINKING ABOUT ISRAEL AT SIXTY MAKES ME WANT TO LOOK BACK IN TIME TO FIGURE OUT HOW the Zion of the Jewish people's dreams became Israel as we know it today. In the early days before statehood, Zionism was a complex phenomenon. While some talked of nationhood and governance, others wanted to build a society based on the highest Jewish ethical principles where Jewish culture could flourish. We have forgotten the cultural Zionism of Ahad Ha'am, the pseudonym of Asher Ginsburg, who wanted to create a place where Jewish art, music, literature, and intellect could thrive. We have forgotten the socialist Zionism of Martin Buber and Judah Magnes who knew that this "land without a people" was inhabited by Arabs, and argued early on for a binational state rather than the British partition plan in the 1940s. But after the state was established in 1948, the myth of nationhood gained absolute supremacy.

Although there were Zionists in Jewish populations around the world, and being anti-Zionist was becoming less acceptable in the Jewish world, in the early days of statehood Israel was by no means the center of American Jewish life. As far as my Reform synagogue in the 1950s and 1960s was concerned, Israel did not exist. Although there were exceptions, most of the Reform movement was in the non-Zionist camp. Israel wasn't part of our Hebrew school curriculum—in fact I learned to speak Hebrew in an Ashkenazi dialect that differed from the Hebrew adopted by Israel. My rabbi never gave a sermon about Israel, and not one dime was raised to support the new nation. All I knew of Israel was from what I read in the newspapers or learned in Social Studies class in junior high school.

But in June of 1967 all that changed. The Six Day War put Jewish communities around the world on notice that Israel was vulnerable but also powerful. Its military exploits in defense of its right to exist against Arab nations bent on its destruction were an instant source of pride. Almost overnight, Israel became the focus of American Jewish life. Any group that had previously considered itself non-Zionist quickly changed its tune. It was not possible to imagine that Israel was anything less than perfect and that the survival of Judaism depended on what happened in this tiny country.

To understand this for myself, I decided to spend my junior year of college (1969) at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Two years after the war, I landed in a country that had just secured its borders by having captured land from Syria, Jordan and Egypt. The feeling in the country was euphoric and it was impossible not to be moved by what I saw. I landed in Jerusalem to visit the holy sites of Islam, Judaism and Christianity, all within walking distance of one another. I saw excavations of ancient sites I had read about in the Bible alongside modern museums filled with Israeli art. I lived for the summer in the Negev desert where I picked peaches from trees that grew in the sand and learned Israeli folk songs and dances, along with properly-accented Israeli Hebrew. I heard the inspiring words of David Ben Gurion, the country's first prime minister, who told this group of young Americans that Israel was the key to the

survival of the Jewish people. It was hard not to fall in love with the place. And then they took me to Gaza.

Not many American Jews saw this side of Israel back then, and I'm still not sure what they were thinking taking a busload of us to a refugee camp. Perhaps they meant to show us the cruelty of the Egyptians in forcing their Arab neighbors to live in conditions that were not fit for human life. Girls wearing woolen dresses in sweltering heat, rationed food that consisted of small amounts of oil and grain, with milk only for nursing mothers and children under five, people begging us for our leftover lunches. It was hard to envision these people as the enemy. Why Israel wasn't doing anything to ameliorate these conditions in its newly occupied lands was not explained.

I began to notice that, despite the rhetoric that what made Israel special was that Jews did all the jobs, the construction of my building was being done by an Arab work force. The women who cleaned our dormitories were Arab and so were the day laborers I observed coming from East Jerusalem early in the morning. Something was just not right....

By the end of the year I was convinced that I was destined to be an American, not an Israeli Jew. But my skepticism put me out of step in the American Jewish community, which was becoming more and more Israel-centered. I never questioned the need for a sovereign state, for a safe and secure place where Judaism could flourish and Jews could live in peace. I could not align myself with those forces on the American Left that turned against Israel, denouncing Zionism as racism after 1967. But I also assumed that Israel intended to return the land it gained during the war in exchange for peace. I never imagined an occupation that was to last for more than forty years and change the character of the country completely. ■

*Rebecca Alpert is a Reconstructionist rabbi, Associate Professor of Religion at Temple University, and author of the forthcoming book, *Whose Torah? A Concise Guide to Progressive Judaism* (The New Press, 2008), from which the above is excerpted.*

This is Not the Israel Our Young People Died For

by Uri Avnery

MAY 14, 1948. B COMPANY, 54TH BATTALION, GIVATI BRIGADE. WE HAD JUST PUT UP OUR LITTLE tents (which we called "bivouacs") in the yard of kibbutz Hulda. We were not allowed into the dining hall, the center of the kibbutz.

We were busy preparing for the night's action. We already knew our objective: Kubeiba, an Arab village east of Ramleh, on the Jaffa-Jerusalem road. I was cleaning my Czech rifle—manufactured for the Wehrmacht and supplied to us courtesy of Stalin—when a rumor went around: Ben Gurion was just making a speech declaring the foundation of our state. For this special occasion, the kibbutz was allowing the soldiers into the dining room, where the communal radio was located.

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Frankly, we were not very interested in the windy phrases of some politician in Tel Aviv. We knew that the state was *us*. If we won the war, there would be a state. If we didn't, there would be no state, no Tel Aviv, and no us.

But there was one item that aroused some curiosity: What was the new state to be called? Jewish State? State of the Jews? Zion? Judea? Jerusalem? So I went to the dining room. When Ben Gurion's easily recognizable voice announced that we were founding the "State of Israel," I had heard enough returned to my bivouac.

On the way out, I ran into Issar, the brother of a girlfriend of mine. He belonged to another company, which was about to attack another village. We exchanged some small talk. I never saw him again—a few days later he was dead.

That night we attacked the village. When we got there, it was already deserted. I went into one of the primitive houses and found that a pot on the stove was still hot. The villagers must have fled at the last moment.



Jewish Haganah troops patrol a suburb of Jerusalem, Palestine May 6, 1948.

At that time I could not foresee that these villagers would return to haunt us for decades to come...

When you reach the age of sixty, you should know who you are. The State of Israel does not.

Is it a "Jewish state"? The "State of the Jewish People," as one of our laws says? An Israeli state? A state belonging to all its citizens, at least 20 percent of whom are not Jewish at all? Or a state belonging to its Jewish citizens only? A "Jewish and Democratic State," as the official doctrine, upheld by the Supreme Court, asserts? And is this not an oxymoron?

And if this is a "Jewish" state, what does that mean? A state expressing the Jewish Spirit—whatever that is? A state where the majority of the citizens are Jews, now and forever, which would turn it into a "Jewish and Demographic" State? A state where Jews enjoy special privileges?

And anyway, who is a Jew? Somebody who would have been considered a Jew by the Nazis and marked for annihilation?



Somebody who practices the Jewish religion? Somebody who feels they belong to a Jewish nation? Or, as the Israeli law says, somebody whose mother is Jewish and who has not adopted another religion, as well as somebody who has converted to the Jewish religion in a recognized religious ceremony? (In the Jewish religion, the father does not count.)

And what are we Jews in Israel? Israelis? Jews? Israeli Jews? Jewish Israelis? These are very different things. The distinctions are not abstract, not at all theoretical. They have very practical implications in our daily life and in the life of our state.

Current polls in Israel show that a third of the population defines itself as Israeli, another third as Jewish and the rest as Jewish Israeli. The population registry of the Interior Ministry refuses to recognize anyone as belonging to the "Israeli nation." A group of Israelis, including myself, has a case on file against the ministry, demanding that their registration document should drop the entry "Nation: Jewish" and replace it with "Nation: Israeli."

Sixty years after its birth in the throes of war, the state does not really know what it is. There is hardly any debate about this, aside from some little-noticed academic treatises. By universal, tacit agreement, the issue is simply avoided.

One of the manifest results: on its sixtieth anniversary, Israel is one of just three states in the world without a formal constitution. (The British Constitution, consisting mostly of precedents established over a very long time, exists in all but name. New Zealand is still British in this respect.)

Israel knows no clear separation between religion and state, nor between religion and nation. The status of its Arab citizens is uncertain in practice, if not in theory. The war between us and the Palestinian people just goes on and on. For the whole of its sixty years of existence, Israel has lived officially in a state of emergency. Indeed, the State of Israel and the State of Emergency are twins.

Why? What is the root cause of this uncertainty?

Modern Zionism was born at the end of the nineteenth century. The timing is significant.

Zionist mythology has it that throughout the ages the Jews yearned to "return" to the Holy Land. If so, they certainly kept their longings in check. When hundreds of thousands of Jews were expelled from Spain 515 years ago, most of them eventually settled in the countries of the Muslim Ottoman Sultanate, but only a handful of old Rabbis went to the poor Turkish province of Palestine. When Napoleon called for the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine, nobody paid any attention. Similar nineteenth-century British and American initiatives did not fare any better.

The real trigger for the revolutionary movement called Zionism was the emergence of nationalism as the main driving force all over Europe. All the new national movements were more or less anti-Semitic. When many of the Jews realized that there was no place for the Jews in the new European nations—from the France of the Dreyfus Affair to the Russia of the pogroms—some of them decided to constitute themselves as a new nation. Instead of "assimilating" individually, as Theodor Herzl initially proposed,

they were to assimilate collectively by becoming a nation of their own on the European model.

Almost all the leading Orthodox Rabbis of the day cursed Herzl. God had punished the Jews by expelling us from His land, and only He could decide whether and when to lift His punishment. By seeking to anticipate the Messiah, the Zionists were committing a mortal sin. Some of the Orthodox even believe that the Holocaust was a sign of God's wrath.

The trouble with the Zionists' resolve to create a national state for the Jews was that there was no Jewish nation in existence. One had to be invented. So invent one they did.

Actually, inventing nations was then developing into a popular international pastime. In his ground-breaking book *Imagined Communities* (Verso, 2006), Benedict Anderson describes how all modern nations more or less "invented" themselves by rearranging historical facts and myths and creating "national" histories.

The Zionists went much further than that. They pretended that the Jewish Diaspora was also a nation. Actually, the Jews, who were such an anomaly in nineteenth-century Europe, had been quite normal at the time of Christ, when ethnic-religious communities led autonomous lives and had their own jurisdiction. They were then the rule, not the exception.

At that time, a Jew in Alexandria could marry a Jewess in far-away Antiochia, but not the Hellenic lady across the street, who in turn could marry a Hellenic man in Corinth but not her neighbor the Jew. This system continued under the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires (where the communities were called "millets"). It was taken over by the British mandate regime in Palestine, and traces of it can still be detected in the legislation of today's Israel.

When Herzl wrote *Wir sind ein Volk*—we are a people—he was borrowing a term from European reality. But of course the Jews were not *ein Volk* like the Germans or *un peuple* like the French. Even today, when we use the term "Jewish people," it is in a metaphorical sense.

When the Zionists came to Palestine, using a borrowed terminology and a reshaped history, they created a new reality. Today, no one in his right mind would deny that we here in Israel are a nation in a very real sense; a vibrant, thriving nation with a renewed language, creating a new culture, boasting achievements in many fields.

But this nation—what is it? Jewish? Hebrew? Israeli? I have no doubt that it is a new Israeli nation, new as, say, Australia, Canada, and indeed the United States are "new" nations, distinct from their British mother-nation. We, the Jewish Israelis, are as Jewish as the Cohens of New York and the Levys of Los Angeles—but we belong to different nations. Their nation is American, ours is Israeli.

It could not be otherwise. One cannot transplant millions of individuals from one country to another, from one language to another, from one climate to another, from one society to another, from one geopolitical reality to another, and expect them to remain the same.

The Jewish Israelis and the Jewish Diaspora are closely connected. We have common traditions, a common religion (even

atheists like myself are Jewish atheists, not Christian atheists), common memories—foremost among them the terrible, unifying memory of the Holocaust.

But we are Israelis, belonging to this country, this region, this reality in which we live, work and fight—mostly fight.

If somebody had told us on that sunny day in May 1948 that we would still be fighting the same war in 2008—indeed, that this war would still dominate our lives, fill the front pages of our daily newspapers, occupy our thoughts and actions—we would have considered them mad.

My comrades and I saw before us a vista of a thriving, peaceful state, democratic, liberal, secular, in the front row of a humanity marching towards a better world. Instead, we are mired in a conflict without end. Many Israelis now believe that this will be our lot for generations to come.

This is the central failure of Israel: it has achieved so very much in so many fields, but it has failed to achieve peace.

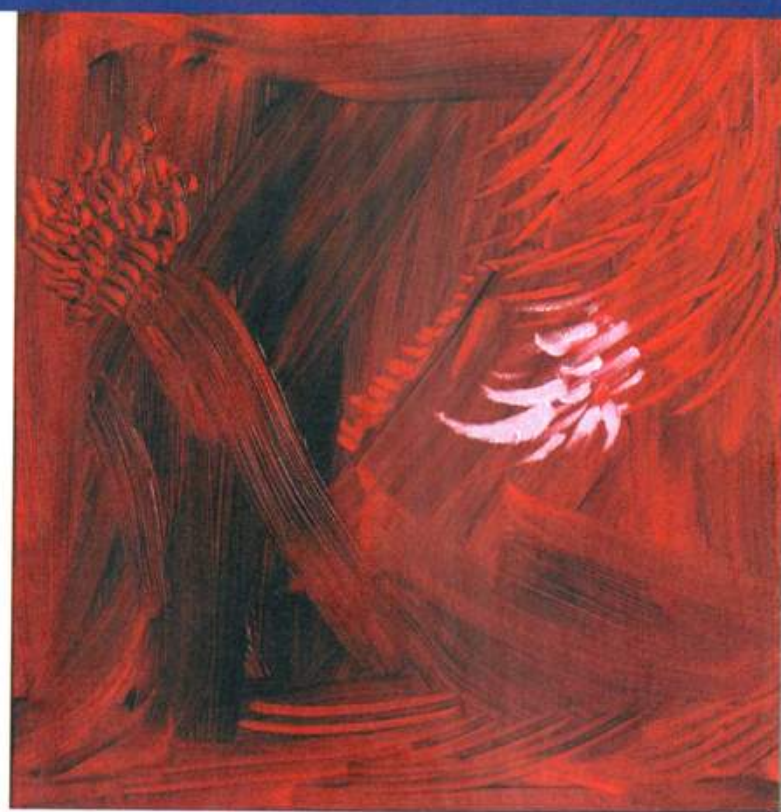
The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been likened to a clash between an unstoppable force and an immovable object. When the early Zionists decided—contrary to the inclinations of Herzl himself—to found their national state in Palestine, they unwittingly started the war which has continued to this very day and which completely warps our character and all our endeavors.

I wrote almost the same on our fifteenth anniversary. I hope that I shall not be obliged to write it again ten years hence—assuming I am still around.

Writing this, I think of Issar—the young soldier I ran into in front of the kibbutz dining hall the day the state was proclaimed, who lost his life in the desperate struggle to hold off the Egyptian army on the approaches to Tel Aviv. If he were resurrected today (and it wouldn't be the first time that something like this has happened in this country, would it?), as he was then, still eighteen years old, what would he see?

He would hardly recognize the face of the state that had then just come into being. Instead of a society which ranked equality and solidarity and mutual responsibility above all other social values, which had created the unique kibbutzim and a comprehensive system of universal social insurance, he would see a state with a gap between rich and poor wider than in any other developed country, with more than a quarter of its population below the poverty line, with just nineteen families controlling a third of the economy, with a shameless governing group of corrupt politicians in the pay of local and foreign billionaires.

Instead of a vanishing religious establishment, ridiculed by most young Sabras at the time, he would see a huge Orthodox pressure group using its immense power to impose intolerant, reactionary laws on the citizens, while milking them without shame. He would be amazed to see that the "Religious Zionists," whom he knew as a moderate party on the margin of the political scene, have turned into a fanatical, semi-fascist, racist and Arab-hating monster controlling government policy, gobbling up the land of others and preaching a religion of ethnic cleansing.



"Bordering on Embroidery #16" by Miriam Neiger

He would see that the army—whose name he never knew because he was killed before the Israeli Defense Forces were officially established—this citizen-army he joined in order to defend his home and family, and which boasted of its "purity of arms," has turned into a brutal army of oppression, a colonial force executing Arabs at will, turning back women in labor and the terminally ill at the checkpoints, terrorizing a whole population and covering up war crimes.

Worst of all, he would see the Zionist movement, which he believed to be an idealistic, humanist liberating force, behaving like a soulless instrument oppressing another people, led by cynical demagogues whose main aim is to choke any peace initiative in order to gobble up more land and cover it with new settlements.

What would Issar have said? Would he have said: "This is not the state I died for, to hell with it!"? I don't think so. Rather, I imagine him saying: "This is not the state I died for! So let's get to work and change it, let's turn it into a state—what was the name again?—a State of Israel we can be proud of."

The Biblical general whose name I bear, Abner, cried out to his opponent on the eve of battle: "Shall the sword devour forever? Knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? How long shall it be then, ere you bid the people return from following their brethren?" (2 Samuel, 2:26)

Joab, King David's commander in chief, did indeed call the battle off. When shall we have the good sense to do the same? ■

Uri Avnery is Chair of Gush Shalom, the pre-eminent peace activist organization in Israel.



SOME GOOD NEWS

TIKKUN READERS KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE PROBLEMS IN ISRAEL OFTEN KNOW FAR less about the dynamic community of Israeli non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which are the engine for challenging this reality. With the diminishing of the Israeli welfare state and collapse of the collective national ethos, on the one hand, and the absence of any cohesive left political movement, on the other, these organizations are now the driving force of legal, advocacy, and educational work for social change in the country. The past two decades has brought a dramatic increase in the number of these social change organizations. There are hundreds of organizations working on issues as diverse as economic justice, civil and human rights, community economic development, environment, and religious pluralism. They range from small, grassroots organizations to large professional ones.

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The list below provides just a flavor of the work of some of the groups, supported over recent years by the Ford Foundation Israel Fund (www.fordisrael.org). Some of these groups, and numerous others, receive financial support from the New Israel Fund (www.nif.org) and ongoing capacity-building assistance from its empowerment and training arm, Shatil. *Ha'aretz* recently stated: "There is hardly any significant, socially-oriented organization in Israel today that does not owe its existence to the New Israel Fund."



CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI, www.acri.org.il) is Israel's oldest and largest flagship civil rights organization, often described as the Israeli equivalent of the ACLU. The organization's precedent setting Supreme Court victories, won over the past 26 years, have advanced the rights afforded to Israelis in all communities from left to right, secular to religious, Jews and Arabs alike.

While ACRI is the only national organization working on the full spectrum of issues, there are a host of other, smaller, human rights organizations focusing on specific issues or constituencies. For example: **Physicians for Human Rights-Israel** (www.phr.org.il) monitors and advocates for the right to health within Israel and in the Occupied Territories; **Workers Hotline** (www.kavlaoved.org.il) works to protect the rights of vulnerable workers in Israel and the Occupied Territories; and **Rabbis for Human Rights** www.rhr.israel.net introduces Jewish tradition and sources into its work to promote the rights of Israelis and Palestinians.

B'Tselem: the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories (www.btselem.org) monitors and documents Israeli human rights policies in the Occupied Territories. Since its inception close to twenty years ago, its reports have earned high marks for accuracy and credibility. If you go into the offices of Israeli government and military officials, and senior offices within the U.S. State Department, you will undoubtedly see B'Tselem reports on staffer's desks. B'Tselem's work is focused on the macro level, leaving other organizations, such as **HaMoked: Center for the Defence of the Individual** (www.hamoked.org) to offer free legal and administrative services to individual Palestinians suffering consequences of Israeli policies in the Occupied Territories. The organization has handled more than 60,000 individual cases.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

Mirroring a global phenomenon, Israeli social change organizations are increasingly working in areas of economic and social rights. A leading example of this approach can be found in the work of **Yedid: The Association for Community Empowerment** (www.yedid.org.il). Utilizing a network of twenty Centers across the country, Yedid empowers Israelis to break the cycle of poverty through free individual legal and social assistance, community education initiatives and grassroots organizing for social change.

New, critically important work is being undertaken on the allocation and development of land and other national resources. **Bimkom-Planners for Planning Rights** (www.bimkom.org) works on system-wide change by encouraging the development of new planning practices and procedures that are more accessible and responsive to the needs of local communities in Israel. Since its founding seven years ago, Bimkom has assisted hundreds of local communities throughout Israel on questions relating to land zoning, planning and building regulations, and neighborhood redevelopment plans, and has run planning rights workshops for disadvantaged communities and other social change NGOs.

The Arab Center for Alternative Planning (www.ac-ap.org) works on exposing and challenging discriminatory planning and development policies directed towards the Palestinian Israeli community. The **Israeli Association for Distributive Justice** (www.adj.org.il) addresses the lack of transparency and accountability in official policies related to land distribution, water, and other natural resources.

FROM ISRAEL

by Aaron Back

EQUALITY FOR PALESTINIAN ISRAELI CITIZENS

Adalah: the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel (www.adalah.org) is often viewed as the legal arm of the Palestinian minority in Israel, which numbers close to 20 percent of the country's citizens. Utilizing Supreme Court litigation, the organization works to achieve individual and collective rights. Its dynamic cadre of lawyers is equally comfortable discussing the intricacies of Israeli law or citing international human rights standards and minority legal rights canon from the U.S. Supreme Court. This young, sophisticated organization reflects the growing face of the NGO sector within the Palestinian Israeli community.

Other Palestinian Israeli organizations working to advance equality: **Al Ahali: Center for Community Development** (www.ahalicenter.org), a

center focused on community organizing and training initiatives; **Galilee Society: the Arab National Society for Health Research and Services** (www.gal-soc.org) advances equitable health and environmental policies; **Mossawa: the Advocacy Center for Arab Citizens in Israel** (www.mossawacenter.org) and **Sikkuy: the Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality in Israel** (www.sikkuy.org.il) organize advocacy campaigns to advance equality; and **Al Tufula** (www.tufula.org) and **Women Against Violence** (www.wavo.org) are two leading women's organizations working to advance the rights of Palestinian Israeli women within their community and within the larger society.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Academy-Community Partnership for Social Change

(<http://law.huji.ac.il/eng/>, click on Institutes and Centers/Academy-Community). This new Center, established in 2006, promotes the mutual commitment of institutions of higher education, students, and the community towards advancing social justice and human rights in Israeli society. The Partnership, hosted by the Faculty of Law of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, has developed and implemented a national network of community engaged courses—academic programs integrating learning, research and social action. The Center also serves as a national hub for dozens of student-led organizations working to promote social change within the community.

Maala: Business for Social Responsibility (www.maala.org.il), inspired by the U.S.-based Business for Social Responsibility, has taken the lead since its founding ten years ago in educating and organizing the Israeli business community in developing strategies of corporate social responsibility.

MEDIA

Agenda—the Israeli Center for Strategic Communications (www.agenda.org.il) recognizes that the Israeli media is a powerful tool shaping public opinion, the public agenda, and influencing decision-makers. Sixty-three percent of adults (as compared to 40 percent in the United States) read at least one newspaper; 68 percent (United States: 41 percent) listen to the radio regularly; and 40 percent of Israeli adults (United States: 16 percent) visit Internet news sites on a regular basis. In this robust media environment, the critical perspective of Israeli social change activists and organizations often goes unheard. Founded in 2003, Agenda provides training and consultation to Israeli social change NGOs in how to influence the ways their issues are presented in the media. Through its work, Agenda seeks to establish a new public discourse where voices outside of the established mainstream are heard and a central place is given within the media to issues of peace and social justice.

CENTERS FOR PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

Adva Center: Information on Equality and Social Justice in Israel (www.adva.org), conducts research and analysis focused on social and economic inequalities. Much of this work is done within the framework of its *National Budget Analysis Program*, in which the draft national budget is analyzed annually, in real time, regarding its implications for disadvantaged social groups in particular and Israeli society in general. Members of Knesset are as eager as civil society organizations to read Adva's analyses so as to better understand the often impenetrable budget, leading Adva's work to be compared favorably with that of the highly respected Center for Budget Policy and Priorities in Washington, D.C.

Two new applied social research and policy institutes have emerged within the Palestinian Israeli community in recent years. **Mada al-Carmel: the Arab Center for Applied Social Research** (www.mada-research.org) develops theoretical and applied research on issues of identity and citizenship for the minority community, while the newly founded **Arab Center for Law and Policy** focuses on applied research that can inform strategic goal-setting, law and policy reforms affecting Palestinian Israeli citizens.

PUBLIC INTEREST LAW

Over the past twenty years, the **New Israel Fund Law Fellows Program** (www.nif.org/programs-and-partners/fellowships/) has nurtured an impressive stratum of lawyers who have gone on to form the core leadership of Israeli law based NGOs. Building on this foundation, the **Public Interest Law Program** (www.law.tau.ac.il/Eng/?CategoryID=248) based at the Tel Aviv University, is spearheading the development of a legal culture and practice in Israel advancing public interest law.

Aaron Back is Director of the Ford Israel Fund, a grant making partnership between the Ford Foundation and the New Israel Fund.



New Voices of Sanity and Deliberative Reason

by Theodore Bikel

ONE COULD LOOK AT THE VERY FACT THAT Israel is alive and thriving and say, “Dayenu; is there a need to look much further?” But look we must, as Jews who have regard not only for our yesterdays but for our future and survival. Surely Israel is an essential element of our ethnic and cultural identity. The centrality of Israel to Jewish life in the Diaspora is quite properly of paramount importance to the world Jewish community; yet there are moral and political pitfalls.

Jews outside of Israel have been reluctant to differ publicly—and even privately—with the policies of the government of Israel as they relate to questions impinging on physical security and military strategy. This reluctance was rightfully born of the feeling that the costs and consequences of any such policies would rest not on the shoulders of European, American, or Australian Jews, but on Israelis who have invested their lives in the creation and continuity of the state.

Yet it would be foolhardy to pretend that Jews the world over are not also profoundly affected by the choices any Israeli government makes. The meaning of our lives as Jews would surely be at risk, were Israel’s continuity endangered—not merely its physical continuity but its moral and ideological underpinnings as well.

In public Jewish pronouncements there are frequent calls for unity. Yet I firmly maintain that our strength lies not in unity but in diversity. In our past, there has always been disunity in one way or another, friction between scholars, strife between Pharisees and Sadducees, or between Hassidim and Misnagdim. What kept us alive was the sharp discussion, mind pitted against mind and man wrestling with God. Dialogue keeps one alive; acquiescence, on the other hand, leads to apathy and apathy to resignation.

The peace process is in deep trouble, partly due to certain elements that desire a radical shift from rational and democratic principles of governance to one that is shaped by messianism, extreme nationalism and religious fundamentalism. Two sayings of the prophets come to mind: *Shalom, shalom ve’eyn shalom* (peace, peace, they mouth, yet there is no peace) and the other, an admonition not usually heeded by politicians in any country: *Tzedek tzedek tirdof*—Justice, justice, shalt thou pursue.”

The thought often occurs to me that far more dangerous than the conflict between Arabs and Jews is the conflict between Jews



Theodore Bikel, folk singer, recording artist, linguist and actor.

and Jews. The recent controversy about religious conversion is an ominous case in point. The halachic definition of “who is a Jew” is coming into conflict with demographic realities that cannot be swept under the rug. For example, of the 250,000 recent immigrants to Israel from the former Soviet Union, fully 50 percent are of dubious Jewish identity by halachic standards. They suffered as Jews, were jailed and escaped communist prisons as Jews, clamored for freedom as Jews, and finally found refuge in the Jewish homeland. Now, unless they can furnish proof of descent or “acceptable” conversion, they cannot even be married in Israel, because this modern democratic country has not understood the value of erecting a barrier between state and religion.

I firmly believe that Jewish life, indeed any communal life, can only be organized according to democratic principles. The very antithesis to democracy is autocracy, or worse—theocracy. We are on dangerous ground here, with factions seeking to dictate to the rest of us and admitting of no definition but their own. It shames all those who have toiled in the service of the Jewish people and of the Zionist ideal, even laid down their lives for it, without the need for any declaration other than “I am a Jew—hineni.”

My hope is for a return to a Zionism that is faithful to its founders. Not one that is divisive and exclusionary, not one that labels all within or outside of Israel who do not share one single view as “*posh’ey yisrael*” or “*sony yisrael*” (sinners or self-haters). In this world of confusion, turmoil and obfuscation, we must above all insist that our voice be the voice of sanity and deliberative reason. ■

Theodore Bikel, an internationally beloved actor and singer, has had a profound impact on Jewish culture through his numerous albums of Jewish folk music, his concerts and his unrelenting efforts to preserve Yiddish.

AROUND JERUSALEM

by Dahlia Ravikovitch

trans. Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld

There is a train that goes round
And around Jerusalem
At night.

Birds there circle far above her,
Beat their wings, and with a clamor
In the dark they shed a feather
On the Jebus threshing-floor.

Black trees stand beside the track,
The tunnel calls the burrow black.
There's a sheen of polished rock
In the wadi at her back.

At night there's a train
That goes round
And around Jerusalem.

Mountains circle round about her,
Winds make moan from ruins inside her.
Birds are screeching in the calm air
And when night falls, owl eyes glimmer.

Mountains hang upon her breast
Like a crown, a regal vest.

A golem's clawing at her dust,
Growling like a hunted beast.

A clatter in the heart of dark,
In the gloomy hell-pit. Hark:
The golem growling Hallelujah.

WILDPEACE

by Yehuda Amichai

trans. Chana Bloch

Not the peace of a cease-fire,
not even the vision of the wolf and the lamb,
but rather
as in the heart when the excitement is over
and you can talk only about a great weariness.
I know that I know how to kill,
that makes me an adult.
And my son plays with a toy gun that knows
how to open and close its eyes and say Mama.
A peace
without the big noise of beating swords into ploughshares,
without words, without
the thud of the heavy rubber stamp: let it be
light, floating, like lazy white foam.
A little rest for the wounds—
who speaks of healing?
(And the howl of the orphans is passed from one generation
to the next, as in a relay race:
the baton never falls.)

Let it come
like wildflowers,
suddenly, because the field
must have it: wildpeace.

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"Galilee" by Betty Rubinstein





New Hopes Are Needed

by Leon Botstein

ON THE OCCASION OF ISRAEL'S SIXTIETH BIRTHDAY, ALL OF US SHOULD REFLECT ON THE future of Israel by comparing the realities of today with the aspirations that guided the Zionist movement for generations in its various forms before 1948. From my point of view, I hope that during the years ahead Israel can move toward developing the kind of constitutional framework that can secure a genuine secular and open democracy where the separation between church and state can be accomplished. A state where the majority is Jewish and of Jewish descent should be a democracy in a manner that implies a civil constitution that avoids the notion of an established state religion. This should in no way prevent or diminish the prospect that religion can thrive as a matter of personal and private choice. Such a framework would also give a firm legal basis for citizenship for all minorities.

Furthermore, I hope that sixty years of statehood have already successfully achieved one of the dreams of Zionism, to prove to the world that the Jews are just like all other human beings, and not exceptions. Having achieved this goal, I would nonetheless like to see Israel strengthen a commitment to values that were nurtured over many centuries in the Diaspora. These values are a love of learning and a commitment to culture and the arts. Israel should be preeminent as a nation in which public education flourishes at an extremely high level. It should be a nation of universities with international standing. It should be a nation where cultural institutions—including arts organizations (from museums to orchestras, dance ensembles, and theaters) and scientific research institutes—are a priority for public and private support. In Israel there is a residue of the exceptionalism of the past, which should become a cultural norm that protects the country from the drift to mediocrity and vulgarity in cultural and political life that threatens the United States and Europe.

For these goals to be achieved Israel must, for the sake of the lives of its citizens, find a way to diminish the priority that now, of necessity, must be placed on issues of security and defense. The need for peace is driven not only by basic concerns for safety and prosperity, and the interests of the international community in bringing years of conflict to an end. The need for security and peace is perhaps most urgent when one takes

into consideration the toll that sustained conflict and violence take on the character of Israeli culture and civil society. One hopes, from the perspective of an individual who is not a politician, that the aspiration, courage, and sacrifice that made Israel possible will result, during our lifetime, in a state in which the military is no longer the central domestic institution in the creation of social cohesion and political leadership.

It would be naïve to underestimate the obstacles that face Israel in the task of achieving a viable peace. But at the same time, enlightened self-interest seems to suggest that for Israel to thrive, the political and economic well being of the Palestinian population must be realized so that an end to enmity between Arabs and Jews can diminish, if not ultimately come to an end. Noble hopes are the regular objects of derision by those who consider themselves realists, but for culture and civility to flourish, pragmatic solutions must be based on ideals that mirror the fundamental belief in the dignity of all human beings that is at the core of Judaism as a religion and the Jewish historical experience in ancient and modern times. ■

Leon Botstein is President of Bard College, Music Director of the American Symphony and The Jerusalem Symphony Orchestras, founding artistic director of the Bard Music Festival, and editor of The Musical Quarterly.

Their Nakba and Ours

by Daniel M. Boyarin

FOR ME, THE DOMINANT ASSOCIATION WITH ISRAEL'S INDEPENDENCE DAY IS PEOPLE HITTING each other over the heads with plastic hammers that make an unpleasant noise. I found this custom distressing and obnoxious even before my eyes had been opened to the harm done by Zionism. I now find it emblematic of that double harm, done to Others and to ourselves, as Jews, by adopting the ways of violence necessitated by the nation-state and particularly the ethno-state, most especially the religio-ethno state.

It is emblematic to me that our way of celebrating has become an enactment of symbolic violence, a sign of the erosion of sensitivity to others that once was a vaunted hallmark of our culture. I am not saying that Jews were ever individually better ever than any other human beings or even collectively as a group; only that the cultural aspiration was to a kind of gentle concern that precluded, in aspiration, violence. There is a new Jewish word now for the honest and the gentle; they are both called in Israel, *friars*, suckers. Through pursuit of temporal power, exclusive sovereignty, and

wealth, we have become a people our own grandparents would not recognize, so I mourn on Independence Day.

Far more important than my narcissistic concerns for Judaism and its future and the harm done to them by Zionism is the harm done to the Palestinian People. Their own potential sovereignty in a land in which they have lived for thousands of years (the myth of recent immigration having been exploded well and truly by Israeli scholars) was wiped out in one moment on Independence Day. Half the land of the Israeli Palestinians, if not more, has been appropriated for immigrants from Europe, not refugees because of anything Palestinians did to them, but owing to what Europe did to them. The Palestinians' culture has become a second-class citizen in their own homeland, as have their bodies. Forty years ago, an enormous territory belonging entirely to Palestinians was appropriated by Israel for its expansionist projects to control all sites holy to Jews. Such massive theft of a People's Land and also of so many people's land is a huge act of violence in its own right; maintaining that military occupation further perpetrated untold violence and continues unabated, even exacerbated, every day. Jews, good people most of them, support this carnage having convinced themselves that it is necessary: for what? for whom?

Isaac Deutscher many years ago compared the Jews in Europe to a man standing on the roof of his burning house. He jumped off to save himself and landed on a neighbor whose bone he broke. Instead, however, of apologizing, helping the neighbor up, calling the doctor, and paying for the damage, he began cursing the neighbor for having been under him when he jumped and punishing him for lashing out in pain.

Hitting folks over the head with plastic hammers is the perfect celebration of this Nakba, this catastrophe for everyone involved, both perpetrators and victims, on the sixtieth anniversary of the Nakba of 1948. ■

Palestinian artists paint a mural to mark the anniversary of Al Nakba, or the catastrophe, the Arabic term used to describe the uprooting of hundreds of thousands of their people with the 1948 creation of the state of Israel, in Gaza city.

Daniel Boyarin is Hermann P. and Sophia Taubman Professor of Talmudic Culture, Departments of Near Eastern Studies and Rhetoric, University of California at Berkeley.

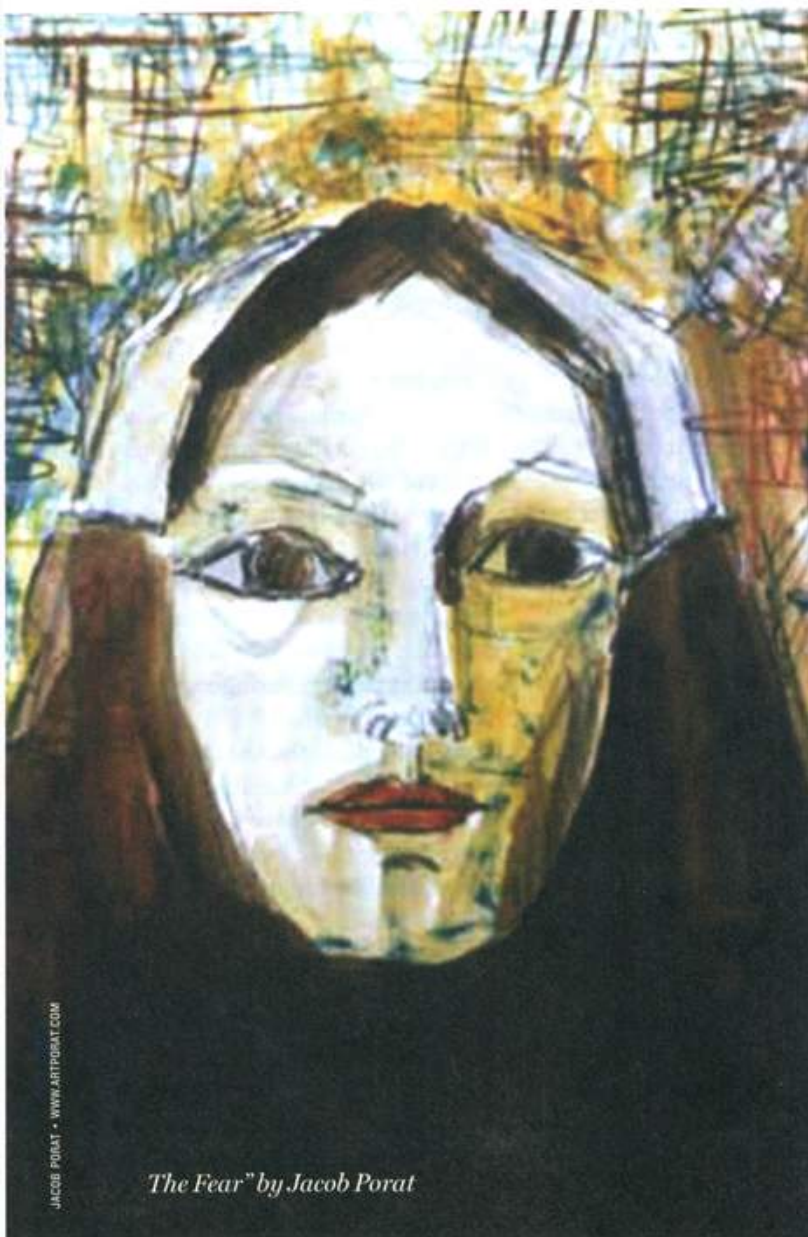




Un Numbing from the Holocaust

A Prerequisite for Advancing Dialogue on Israeli- Palestinian Peace

by Cherie R. Brown



JACOB PORAT • WWW.ARTPORAT.COM

The Fear by Jacob Porat

I GREW UP IN A STRONGLY JEWISH HOME WITH A deep love of Israel. My first trip to Israel was in the summer of 1969 when I was a dedicated anti-war activist on my campus at the University of California, Los Angeles. I traveled to Israel with a group of young Jewish women to study with Inbal, the Yemenite dance theater of Israel. As part of the trip, I attended a conference for Jewish progressive young people from four countries.

When I went for my first visit to the Wailing Wall, I saw the Israeli military with their guns guarding the sites surrounding the Wall. I had a strong premonition that day in 1969 that I couldn't shake off: that the occupation of Arab lands and the dependence on military strength to secure Israel's well being would be the downfall of my people. Everyone around me was celebrating the victory, that Israel could defeat her enemies in six days. I was heartbroken because I could see that the Israel I loved from afar as a child was being consumed by a military victory that was so foreign to my understanding of what it meant to be Jewish. I went in search of those within Israel who shared my concern. Since buses didn't run in Jerusalem on the Sabbath, I walked five miles on a Saturday afternoon to find the one conscientious objector I had been told was refusing to fight in the Israeli army. He was a lonely voice speaking out against the growing reliance on the military.

I came back to the United States and tried to talk with my Jewish friends and my rabbi at Hillel about my worries for Israel. I couldn't find anyone Jewish to talk to. In those years, many Jews were saying that there was no such thing as a Palestinian. No one could listen to a twenty-year-old who had just come back from her first trip to Israel and was grieving about the growing pride in military solutions for a complex struggle.

The only person I could find who understood my worries for

Israel was an African American friend, Lou Smith, who directed a storefront in Watts for Black empowerment, Operation Bootstrap. I had begun attending White-Black Dialogue sessions at Operation Bootstrap while I was still in high school, and I built a strong friendship with Lou. He told me that one of the reasons he liked me so much was because I was proud of who I was—and I was proud of being Jewish. I invited Lou to speak to the seventh graders I taught at a local Reform Synagogue. Here was a strong African American community activist telling my seventh grade students why they should be proud of being Jewish. It was to Lou I turned in 1969 when I couldn't find anyone Jewish to talk to about Israel. I cried with him about my worries that Jews were celebrating a military victory over Arabs and how I thought this could destroy the soul of the Jewish people. Lou was able to tell me about his similar worries with the growing militarism in the Black Power movement.

I spent the next forty years trying to understand and then help Jews heal from some of the scars I saw that summer in Israel. As part of that work, I have led workshops all over the world for Jews on issues of Jewish identity, Jewish internalized oppression, and Jewish-non Jewish alliance building. In thousands of counseling sessions, I have listened to Jewish stories—and come to understand first-hand how the unconscious collective memory of the Holocaust invades every part of our daily lives as Jews in ways that very few of us have a full picture of—and affect deeply American Jewish responses to Israel.

Those of my generation, born either during or directly after World War II, bear some of the strongest scars from the Holocaust. Many were born into families who either lost loved ones in the death camps or had to bring children into a world that had just gassed six million Jews, including thousands of Jewish babies.

There is one phrase I have heard so many times in my life, whenever concerns about Israel and Palestinian rights are raised: "How can we, a people who have experienced 2,000 years of mistreatment, turn around and mistreat another people?"

Denial is one of the first psychological stages of dealing with unbearable grief. Many Jews in the United States deal with the enormous feelings of grief and devastation from the Holocaust by denying that they knew anything about what was happening to Jews.

I took my parents to the United States Holocaust Museum when it first opened in Washington, D.C. Before getting to the museum, my dad sat me down and said, "Honey, we just didn't know what Hitler was doing." When we got to the museum, I walked with my dad hand in hand through rooms with newspaper clippings from the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and other papers, all dating back to the late 1930s. Article after article spelled out clearly Hitler's design for Jews. I turned to my dad, who is an avid newspaper reader, and said as lovingly as I could, "I don't understand. How can you say you didn't know anything?"

The guilt for so many American Jews is enormous. I was fifty-three years old before hearing that there was a huge part of my

family that were never heard from again after 1941 and most likely perished in the death camps. I know many Jews of my generation with similar stories of only recently seeing pictures or being told about family that were killed.

The amount of hidden, denied parts of our past means that we as American Jews are hidden—with important parts of our own history locked up in denial. How will American Jews ever agree to examine their unquestioning support of some policies of the Israeli government, when parts of their own family histories are so deeply unexamined? Is it possible that there is a connection between those Jews who have a difficult time facing the unfaceable—the destruction of six million Jews—and the Jews who have a difficult time facing that the Israel we love so much could be contributing in significant ways to the daily suffering and mistreatment of the Palestinian people?

A Palestinian and Israeli team presented a slide show last year in my community to a largely Jewish audience about their reconciliation work with Israelis and Palestinians in Israel. At a Shabbat morning service at my synagogue later that month, I listened to a young Palestinian speak about the day he had been shot by an Israeli soldier. He told us about lying in a hospital bed, filled with rage towards Israelis, and planning for revenge, when his father came to visit him. His father convinced him to move beyond his hatred and work instead for Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation.

I was deeply moved to hear these young Palestinian speakers. I was glad their stories were being heard by so many American Jews. But I couldn't help thinking also that American Jews only invite Palestinian speakers into their synagogues who have a gentle message of reconciliation. The Palestinians who are angry, who are suffering daily indignities under the continuing occupation, and whose messages aren't so clearly filled with hope, are rarely invited to speak in Jewish congregations. This insulates Jews in the United States from hearing firsthand from Palestinians who are suffering under Israeli occupation. This denial, initially born out of tremendous unhealed grief from the Holocaust, has now rigidified into a similar denial about Palestinian oppression.

For all of us in the United States who love Israel and want her to flourish and grow for the next sixty years, we may want to consider that there is prerequisite work to do with Jews to un-numb from the Holocaust and its continuing effects on all of our daily lives. As we reach beyond our own denial, we might be more effective in assisting U.S. Jews to un-numb and to then make the important connections between our pain as a people and the pain being inflicted by our beloved Israel on the Palestinian people. ■

Cherie Brown is the founder and executive director of the National Coalition Building Institute. For 40 years she has worked with American Jewish groups, including Tikkun and Brit Tzedek V'Shalom on Israeli-Palestinian peace issues.



Beyond Tribalism

by Bradley Burston

ADMIT IT. YOU'RE SICK OF THIS. ANYONE WHO CARES IN THE LEAST ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE HOLY Land, and of a Jewish state, would have to be. Sixty years of war, grief, mutual terror, opera-strength myth, heartfelt dishonesty, the funerals of innocents, the maiming of conscience, the death of faith.

Israel at sixty. Palestine at square one.

It's only natural to want to wash your hands of all this. It's only human to be repelled by the rightwing U.S. Jewish leaders who presume to speak in your name, warning Israel against even thinking about any compromise with the Palestinians over Jerusalem.

It's only Jewish to be appalled by the commandeering of Orthodox Judaism by radical rightists who have elevated the acts of settlement, brute force military action, and rejecting negotiation and truce, to the level of sacrament.

It's only moral to be disgusted by the acts of self-styled Islamic fundamentalists, who have enshrined the armed struggle, suicide bombings, the random killing of innocents, and the principle of a violent end to the Jewish state.

It's only reasonable to say to both sides, "Not in my name," and to look elsewhere to invest your spiritual energy, your good will, your resources of charity and activism and enthusiasm.

It's more than understandable to reach the conclusion that tribalism is the root of the Holy Land's evils. Surely, tribalism has more than earned its bad name.

It makes perfect sense, at this point, to just get off the bus.

Except that your people need you. The people of your tribe. The Jew who still believes in compassion and compromise, in empathy for the disenfranchised, in two states for two peoples, in the possibility of settling entrenched conflicts without resorting to overwhelming force or misguided military adventure.

With peace talks a matter of all talk and no peace, with no good solutions on the horizon, with Palestinians continuing to fire rockets at Israel, with Israel continuing air and ground raids in the territories, this is the time when your tribe needs you the most. It is, in fact, time for a new tribalism. It's time for a redefinition of who speaks for the Jews, and what their message is. To leave the field to hardliners is criminal.

There are those who are working with all they have, in Israel and abroad, to reverse the inertia that plagues us, to search for alternatives to Olmert, Barak, Netanyahu, and other guardians of paralysis. Seek them out. Join them.

This, I believe, is the basis of a new tribalism that can foster reconciliation:

Don't take sides. Take steps.

For the good of your side, consider the rights and needs of the other. For the good of both, recognize the pain of both sides, their tortured histories, their ties to the land, their feelings for shared holy places.

The new tribalism does not need a single campfire, but can reach everywhere and everyone through the truly miraculous, and, at least for the moment, still liberated media of the new electronic forms of communication.

Even in this era, there is hope. But there may not be much time. There are Palestinian hardliners who now argue that the optimal course of action is to let the occupation take its course, to let it take its corrupting, costly, demoralizing, divisive toll on Israel—in short, to let the occupation itself destroy the Jewish state, and pave the way for a Palestine from the river to the sea.

They are betting that the old tribal leaders of our people will lead the Jews directly into that sea. They may be right... unless our tribe is infused by new visions, new openness, and a new, proud sense of what we are, not based on xenophobia and exclusion, but on the willingness to consider a future shared with members of another tribe, people who have had their fill of wrongheaded chiefs and tenets of their own. ■

Bradley Burston is a columnist for Ha'aretz newspaper and Senior Editor of Haaretz.com.



"Dove" by Eldar Baider

Historical Consciousness

by Hillel Cohen

SOME PEOPLE ARE BORN WITH HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS. WHEN THEY WALK IN THE WORLD, they do not think only about the present or the future but also feel the past. They move through Jerusalem with Abraham and Isaac, with David and Hizkiyahu, and their lips mutter the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah. They see the new arrivals from Russia, Ethiopia, and France and think of the Jews in the Diaspora who prayed for generations for Zion. They take a bus down Herzl Street and they think of those who established the Zionist movement in order to enable the Jews of Europe to return to this place. The Arab siege of Jerusalem in 1948 is also part of their memories, even if they were born years later.

Those with such consciousness know very well that they would not have been here, in Jerusalem, under a sovereign Jewish state, without all this past. They feel part of this history and feel this history is part of them.

I guess I'm one of them. When I'm riding my motorcycle through the streets of Jerusalem and it starts to rain I feel joyful. (See? History can sometimes be useful.) How many Jews died without realizing their dream to come to Jerusalem? How many times did Jews pray for rain in Eretz Yisrael? How lucky I am to be caught in the rain in Jerusalem.

But when someone has a real historical consciousness he cannot lie to himself. He knows that according to the Bible, the days of David and Solomon were not a real golden age. He bears in mind the civil wars between the Hebrew tribes; he recognizes that the prophets called for social justice because there was no social justice in their times. He starts to differentiate between myth and reality.

And when one has a real historical consciousness, he cannot, of course, ignore history. So when he walks in the Old City of Jerusalem he remembers the Caliph Omar Ibn al-Khattab who conquered Jerusalem from the Byzantines in 638 and allowed the Jews to resettle in the City; he turns his thoughts to the Mamluks who established dozens of public buildings inside the walls; he considers the legacy of the aristocratic Muslim families of Jerusalem who held senior positions in the Ottoman administration. He remembers the riots in 1929 when Arabs massacred some 130 Jews—and remembers also the Palestinians who saved many Jews' lives in Hebron and elsewhere. And when he goes (if he goes) to the biggest mall in Jerusalem, Malha Mall, he is aware that he is walking on the ruins of the village of al-Maliha that was destroyed

in 1948, and that the inhabitants of this village now live in al-Aideh refugee camp and elsewhere; and when he goes to the income tax offices in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Givat Shaul he knows that it was built on the land of the village of Deir Yasin; and when he visits Tel Aviv University he knows that this institution "inherited" the land (and some of the buildings) of the village of Sheikh Munis. And he asks himself: what should be done with all this history? Isn't it better to forget? Do we have to teach Israeli schoolchildren the truth about the history of this country?

My answer is yes. We should all know much more about the history of our country. We should know what really happened in 1948. Where, when, and why the Arabs were the aggressors, and where, when, and why the Jews were. We should acknowledge the Palestinian-Arab history of the land, as the Palestinians should acknowledge ours. We should understand that the current Arab antagonism towards Israel is not an outcome of blind anti-Semitism but a consequence of a historical process in which the fear of the Palestinian Arabs that they would be thrown out of their land was realized. Sixty years after Israel won its independence, it is time to stop ignoring the fact that our country was established on the ruins of Palestinian society, figuratively and literally. It is time to start thinking about what that means to us, and what we should do with this tragic fact. ■

*Hillel Cohen, a Jerusalemite, teaches history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and is the author of *Army of Shadows: Palestinian Collaboration with Zionism 1917-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).*



If I Forget...

by Harvey Cox

*"Last night as I lay sleeping, I dreamed a dream so fair,
I stood in old Jerusalem beside the temple there."*

—"The Holy City", Frederick Weatherly

MY FEELINGS ABOUT ISRAEL TODAY TEETER PRECARIOUSLY BETWEEN HOPE AND HEARTBREAK, between a deep, almost irrational fondness and a simmering anger. It is the fate of that little country, and always will be I suppose, to be burdened with an overload both of symbol and significance. As someone has said of Jerusalem, too many people love it to death.



As a kid in a Baptist Sunday School I watched in admiration movies about those brave pioneers, the kibbutzniks, marching off singing, with their picks and shovels, to make the desert bloom. I heard choir anthems and sang hymns about Jerusalem (like the one quoted above). In our church that little slice of earth was always referred to as the "Promised Land," or "The Holy Land." When Israel declared its independence in 1948, I was a freshman in college and when I saw the newspaper pictures of the joyful Jews dancing in the streets of Tel Aviv, I wished I had been there.

Like many other people, my feelings began to change after 1967. I was gladdened and amazed that the Israelis had won. But then, beginning with Hebron, the settlements started, and since then my feelings have been in a tailspin. What a fatal error it was, for Israel, the Palestinians, and the world, that successive Israeli governments sponsored or supported this gross violation of international law and human decency. How infuriating that successive American administrations have watched smugly or issued an occasional mild disagreement, while continuing to arm both Israel and the Arab world with increasingly lethal weapons, seeming to stoke some ghastly Armageddon.

For my fortieth birthday I treated myself to my first visit to Israel. In Jerusalem I walked around the entire wall of the city. Later I sloshed into the Jordan up to my thighs at the spot our guide solemnly assured us was precisely where Jesus had been baptized.

Since then I have returned to Israel and Palestine a number of times. Whenever I do, I spend long hours with friends on both sides of the lines. The experience is always a profoundly moving one for me. I feel, of course, a special kinship with the tragically diminishing minority of Palestinian Christians who represent the oldest continuing witness to the spirit of Jesus in the world. Every time I visit, there are fewer of them.

Maybe the next American president will have the courage and the intelligence to exert the indispensable influence—not just rhetoric—of this country to advance the solution that every thoughtful person agrees on: A fair arrangement for the refugees, sharing Jerusalem, adequate water resources for everyone, and, above all, removing most of the settlements.

Sadly, the leadership on all sides now seems weak and paralyzed. But achieving a just peace would make an incomparable contribution to the peace of the whole world.

I hope and pray that I will be granted enough years of life to see a peaceful Israel living with a peaceful Palestine, making together a true "Holy Land." And I look forward to walking those old walls again, to be in "old Jerusalem" not in a dream but for real. ■

*Harvey Cox is Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard. His *The Secular City* (first published in 1965) has sold one million copies in 17 languages. His most recent book is *When Jesus Came to Harvard*.*

THE SPOILS

by Chana Bloch

*The mother of Sisera looked out at a window,
and cried through the lattice.*

— Judges 5:28

An Israeli soldier, just back from the front,
gave me a photo he found of a mother and son,
a talisman the enemy wore to battle
in his khaki shirt pocket.

I was too giddy to ask
what he thought he was offering me that day
forty years ago
—a trophy? a souvenir?
All he wanted, he said, was to get home safe.

His mother fought the war
by candlelight in a Jerusalem shelter,
stood up, sat down,
slumped to the mattress:
*Why is his chariot so long in coming?
Why tarry his nine hundred chariots of iron?
Surely the victors are dividing the spoils,
To each man a damsel, a damsel or two—*

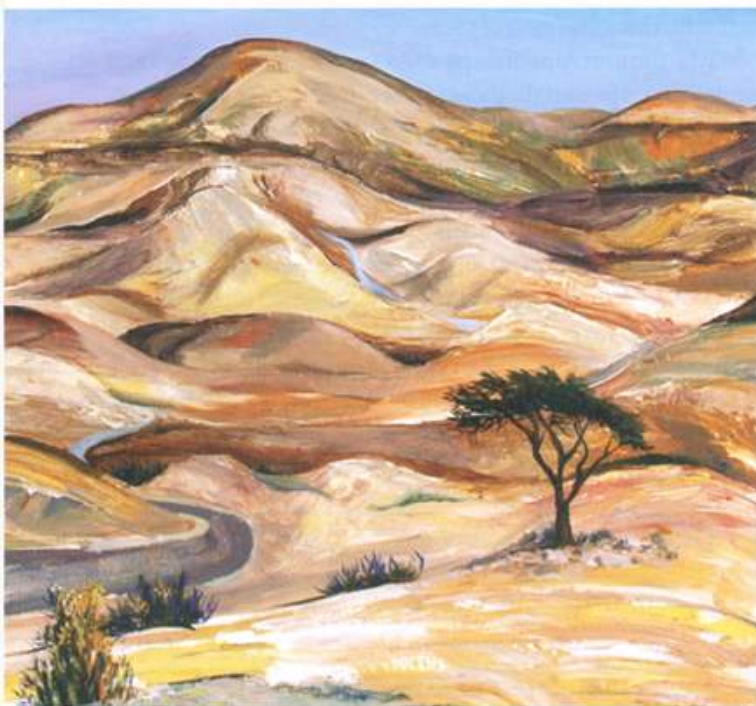
Home safe, the soldier let me take
a shot of him holding his dazed mother,
a shot of him cradling his gun.
Then, with the pomp of a conquering hero,
he gave me the photo he found on the battlefield

and I was pleased
to take that relic from his hand
two days after a war he still likes
to think we won.



Older—and Wiser?

by Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi



"Eilat II" by Betty Rubinstein

My wandering attention is possible because, unlike many Jews who came to this country as stateless nonpersons, I did have another home. I came to Israel out of choice, at a time of hope in America, before Vietnam, before the Kennedy and King assassinations. But there was hope in Israel too—before the Gruenzweig and Rabin assassinations, and most crucially, before the Six Day War.

Israel and I are nearly the same age; she was fourteen when I came as a young student. When I petitioned the dean at Wellesley to spend my junior year abroad at the Hebrew University, she hesitated but gave me her blessings to join my fate (how did she know?) with "that valiant little country in the Middle East."

Israel and I have grown old together. We're not attractive young women any more—though she's got Tel Aviv and I've got an Audi. But if twelfth-century poet Yehuda Halevi were alive today, he'd hardly be fantasizing about walking "naked/and barefoot among your desolate ruins," or soaring "on eagle-wings/if only to mix my tears with your dust," to "kiss and cherish your stones" and savor your earth as "sweeter than honey to my lips." Israel's sixty now and her basic problem is, she's just too fat, engorged with territories and natives that don't want her. Yehuda Amichai knew the secret: "They're burning the photos of the divided Jerusalem/ and the beautiful letters of the beloved, who was so quiet. The noisy old dowager, all of her,/ With her gold and copper and stones,/ Has

EVERY TIME I TRY TO WRITE ABOUT ISRAEL MY mind wanders to Barack Obama. My weekly force-feed of *Ha'aretz's* Gideon Levy's heart-breaking reports from the occupied territories is sweetened by rereading Obama's speech on race in Philadelphia. My anger over an Israeli government held hostage to religious parties and settlers and the most nationalist, racist, benighted versions of Judaism, fed by the worst of the American Jewish neo-cons, finds temporary surcease in Obama's line about the prejudices of family members and preachers whom we can't help loving even when we strenuously disagree with them; in his reminder that some of us Jews also had aunts and uncles who referred to the 'shvartzes' with the kind of fear that his own white grandmother exhibited.

come back/ To a fat legal life./ But I don't like her./ Sometimes I remember the quiet one."

As yes, the quiet one. While my gray hairs have accorded me a bit of wisdom, Jerusalem has just become stupider, exchanging a political conflict for a religious war and an exemplary system of justice for the principle of an eye for an eye.

Would I come to Israel today as a nineteen-year old seeking a just place in the world that rhymes so completely with the Judaism of Heschel and Isaiah? Although I have no intentions of leaving, and probably will find my eternal resting place in the *helkat ha-professorim* (the professors' plot) in the desolate, dusty cemetery on Givat Shaul—condemned to argue for an eternity with Ya'acov Talmon and Gershon Shaked—the answer is: probably not.

But I remain an indomitable optimist and right now optimism equals Obama. Maybe if he is elected, the winds will change even here, and Israel will be enticed by the promise of a return to the "family of nations" in exchange for her excess weight. Then I could even stand an eternity with those old *Yekkes*. ■

Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi is professor of Comparative Jewish Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She is the author of Booking Passage: Exile and Homecoming in the Modern Jewish Imagination. She won a Guggenheim fellowship in 2007 for her book in progress, Jerusalem and the Poetics of Return.

Israel's Dilemma

by Riane Eisler

RABBI LERNER ASKS, "TO WHAT EXTENT IS Israel tied to a world view based on the notion that domination of others is the way to achieve security, rather than a world view, implicit in the Torah command of *Ve'ahavta la'ger*, that security comes through generosity and caring toward others?"

This to me is not the right question because it fails to take into account the fact that, unfortunately, most of Israel's enemies tend to view generosity and caring as weak, as "feminine," and hence an invitation for domination on their part. Research shows that when people believe that men's "honor" depends on absolute and, if "necessary," violent control over women, they also believe there can only be rulers and ruled, winners and losers, dominators and dominated—and that violence on their part is holy and moral.

This then is Israel's dilemma—and the dilemma for the world. How do you deal with cultures where rule by the "strong"—the male head of family, the tyrannical head of tribe or state, the cruel warrior—is honored, and one-sided concessions are seen as weakness? This is characteristic of fundamentalist Muslim cultures; it also afflicts "Christian" fundamentalists, who likewise believe in women's subordination and "holy wars"—wars that the Left fiercely opposes.

Yet when it comes to Palestinian violence and other Arab policies of confrontation, the Left rushes to their defense. No matter how brutal their attacks on civilians, how openly they state their goal of destroying the Jewish state, or how blatantly they continue teaching their children hatred of Jews, to the Left, it's all justified.

Horribly immoral, this double standard brings the indifference of the world that led to the Holocaust roaring back to mind.

In 1946 I found out what happened to those in my family who weren't as fortunate as my parents and I to escape from Europe—my beloved aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, whose survival I daily prayed for as a refugee in Cuba during the war. There were only a handful of survivors, desperate to leave the continent that stood by and often actively participated in the murder of their parents and siblings along with six million other Jews. They wanted to go to Palestine. The British intercepted one and interned him in Cyprus. Another young cousin made it. When the state of Israel was approved by the UN and was immediately attacked by an overwhelming army of its neighbors, she died fighting with the Haganah (which later became the Israel Defense Forces).

What happened during the Holocaust, what almost happened to me, profoundly affected not only my life and my feelings toward



Two of the 100 British and 70 Hungarian Jewish settlers begin to dig the foundations for their prefabricated homes in the new Yatzur Kibbutz, on the hills near the old town of Acre, Israel, Jan. 20, 1949.

Israel but my work as a cultural evolution theorist and activist. My book *The Chalice and the Blade* cuts to the core of our problem—not East vs. West or religious vs. secular, but the difference between domination systems and partnership systems. The Holocaust led me to passionately work for the cultural shift from domination to partnership worldwide, starting with the foundational relations between women and men and parents and children, where people first learn respect for human rights or to accept human rights violations as normal and moral.

The kibbutz movement was a movement in Israel toward partnership, toward economic, social, and gender equality. These were—and remain—positive ideals. But Israel, again and again, has had to fight neighbors pledged "to push the Jews into the sea." Every war, including the Six Day War, was a war of self-defense. Israel did what any other nation would do if it were attacked, if terrorists were killing its people in buses, schools, and homes. It struck back with armed force.

I know that in the end violence only breeds more violence. But to change cycles of violence we have to look to the underlying culture. Yet the Left refuses to look at the cultures surrounding Israel realistically, to acknowledge that cultures that rely heavily on violence in intimate relations are not going to renounce violence in national and international relations.

We do not help the situation one iota by preaching caring and nonviolence to Israel without just as forcefully asking the same of its enemies, and, even more fundamentally, helping all those—Muslim, Jewish, or Christian—working to change cultural beliefs that idealize and even sacralize brutality and violence. ■

*Riane Eisler is author of *The Chalice and the Blade* and *The Real Wealth of Nations*, and founder of the Center for Partnership Studies (www.partnershipway.org) and the Spiritual Alliance to Stop Intimate Violence.*



The Abandonment of Socialist Ideals

by Sander Gilman

ONE OF THE MOST UNDER-DISCUSSED aspects of the history of the State of Israel is the gradual abandonment of the socialist ideals of its founders and its political implications for the twenty-first century. In spite of Zeev Sternhell's view that Israel was never truly socialist (what country was?), Israeli politics had in many ways anticipated the pathway taken by the Left in the West. From Tony Blair's New Labour in the United Kingdom to the Clinton Democrats in the United States and beyond, old "Left" politics were abandoned for a philosophy of political expediency. Now one could ask whether this is a negative or a positive development: just as it is asked today about India, the world's largest democracy, which has moved along a similar path in the past decade.

In Israel the iconic kibbutz movement, which imagined an ideal of human interaction beyond the normative patterns of ownership and true alternatives to the nuclear family, has been transformed into for-profit economic units and tourist attractions. Parallel to this transformation have been radical changes in the very meaning attached to Israeli identity and political experience. Now (again) one could ask whether this is good or bad, whether these changes were mandated by alterations in the real political situation, or simply a "natural" movement away from a collective identity towards



Some of the 100 British and 70 Hungarian Jewish settlers raise the Socialist, lower, and Israeli flags as they begin to build their homes in the new kibbutz, on the hills near the old town of Acre, Israel, Jan. 20, 1949.

the open market of ideas and actions? But that these changes have happened is without a doubt true. At this moment, in its sixtieth year, Israel has become what Chaim Weizmann truly desired: a normal state among the nations. And that—like it or not—is something to ponder. ■

Sander L. Gilman is a Distinguished Professor of the Liberal Arts and Sciences and professor of psychiatry at Emory University, where he is the Director of the Program in Psychoanalysis and the Health Sciences Humanities Initiative.

Refusing to be Enemies

by Lynn Gottlieb

MOTHERS WORRY ALL THE TIME. SHE SAT BEHIND THE COUNTER, BUSY WITH PAPER WORK. HER boss, who lost sight in one eye when he was hit with a rubber bullet, was speaking to us about their organization, which provides free wheelchairs and crutches to thousands of those wounded. It's easy to be in the wrong place at the wrong time if you are a Palestinian living anywhere in the West Bank or Gaza. I was leading another Fellowship of Reconciliation delegation to the land of sorrows, visiting health care professionals on both sides of the conflict to gather information about those who occupy themselves with healing broken bodies and souls. We had just come from a women's center where the director told us about her daughter who volunteers in a youth ambulance corps. Her daughter comes home and pulls a finger out of her pocket, which she found in the street after an incursion, and wants to know how to return it. Muslim sensibility like Jewish sensibility demands that all the parts of the body are buried together. I have to find out to whom it belongs. She tells her mother who does not know how to keep her daughter from the extreme risk-taking which is all too common among Palestinian youth. Death is all around them, and they don't know how to stop it, she says.

I walk over to a woman behind the counter surrounded by stacks of crutches and greet her with "salaam" and ask if I might be able to interview her for a few minutes about the Occupation and she agrees. I sit down.

"What is the most difficult aspect of the Occupation for you," I ask. Tears well up in her eyes and I immediately regret stirring up her pain. "It's okay," she says. "The hardest part is coming to work because I have to pass through two checkpoints. I have two sons, one ten years old and the other fourteen. It is so difficult. The younger one never wants to let go. He pees in his bed every night, is frightened by noise, and cries and screams every day when I go to work. Once I take him to school, he's better, but all the children are easily terrified. My elder son refuses to go to school. Every day I argue with him before he finally leaves the house. He prefers to stay at home and play video games. I tell him education is important. He says, 'Why bother, they're going to kill me anyway.' I sent him to a peace camp before the intifada, but those days of hope are over. 'How can I be friends with people who put on a uniform the next day and shoot at me?' he asks. I wake up at two every morning, my heart pounding. I start to worry in the middle of the night. I try not to think about it but I am scared to leave my children, scared I will not make it home, scared something will happen to them. Sometimes, if the situation is really dangerous at the checkpoint, I walk through the hills, which takes hours, and then my children

worry even more. Some days," she says, her eyes overflowing with tears, "I think perhaps it would have been better if they had never been born. Tell me, what can I do?" Both of us are crying, we hold hands in the silence of her question.

As always, after listening to the testimony of survivors, I am speechless. I carry thousands of stories in my heart, as I have been listening to both Palestinian and Jewish survivor accounts since 1966; when I first heard the story of the Nakba from the lips of Atallah Mansour. I always wonder which terrible rendition of loss and grief will tip the balance of scales so that a flood of compassion will wash away our fear and create the resolve to not turn away. In times of profound sadness, I gather up seeds of hope from the tears of those Israeli Jews and Palestinians, who in spite of the worst kind of loss, nonetheless, reach out to each other for the sake of peace, and then take their message of reconciliation to anyone who will listen. Aware of all the complexities, they refuse to be enemies, they speak out against occupational brutalities, construct bridges across the abyss. For the sake of our children, how can we not do the same? ■

Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb is director of Shomer Shalom Institute for Jewish Nonviolence, cofounder of the Muslim Jewish PeaceWalk and a performing artist.



Teshuva: Our Only Hope



by Joshua Levine Grater

Human reason, even at its most sublime, cannot begin to understand the unique holiness of Eretz Israel; it cannot stir the depths of love for the land that are dormant within our people. What Eretz Israel means to the Jew can be felt only through the Spirit of the Lord, which is in our people as a whole, through the spiritual cast of the Jewish soul, which radiates its characteristic influence to every healthy emotion.

"Kamayah XXVII" by Sandi Knell Tamny

—Rav Kook

ACCORDING TO THE PREEMINENT TWENTIETH-CENTURY SCHOLAR, ARTHUR HERTZBERG, IN HIS seminal work, *The Zionist Idea*, Rav Kook, the first chief rabbi of Palestine, wrote the above words sometime between 1910 and 1930, to explain how and what Jews feel about the land of Israel. Today, as we celebrate sixty years of Israel's existence, we might apply the same description when explaining how we feel about the Jews who inhabit the land, our brothers and sisters. Kook, like the rabbis who composed our liturgy, was writing before the possibility existed that Jews would actually find themselves living in a modern state of Israel. Although his words are perhaps even more relevant to today's situation, and although I agree with Rav Kook's assessment of our soul-deep connection to our homeland, I also believe that it is precisely in applying reason that we will find a way out of this nightmare called the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

I feel intimately connected to Israel, having lived there and spent many subsequent visits leading groups on pilgrimage. I serve as National Secretary of Brit Tzedek v'Shalom, the largest grassroots Middle East peace group in America, and I have dedicated a great deal of my rabbinate and personal life to working for peace and a just end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And it has come at great personal cost to me, for the Jewish-American emotional landscape is completely out of whack when it comes to talking about Israel. Good, well-meaning people with whom I agree on most issues see me as a traitor to the Jewish people; a young, naive and ignorant leader who, with age and maturity, will understand that only through might will Israel come to terms with the Arabs. Negotiations have been futile in the past, so they will be futile in the future; diplomacy is for the weak, and what's more, there is no diplomacy in the Arab world. Egypt in 1978? Luck. Jordan in 1994? More luck. Oslo failed because of the Arabs alone; Camp David 2000 failed because of the Arabs alone. When I grow up, these folks tell me, I will come to understand the real truth. Israel is

under siege and we must stand with Israel, no matter what.

When I try to bring up the Occupation, the settlement project, or the unilateral pull-outs from Lebanon and Gaza as examples of situations in which Israel has made mistakes, there is furor. As Kook said, human reason cannot begin to explain our connection to Israel. Yet, the irony is that it will only be reason, not emotion, which will prepare us to end this conflict. Israel cannot thrive, let alone survive, as long as the Occupation and settlements continue. Prime Minister Sharon, before his tragic illness, understood this, and was beginning to articulate this reasonable position. Prime Minister Rabin (ztl) understood this and paid with his life. The collective blinders that we have put on in regard to Israel are now driving an even greater wedge between us and the Israeli populace, most of whom are ready to end the conflict and understand the means to get there. We American Jews need to find a way to see the damage we are causing by continuing to perpetuate a myth that Israel is the great victim to the Palestinians' great attack.

Israel is remarkable, and it has achieved incredible

advancements in its short history as a nation, but not without blemishes. The Occupation is a blemish that must be ended and wiped from the body of Israel. The Palestinians have their blemishes too, and it is up to their leaders to deal with them. But that must never stop us from dealing with our own, looking in the mirror and seeing the whole truth. The end of the conflict, and with it, the beginning of Israel's life as a normal nation, will only come about when Israel and the Palestinians have the courage to acknowledge their collective failures, apologize for their respective mistakes and pledge to move forward with mutual recognition and understanding. This is not weak or naive; this is the prophetic calling of our

people, the greatest Torah lesson that we can bring to bear on this tragic century-old conflict: *teshuva*, the process of renewing, repenting and returning is our only hope. *Teshuva* involves faith, the faith to hope in a better future, and reason, as we rationally and honestly examine ourselves, our motivations, and our actions. After sixty years of life, and sixty years of war, we need to overcome Rav Kook's block on human reason if we are to ever have a hope of an Israel living in peace. This is not naive; this is redemptive. ■

Rabbi Joshua Levine Grater is the spiritual leader of Pasadena Jewish Temple and Center and National Secretary of Brit Tzedek v'Shalom. He can be reached at rabbijoshua@pjtc.net.

JEWISH PORTRAIT

by Dahlia Ravikovitch

trans. Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld

She
is not your sort.
A Diaspora kind of Jew who darts her eyes around
in fear.
Wears an old-fashioned dress,
her hair pulled back without a touch of grace.
Doesn't undo her bundles.
Why should she undo her bundles?
Any place she might stumble on
would be just a place of transience.
Her bed is unmade.
Transience requires no adornment.

On the road.
Caravans pass her by,
Ukrainian peasants in their carts
and dark-skinned refugees, screaming;
babes-in-arms dry up in the sun,
flies clinging to their eyes.
People carry mattresses on their heads,
a clangor of pots and pans.
People curse her as she goes by:
she's slow,
slowing down the caravan.

She goes off to the side of the road and stops.
She has no baby,
can wait for dark.

Suddenly she sees a coin in the dust—a spark.
She smiles an inward smile.
In her mind's eye
rivulets well up in the thicket.
It's wrong to think she has lost her mind.
A kernel of sun-crimson dawns in her heart.
There. She's no longer upset.

She has no use for this business, Jerusalem.
Day after day they wrangle over the Temple Mount,
each man smites and reviles his brother,
and the dead prophet shrieks,
Who hath required this at your hand, to trample My courts?

Once the caravan has crossed,
night will fall and she'll find her house.
Her feet stub against the sharp gravelstone,
dust soils her dress.
She will bolt the inner door,
seal the shutters on every side.
Only the soles of her feet will she bathe,
so boundless her weariness.
In the dark she knows the features of her face
as a blind man knows the feel of his temples.
Her eyes are the blue eyes of Khazars,
her face a broad face,
her body the heavy body of a native woman,
third generation in the Land of Israel.

June 4, 1982



A Lover's Lament

by Art Green

I'M JUST BACK FROM YET ANOTHER TRIP TO JERUSALEM. PERHAPS MY THIRTIETH OR SO, BUT I'VE really lost count. Yes, wonderful to be there, as always. Seeing friends, drinking endless lattes in the Israeli version of middle European coffee houses, enjoying the special atmosphere of conversation that so characterizes that city as a Jewish intellectual hothouse.

I first visited Israel in 1961, six years before the Six Day War and Israel's conquest of the Old City of Jerusalem. In those days you could go up to the belltower of Notre Dame Monastery, right on the city divide, and for a fifty *grush* fee you could get a look over the Old City wall and peer into the marketplace. I came to Israel as a young man filled with dreams of holiness, of Jerusalem as the embodiment of heaven on earth. During that first visit, a year of study and teaching, the holy Jerusalem of my dreams and fantasies was transformed into a real place. I came to love the real Jerusalem—its people, markets, parks, and cafes. This was “new” Jerusalem, though it seemed plenty old to me. It was an all-Jewish city (except for the monks and nuns), rich with Hebrew and all the languages of the Diaspora, spanning an infinite Jewish ethnic and religious diversity. But it was no longer the Jerusalem of my prayers, of perfect wholeness, of messianic dreams. The pushing and shoving, the cursing and bargaining, the roughness of daily life made it clear that this place was real, not the stuff of fantasy. That Jerusalem, I decided, must reside over there, inside the Old City wall, a place I could not reach. I paid my fifty *grush*, peered over the wall, and dreamed.

When I went back after the war, I was able to walk through those markets, see the difficult conditions in which Jerusalem's Arabs lived, and feel the hostility behind their masks of commerce-driven friendliness. The markets were beautiful in their own backward way, and drew me to them frequently. But they were not holy; the air I breathed in them was not that of redemption, certainly not that of freedom. The proclamation of Jerusalem as a united city was clearly a myth. Old Jerusalem, too, became real, even profane, as I came to understand the deep conflict between its inhabitants and the multiple hatreds that lay just beneath its beautiful façade.

Where, then, was holy Jerusalem? I looked up at the Temple Mount, beyond the Western Wall, and decided that was where the true Holy City lay. Respecting both strict halachah and Muslim sensibilities, I decided I would not go up there, and I still have not done so, despite all those many visits to Jerusalem since then. But the truth is that it is neither Jewish nor Muslim strictures that have held me back. I fear that this Jerusalem too might turn out to be profane, and then there would be no holy place on earth at all. I

cannot allow that to happen.

This self-imposed taboo is a metaphor for much of my relationship with Israel. I so wanted to believe in it fully—in the rightness of our cause, in the high humanitarian ideals it represented, in the “purity of arms” of its soldiers, in the writing of poetry in Hebrew once again, in the clearing of swamps, the eradication of mosquitoes, and the raising of health standards throughout the Middle East, for Jew and Arab alike, as those old Zionist films used to proclaim. This was the Israel I learned about as a child. This was the Israel I believed in fully when watching Abba Eban address the United Nations, when hearing about David Ben Gurion's interest in the Bible and in Buddhist meditation, when corresponding in childish Hebrew with pen pals in Pardes Hanna, when reading the first Hebrew novel I mastered, S.Y. Agnon's *In the Heart of the Seas*, the tale of a fantasy journey to the Holy Land, many centuries ago.

That Israel got lost, of course, in the clash with reality. If it continues to exist somewhere behind a wall, that wall stands deep within my own heart. Meanwhile, I have indeed come to love the real Israel, the one I visit so frequently and where I have many friends. I love the richness and naturalness of its Jewish culture, so much of which is borne by the Hebrew language itself. I love the directness of human encounter one has there, as though you are always dealing—and arguing—with half-familiar members of your own extended family. I love the closeness of Jewish historical memory that Israel represents, so dulled and almost forgotten among American Jews.

But that love combines with a deep sense of betrayal, disappointment, and hurt that I also feel when visiting Israel. In recent years I have refused to visit Jewish settlements across the Green Line. My feeling since 1967 has been that this territory belongs to the Palestinians, and should be kept in trust to be given to them when they are ready to make true peace. Settling that land in seemingly irreversible ways, creating “facts on the ground,” as they were called, betrayed the Zionist dream. It (combined with ongoing Arab intransigence and folly, both of which there are plenty of, I know) has made a two-state solution nearly impossible. Without a two-state solution, I believe, Israel is impossible, and will not survive.

Even inside the state's borders, the ongoing discrimination against Arabs, who have been second-class citizens for more than half a century, is a terrible stain on the moral reputation of the entire Jewish people. The inability of most Israelis, both individually and institutionally, to treat the Arab population with dignity, even to the point of learning their language, marks a major failing in the Zionist enterprise. One would have thought that post-Holocaust Jews would understand what it is to be a minority, and would empathize with those who entered that status because of our presence. Far from it. One might have imagined that Jews would feel impelled to treat others in our midst as the Bible tells us to treat strangers, "for you were strangers in the Land of Egypt." But this has not been the case. The memory of our own hurt, the terrible wound of the Holocaust and the lesser, but still traumatic memory of second-class status in the Arab world, are what count. Biblical imperatives mean less, especially, so it would seem, among the more traditionally "religious" sectors of the Jewish population.

I believe that it is very late. Great damage has already been done. Is it *too* late? Is it still possible to reverse direction? Could responsible leadership in Washington, Jerusalem, and Ramallah force a change, giving us a peaceful Israel behind safe borders, one not consumed by Holocaust-driven fears and not playing into and intensifying the hatred by which it is surrounded? I *try* to believe that time has not yet run out, but that belief gets harder to maintain, day by day. Meanwhile, I see Israel, the state and the society, as the great collective accomplishment of the Jewish people in the twentieth century. Its astounding successes—material, cultural, scientific, technical, and artistic—reflect the tremendous strengths and resources that are our people's legacy. But the essential moral failing of Israel, its inability to deal fairly with the rights and even the full humanity of the other people with whom it shares a homeland, remains deeply troubling. Whether this inability was caused by the intransigence of the other side, was fueled by memory and fear left over from the Holocaust, or was the predictable legacy of Jewry as an ancient covenantal community that never cared enough about the lives of those who stood outside it, is something we have no time to debate right now. Only history will be able to judge.

Visits get harder. My friends, members of the Israeli intelligentsia, will talk about anything except the one thing that matters: Is it *too* late? Is there any chance for a two-state solution any more? None of them has a shred of faith in any of the present or proposed Israeli leaders, in any political party, or in the current American-led "peace overtures." They'd rather talk about Mozart overtures, or ever Wagner. None of them believes in a possible Israeli government that could offer nearly enough to satisfy even the most moderate Arabs, without being instantly toppled by intransigent coalition partners. Most ominously, these dyed-in-the-wool Israeli leftists fear that there is no more Arab will for a two-state solution. We have given them so little hope, so little reason to believe, that



"Pain" by Elisha Ben-Yitzhak

they are turning more and more to groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, whose message is very clear: "Give those Zionists nothing. The Jews will tire of this. Just sit tight. Make more babies. We have the strength and numbers to wait them out."

I therefore need to violate the most terrible of taboos to talk about the alternative, my fears of what will happen without that two-state solution. If not two states, there will be one, reaching from the Sea to the Jordan. Within a decade or two, the Arabs will be a clear majority. Lebanon will be the model: a bi-communal state, supposedly built on equal protections, but where everyone knows who the real majority is.

At some point they'll stop taking—or counting—the census. The Jews have the guns, of course, and they will try for a while to rule in that way. But then the "Apartheid State" epithet will become too obviously true, and the world will not permit it. Israel will become a pariah, finally having to agree to equal citizenship rights for all. We'll be fighting increasing boycotts and denunciations, as we'll have progressively less and less stomach for it. But even after voting rights are acquired, the Arabs, feeling victory imminent, will not stop in their harassment of the Jewish populace. War, sniping, and suicide bombings will continue to make life too unpleasant for Jews to stay and raise their children in Palestine/Israel, or whatever it will be called at that particular stage. Jews who have the ability to do so will begin to leave in large numbers. I mean really large numbers, far beyond the Israeli émigrés we already see today. Ashkenazim, activating those EU passports they can all now



receive, will flee with their capital, education, and skills. Poor Sephardim, Ethiopians, the ultra-Orthodox, and others with no place to go will be left, led by a small fringe of ideological hard-liners. Can you imagine an Israel led by the sorts who now lead on the West Bank? Does it seem unimaginable? Just look to the north, at the growth of the Lebanese Phalange as the moderate Christian populace and resources re-established themselves in South America.

I won't go on. This nightmare gets worse, not better. The editor of *Tikkun* will attest (at my forthcoming trial in the Jewish public media) that I tried to beg off writing this article, having nothing to offer but an old-fashioned Jewish cry for *teshuvah*, for us to repent of our sins before it is *really* too late. What sins? You know the list: Arrogance, Deafness, Greed, High-handedness, Intransigence, Land-hunger, and all the rest. If Lerner hadn't already made up the full alphabet, we could certainly do it here and now.

Will repentance do any good at this point? Can we rebuild an Arab constituency for two states, one of them the Jewish State of

Israel (in which I fully believe, by the way)? I think that depends (God help us!) on the Arab governments, especially the Saudis. The solution will need to be imposed by the Americans, the Europeans, and the Arabs, acting in concert, with a fig leaf of "consent" given to both sides. If the outside Arab leadership gets fully behind it, I think there still is a slim chance. At least I *need* to believe there is. Israel's best—and only—hope lies in such an imposed settlement, replete with international guarantees and foreign troops to back them up. As a lover of Israel and all the best that she stands for, I pray that there are still some statesmen who understand this and are powerful and persuasive enough to make it happen. They will need the courage to ignore the screams and machinations of the American Jewish establishment, of course. I don't envy them that, but I urge them with my whole heart to stick it out. The day will come when we will thank them for it. ■

Arthur Green is Irving Brudnick Professor of Jewish Philosophy and Religion and Rector of the Rabbinical School at Hebrew College.

Liberating Zionism

by Bonna Devora Haberman

IN 1992, ISRAEL LEGISLATED "TO ESTABLISH IN A BASIC LAW THE VALUES OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL as a *Jewish* and democratic state"—without suggesting what that Jewish content ought to be. Having revived Hebrew as a spoken language after 2,000 years of dormancy, it is time for Zionism to draw deeply from its Jewish sources.

One core narrative of the Jewish People is the biblical Exodus from Egypt. In the opening chapter of the book of Exodus, the midwives and birthing mothers are torn between the obligation to submit to the authority of Pharaoh—who commands them to kill all Hebrew male babies—and their commitment to enable life and creation. At that moment, the Exodus women activate their moral outrage and conceive liberation from oppression. Their bold rebellion seeds the ensuing redemption that sustains Jewish hope through thousands of years. Passover has been among the most celebrated traditions of Jewish families. Nurtured on the messages of social justice and freedom, Jews have contributed to the struggles of many oppressed groups, and ultimately waged our own—Zionism. Exodus sets out an unrelenting trajectory toward the homeland. The establishment of Israel, the airlift of far-flung Jewish communities in danger, and the opening of the former Soviet bloc all refer to the Exodus ideals.

Up until and including the Six Day War in 1967, Israel was a

favored protagonist in a modern Exodus drama. From the 1970s onward, Israel's detractors inverted the Exodus script. Since the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, Israel has come to be viewed as a colonial power, preventing the Palestinians from achieving the self-determination that Israel enjoys. Casting the Jewish People in the Pharaoh role confounds Jewish consciousness. Once a youthful and bold adventurer, Israel has reached middle age and appears to many to have become part of a sordid and commandeering "establishment." Yet, even as the image of the ruthless Israeli military machine projects throughout the global media, Israelis feel little of the control and security that would accompany such strength. Particularly during the sequential Palestinian uprisings, the wars in Lebanon, ongoing terror attacks, and the threats of a massively hostile region, the sense of danger and injury to the Jewish body persists. Violence and occupation discombobulate the joyous sense of achieving the long-desired return to Zion. There is profound dissonance between external perceptions

of Israel as "oppressor" and Israelis' self-perception as "oppressed."

The establishment of Israel creates another Exodus inversion. From our earliest ancestors, Jews are rebels. Beginning with the midrash that tells of Avraham breaking the idols in his father's shop, iconoclasm is a feature of Jewish identity. In Egypt, the midwives disobey on the grounds of their conviction that divine authority prevails over earthly authority. Israel creates a new framework that obligates Jews to the state as members of the ruling political culture. Instead of struggling for freedom from authority, from the state, the struggle is to express Jewish yearning and freedom *within* and *through* the instruments of a modern and fiercely democratic state. Many immigrants arrive without initiation into fundamentals of Israeli society—political accountability, due civic and legal process, open, tolerant and critical civil society, and entrepreneurialism.

The Exodus is not a linear story, but an aspiration toward continuously renewing liberation. Liberation is not only a struggle against the Other, but also a subversion of all oppressions. How can Israel fulfill Jewish destiny while embracing peaceful coexistence and ever-refining ethical conduct? How do we enact the sanctity of space and land without capitulating to the machismo of territorialism that fuels conquest, conflict, and draws blood? How can we further welcome the leadership of girls and women in all aspects of the Jewish public, sacred and secular? How will we liberate ourselves from our ethnocentrism? These are Exodus challenges that beckon the Jewish People to move beyond fear.

The attainment of the land summons Zionism to continue with the complex labors of liberation and not to desist from creation. The State of Israel signals not only change from oppressed to empowered, from rebel to citizen; Israel is at once a conscionable member of the global ruling establishment, and at the same time a delicate and vulnerable experiment.

In the land, we need the vigor of liberation more than ever. Now that we, the Jewish People, are the authors of our narrative, our call is no longer "Let my People go." We exhort ourselves and each other, "Let us be a liberating People." ■

Bonna Devora Haberman lives in Jerusalem where she teaches Jewish gender studies at Hebrew University, and activates Jewish sources for social betterment. She recently completed the book manuscript Spirit Matters: A Text-based Approach to Zionism in Crisis.

POWER

by Chana Bloch

"Why can't they just get along?" says my neighbor when he hears the numbers on the morning news. Then he's got the answer:
"They're people, that's why."

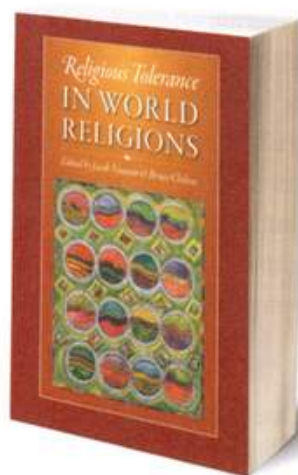
Thus saith my neighbor
who lets his Doberman out to bark at midnight
and grumbles "Yeah, yeah"
when I call to complain.

Meanwhile, in the precincts of power,
the new Chief of Staff
who learned his trade as a fighter pilot
is fending off questions from his swivel chair.

"And what did you feel," the reporters ask,
"when you dropped a bomb from an F-16?"
"I felt a slight lift of the wing," he says.
"After a second it passed."

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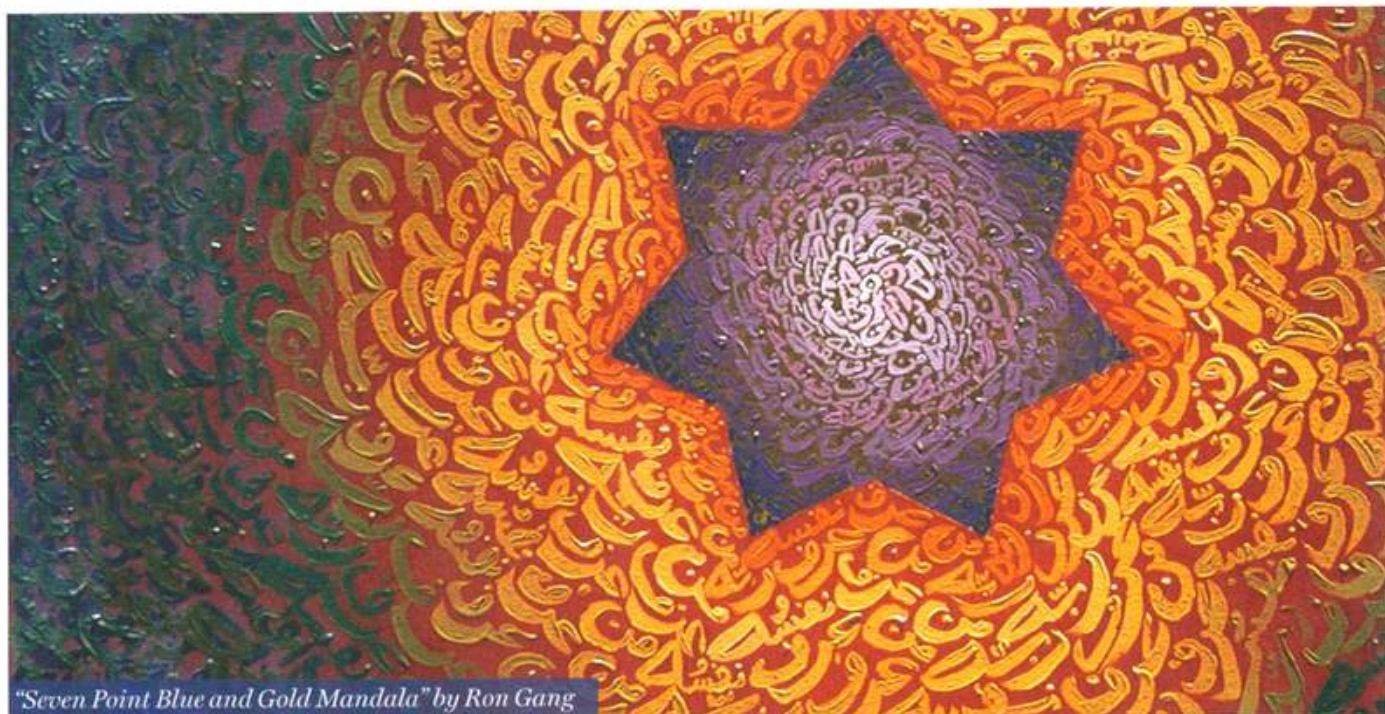
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The Incompleteness in Each of Us

by Irwin Kula



"Seven Point Blue and Gold Mandala" by Ron Gang

I JUST RETURNED FROM WHAT I THINK MAY HAVE BEEN MY THIRTY-FIFTH VISIT TO ISRAEL. MY WIFE, youngest daughter, and I spent nine days there—six nights hanging out in Tel Aviv enjoying its culture, art, and nightlife and then three days dealing with the burden, heaviness, and over-determined meaning of Jerusalem. Despite the huge difference between the sacred secularity and normalcy of Tel Aviv and the less-than-holy religiosity and abnormality of Jerusalem one question repeatedly arose: What about the *matzav* (situation) with the Palestinians? I listened to people from all walks of life and perspectives—hawks and doves, religious and secular, masorati and reformim, teenagers, middle aged, and elderly, intellectuals, taxi cab drivers, business men, waiters, rabbis, settlers and store keepers. When I returned home, (and yes I do feel at home here in New York City—as, if not more, at home than I do in Israel, though I am magically and inextricably drawn to regularly be in Israel) all that people asked me, in one way or another, was whether I thought the conflict with the Palestinians would ever end. After sixty years of independence this question casts a shadow on and swallows up almost all the amazing and inspiring accomplishments of the people of the state of Israel.

I am not sure I have anything to say that has not been said by our generals or pundits, our politicians or religious leaders, our AIPAC supporters or postmodern academics but it does seem to me that there will be no discernible movement towards resolution of the conflict (which, in all honesty, one barely feels even exists when in Tel Aviv—sort of the way the war in Iraq feels sitting in a Manhattan restaurant) until two things happen. On the one side, we Jews on the Right will need to realize that having power will

never heal the trauma of the powerlessness we feel in the face of the Shoah, and that no matter how much power we have or exercise the type of security we yearn for is never guaranteed in this world. On the other side, we Jews on the Left will need to realize that, while evil is indeed a social construction with identifiable causes that must be addressed or is indeed sometimes a projection of our own inner demons, the social construction is so complex and multi-layered or the projection becomes so hardened and real that

we do need to slay the dragon before it kills us, knowing all the while that this is no final answer but merely breathing space to address the projection before it returns. And then there is the vast majority of us Jews in the middle who feel the truth of both sides for whom the trauma is not yet personal enough to compel us to either choose one side or to reveal a new path, around which we can organize, that transcends both the fears and hopes of the Right and the hopes and fears of the Left. So we wait for what we all know is coming: more trauma that will at some point shake us out of our conventional boxes and positions that in a very strange way must provide us psychic and spiritual comfort.

Spirituality 101 teaches that the protracted nature of a conflict suggests not only that the other side will *not* go away but that it probably *should not*. This seemingly interminable conflict is not simply the result of the existence of opposing views. It isn't so much that the two parties have created the conflict as it is the conflictual relationship that has created the two parties. We Jews and we Israelis and Palestinians are in this relationship because we need each other to actually discover the incompleteness each of us is so frightened to acknowledge that at present makes it actually feel safer to live with the illusion of our completeness and the consequent violence. When the trauma is significant enough we will realize that the question isn't how we the parties can resolve the conflict but how this conflict can transform us. Then, we will each,

for different reasons that will heal us in different ways, come to learn what we desperately and so fiercely need to learn but have not yet been ready for because it requires a sort of death and rebirth and a level of mourning and grieving for how we see ourselves that will be almost as painful as the conflict itself. We will each, appropriate to our need as if standing at Sinai, learn that *we are never as powerful as our greatest fantasies and never as powerless as our worst nightmares*.

But all this seems to miss what is also true. We Jews are celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of a profound and awe-inspiring human accomplishment. The establishment of a Jewish state after 2000 years of wandering, where one of the smallest tribes in the world, whose very existence is pretty miraculous, with as much freedom as any people really possesses in the twenty-first century, can wrestle with who it wants to be and choose what sort of society it wants to create in light of its 3000 year old dream of being a blessing. No matter how messy the details are today on Israel's sixtieth anniversary, this is a sacred messiness worth celebrating with extraordinary joy, great gratitude, and deep humility. ■

Rabbi Irwin Kula is the author of Yearnings: Embracing the Sacred Messiness of Life (Hyperion, 2006), and President of CLAL—The National Jewish Center for Learning.

"Little Ice House in Old Katamon"
by Rifkah Goldberg



THE TWO CITIES

by Marge Piercy

L'shanah haba'ah b'Yerushalayim
we say every Pesach, concluding
the haggadah. Some say it piously,
some with pride, some almost
embarrassed, some with mixed

feelings, some balk at the words.
In the murderous times that came
down so often in the Diaspora,
it was said with fervent hope
that some where, some time

we could, would belong, be
free. But Jerusalem the golden
the city on the hill, is two
cities, one blood-soaked, fought
over for millennia, again, again.

The other is a city of the mind.
Utopia comes as a walled garden
or as a city, a community of peace
we have never reached, where
justice and equality are daily

as water and still as precious.
May we always travel onward
toward that good place even
if like Moses we never arrive
struggling through dust and blood

to unite the two Jerusalems
in one shining city of peace.

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Grief and Inspiration

by Laura Levitt

AS I LOOK BACK ON ISRAEL'S SIXTY YEARS OF EXISTENCE AS A JEWISH STATE, I FIND MYSELF STUMBLING. PART OF what I find so difficult is the complicated and contradictory emotions that mark my ongoing engagement with Israel. And right now, what I feel most profoundly is grief—I mourn the loss of a set of Zionist promises that once comforted and inspired me—and shame in my naiveté for having believed so fiercely in precisely those dreams. Having said this, I also know that I cannot only talk about this loss. There is too much at stake, too many lives in ruin, too much pain, and too much destruction. And so I look to those working for change on many fronts, especially the work of Israeli intellectuals, artists, and activists who are making a difference. I think of the brilliant and courageous work of so many of my colleagues at various Israeli universities, the powerful feminist work of Tamar El-Or and her ethnographies of Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jewish women and the passionate teaching and writing done by Susan Handelman at Bar Ilan. And more specifically, I think of the theoretically sophisticated, politically principled and courageous work of Adi Ophir, Relly Azoulay, Hannan Hever, and Yehouda Shenhav, among many others whose writings have changed the ways I teach and write about Israel and its history. Let me be more specific. I believe that all of these scholars—as Laurence Silberstein has suggested in both his *Postzionism Debates* and his forthcoming *Postzionism: A Reader*—are helping many of us reconsider the legacy of Zionism to imagine a different future.

I am also inspired by the work of the many Palestinian and Israeli, Arab, Muslim, Jewish, European, Middle Eastern, and American feminist scholars, especially those I met at Dartmouth during the summer of 2005, and by our efforts there to share our work. I am also disturbed that this kind of exchange had to happen in the United States and not in Israel/Palestine. Nevertheless, for me there is hope in engaged scholarly conversations and writing.

There is also hope in the work of so many Israeli and Palestinian writers, filmmakers, poets, and performers, painters, and photographers. Art offers another kind of opening. Imagination helps us refuse easy answers. And so I think about my former student Inbar Gilboa directing the first Hebrew production of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and I consider all of the amazing films, novels, and art coming out of Israel and Palestine.

Even still, I feel a deep and disturbing sense of responsibility and urgency at this very moment. As an American citizen, I am troubled by the ongoing and escalating violence. I am alarmed by attempts at solutions that have only reinforced and made worse some of this same violence, especially in places like Gaza where so many are sick and hungry and dying because of the sanctions.

In the face of all of this, I think of my fellow American Jews, the former socialist Zionist summer campers and the liberal Jewish youth movement kids like me who went on pilgrimage

to Israel in the 1970s and 1980s and are now troubled and pained and no longer sure how to talk about our love of Israel and the loss of those promises. And I don't want us to be complacent. So I think of people like Gordon Lafer, the union organizer who went back to Israel on Birthright Unplugged and stumbled trying to reconcile all the love and affection he had for Israel with the violence he experienced staying with a Palestinian family on the West Bank. I think of April Rosenblum and Avi Alpert, young, smart Jewish activists and intellectuals here who are using their imaginations and political savvy to address a new generation of young American Jews about the legacy of Jewish nationalism. And I think about all of the long term Jewish and Palestinian activists for peace, many of whom are poets, writers, academics, and artists who continue to be maligned in the mainstream media for speaking out on these issues. After sixty years I know that there is no going back to a lost vision. Instead I find myself asking critical questions turning to the talent, courage, hard work, and imagination of many others—those named and unnamed here—who are also already thinking and acting otherwise. It is their visions that I take with me into my work in Jewish studies. ■

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JERUSALEM BUS

by Rodger Kamenetz

....They are serving man, ass, wood, knife and nothing else.

—Auerbach, Mimesis

So much darkness allows the bandages to be undone without being seen
allows the wound to smoke in the open air, allows the wheels of the bus
to touch the ruptured road, allows the tires to burn into the sky
allows the smells to penetrate, the smell of burnt hair, the smell of blood
the smell of tongues moist inside closed mouths, the smell of it all.

So much darkness and none of it has any light, there's no life in the dark
there are no stars in the imagined sky, the town is dark, the deaths
have used up the air, there is nothing but the nothing.

My accident is your opportunity said the death to the life
and life did not answer, life was mute as a scar.

Did anyone turn towards the sun and pray?

He would be stolen by the next breath.

Did a baby actually lay there with his eye to the ground?

Did his mother who had held him in her lap

leave a tear near the milk? These questions are cruel.

Tomorrow will be another day entirely but this day will always be burnt.



A Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up on this crowded bus during morning rush hour, killing 10 passengers and wounding dozens.

The “Zionist” Clock at 60

by Shaul Magid

IN THE 1980S THERE WAS A DEBATE IN THE *HAREDI* (ULTRA-ORTHODOX) WORLD IN ISRAEL ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S decision to institute “summer time” by moving the clocks ahead one hour. The reasons largely had to do with energy consumption. There were protests from the religious parties in the Knesset about making sure this was done after Passover so that the seder would not begin too late at night. But there was a deeper anxiety in the haredi world having to do with the ostensible expression of power expressed in the “Zionist” state determining time. During these days I noticed a giant poster in Kikar Shabbat, the main intersection separating the haredi neighborhoods of Geula and Meah Shearim. The poster had two clocks, one reading 7:00 and the other reading 8:00. The first was labeled “true clock” (*she'on emiti*) and the second, “Zionist clock” (*she'on zioni*). I recall being struck by what I took as an expression of existential angst embodied in this poster. While many governments legislate “summer time,” the haredim saw in this an expression of how Zionist influence pervades their lives and how, against their collective will, they feel trapped in its grasp.



In the past sixty years, Zionism has made enormous contributions to Jewish and global society: it drained swamps and made the desert bloom; it provided a refuge for persecuted Jews from Yemen to the former Soviet Union, from Ethiopia to Iraq. For many American Jews, Israel has been a source for pride and renewed Jewish identity. It created a vibrant secular Jewish culture including art, music, dance and literature. It revived the Hebrew language and created a thriving and organic religious environment. It breathed new life and, for some, provided renewed faith, after the devastation wrought by the Nazis. It brought democracy to the Middle East. This is all to be celebrated.

But there is a darker side that cannot, and should not, be ignored. Zionism as an ideology and political reality was also guilty of a form of colonialism and, until quite recently, overtly denied the very existence of Palestinian collective identity. In some cases, it "liquidated" villages, illegally expropriated agriculturally rich territory and oppressed another people through occupation for almost a generation before any sustained armed resistance by the oppressed. Whatever justifications one could make for all these things, they were a product of Zionism, perhaps necessarily so. Benny Morris's "Zionist" response to his own post-Zionist book on the making of the Palestinian refugee problem said it best when he argued that, yes, Israel committed many of the atrocities enumerated in his book but that is the necessary price of nation-building. In other words, Zionism needed to undermine the indigenous population and deny their collective existence in order to create the Jewish state. While he claims it was taken out of context, his analogy of Israel's origins to nineteenth-century America's treatment of the Native Americans is not totally out of place. While the analogy is problematic on many levels, it is arguably true that both countries would not be what they are had they not committed these deeds. This, I think, is Morris' point.

Zionism, of course, is not monolithic. However, Gershom Gorenberg's new book *The Accidental Empire* does a wonderful service documenting how the leftist kibbutz movement was as deeply invested in settlement activity after 1967 as the religious Zionists now seen by many progressives as root of the "the problem." That is, the issues regarding Israel, the land, and its non-Jewish population are not solely a product of a religious ideology gone awry but are an outgrowth of the very notion and nature of Zionism.

While many of us on the Left have a deep love for the land, the country, and the culture (secular and religious) that Zionism produced, we can no longer stand under the banner of Zionism; we no longer want to tell time by the Zionist clock. Perhaps it is time, after sixty years, to unambiguously state, "we love the land and its culture and support a state in part of Eretz Yisrael but we can no longer call ourselves Zionists." Why? Because Zionism, in its myriad forms, cannot absorb what needs to be done, from relinquishing vast amounts of territory to the implementation of a liberal (and not only an "ethnic") democracy where all citizens are treated equally in the eyes of the law. This may, or may not, result in the end

of the Jewish State as we know it, or as Zionism envisioned it. That depends on many factors beyond our direct control. Many Israelis, known as post-Zionists, have come to a similar conclusion but post-Zionism is an Israeli phenomenon and has no real place in the Diaspora. Diaspora Jews who are sympathetic to this position must begin to formulate a stance that continues to appreciate and even celebrate all the positive things Zionism has accomplished at the same time that it views Zionism as an ideology that can no longer serve as a foundation for the future of Israel.

Until this point, Zionism in the Diaspora has been viewed as synonymous with supporting Israel. I suggest the Israel that some of us would like to see is one that can no longer be viewed through the Zionist lens. Perhaps, after sixty years, we need to critically look at whether Zionism itself has become a spent and even counter-productive ideology. This is not about the eradication of Israel, far from it: it is about the liberation of Israel from an ideology that once brought it into existence but can no longer serve as its core. America would simply be a different country without the doctrine of Manifest Destiny or slavery but few, if any, in America still hold these ideologies as having any contemporary relevance. In fact, America has gone to great lengths to repair the damage done by these doctrines. We in the Diaspora have lived for sixty years with a Zionist clock. Perhaps it is time to consider resetting our watches. ■

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Make the Dream Come True

by Tzvi Marx

A SOBER REFLECTION ON THE STATE OF THE JEWISH STATE AFTER SIXTY YEARS OF EXISTENCE should, from a *Tikkun* perspective, be primarily oriented on the search for peace based on compromise with the Palestinian people. However, the Hamas Charter rules out peaceful compromise with any version of a sovereign State of Israel:

Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it...The Islamic Resistance Movement believes that the land of Palestine is an Islamic Waqf consecrated for future Moslem generations until Judgment Day. It, or any part of it, should not be squandered: it, or any part of it, should not be given up...There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavors.

It would not be prudent to allow this kind of negation to deflect a religious Zionist from seriously reflecting on Israel on the occasion of its sixtieth.

In the conclusion of his very critical 1998 study of the Middle East conflict, Benny Morris, leading voice among the wave of "new" and critical Israeli historians who the journal *Arab Affairs* endorsed as "required reading for anyone who professes a serious interest in the Arab-Israeli Conflict over Palestine," argued that when "viewed as a whole, the success of the Zionist enterprise has been nothing short of miraculous. For how else can one describe the taking root, in a desolate land, in the face of imperial ill will and native hostility, of a small, ill-equipped community of tens of thousands of transplanted Russian Jews; how else describe the growth of that community... in defiance of increasing Arab opposition and violence? How else describe the victory of the minuscule community against the surrounding sea of Arabs and Arab states in 1948, the establishment of a solid, viable state..." His remarks are no less relevant twenty years later.

The sages of the Mishnah, in their pastoral mode, suggested that sixty in the life of an individual signifies *zikna*, literally "old age" (Pirkei Avot 5:24) and as Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzchak, eleventh century) commented, marked by the weakening of one's abilities, simply physical and mental deterioration. Another rabbinic view is that *zikna* implies attaining the age of wisdom, discernment and judgment, the fruits of experience. By analogy from the individual to the collective, one may conjecture that, following Rashi, the State of Israel is showing signs of weariness, of a losing of its youthful prowess which may signal an eventual caving in of its

earliest promise due to the obsolescence of its Zionist dreams. I do not share that view, but see rather its attaining a stage of life's wisdom which could only be attained through experience. How could one, after all, imagine a Jewish state before having had one?

The words of the Bible, sacred literature, and liturgy that sustained the dream of Zion when there was no Zion were mere hopes and incomplete visions serving as compensation in fantasy for the absence of a lived Jewish sovereign reality. The complexity that this entailed could not truly be imagined even by its most fervent visionaries current or past. One need only re-read Theodore Herzl's vision of Zion, *Der Judenstaat* (*The Jewish State*, 1896) to be convinced how unimaginable the reality of a Jewish state in the middle of the Arabic Islamic Middle East was. Especially, no one could imagine the degree of negation our enemies were capable of articulating in words, policies and deeds.

Against this background, it seems to me that a decent critique of Israel by a committed Jew must begin with a "*shehecheyanu*" (benediction expressing gratitude) in appreciation of the resurrection of a nation from ashes and attaining its sixtieth anniversary, a veritable miracle marking the transition from "exile" to "return." The Psalmist's yearning "when the Lord restores the fortunes of Zion... our mouths shall be filled with laughter... with songs of joy" (Ps.126: 1-2), words recited before every Sabbath's grace, were actualized in our time. As a World War II survivor who was born in France in 1942 and whose family was saved by a successful escape through a break in the border fence due to a temporary lapse in the Swiss policy of not returning refugees with children, how could I not acknowledge the privilege of having personally experienced this reality when I resided for twenty years in Israel. I couldn't possibly begrudge the sense of elation I felt in dwelling with millions of Jews in their own sovereign state after 1900 years of exile, subjugation and persecution. It is because of that larger perspective that this sixtieth anniversary of Israel's existence invites a deep look at ourselves in the details of our return as a people in our land.

The idea that such periodic reflection is desirable is expressed through the Biblical jubilee year, *yovel*, observance. In its fiftieth year, the land lies fallow for a second consecutive year, following



the seven times seven sabbatical years of the forty-nine years of the sabbatical cycle. The Biblical life-rhythm emphasis on periodic withdrawal for the purpose of self-awareness is institutionalized not only into the weekly Shabbat retreat but also within the larger life cycles. The land lies fallow and moreover returns to its original owners having been successfully worked by its current developer. Even slaves sold into perpetuity are liberated, "let freedom be proclaimed in the land" (Lev. 25:10). Let the shofar blast awaken by its sounds the insight of a nation that has mastered the skills of the survival in the earth, having learned how to make it yield its fruits. Reflection means critical thinking principally by committed participants who want the enterprise to succeed, in contrast to outsiders who want the enterprise defeated.

What questions must we pose? What is the proper perspective in which to frame these questions so as to not allow petty annoyances to outweigh more important overall issues? For a "religious" "Zionist" like myself, that means the critique must relate to two issues: The secular reality of the twentieth century in terms of which the dream of political Zionism was articulated. From this perspective, the only redemption from the misery of political dependency and arbitrary persecution was the reestablishment of a homeland on the soil Israel, leading to the "normalization" of the Jewish people. It must also relate to the religious traditions (both prophetic and rabbinic) where the vision of Zion, of "the Land," is fundamentally anchored in the implementation of its values, and not in the land per se: "keep My statutes and Mine ordinances and do not any of the abominations...so that the Land vomit you not out... (Lev. 18:27-8). The deep linkage between values and space or territory is obvious in that the Bible makes its injunctions (*mitzvot*) contingent on "when you come into the Land..." (e.g. Deut. 26:1).

For both the secular and the religious perspectives, "landedness" and "being" are inextricably linked!

What was at stake for the secular in this connection was the "normalization" of a people living too long a distorted form of existence that was parasitic on the total environments created by other peoples in their homelands through their cultures. Visiting was fine, but overstaying by 1900 years was seen as overdoing it, a condition that could only lead to political, national and psychic disability—witness the persecution of the Jews in the Diaspora.

From the religious perspective, landedness was the very condition for realizing a vision of totally responsible comprehensive collective life. The sages of the Mishna coined the distinction between "precepts dependent on the land/soil" and those "not dependent on the land/soil" (Mishna Kiddushin 1:9; Talmud 36b) to protect this vision when it could not be concretized in the Diaspora and thereby facilitate an incomplete though religiously fulfilling Jewish life in the Diaspora. Even the term for Diaspora life—"galut" (exile)—underlines this. Diaspora is a neutral term that signifies a people merely distributed or dispersed across the globe while "galut" is an evaluative term that signifies loss, of being away from home.

The secular analysis of the Jewish problem explains the



After release from Buchenwald three Jewish children are bound for Palestine, 1945.

"negation of the Diaspora" ideology by which Israelis, from Ben Gurion to Yitzhak Rabin, tended to interpret the continued Jewish institutionalized life in the Diaspora during the period of its (Israel's) development, and even today. This negation expressed itself in its refusal to educate Israeli youth about the two millennia of Diaspora achievement. Israelis were ashamed of their Diaspora/galat past to the point of denial. For them, the Jewish people was born not in the desert Sinai nor in the slave fields of Egypt, but on the soil Israel. The opening lines of the Israeli Declaration of Independence attest to this: *Eretz Yisrael was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here [and not in Egypt or on Mount Sinai] their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped.*" It detested the Diaspora and distanced itself from it, disregarding the Diaspora's agenda for continued positive life. Israel concerned itself with the Diaspora merely as a potential pool for aliyah. The fundamental, perhaps only, message that its Zionist leaders could communicate to Jewish youth searching for Jewish meaning in the context of their widespread communities was "aleh"—"come on aliyah"—"there is no meaning to Jewish life in the Diaspora!" Spiritual yearning for values, for mitzvot as a life context, was apparently not grasped by Israel rooted *shelichim* (emissaries). *Extra*

territorium, non salut—Outside the land there is no redemption, no spirituality! It was as if their proof-text was the naive reading of Talmudic teaching that “whoever lives outside the land may be regarded as if he worships idols” (Talmud Ketubot 111a). They were unaware that in that same discussion, even on the same folio, the view is expressed that “whoever leaves Babylon [the Diaspora] to ascend to the land of Israel transgresses.”

Religious Zionism, on the other hand, had at least, in part, to affirm a positive meaning for the Diaspora, even while it also acknowledged that the opportunities for collective realization of Jewish visions through the Diaspora were limited. It had a much greater sense of continuity between the land of Israel and Diaspora-based contexts of Jewish living. This, because Torah was its foundational measure of Jewish meaning in either of these contexts. Torah was imperative in the Diaspora as well, even if its obligations were more limited.

From the perspective of the secular vision, did the achievement of Zionism in the creation of Israel achieve its goal of normalization? Did it become a nation “like all nations” (Deut. 17:14; I Samuel 8:5, 20), no longer “set apart” nor “disregarded by the nations” (Nu. 23:9), no longer admired or loathed in exaggerated fashion? Did a new “Hebrew” person emerge imbued with ideals of justice and egalitarianism as dreamt of by the Zionist ideologues of the early twentieth century, freed of the social disabilities brought on by the crippling Diaspora existence?

And from the perspective of the religious vision, did the return to the Holy Land stimulate the realization of sanctity as was envisioned in the formation of “a kingdom of priests, a holy people” (Exodus. 19:6)? Were the ideals of the holiness code realized? This wish list begins “you shall be holy for I, the Lord your God, am holy” and culminates in the “loving of one’s neighbor” (19:18) and of “the stranger” (19:34). And what of those articulated by Isaiah that “Zion shall be redeemed with justice and ... lovingkindness” (1:27)? The rabbinic sages singled out the three identifying marks of an Israelite “compassion, shame and kindness” (Talmud Yebamot 79a). Maimonides religiously humanizes his codex, the Mishnah Torah, with the ruling that “the ordinances of the Torah were meant to bring upon the world not vengeance, but mercy, lovingkindness and peace” (Mishnah Torah, Laws of the Sabbath 2:3). His messianic aspiration did not betoken “that Israel might exercise dominion over the world, or rule over the non-Jews... but that it devote itself to the Torah and its wisdom...” (Laws of Kings and Wars 12:4). Could it honestly be said by one who defined himself in terms of the religious inspirations of Judaism that the people Israel in their state form have become a “light unto the nations” (Isaiah 42:6, 49:6)? Do the nations currently testify how Israel is “a wise and discerning people” (Deut. 4:6) as Moses had hoped? Have we learned to be with one another in our land in a way that would bring the words of the Psalmist to our lips “how good and pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity” (Psalm 133)? Do we treat the stranger in our land according to the maxim “there shall be one law for you, whether stranger or citizen” (Nu. 9:14, 15:15)?

What is it that we have painfully learned through the experience of sixty years of independence in our land? Our proud self-understanding as God’s elect needs to be tempered by a sober look at ourselves after this period of empowerment! Like the rest of the human race we are merely human and not infrequently act in ways that are open to criticism from universally accepted human rights, as well as Jewish, standards. The mere return to “land” is not by itself a cure for the weakness of the disempowerment that was the condition of the Diaspora, nor for the weaknesses that are the human lot. On the contrary, the return to the land also opened the way to express those weaknesses in larger and more virulent forms than we were able to acknowledge in the more limited context of Diaspora.

Nevertheless, I do not share the view of those who think that Diaspora is that form of Jewish living where the Jewish people were, because of that disempowerment, at their best, as a minority which allowed religious ideals to be exercised without the opportunity for the exploitation of others. In the first place, the price for Diaspora living was too high in because it invited too much persecution. And further, this view smacks of romanticization of the ghetto. It overlooks the actual condition of a people under pressure exercising their “smaller” forms of meanness, often against one another. Besides that, being moral when disempowered is no great achievement. The prophets and sages dreamed of morality within the context of empowerment.

At the same time I do not worship at the shrine of land idolization with those who liturgically proclaimed the return to the land as “the beginning of the flowering of the redemption” (the standard *siddur*-prayer for Israel composed by the chief rabbinate of Israel). Whether it is an event in redemption depends on what the people of Israel do in the land, by the kind of moral and ethical reality they create there, and not by the mere fact of returning. One is tempted to call that sort of land assessment a new form of idolatry, which the late iconoclastic Prof. Yeshayahu Leibowitz repeatedly warned against. The enthusiasm for the land in itself which is expressed in such liturgical celebration may be understandable against the background of a long period of deprivation. But after sixty years of acclimatization to that kind of stability, this uncritical enthusiasm must give way to a quieter assessment and a realization that there is much that has gone wrong.

The great Israeli writer Chaim Nahman Bialik is often quoted for suggesting that Israel will finally have become in his eyes a “normal” nation when there are Jewish prostitutes cruising in Tel Aviv, when there are Jewish thieves and more. He would then have been gratified to read the crime statistics in Israel, about its child abuse and battered women in the hundreds of thousands, of the insufficient services for those with disabilities, the increasing economic gap between the haves and have-nots, of bureaucratic indifference, automobile casualties, inter-religious and intra-religious conflicts bordering on violence, political corruption, educational gaps, and the discrimination against and exploitation of minorities, including immigrants—all these and more. How are we to explain



ourselves to ourselves in our so imperfect state and at the same time sustain our vision?

Can we take comfort in realizing the difficulty of the undertaking, of coalescing a scattered people in one land, a people that is in actuality many peoples who come from divergent cultures and have not had contact with one another?

Does the rapid rate of absorption of immigrants explain this? Is our disappointment assuaged in realizing that Israel is a pressure cooker where suppressed anger that has accumulated over so many hundreds of years of containment is being released, often in ugly ways? Is the trauma of the Shoah, the survival mechanism, wreaking havoc in our inability to treat one another without suspicion, without seeking advantage? Are we in Israel experiencing the psychological and social consequences of the first, second and third generation of Holocaust trauma? Or is there something in the concept of our self-understanding that inherently invites the mistreatment or mishandling of the other?

We have challenged ourselves to become a holy people, though we have never been such. I must say, though, that I prefer this kind of problem to that of survival as a minority in a Diaspora in the pre-State era. But that kind of abstraction only works with depersonalization. As soon as one looks into the faces of persecuted people, children, women, and seniors, the words of Maimonides pose a serious critical question:

The practice of the righteous is to suffer insults and not inflict them; to hear themselves reviled and do not retort; to be impelled in what they do by love, and to rejoice in [their own] suffering...(Mishnah Torah, De'ot- Ethics 2:3 based on Talmud Yoma 23a and Gittin 36a).

If the condition of landed-ness facilitates the infliction of wholesale suffering on others, can one be blamed for the illusion that in a sense the Diaspora was for the Jew an arena of greater morality? There s/he suffered at the hands of others, but was deterred from inflicting collective suffering on others by the very condition of her/his minority status.

Israel must use the occasion of its sixtieth to confront these difficult questions in holding onto and realizing its best visions of itself despite the often unbearably hard reality that understandably brings out its harsher, insensitive sides. God Himself is said to have approved of the appeal "may Thy mercy prevail over Thy anger" (Berachot 7a).

After all, no one forced the people of Israel to take up the burden of becoming a holy people, a divine calling. According to the Jewish tradition as expressed in the Talmud (Shabbat 88a), the people accepted this freely when they in their history affirmed and reaffirmed (Esther 9:27) what they had formally taken upon themselves at the beginning, at Sinai (Ex. 19:5). Let them now make the words of promise real. ■

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A Measure of Renewed Hope

by Steve Masters

THE ISRAEL OF MY YOUTH WAS FULL OF WONDER AND JOY. I STEEPED MYSELF IN THE NARRATIVE of our people's return from exile, and like many, joined myself to history.

Each Walk for Israel was my own personal Exodus, and my knowledge of Jerusalem won me a round-trip ticket in the 1974 Chicago Jerusalem Quiz. As a high school senior, I placed first in the Reform Movement's national sermon contest, arguing that Judaism couldn't survive without the Jewish State, and the summer of 1977 saw me living in a youth village on the 1948 border. Ten years later, I was back and finally living in

Jerusalem, a city that still holds a magical place in my heart.

Of course, by then, much had changed. My year in Jerusalem came in the final months before the 1987 intifada; as Israelis and Palestinians edged closer to that fateful uprising, I, too, had begun to see the limitations of the country I so loved.

And yet I arrived full of hope. Fresh out of law school, I

worked as a human rights lawyer for the Association for Civil Rights, joined scattered peace protests, and dialogued with Palestinians. There were hints of the coming violence in the pebbles thrown at me in East Jerusalem—but there was also a glimpse of peace on the hills of Neve Shalom, when Palestinians mingled with Israeli Jews for a day of music and celebration. How could hope not triumph over despair?

When despair won out, and the first intifada exploded, I was shocked to my core. Years of certainty fell away as I saw young people rise in anger to claim their freedom with rocks and guns—and other youth, wearing the Magen David, break their arms, in a vain attempt to break their will.

To answer the pain in my heart, I threw myself into peacemaking, spending years with fellow travelers in the wilderness of the Jewish community, as hearts hardened, and the voices of peace were silenced and ignored.

What joy, what vindication we felt when the Oslo Accords were revealed, and Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin heroically laid down arms. Peace at last!

How could we have known how brief hope's reign would be?

Two short years later, Rabin was gunned down, suicide bombings became a numbing routine, and the entire Oslo process crumbled into bloody hostilities. Israel and the Palestinians weren't building a new future—the past was eating them alive.

I cannot honestly say, then, that I was shocked when the al-Aqsa intifada erupted in September of 2000. Not shocked by the cycle of violence and retribution, not even terribly surprised—but my heart broke with each new horror.

The pain was too great; I couldn't sit by and watch the dream fade. I joined with a group of peace advocates, and in 2002, we founded Brit Tzedek v'Shalom, the Jewish Alliance for Justice and Peace; rather than give in to the prevailing desperation, we wanted to find a way to help our Israeli brothers and sisters forge a path to peace.

Since then, Brit Tzedek has grown exponentially, mobilizing some 40,000 American Jews, including 1,000 rabbis, to advocate for a negotiated, two-state resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Our grassroots advocates have met with the Israeli and Palestinian Prime Ministers, U.S. Senators and Representatives, friends and loved ones, and in part because of these efforts, our message is now conventional wisdom: today, 87 percent of American Jews want to see a two-state solution. In this, then, I have found a measure of renewed hope.

I am as dedicated to Israel today as I was when I walked for Israel through the streets of Chicago. Yet the question for me is no longer whether Judaism can survive without Israel—but instead whether Israel can truly flourish without the care and support of peace-minded Jews across this nation, demanding that our government lead the way to peace.

A sustainable two state solution is the only path that will bring either people true security; it's the only way that the Jewish people can reclaim the joy we felt at exile's end. I love Israel, I truly do, and I hold on to the hope that one day, her people will live in peace, and none shall make them afraid. ■

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Chosen for What?

by Brian D. McLaren

I WAS SURPRISED A YEAR OR SO AGO, DURING A TRIP THROUGH GUATEMALA, TO SEE BUMPER STICKERS plastered on car after car with the star of David and Israeli flag proudly displayed. Surely there couldn't be that many Jewish people in Central America? I wondered aloud. No, my hosts explained, those bumper stickers came from Evangelical and Pentecostal churches that taught Christian Zionism, a brand of theology that is associated with names like Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and John Hagee, recent endorser of presidential candidate John McCain.



I grew up in a conservative American church that fervently supported Christian Zionism. Although my faith journey has taken me far from that theological approach, because of my upbringing, I understand the mindset that produces Christian Zionism.

From my vantage point, one of the fatally flawed assumptions that underlies a Christian Zionist reading of the Bible is this: for God to choose (or elect or call) some people requires God to exclude others. In this view, to put it baldly, God plays favorites, electing some and rejecting others, calling some to grace and condemning others to despair. In much conventional Christian teaching, the Jewish people were God's original favorites—until we Christians came along. Then, in many minds, Christians replaced Jews as God's chosen; in other minds, Christians joined the Jews as junior partners in this elite status.

God could be expected within this scenario to act on behalf of his favorite people without regard for the dignity, well-being, or even survival of those who were not so chosen. The historic injustice done by Christians to Native Americans and African slaves in the Americas, to Jews by anti-Semitic Christians across the centuries, and to Palestinians today in the Middle East, all flow, in part, from this dangerous misunderstanding of what it means to be God's chosen or elect.

I remember the great relief I felt when my thinking about call, choosing, or election changed. I was liberated by a new understanding of the story of Abraham. I realized there was a Part A and a Part B to God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12. Yes, in Part A, God says, "I will bless you ... I will make you a great nation." But that was only half of the story, because in Part B, God added, "I will make you a blessing ... all the nations of the world will be blessed through you." The conventional view of Christian Zionists depends on reading Part A alone, so the world falls into two categories, "some/us" who are elected and "others/them" who are rejected.

When I was no longer able to break apart what God put together, when I included Part B with Part A, God's choice of some was no longer exclusive of others; it was instrumental for others. God no longer played favorites, but, in line with the teaching of Jesus, graciously gave rain and sun to all people.

I believe the idea of exclusive election has twisted sectors of all three Abrahamic faiths. If we perpetuate this misunderstanding, earth's future will be darkened by our religions, not enlightened by them. But if our understanding of chosen-ness, calling, or election can be corrected, wonderful new possibilities can arise. All nations, truly, can be blessed.

In the meantime, through its influence on U.S. foreign policy, Christian Zionism elicits uncritical support for the Israeli state and brings great suffering for the Palestinian people. I do not expect many in the older generation of conservative Christians to alter their longstanding view of chosen-ness. For them to change their view would require a profound repentance and paradigm shift. Such a shift would in turn unsettle all their theological categories—not to mention their foreign policy priorities. Few can handle this kind of rethinking.

But I see signs among younger generations of Evangelicals that the old view is losing its grip. Fewer and fewer can in good faith affirm a Part A religion divorced from Part B. More and more are emerging into what is for us a better and more truly biblical view: not "us instead of them" or "us without them" or "us versus them" but rather "some of us for all of us," embracing tikkun olam and seeking the common good. If this view wins hearts among believers in the God of Abraham, the next sixty years can be brighter than the last sixty for Israel, for Palestinians, for the United States, and for the world. ■

Rev. Brian McLaren's newest book is Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crises, and a Revolution of Hope (brianmclaren.net).

Reclaiming the Flag

by Jessica Montell

WEEKS BEFORE ISRAELI INDEPENDENCE DAY, VARIOUS ENTREPRENEURS APPEAR AT intersections around the country selling flags that can be attached to the roof of the car. These innocuous vendors invariably trigger in me a soul-searching as I wrestle with existential questions about the meaning of the flag in my personal and collective contexts.

"Look at the flags!" my son Nadav exclaimed excitedly when he first saw the vendors last year. "Let's get one."

"My friend Alon's car has *two* flags!" his twin brother Asaf chimed in.

"C'mon mom. Can we get a flag??"

Well, I asked myself, not for the first time, *can* we get a flag? An apparently simple question, with so much baggage beneath the surface.

What does it symbolize, that white rectangle with the two blue stripes and the Star of David in the center? What would I be saying if I hung it from my car? I cannot divorce this question from the reality of my daily life.

I see my three kids growing up happily in Jerusalem, talking, thinking and dreaming in the Hebrew language, living their life according to the Jewish calendar. My kids would have no problem unhesitatingly subscribing to the words of the Steven Van Zandt song: "I am a Patriot / and I love my country / because my country / is all I know."

For me it is not that simple. I prefer to think of myself as a citizen of the world and, having been born and raised in the United States before moving to Israel fifteen years ago, I "know" and am full of criticism for both. Patriotism doesn't come so easy to skeptics like me.

And to compound the general skepticism, I lead B'Tselem, an organization dedicated to documenting and publicizing what are the least attractive aspects of Israel: its military control of the Palestinian population and all the abuses of that control—land confiscations, checkpoints, house demolitions, administrative detentions. It's hard to be a flag-waver in my job.

But I too love this country. It infuriates me to see the label "pro-Israel" become a euphemism for the worst of jingoistic Zionism, appropriated exclusively by people who are so clearly working against the welfare of the State of Israel. What is more pro-Israel than my work at B'Tselem, where we are struggling to make Israel live up to the essence of Jewish and human values?

Recognizing the importance of B'Tselem for Israel's future does not always make it easy to confront the reality that B'Tselem documents. Israel's policies in the Occupied Territories can create a kind of cognitive dissonance for those Jews who see social justice as inherent to Judaism. One way of resolving this dissonance is to deny the severity of Israel's policies: to deny that Israel is guilty of human rights violations and argue that everything Israel does is justified in the name of its security. This is the ostrich strategy, and one of B'Tselem's primary missions is to provide the well-documented evidence, so that we cannot simply shut our eyes and claim not to know what Israel is doing in our name.

Another way to deal with the dissonance created by Israel's human rights violations is to distance oneself from Israel. And indeed it appears that there is such a trend among liberal American Jews. But disassociating from Israel may not be as easy as it seems. I remember my father telling me his experience of June 1967. As war broke out between Israel and its neighbors, my Marxist atheist American Jewish father surprised himself by trying to book a

flight to Israel to join the war effort. So you can take the Jew out of Israel, but apparently it's not so simple to take Israel out of the Jew.

But couldn't there be a third way to resolve the dissonance—to embrace those elements of Israel that are continuing the Jewish tradition of justice? Israeli society is full of organizations, groups, initiatives, and individuals advocating social justice. We can be proud that in spite of the difficult security situation and the fear for their personal safety, many Israelis refuse to accept that Israel must be a military fortress where might makes right.

So why should we let the jingoists take over Israel's sixtieth anniversary events? Why can't this year be an opportunity to reconnect with the dream of Israel and our commitment to make Israel live up to that dream? This year let's say: this is our flag too. ■

Jessica Montell is Executive Director of B'Tselem: the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories (www.btselem.org).





Gender Inequalities

by Vanessa Ochs

IN ISRAEL, FEMINIST CHANGES AFFECTING THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN BOTH THE SECULAR AND religious spheres have greatly lagged behind those in the United States. If you didn't know this, there was often a reason: perhaps you thought that if Golda Meir could have been prime minister, an Israeli woman could do anything. Perhaps you assumed that the women in the army and kibbutzim could do the same work as men.

Even if you were aware of gender inequalities, you might have been persuaded that equal rights for women was a project trumped by the priorities of this war or that one. Perhaps you were persuaded that in a place where the sensibilities of the ultra-orthodox have been privileged with surprising accommodations, powerful traditions cannot be changed overnight without completely shattering the integrity of Judaism.

How easy it is to explain away lethargy and discrimination and to caution patience when the status quo does not threaten one's own human dignity. It is easy enough to say that change happens slowly for those who can already pray at the *Kotel* wearing a tallit and reading from a Torah scroll; or for those who can freely remarry after a divorce without needing to receive a get.

As an activist who has tried to address women's religious rights

in Israel, I have often been aggravated to tears by Israel's snail's pace towards granting equal rights for women. But then something quite wonderful will happen that distinctly improves the lives of women: a seminary once closed to women now ordains its first women rabbis; a school that teaches Talmud at advanced levels to women is built; an orthodox synagogue in which men and women participate with near-equality is packed with worshippers.

Witnessing such accomplishments with my own eyes and celebrating them, I tell myself that while the Israel of my own vision is unlikely to be built in my own lifetime, it may still happen one day. ■

*Vanessa Ochs is an associate professor at the University of Virginia and the author, most recently, of *Inventing Jewish Ritual* (JPS).*

Fata Morgana

*(The righteous shall flourish like the date palm
Psalm 92: 13)*

by Jacqueline Osherow

There I was at the literal
depths of the earth: nothing
but rock, saltwater, salt, parched air
and a redundant sign with an arrow
reading *S'dom*, as if there were another
possible explanation. I wanted to see

for myself what a woman looks like
who has watched God wreak vengeance
on her home, but there wasn't a single
pillar of salt anywhere. I would have thought
there'd be a host of them—in such
dry air the tears evaporate so quickly—
perhaps we should have tried a different road?

But then we got distracted by a shock
of green: row after row after row
of righteous palms, their fronds
pressed against the blistering air
to offer anyone who passed a gift of shade

and a fleeting glimpse
of the colossal move
from a bleak, closefisted
stretch of wilderness

to a land flowing with milk
and so much honey
that an iridescent flock of emerald bee-eaters
had flown all the way from inmost Africa
to gorge themselves on swarms of promised bees.

I saw them with my own eyes: green on green,
their unreal wings (studs of sapphire, shafts of gold)
almost invisible against the blinding leaves
that had sworn off any dew or mist or rain—
sustained by a cool unearthly earthly secret.

Lot's wife was foolish to look back,
when she might have seen this in front of her,
except that sometimes
it isn't beauty we're after
but an even more ethereal apparition

that finds its double in our memory
and lets us know when something is our own—

usually a reassuring notion
though it can cause—especially
around there—so much trouble

and this woman hadn't thought
to bring her name with her,
much less her hand-mirror, her emerald earrings ...
and even if she had been self-possessed
when her husband said they weren't coming back

she couldn't have brought along
the perfectly positioned tent-flap,
through which she'd watched
her mountains at their rose toilette
transform themselves each night
to deep vermilion, their sighs
a makeshift trove of evening breeze.

Anyway, as I told you, I forgot her
in a momentary trance of brilliant green
on which I, too, am frantic to make a claim

and—though I don't mean anything
explicitly political—I know this
entangles me in bitter chaos,
hatred, terror, torture, war.

Is it worth it, just so I can write:
My bee-eaters, My date-palms,
My dazzling mirage of desert green?
I, who could sit anywhere, write almost anything?

The truth is I didn't realize what I was doing.
I just took a simple backward glimpse
and there, in front of me, corporeal
was something I'd thought only lived in words,
inviolable—a holy language—
words you couldn't even paraphrase,
much less have three-dimensional before your eyes.

"Blossom in Galilee" by Betty Rubinstein





I dispensed with them as soon as I had the chance,
dispensed, in fact, with half the famous promise,
didn't even look for any sign of milk
in my delirium at all that honey,

which I identified,
it turns out, thoroughly by accident.
Biblical honey required no bees
but came from dates—another
gift of selfless palms—

and, therefore, had nothing to do
with my enchanted bee-eaters,
first sighted in the area in the fifties,
all those idealists making the desert bloom
naturally enough attracting bees
and then, after a while, their gorgeous predators

but still, it's too late, I've glimpsed
my vision—I can't dissociate
God's ancient balmy promise
from the gemstones beating
in those bright, green wings,

which amounts, like it or not, to a kind of claim,
not that I'm in favor of displaced people,
retribution, ethnic hatred, misery,

but a person—even a poet—every once in a while
needs to know that words are linked to things

even if it means looking out
on insurmountable earthly complications,
the messes so intrinsic
that God Himself
has only tried to solve them with destruction.

(Maybe it was His own incompetence
He so didn't want Lot's wife to see.)

I was squeamish—for years
I wanted no part of this—

and I'm not sure I know what happened next;
there I was, my head turned back, my eyes opened:
I just wanted to see it before it exploded
or maybe I *was* curious about my home;
everybody has to come from somewhere

and Philadelphia, though among
the more generous way-stations
in the course of all that drawn-out wandering,
is far too haphazard for consideration.

So now, with no warning,
I'm suddenly stuck
in this place of warring claims
and endless trouble,
with all these people crowded
onto a single sliver of vision
murmuring to themselves *my land, my home*.

I can't even see the oasis from here
just the Dead Sea and endless desert.
Nothing lives here. Not even sound
except for snatches of oldies on Radio Jordan
(clearer than any Israeli station)
dispensed by the occasional passing car

and the intermittent rumbling
of artillery in the distance—practice
maneuvers at an outlying base —
like stifled, systematic thunder.

Even durable words come up empty.
Righteousness, for example,
is a good deal easier
for a date palm
than for a human being.

For one thing: what honey do I have to offer?
Here, there's only salt and bitterness

and as for shade, I wouldn't get between
even the most brutal sun and anything;
I can't help it. I need light. I want to see:
the thin layer of salt
over the bleached-out rock
in this godforsaken outpost
of the wilderness

or its lush, inexplicable
antithesis, just down
the road, outside my
line of vision, tangled
up in outstretched fronds
and wings, baffling
the promised air with green.

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Israel and My Lenses

by Alicia Ostriker

WHAT THE STATE OF ISRAEL MEANS to me: a good question. A good Jewish question. I have a good Jewish answer.

What *should* Israel mean?

I perceive Israel through an array of lenses. One is the lens of the senses that reveals the purity of a desert landscape, the road coming up from Ben Gurion airport finally cresting above Jerusalem, the beauty of Jerusalem stone, the textures and colors of a marketplace, the shining Dome of the Rock, black olives in a dark café, the relaxed civic pleasures of the Tel Aviv beachfront promenade, the lineup of whores on the curve of road between Tel Aviv and Ramat Aviv, the dark hair of the young, the bright eyes of children.

Another lens is that of the imagination, in which Israel exists as story, as symbol, as Meaning. Symbol of promise. People—my intense people—once had an intense relationship with God here. Our mother Rachel is buried here. We crossed the Jordan River here and marched to Jericho. The land was promised to us and in return we promise something. We promise to construct a just society. We promise to make the land bloom. We promise to worship only.... Well, that keeps changing, doesn't it? What we mean by God keeps changing. The land, though—our blood and our myths attach us to it.

One lens admits bullets of light that almost blind me. "Justice, justice shalt thou seek." "Love therefore the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation." "My beloved is mine and I am his." These missiles were locally manufactured and have a very long shelf life. They travel right through to my brain, where they inscribe themselves permanently; and they lodge in my yearning heart.

But my most piercing view of Israel comes with a set of double lenses. Over my right eye goes the lens of the Holocaust, by which the



Polish Jews are led away for deportation by German SS soldiers, in 1943.

State of Israel continues to define itself, in memory of which it repeats Never Again, again and again, and views itself as eternal innocent victim. Over my left eye goes the lens of Al Nakba, the catastrophe/cataclysm, in which a million Palestinians were ethnically cleansed in 1948, in memory of which many Palestinians have vowed to destroy Israel, and view themselves as eternal innocent victims. Through one lens I see Jews in pain, through one lens I see Palestinians in pain.

I see wealth, I see poverty, I see oppression. I see bulldozed homes, sneering soldiers. "And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and there was none to comfort them. On the side of their oppressors there was power" (Ecclesiastes 4.1). I see also zealots eaten by hatred, in love with death and with another kind of power, sending young people out to kill themselves and random Jews. The doubling is driving me crazy, and I cannot tear these glasses from my eyes.

Israel has entered my poems on many occasions. I was raised (full disclosure) a third-generation atheist socialist, but find myself often talking to God. Haranguing, you might say. One of the things I talk about is Israel. Here is an example, from my recent book of poems, *No Heaven*:

...Yet those who believe you chose them
break the bones of the unchosen
Those who trust in your righteousness
study death's secret handshake
Those who remember you promised them the land
sow it with corpses
Those who await messiah
dream of apocalypse
in which their enemies burn—
I speak of all your countries, my dear God. ■



Arab refugees stream from what was then Palestine, on the road to Lebanon in northern Israel to flee fighting in the Galilee region in the Arab-Israeli war, November 4, 1948.

Alicia Ostriker is a poet and critic, most recently author of For the Love of God: The Bible as an Open Book, a set of linked essays.

Co-existence and Joint Action: A Lesson from 60 Years of Conflict

by Mazin Qumsiyeh

AS A PALESTINIAN FROM THE WEST BANK I was raised under Israeli occupation, but my family was rather lucky in being in a part of Palestine that was occupied in 1967 rather than ethnically cleansed in 1948. This has always placed an element of guilt and responsibility on me. Most people I developed close connection to seem to be refugees: in childhood schools in Bethlehem, in college in Jordan, and even in the United States where 400,000 Palestinians now live. But the second group of people I developed close friendship with is Jews of conscience. These interactions and many others shaped my life, including my philosophy of life.



Christian mother and children in Bethlehem.

My thoughts evolved as I learned history and grew in my political understanding of the causes and consequences of the Zionist project. I went through stages of anger, depression, immobility, hope, and caring. Today, sixty years after that seminal event, there are simple truths that my friends (Palestinians, Israelis, U.S. citizens, etc.) and I understand even as we continue to evolve our political and activist agenda. We know now that the catastrophe (Nakba) of 1948 was not inevitable and certainly most Jews in the world at the time did not participate in the Zionist project (although many were silent while today many speak out).

We know that ethnocentric nationalism is not the humane answer to the racism and discrimination inherent in ethnocentric nationalism. We know that people of all faiths and backgrounds can and do work together for peace and justice. They can and do live together (even as husband and wife—I have been married to a Chinese woman for twenty-three years). We know that violence is a symptom of the underlying disease not its etiology (as seen in the end of violence in Northern Ireland and South Africa). We know violence to be more: that violence only begets violence. We know that the only route to a durable peace is restorative justice. And we

know that we must transcend the nineteenth-century ideologies especially now in this twenty first century after the birth of Jesus. This is the era of dissolving borders (e.g., in Europe) and dissolving barriers (e.g., the internet). In my humble opinion, the only way to maintain an Israeli Hebrew culture is *Sharing the Land of Canaan* (the title of my book). If apartheid (segregation) was the problem in South Africa and the Jim Crow South, why would we think it a solution in the Holy Land?

We can either wallow in our old violent ways or we can really be a light unto the nations. Of all these lessons, the one I as a Palestinian Christian most understand now is what Jesus and many of the prophets taught: though we must challenge and hate the bad deeds done to any fellow human being, we must never hate the evil-doers but try to win them over to the causes of humanity and co-existence. That should be our collective mission and the lesson we draw from sixty years of violence (but also sixty years of good people doing good things for peace and justice). ■

Dr. Mazin Qumsiyeh served on the faculty of Duke and Yale Universities and is a peace activist who splits his time between Palestine, Connecticut, and the Wheels of Justice bus tour (justicewheels.org).

A Muslim Spiritual Progressive Perspective on Palestine/Israel: (with a dash of Obama)

by Omid Safi

I BEGIN MY REFLECTIONS ON THE SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MODERN nation state of Israel, alongside the events commemorated by Palestinians as the *Nakba* (The Catastrophe), with a reminder of an event that at first sight might seem unrelated: Barack Obama's March 2008 speech entitled "A More Perfect Union" that called for addressing racial issues in the United States.

In this speech Barack Obama, a Christian spiritual progressive who would surely find a home among many committed to the *Tikkun* ideals, spoke about how there is no way for us to immediately and magically get beyond our racial divisions. There is, however, a way for us to begin addressing issues of racial justice by confronting systematic injustices inflicted upon black communities as well as the real economic anxieties of white communities. Obama stressed that we can "address our past without becoming victims of our past." It is in this spirit that I wish to address the Palestinian/Israel situation/tragedy.

Jews have historically been persecuted and marginalized as few other communities in the history of the West have been. The rise of Zionism in many ways was a response to this persecution. While Zionism did begin with European Jews, it is in many ways part and parcel of the same milieu that saw the rise of other nationalist movements. For many Jews, the desire to return to what they have seen as their ancestral homeland is also real, and was a joyous cause for celebration after centuries of exile. Furthermore, there is little doubt that the establishment of the state of Israel has had a positive impact on the survival of Judaism—and Jews—in the Western world that for far too long had attempted to eradicate them. Furthermore, the concerns of the Israeli civilian community for genuine and meaningful security are real, and must also be addressed.

And yet part of our attempt to see with two eyes, hear with two ears, and yet feel with one heart is to recognize and remember that the same establishing of Israel is remembered differently, radically differently, by Palestinians. Going back to the 1917 Balfour Declaration, there has been a history of colonial support for the creation of Israel that remains for many Arabs and Muslims a painful reminder of centuries of oppressive foreign occupation and domination. The establishment of Israel in 1948 involved the forceful and violent ethnic cleansing of some 750,000 Palestinians from their

ancestral homelands (see Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oneworld 2006). The homes and lands of these indigenous Arab inhabitants of Palestine were confiscated and handed over to Jewish immigrants. In a matter of two generations, Palestinians who had made up 90 percent of the inhabitants of Palestine were forced to become a persecuted minority in their own homeland, or perpetually homeless exiles, much as Jews themselves had been for centuries before. The other major act of injustice on the part of Israel has been the forty-year occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, combined with draconian measures that inflict collective punishments upon Palestinians, in both the occupied territories and inside Israel itself. These systematic injustices too are real, and the subhuman condition that many Palestinians live in must be addressed if words like justice are to rise above being hollow mockeries of their lofty reality.

All of this is well known. And yet our point is quite simple: if we are to have a common future for all of us in this sacred land, there must be a just and compassionate way to atone for these atrocious realities of the past and the present.

I write these words not as a nationalist, but as a person of faith who remains convinced that the Divine qualities of *al-Rahman* and *al-Rahim*, the Compassionate and the Forgiving Merciful, are the two greatest Divine qualities that human beings can and should embody. I write as one of many who are certain that forgiveness and reconciliation are indeed possible, as they were in South Africa, so long as the reconciliation is an exercise in Truth and Reconciliation. The truth must be told, as bitter as it might be for some of us to speak it, and as unpleasant for others of us to hear it. Yet if we are understand one another's realities, we have to grant that the same truth that brings joy to some members of humanity has caused immense pain and suffering for others.

I also write these words as a religious humanist, and a historian,



"Behold how good and pleasant it is for brothers to dwell in unity." Lithograph by Mordecai Beck

whose issue is not with the existence of Jews, or Muslims, or Christians in this holy land, but with the notion that the state somehow belongs to one ethnic or religious group. It is that arrogance of nationalism that I reject in favor of a pluralistic and historically more accurate vision.

I remember that a thousand years ago, over 85 percent of all Jews lived among Muslims of Arab and Persian backgrounds. I remember that Jews achieved a "Golden Age" in Andalusia, ruled by Muslims. I remember that it was the Muslims who received the majority of the Jewish exiles when they were later expelled from Christian Andalusia. I remember that it was the Muslim Ottomans who provided for the welfare and security of the Jewish community, to the point of voluntarily settling Jewish families in the region, including in Jerusalem. We have lived together in the past, and can live together again.

The problem, therefore, is not that of the presence of Jews in the Holy Land. The issue is an unjust interpretation of Zionism that has sought and seeks to rid the land of Palestine and Israel of its Arab inhabitants, and render them second-class citizens in their own ancestral homeland. Only after addressing these issues can there be hope to realize the creation of a community where Jews, Christians, and Muslims can live side by side with one another in full dignity and equality.

Speaking on behalf of all those who resonate with the dream of such a new Israel, such a new Palestine, I say the following: We too dare to dream, we dream of a place, of land, where Muslim, Christian, and Jew live side by side, where Jerusalem becomes once again the Holy City, the Sacred City, simultaneously al-Quds and Zion. (There are many who share this dream, including Christians like

Elias Chacour, the many Israeli peace organizations, and members of the Jerusalem Peace Makers such as Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bukhari). We too have the audacity to hope and dream that God's love encompasses all of God's children, Jewish and Muslim, Christian and others. In that dream, we reject the notion, any notion, that this land belong exclusively to one people, or that others are at best tolerated guests. Rights, if they are meaningful, belongs to all; otherwise they are nothing more than privileges guaranteed to a chosen few, which effectively work as frameworks for oppression.

There are some Jews and some Arabs who if given a chance would no doubt wish to purge the land of the other. We see this hateful wish written into the charters of movements like Hamas, which has responded to the Israeli occupation with its own injustice, by inflicting violence upon Israeli society. And as many Palestinians have mournfully reminded us, the creation of Israel has involved the destruction of their own society not as an abstract dream but as an all too vivid reality. It is vital for us to address these past and present realities, and yet we remain hopeful that by addressing them we can avoid the situation of forever remaining their victim.

We dare to dream of a place where the majority of people want to live together, to co-exist, perhaps initially uncomfortably—but we have no choice today other than learning to live together. And we remain convinced that God creates us in love, that love is natural to our state, and it is in fact hate and mistrust that are unnatural. We are taught to hate one another, and if we have been taught hatred, we can un-teach hatred and replace it with an inclusive love. Our hearts are big enough for all of us.

Martin Luther King taught us that we have a choice: nonviolent coexistence or violent co-annihilation. We have gone down the path of attempting to violently annihilate one another, and it has gotten us nothing but this vortex of pain and destruction. It is time to try the higher path of nonviolent coexistence, illuminated by love.

We dream of a day where our children, Jewish children and Arab children, go to school together, live in the same communities, and work the same fields together. That day is possible, and our co-existence is possible, but only if we dare to rise above our own worst fears, and reach out to others who wish to coexist with us. Dr. King was right: we are all bound up in an inescapable network of mutuality. Buber was right: we achieve our full humanity when the "I" is projected into the Thou. Jesus and Muhammad were right: that which we do to the least of humanity we do to one another. May it be that when the 100th anniversary of Israel is celebrated, it is also a celebration of how the dreams of multiple communities became realized, not one at the expense of another. It is to that common humanity that we appeal. May the path to Truth and Reconciliation begin with each of us, today. ■

A professor of Islamic studies at the University of North Carolina, Omid Safi is one of the leading Muslim public intellectuals in the country, and is committed to social justice, compassion, and pluralism.

Repression of Dialogue

by Andrew Samuels

AS A THERAPIST WHO WORKS AS A POLITICAL CONSULTANT, I AM INTERESTED IN UNDERSTANDING some of the psychological reasons why it has been so terribly hard to achieve meaningful dialogue between the warring parties in the Middle East—and also within world Jewry. Governments have tried, and organizations and people of good faith have tried. There are certainly massive political, economic, and historical reasons for what has been, in overall terms, a failure. My modest question: are there some psychological ingredients we could add to these efforts?

My experiences running dialogue groups bringing together Israelis, Arabs, and Palestinians in several countries, including Israel, have taught me the incredible degree to which Palestinians and Israelis remain genuinely fascinated with each other. This sixtieth anniversary will intensify the sense of being bound together, which is what the word 'fascination' means. But does emotional interdependence rest only upon their historic enmity? Or is there a deeper yet repressed desire to know one another? According to the Qur'anic principle of *Ta'aruf*, political conflict has a crucial function of enabling different groups to get to know one another. Unfortunately, it is not in the interests of embattled leaderships in the region to foster much mutual understanding. This would undercut their reason for existing. So attempts at dialogue tend to go on more actively elsewhere in the world, though even there the impulse—it is almost an instinct—to know the other has to be got rid of.

What could be done to provide arenas (small and large) where, alongside vigorous and even hostile political debate, tiny shards of mutual knowledge might come into being? Jungian psychoanalysts speak of their work as taking place within an alchemical vessel; unpromising ingredients are mixed together in such a way that something more valuable and beautiful can emerge from out of the pot.

The profound cultural inequality in the Middle East makes the provision of such arenas problematic. We saw how cultural and other inequalities conditioned the debate over an academic boycott—a policy which was really a diversion. But, during the debate, it became clear how little academic freedom existed for Palestinians and therefore how fatuous calls for even-handedness were.

However, the problem of a lack of places in which to talk is not the only obstacle to dialogue. When such debates take place, we see a kind of political moralism in action. This means that each side attacks the other side via moral condemnation of its extremists, whether those extremists are represented in the debate or not. So the arguments leapfrog anyone who might be interested in dialogue to focus on either suicide bombers or machine-gun toting settlers. For the majority, the ease with which they can validly condemn these fanatics means that the psychologically difficult task of dialogue can be avoided.

I have noted, in such arenas, that once someone points out the

way moralism creeps into dialogue, there is a greater possibility of some kind of contained yet passionate interaction to take place. Not all Israelis live in or support the settlements; not all Palestinians want to see suicide bombings and rocket attacks. People occupying the political middle ground are shamed and embarrassed into silence when their more extreme compatriots are brought into the debate.

But noting the errant moralism of much of Middle Eastern political discourse does not bring this catalogue of the reasons why dialogue does not take place to an end. My experience in those groups suggest that peacemakers pay too much attention to the manifest content of political positions in the Middle East and not enough to the way in which those positions are expressed, to what I call their 'political style.' If we consider political style, then we can see that, on both sides, there are terrorists, warriors, historians, diplomats, philosophers, poets, aggressors, victims—and even ostriches. Take these tags metaphorically, and spread them out on a piece of paper and pair them up and a rather different map of the argument appears. Terrorists from one side go with terrorists from the other, philosophers with philosophers and so on. Not because they agree, for they obviously do not. But they tend to speak in a similar language and hence start from a higher threshold of mutual comprehension. Anyone—president or psychotherapist—trying to create a vessel in which peacemaking dialogue can flourish might recall that it ain't only what you do....

To summarize: peacemakers need to think about psychological reasons for their failure to establish dialogue in the Middle East. These include the repression by self-seeking leaderships of the desire to know the other side, the corruption of passionate expression of difference by cheap moralism leading to superior-inferior thinking, and a concentration on the content of what is said which, though important on one level, misses the point about how similarities in political style might make dialogue easier. ■

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Requiem for a Dream

From An Oldster: A Lament With A Mazel Tov

Ben Shishim L'ziknah—At Sixty Get Wise

by Zalman Schachter Shalomi

תחלים קכו

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת, בְּשׁוּב יְהוּדָה
אֶת שִׁיבָת
צִיּוֹן, הֵייוֹנוּ בְּחַלְמִים. אֲזִי וְיִמְלֵא
שְׂחֹק פִּינוּ וְלִשְׁוֹנֵנוּ רָנָה, אֲזִי יֹאמְרוּ
בְּגוֹיִם, הַגְדִּיל יְהוּדָה לַעֲשׂוֹת עִם
אֱלֹהֵי. הַגְדִּיל יְהוּדָה לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּנוּ,
הֵייוֹנוּ שְׂמֵחִים. שׁוֹבָה יְהוּדָה אֶת
שְׁבִיתָנוּ, בְּאִפְיָקִים בְּנִגְב. הַזֹּרְעִים
בְּדִמְעָה בְּרָנָה יִקְצְרוּ. הַלֹּךְ יֵלֵךְ
וְכִכָּה נִשָּׂא מִשָּׁךְ הַזֶּרַע, בָּא יָבֵא
בְּרָנָה, נִשָּׂא אֶלְמָתִיו.

*A song to ascend by
when God brought about our return to Zion we were dreaming...
oh how we will laugh with delight
oh how our tongues will sing...*

Our youthful dream got old and stale
we dreamed that we would care for the land
we dreamed how we would make the people happy
we dreamed that we would heal from 2000 years of exile
we dreamed of equality and rectitude
we dreamed ...

ALAS—WE DID NOT DREAM OF THE HUMAN COST TO our cousins.

Bloody and exhausted from the Holocaust we could not imagine ourselves except as in the role of victims. Our trust in the Balfour Declaration—subsequently shattered by the White Paper—redoubled our effort to secure the land of our dreams.

I was eleven years old in Vienna going around with a little box collecting for the Jewish National Fund. I was so proud to think that we rightfully owned every dunam of land because we bought it for our people with the money of our people.

I belonged to a Zionist youth group and watched 16mm movies of kibbutzim, danced the Hora, and began to pronounce Hebrew with a lot of ahh sounds.

I liked to think of Tel Aviv as an up-and-coming metropolitan city, of Jerusalem as a sacred place shared by all of the Abrahamic religions.

Every time I saw a picture of Theodore Herzl I walked straighter and held my head higher. I still remember the Herzl motto "Wir wollen von Judenjungen junge Juden machen" (literally, we want to turn Jew-youths into Young Jews). With fervent hopes I sang not only the *Hatikvah* but also the *Techezakna, Artzah Alinu*.

A pro-labor government established a healthcare system,

Bikkur Cholim, which was the model for the rest of the world.

With great hope and delight I read about the *Talmudbauer*, a Talmud scholar who was also a farmer. I took delight in hearing about *Kfar Hassidim*, and seeing the faces of Jews from Yemen.

I look with sadness at the groups that insisted on perpetuating their exilic ethnicity, creating enclaves so that they might continue in the style they brought from Europe without filtering out the psychic spam picked up in Europe under oppression. The Hasidim still want to be known by the towns in which they visited their masters: Amshinov, Belz, Ger, Karlin, Lubavitch, Vizhnitz, etc.

I am glad that some are practicing the *Shmittah*, a sabbatical year in Israel, and giving *Terummah* and *Ma'asser* of our produce. (But is this not to teach the lesson that is contained in these practices: to honor the natural land?)

Early on, I dreamed of an internationalized Jerusalem, headquarters of the United Nations.

I dreamed of an Israeli army that would be the core of the United Nations peacekeeping force. How proud I was of the term *Taharat Haneshek*, the ethical use of arms.

I dreamed of a union of states in the Middle East in which we would share our natural resources as well as our technical know-how.

I dreamed of the weekly concert of Levites who were recruited

from all kinds of religious backgrounds to create the music for the House Of Prayer For All Peoples.

I wrote a proposal that we put aside a penny per gallon of gasoline to be used to resettle Palestinian refugees.

This was not only my personal dream. It was in the air; it was shared, it was the myth that we lived with and for. How we rejoiced the night we heard the UN agreeing to partition.

Each time the surrounding nations attacked Israel I felt personally under siege. Yes, we needed to defend ourselves; yes, we needed to arm (though I was not proud of the fact that Israel sold Uzis to repressive governments and helped organize their secret police forces).

Now the arms industry of Israel has taken plowshares and turned them into swords.

A planned economy has given way to free style capitalistic piracy in return for being allowed to feed from the U.S. taxpayers' feeding trough.

Each one of us, in his own way, laments his unfulfilled dreams.

It isn't only Israel that is undergoing the decay of the myth. Everywhere we turn on the planet there is pain, destruction, waste and oppression; and our mother the Earth is reeling in delirium.

No fix will work if it only deals with an individual issue, country or people. Any solution that is not systemic, organismic, and global will fail.

Yet one has to begin somewhere.

It is not only on the conscious mundane level that the repair needs to be made. Clashing archetypes sit behind the rhetoric. We need to engage with the dreamers on both sides of the conflict to repair the image of the other, to see each other as human beings in the image of God and not as Apes and Pigs/Amalekite savages.

There has to be a separation of secular law and Halachah. We must show the world that Halachah and Shariah are not to be imposed on people who have not committed themselves to live under those rules; we must defend the respectful and separate domains of religion and the state.

Guest workers who come to help us in Israel deserve to be treated as welcome guests, not as beasts of burden to be exploited.

We have to devise and activate a healing way for soldiers to come back to their families after the army and yearly reserve duty.

We have to show the world that on our turf we have taken care of the homeless and hungry.

We have to show that taxes are not a burden, but the membership fee for participating in an open society.

We have to recover our ancient deep caring for the land itself: *mitzvat yishuv ha-aretz*.

We have to commit to sustainability and make that commitment the reality in *Eretz Yisrael*.

If there is a ray of hope it is in the mothers who keep a vigilant humanitarian focus on checkpoints.

Below the radar there are clandestine meetings of peace seekers. Our Renewalists have in concert with others organized the Sulha and other meetings and celebrations. There are collaborations like the Dead Sea works, agriculture and water equity, the Path of Abraham and Rabbis for Human Rights.

I wish that we would truly and fully yearn and plan for a better world. We need to behave in such a way that sings on all octaves of sentient life: "we want a shared and global *Mashiach* (Messiah) now!" And only together can we constitute that *Mashiach*.

The only way to get it together is—together. ■

Rev. Eve Ilse assisted with this article.

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"Rabbi" by Aharon Yakobson



Outgrowing Our Need for Promised Lands and Chosen Peoples

by Rami Shapiro

I LOVE THE STATE OF ISRAEL THE SAME WAY I LOVE THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS. Both are home to me: the one tribally, the other biologically. I visit each periodically, and choose to live in neither. My eyes are always drawn to news articles that mention Massachusetts and Israel, and my ears prick up when I hear someone reference them. I admire and study the sages of both: Hillel, Jesus, Akiva, Luria, Emerson, Thoreau, Fuller, and Dickinson. I thrill to the tales of their heroes overthrowing wicked occupiers: Greeks, Romans, British, and British again. I cringe at the madness of each: Salem and Hebron, to name but two. I feel blessed to be able to claim both states as my own. Yet I accept neither as the Promised Land.

I haven't believed in a Promised Land since the tenth grade, and I find the idea of a Chosen People no less silly. I can't accept the idea that God chooses one people or one swath of ground over any other.

God for me is reality. I reject the idea of supernaturalism. God is what is, and so the word "God" is more of a grammatical ghost than a signifier of something "out there." There is no "out there," there is only the nondual reality manifest in wondrous diversity. This is what I suspect Torah is trying to say when it names God *Ehyeh asher Ehyeh*, the I am-ing that is the evolving universe.

God doesn't choose the Jews; the Jews choose god, and, not surprisingly, the god they choose is a god who chooses them. That is to say, we Jews choose ourselves to be chosen, and invent a god who goes along with us so that we don't have to admit we are making the whole thing up. And while we're making up a chosen people why not provide that people with a promised land as well?

I was never impressed by the logic of this, but there it is; and because so many people have died for this idea it is hard for me to dismiss it out of hand. But I do dismiss it out of hand just like I dismiss the claim that Jesus is the Son of God, that the Qur'an is the only uncorrupted revelation of God, or that when we humans die our souls, or "thetans," go to the planet Venus where we learn about our past and future lives.

Yet even if God didn't promise Israel to us, we did live there, and have longed to return there for thousands of years. Our story, if not our god, says we have a right to a Jewish state in Israel. But do we? Does any people have a perpetual *right* to land? Indeed, can we even say that any people has a *right* to exist? What does "right" mean in this case?

History would suggest that a people's existence isn't inalienable, but is rather totally dependent on its capacity to defend itself against nonexistence. Did the Canaanites have a right to exist? Or the Hittites? Or the Navaho? How about the Palestinians? And what does "exist" mean, anyway? How many of a given people have the right to exist? And where? And at whose expense? There is no right to exist. There is just a people's ability to impose its existence on a world that is quite willing to let it become extinct.

So what do I do with the sixtieth anniversary of the Jewish State?

I celebrate. I celebrate Israel's history, tenacity, and future. I celebrate her achievements and her potential. I celebrate not only what she is, but what she can become.

And I weep. I weep because others must suffer that we might survive. I weep because the official Judaism of Israel is moribund and medieval. I weep because the byzantine politics of Israel seem designed to recycle old ideas rather than birth new ones.

And I hope. I hope that someday we humans will outgrow our need for promised lands, chosen peoples, and choosing gods; that we might stop soaking sand in blood, and realize there is only one Reality and one moral code: justice and compassion for all. ■

Rabbi Rami Shapiro is an author, columnist, passionate blogger, and Adjunct Professor of Religion at Middle Tennessee State University. His latest book is The Sacred Art of Lovingkindness.

Two Stories, No “Truth”

by Svi Shapiro

MY LIFE AS AN ADOLESCENT REVOLVED AROUND MY INVOLVEMENT IN THE SOCIALIST-ZIONIST youth movement. For a Jewish kid growing up in London, the young state of Israel was not just a place but a sign to which was attached the passionate—even ecstatic—energies of Jewish youth living, as we saw it, in “exile.” The central cultural and political symbol of Israel we believed was the kibbutz—a place that embodied our highest hopes for a world of social justice, democratic community, and the transformation of what it meant to be a Jew. Here was the place where Jews had cast off the weakness and vulnerability of exilic existence with all of its fears and shame, becoming instead the tough, brash and confident citizens of their own state. Here was a place where timid and bookish Jews with their *shtetl* mentality had been transformed into workers who gloried in their physical vitality and their power to build and defend a Jewish homeland.

By the time I had arrived at college I had already glimpsed the simplistic and cartoonish nature of my movement-contrived images. The Six Day War had just been won, amplifying on one level the powerful capacities of a Jewish state to defend itself, yet already spawning questions about land, annexation and the rights of Palestinians that would preoccupy us for the next forty years. However nothing quite prepared me for my first real engagement with Palestinian and Arab students at my British university. Here for the first time I was to encounter a narrative about Israel that collided with both my vision and my historical understanding. Far from my Zionist view of a state created to safeguard the remnant of a people brutalized by history and engaged in a brave and imaginative effort to create a just oasis in the sand was the Arab view of a European settler state imposed by the very colonial powers that had exploited and oppressed the indigenous people of this region. It was not simply the counternarrative that shocked me but the sheer ferocity of hate with which the Israeli enterprise was viewed. Here there was no sympathy for the Nazi murders of one third of my people. There was no recognition of the ancient historic attachment to this land that permeated my prayers and religious texts. Nor was there appreciation for the socialist aspirations of the kibbutz and the other egalitarian institutions that formed such a central part of the culture and economy in Israel, at least up till that time. Instead what I found was rage—rage at the humiliation of the Arab peoples and their impotence in the face of superior technology and skills, at the dispossession of a people's homes and their land, at the denial of national and human rights, and at the one-

sidedness of the Western media. In this narrative the Jews were not the victims of history but one more incarnation of colonial arrogance, disregard and oppression.

In my subsequent years as an educator concerned with issues of moral behavior and social change I have found myself returning again and again to this collision of worldviews. In my discussions of peace education I often speak of a “hermeneutics of conflict” in which, as the saying goes, my enemy is someone whose story I have not heard. The issue in conflicts like that of Israel/Palestine is, as I explain to my students, not about who is right and who is wrong. We are not looking for an enlightenment version of the Truth about what has taken place so much as trying to excavate each side's view of reality and history. We must discover the “truth” of each side's suffering and fear. And these truths cannot be separated from the pain and anguish of deep emotion that frames and distills the very meaning of truth itself. It is in this realm of multiple and colliding truths that the struggle for peace and reconciliation is to be found. Yet as we hear the sound of renewed gunfire and exploding bombs in that bloody and suffering region, we know that the mutual wisdom of peacemaking has still not supplanted the knowledge of one-sided certainty. ■

Svi Shapiro teaches in the Education and Cultural Studies program at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. His most recent book is Losing Heart: The Moral and Spiritual Miseducation of America's Children (Lawrence Erlbaum).



Sephardim and Israel Today:

"The Levantine Option" on Shaky Ground

by David Shasha

ABOUT FIVE YEARS AGO I FORMULATED A RADICAL PERSPECTIVE ON MIDDLE EASTERN POLITICS, WHICH I CALLED "The Levantine Option." This new formulation was an attempt to restore an old way of seeing things that was fitted into a dynamic and fresh new context. "The Levantine Option" is an idea predicated on the traditions of Jews native to the Middle East. These traditions contain a significant Arabic component where the indigenous culture of the region has been fused with the realities of Judaism and Jewish identity encapsulated in the rabbinic tradition.

The Levantine Option is built on the hallowed foundations of Sephardic Religious Humanism, an elastic concept that goes back to the writings and ideas of Maimonides and his heirs. Sephardic Religious Humanism incorporated the learning of Greco-Roman wisdom into a parochially Jewish context. The religious mandates of the Jewish religion, its ritual laws and traditions, were opened up to the expansive modalities of the Greco-Roman intellectual system, creating a rich synthesis of sacred Jewish values and Greco-Roman politics, science and philosophy.

Enabled in great measure by the opening provided by Islamic scholasticism, Sephardic Religious Humanism showed that Judaism could adapt and transform itself.

The traditions of Sephardic Religious Humanism were fiercely contested by Ashkenazi rabbinic authorities who saw in the new modalities a fearsome liberality and an acceptance of new and different ideas. Ashkenazi authorities looked to seal off Judaism from the new ideas and set Judaism apart from the world and its evolutionary changes.

It is not well known that the initial impetus in the nineteenth century for a return to Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel came from two Sephardic rabbis living in the Ottoman Balkans—Judah Alkalai and Judah Bibas. Their Zionism was one that sought to affirm the right of the Jewish people to be secure in their own country and to serve as a proud member of the international community.

While the ideas of these two Sephardic rabbis influenced the Eastern European Jews who became the de facto leaders of the emerging Zionist movement, the core humanistic ideas of the Sephardic tradition were often ignored in the new formulations of the Zionist idea.

Ideas of separation from the indigenous populations of the Middle East became the norm that European formulations of Zionism articulated. Such a move led to many of the problems that Israel faces as it marks its sixtieth anniversary as a nation.

Rather than seeing integration of Jews into the cultural and historical contexts of the region, Zionism is today seen by itself and by others as an alien element in the region. From the early concept of what the Zionists called "*Avoda Ivrit*"—Jewish labor—to the current desire for a separation between the Jewish and Arab peoples whether by the use of physical walls or cultural barriers, the Zionist orientation

has sadly followed the Ashkenazi pattern of alienation and parochialism.

It is today a radical idea—given the violent modalities that have subsumed both the Zionist idea as well as its Arab nationalist counterpart—to assert that the future of the region rests in a cultural symbiosis that would continue to acknowledge the genius of the old traditions of Sephardic Religious Humanism that were so pronounced in Spain, North Africa and the Middle East.

With a fierceness that frequently borders on the pathological, many individuals reject the idea that Jews were once a legitimate and accepted part of the Arab world. We are warned that Jews were simply tolerated by a hegemonic Arab triumphalism that kept them in their place. This ignores and diminishes the great accomplishments of Arab Jews who integrated Judaism into the dominant cultural trends in the Middle East.

Indeed, at the dawn of the modern age, marked by the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, reformist movements in the region acknowledged the indigenous Jewish presence and welcomed Jews as partners in the process of national regeneration. Early forms of Sephardic Zionism acknowledged this cultural symbiosis and demanded of the Ashkenazi Zionists a requirement to acknowledge the realities of the region: its history, its values, its culture.

But from the very start of political Zionism, this native Levantine Jewish voice was silenced. There were Jews whose names are not at all known today such as Albert Antebbi, Elie Elyashar and Haim Nahum Effendi who counseled for a Sephardic role in the Zionist enterprise and in the development of a new Middle East.

As scholars such as Abigail Jacobson, Yaron Harel and Michelle Campos have shown in their researches into the subject of native Middle Eastern Jewish thinking during this period, not only were these voices silenced, but the ideas they presented were mocked and vilified. Rather than accepting the native place of Jews in the region, the incoming Zionist leadership incorporated alien ideas into their thinking, which served to ensure that Zionism would become a foreign element in the region.

A corollary to this point was the tension it created between Ashkenazim—whose culture and history would come to dominate the new state and its ideology—and the Sephardim, the indigenous Jews of the Middle East, who were marginalized and often

demeaned in the Zionist mission.

As Arab Jews continued to live in their ancestral homes in the region, some adapted to the new Zionism, while some did not. A seismic shift took place in their world that would be deeply disorienting. In the course of a few decades, Jewish life in the Arab world would come to an almost complete end and with it the rich and varied cultural traditions of those Jews.

The Levantine Option died in the 1950s and 1960s when Jews were forced to leave the Arab world under the specter of an intractable stalemate between Israel and its neighbors that was not merely a matter of politics and territorial dispute, but of a more insidious cultural divide which isolated Israel from its neighbors.

Arab Jews were forced to undergo a cruel process of De-Arabization that left them bereft of their organic identity. The "melting pot" mentality as it took hold in Israel was in essence a process of Ashkenazi acculturation, a process which has continued to this day in the alienated culture of the state.

So in spite of Israel's success in re-establishing Jewish sovereignty over the land, the problems that have been created by its alienated stance have led to a residual violence and a sense of paranoia and entrapment that has gripped so many Israelis who have little hope that the country will ever find normalcy. The parallel obstinacy of an Arab world that has also rejected its own native traditions of liberalism and pluralism has added to this dysfunctional picture of a region that is now permanently on edge.

While The Levantine Option is an idea that will be fiercely

contested by those who hold to the useless orthodoxies—ideas that have led us into violence, anomie and racial hatred—the idea merits examination as a means to restore dignity and rationality to what is now a completely unworkable mess.

The Levantine Option, with its foundation in Religious Humanism is an idea whose allure rests in the fact that it is the native modality of the region and has its roots in the thinking of the greatest figures in the cultural history of the Jews, Muslims, and Christians.

Over the course of many fruitless decades punctuated by hatred, cruelty, and violence at the hands of the different protagonists in this drama, the failed premise that continues to inform the discussion is that peace and stability will come from an acknowledgement of the differences between Jews and Arabs.

The Levantine Option asserts that the future of the Middle East will come when Jews and Arabs learn that they share a culture and that this shared culture flowered in the many centuries of life in the wake of the cultural giants of the region such as Maimonides, Al-Farabi, Averroes and so many others whose names and memories continue to be venerated in the parochial communities that have now been wrenched apart under the rubric of a failed set of nationalisms. ■

David Shasha is the director of the Center for Sephardic Heritage in Brooklyn, NY. The Center publishes a weekly e-mail newsletter and promotes lectures and cultural events. He can be reached at davidshasha@aol.com.

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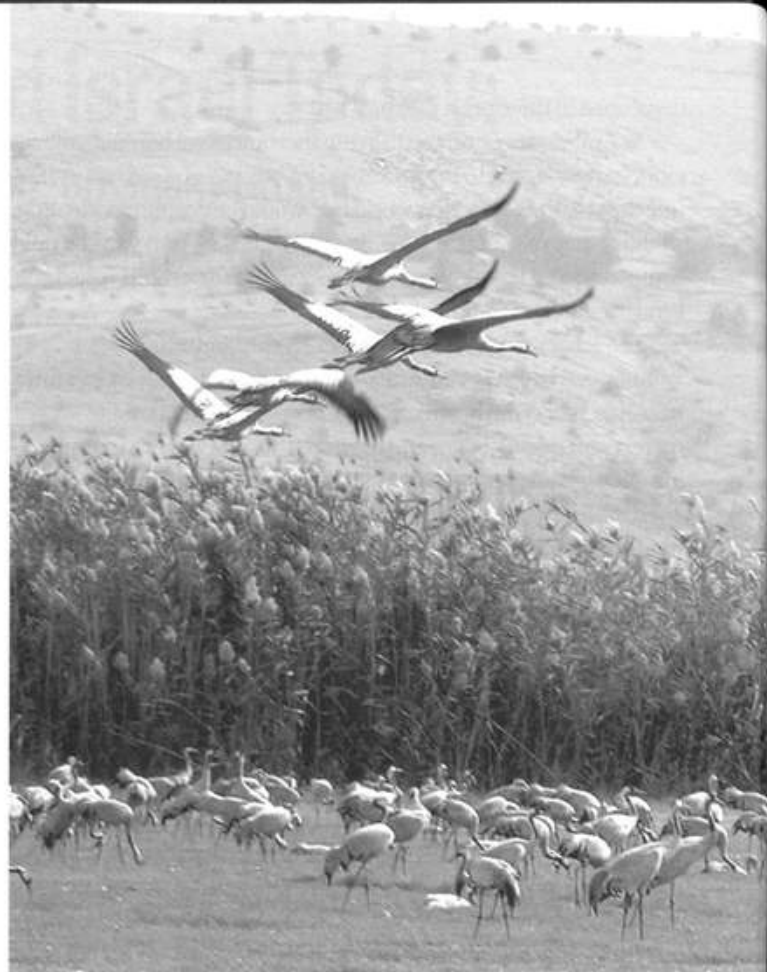
A Sixty Year Environmental Learning Curve

by Alon Tal

TO VISIT LAKE HULEH IN THE NORTHERN TIP of the Galilee during the twilight hours of winter has been characterized by many an atheist as a religious experience. Tens of thousands of cranes, who now choose to winter in Israel, come in for a nighttime landing. It is an amazing cacophony created by these joyous avian clans as they join the 392 bird species—from pelicans to coots, wigeons, mallards, kites, and hawks—who call the fifty square kilometer area home. (By comparison, the combined bird population of Germany and France is only 350 species!) The Huleh wetlands offer them and the jungle cats, jackals, and nutrias who have joined the fun a lovely home and provide us humans with a stirring and life-affirming adventure.

It is life-affirming, because it wasn't long ago that Lake Huleh was an unnatural, unmitigated disaster. When the Jewish National Fund (JNF) decided to drain the wetlands in the 1950s, it certainly had the best intentions. Hundreds of thousands of Holocaust refugees were still languishing, unemployed in temporary tent camps throughout Israel. New agricultural lands seemed to offer the promise of employment and a new, healthy, rural identity for a shattered generation. So the biggest drainage project in the country's history proceeded—and transformed a magical wetland ecosystem into cotton fields.

But the ecological law of “unintended consequences” quickly reared its head. It did not take long for the peat soil to start to combust and collapse, leaving the anticipated agricultural benefits elusive. It would take a couple of decades, but the Jewish National Fund would eventually realize that it had made a serious blunder. What is remarkable about the story is the organization's ability to take responsibility for its ecological folly and successfully recreate a unique reserve. While it may not have the full diversity and authenticity of the original lake, it has its own magic and mystery. And even the most ardent green activist would agree that it is preferable to visit this corner of Israel's natural world without the very



Huleh Valley is a region in northern Israel which is an important bottleneck site for birds migrating along the Syrian-African Rift Valley between Africa, Europe, and Asia.

real threat of malaria.

For me, the Huleh restoration project is symbolic in many ways of Israel's evolving efforts to preserve a land that is Holy to at least four faiths. It is a land that probably holds a higher density of natural and historic heritage sites per square meter than any place on earth. As the country raced from a population of one million in 1950 to 7 million today, the environmental maladies that characterize all modern, industrialized societies were exacerbated by the country's small size and rapid growth. Aquifers were heavily contaminated. Lake Kinneret almost became eutrophied and moribund in the 1970s—but has since improved. Air quality remains so bad that there are pollution violations on one out of every eight days. And innumerable scenic spots gave way to the often-unsightly physical infrastructure of the Third Jewish Commonwealth.

Zionism's initial impulse was to return the Jewish people to their status as indigenous people in their “new-old land,” as Herzl called it. In many ways it succeeded. Israelis are more tied to their countryside—wildflowers, butterflies, hills and wadis—than people in most Western countries. Besides a spiritual inspiration, the Bible became a national natural history guide—and in return, the topography, flora and fauna of “Eretz Yisrael” serve as a “Rashi”—offering insights

to anyone who truly wants to understand the Biblical narrative.

The degradation of Palestine during the 2000 years of Jewish exile is not Zionist mythology. Aerial photographs confirm the massive desertification and deforestation. Ben Gurion once wrote that in Israel, we do the difficult tomorrow and the impossible takes a little bit longer. We have begun that impossible task of finding the balance between preservation and development. Preserving the environmental quality of the "promised lands" is an enormous challenge—requiring the combined creativity of all Israel's citizens and its neighbors.

Mercifully, the country has a strong enough economy today to field the resources for a world-class environmental protection

strategy. Already, in the area of forestry, JNF practices have become a model for international dryland development. Israeli irrigation and water management innovations offer hope—and proven technologies to the hundreds of millions in arid regions whose agricultural productivity does not support them. As Israel turns sixty, our prayers must be focused on attaining regional reconciliation and stability along with the political will necessary to finish the task. ■

Professor Alon Tal from the Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research at Ben Gurion University is a board member of the Jewish National Fund, and founded the Israel Union for Environmental Defense and the Arava Institutes for Environmental Studies.

Remember the Positive

by Daniel Sperber

I HAVE BEEN ASKED HOW I VIEW THE STATE OF ISRAEL IN ITS SIXTIETH YEAR. DO I FEEL PROUD OF its achievements and do I see it as part of a positive national, spiritual, and religious process of revival? My answer is yes, to all such questions.

I do not know of any other example of a nation that lost over a third of its population in the most horrible and inhumane manner and then was able to rehabilitate itself so rapidly and in such a remarkable fashion.

I do not know of any historical parallel to a nation that had been dispersed in exile throughout the four corners of the world for close to two millennia and which preserved its identity through a visionary hope of return to its homeland, that was able to realize that vision in such a remarkable fashion.

I do not know of a nation that has so little tradition of industry that succeeded in developing national industrial complexes that rival those of the major nations of the world to such a remarkable extent.

I do not know of a nation that had a tradition of passivity that was able from virtually nothing to build up a military posture that ranks among those of the leading nations of the world in so remarkable a fashion.

I do not know of a nation that in sixty years increased its population tenfold through an ingathering of her dispersed exiles and melded them into a single unified entity in so remarkable a fashion. And all this with virtually no natural resources and while threatened on all sides by hateful hostile neighbors with enormous wealth and resources and an avowed aim of eliminating the Jewish state.

If all the above are not examples of the beneficent "hand of God," then what would constitute such a phenomenon?

Not everything here is perfect by a long way. Much remains to be improved in numerous areas. We are still suffering painful birth pangs. But one can suffer birth pangs joyfully in the hope of what they presage for the future.

We have a tendency to dwell on our faults, to point to our failings and the causes of our disappointments. But we should also remember the many positive things that are happening in our society. More people than ever before are studying Torah, including many thousands of women. There are numerous organizations involved in helping the disadvantaged, giving food and succor to the poor and indigent. There are many involved in social justice and environmental issues. True, much of these activities ought rightfully to be dealt with by the government. But in the absence of governmental involvement, non-governmental initiatives are in many ways a great blessing, since they posit a greater involvement on the part of the public and the individual.

With heightened pride in our national achievements, and with a single-minded striving after social, spiritual and religious improvements, with a greater and better-defined notion of personal and communal ethical behavior and with visionary leadership, we shall realize our age-old "messianic" dream. ■

Rabbi Daniel Sperber is president of the Jerusalem Institute for Advanced Torah Studies at Bar Ilan University, Milan Roven Prof. of Talmudic Research, and recipient of the Israel Prize 1992 for his research in the history of halachah.



Happy Birthday Israel

by Robert Thurman

HAIL TO ISRAEL ON HER SIXTIETH BIRTHDAY! IT OVERWHELMS MY HEART TO THINK OF THE story of the Jewish people, the founders of traditions that have sustained the spiritual lives of over half the population of the world, not only Jews but also Christians and Muslims; brutally thrown into exile for over two thousand years; often violently persecuted; and then subjected to the inconceivable genocide of the Holocaust. To think that now at last they have returned to their chosen home is truly wonderful! Heartfelt congratulations to Thee, O Israel, on your Big Sixtieth!

In the Tibetan calendar, sixty years is a key cycle, one complete round of the twelve animals and five elements. Israel was born in the Year of the Earth Mouse, and 2008 brings us back to the Earth Mouse. It is thus a year of total renewal. So you are One Year Old again, O Israel! The best tribute we can offer you is to reflect upon your profound spiritual purpose and your vast global promise, Being a Light Unto the Nations.

Reflecting on what is known of your history, before you reached your promised land, you were nomadic, then enslaved in Egypt, then bravely escaped from that and wandered in the desert, then flourished as an empire until crushed by Mesopotamia and again by Rome. Your sacred texts and identity began to be collected under the pressure of those sufferings.

The positive side of your long exile is that you developed a higher level of awakening than the sedentary people among whom you wandered. You excelled because you were so often denied the comforts of routine ownership and agricultural cycles. You have created and invented and given so much all along, and you have developed extraordinary ways of surviving as a people with a distinctive culture in spite of living homeless.

Like the Buddhists, you have made a rich home in homelessness and preserved your vision of the higher realities of existence. The Buddhists explored this home of homelessness, national identity of identitylessness, most completely in the hidden highland of Tibet. That is why today there is this mysterious heart connection between you veteran exile souls and the newly exiled souls of Tibet.

Now as you renew your millennial return to your promised land, you have the challenge to shift from your extraordinary success in being at home in homelessness to maintaining your spiritually liberated higher vision of homelessness while happily back in your ancient home! Your meeting this challenge is essential to your solving the problem of your relations with your neighbors, actually your spiritual children, brothers and sisters in the family of your God, the Muslim and Christian Arabs who have been living in your promised land during the long period of your exile. You definitely have the ability to meet this challenge triumphantly, having mastered the many ordeals of wandering in exile for so long in so many

places, recovering again and again from such horrendous sufferings, restoring again the essential gentleness of your sweet culture, and giving so generously to so many others all over the world.

The key may lie in your tradition of Jubilee, the ancient period-ic cycle in which land was redistributed, and unused land accumulated by the wealthy was freely given to those in need who could again make it productive. Only through such a generous spirit and fear-transcending action can the present cycle of violence be reversed and true peace emerge. The traumas from which you emerged last century during the still ongoing violent throes of the end of the long centuries of imperialisms have marked your first sixty years, caused you continuing sufferings, and limited the shining of your light. The promise of a new century of peace, and the creativity that must respond to the global challenges before us all, has still not manifested clearly. This world has changed so dramatically—the heroes of war that were helpful in the past have not yet met the changes as heroes of peace. The heroism of peace requires another level of risk, another level of fearlessness, another level of insight.

How does the lion learn to lie down with the lamb? What inner resources must be developed to restrain her lion's appetites? We are confident the answers to these questions can be found within your own deepest traditions, O Israel! We are counting on you to find them, use them and then share them with us all. For all of us are still caught in similar endless cycles of violence and fear and terror. And all of us cannot triumph over them by adding yet more violence and terror. So this may be your Light unto the Nations, which you can kindle ever brighter and shine out upon us! It may be for this that your God at last recalled you to your promised land and so asked you to summon all the genius that you developed while in exile to create a home that is not founded on the homelessness of others, but upon the vision of the abundance of all creation, which patiently waits to be enjoyed by a humanity that has finally turned all swords into plowshares! So happy birthday, O divine Israel! ■

Robert Thurman is the Jey Tsong Khapa Professor of Buddhist Studies at Columbia University and Co-founder and President, Tibet House U.S.

L.A. and Israel:

A World Apart But Closer Than Ever

By Antonio Villaraigosa

LOS ANGELES, WHERE I WAS BORN AND RAISED, HAS A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STATE of Israel. Despite the thousands of miles between us, we share so much—connections of culture and commerce, and ties of blood and family.

We are people who have made our deserts bloom; who have been strengthened and sustained by our immigrants; who take pride in our flourishing ports; who share the values of pluralism and democracy; and who strive for peace, prosperity and a brighter future for our children.

Los Angeles and Israel are both homes of creativity and bastions of innovation—places defined by a deep respect for diversity, a longstanding belief in what's possible, and the fervent hope, dream and commitment to build a peaceful tomorrow.

Over the past decade, the ties between Israel and Los Angeles have grown stronger as a result of the L.A.-Tel Aviv Partnership. Started as part of a national movement to connect American cities with Israeli counterparts, the L.A.-Tel Aviv Partnership has set the standard for bringing Israeli and American students, families, civic leaders and peer professionals in education, social services and the arts together; it has strengthened mutual understanding and nurtured lasting friendships that benefit both cities; and it has given the people of each city an inside look into one another's daily lives.

As part of this program, students from Jewish day schools in Los Angeles are "twinning" with counterparts in Tel Aviv, studying in Israeli classrooms, living with Israeli families, and learning about the challenges and benefits of growing up in Israel. Likewise, Israeli students get an up-close experience of Los Angeles and the United States when they visit here.

For one week in late February and early March, Israeli environmental leaders came to L.A. and shared their expertise on developing solar energy and building a greener, more sustainable future. They met and learned alongside the city's experts in sanitation, wastewater treatment, clean air, green buildings, recycling and renewable energy, and had frank discussions with leaders in environmental justice.

During this same decade, professors from Israel's top universities have brought their work, words and wisdom to the halls of the University of California, Los Angeles, the University of Southern California, Cal Tech and other colleges to offer their unique

perspectives on politics and religion, and to share cutting-edge findings in the fields of science, medicine and technological innovation. Los Angeles has taken inspiration from the small nation that developed the technology for instant messenger programs; figured out how to install cameras on cell phones; gave us the latest advances in medical procedures; and showed the world how to build a thriving agricultural sector in a country where the majority of the land is a desert.

Here in Los Angeles, we celebrate the state of Israel and our own Israeli community in a variety of ways. We host the largest





showcase of Israeli films in the United States and we have built a strong relationship with our sister city, Eilat. Thousands of Israeli students of all ages have attended and enriched our schools and synagogues, and Israeli security specialists have come to the Tom Bradley International Terminal at the Los Angeles International Airport to help protect airline passengers and foreign visitors. Each year, the city's Israel Festival brings together over 40,000 people in the largest celebration of Israeli culture anywhere. And, overcoming the obstacles faced by so many immigrant groups, the vitality and vibrancy of L.A.'s Israeli families never diminish and only grow stronger every day.

Israel's sixty years have been shaped by the resilience, strength

and devotion of its people. Through criticism and condemnation, the Jewish state has stood up for the values and principles that have long made the Jewish people a "light unto the nations." Israel's citizens have kept faith with the hope—*ha tikvah*—that they might live as a free nation, in peace and security, in the land of their ancestors. I know the City of Los Angeles and our people will continue to benefit from a close relationship with the State of Israel long into the future. ■

Antonio Villaraigosa is Mayor of Los Angeles.

Some Hard Truths

A Personal Reflection

By Brian Walt

IN 1969, DAVID BEN GURION, THE FIRST PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL, VISITED CAPE TOWN. HE was by far the most important Israeli visitor to our small town. I remember his visit vividly. He met with the leaders of the Zionist youth groups. At that meeting he was asked by one of the counselors whether any Palestinians were expelled from Israel during the War of Independence. He responded passionately and angrily that no Palestinians were expelled in 1948 and that the Zionist leadership encouraged them to stay. They chose to leave because the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem told them that they would get two houses once they had driven the Jews into the sea. This was his version of the history of 1948 and I believed him.

I was then a young idealistic Zionist, committed to going on aliyah to Israel, to participate in the grand Zionist vision of building a society based on Jewish socialist values. All those in the room that day, *madrichim* (counselors) of the various Zionist youth movements, were committed to building a society in Israel that would be the antithesis of the Apartheid society in which we had been raised. Our shared dream was of a country where we, as Jews who had been victimized for so many years, would show the world how to wield power justly and with compassion. As Haim Weizman, the first President of Israel said, the Jewish state would be judged by how it treated the Palestinians. I was confident then that we would pass the test. It was inconceivable to me that Israel, the land where we would create a safe space for our people after so many years of suffering, would cause suffering to another people.

I grieve that this is exactly what has happened in Israel, especially over the past forty years of Occupation. A few weeks ago I had the privilege of sitting with Yehuda Shaul, one of the founders of Shovrim Shtika, a courageous group of Israeli soldiers who tell of the realities of Occupation: realities that most Israelis and American Jews do not know, and more importantly, are determined not to know. Yehuda spoke of his confusion and pain serving Israel as a soldier in Hebron, guarding the lives of settlers who often provoke and attack Palestinians. He could not respond to prevent the aggression, because his mission was just to protect the Jews, not the Palestinian residents. His personal story of how he and the soldiers of his company committed acts of violence on a daily basis was shocking. These acts, he explained, are the inevitable reality of any Occupation where an army rules over 2 million people. Yet he also

acknowledged his own personal responsibility, his own *teshuva* (repentance) for acts he routinely committed that caused suffering. All that the soldiers who founded Shovrim Shtika want is for the leaders and people of Israel to acknowledge what its soldiers are asked to do, and have to do, on their behalf on the West Bank.

I thought back to that meeting earlier in my life with Ben Gurion. I now know that the story he told about the history of 1948 is far more complicated than he admitted then, and that some Palestinians were expelled. Yehuda's sad story highlights how far Israel has strayed from our idealistic vision. While it is true that Israel has become a vibrant cultural center for the Jewish people and has provided a secure home for Jews from many different countries, it is also true that over the past forty years, the moral core of the Jewish state has been corrupted by the Occupation.

While the stark way in which Yehuda described his experience was shocking, I have seen some of the realities of the West Bank, on visits to Israel to support the work of my colleagues in Rabbis for Human Rights and other groups dedicated to maintaining the moral vision of Israel. When I visit the West Bank, as a person who grew up in South Africa, it feels shockingly familiar. There is one small group of privileged people who rule over 2 million people, who have arrogated most of the land on the West Bank and most of the resources for their own use. It controls the population by means of checkpoints and requiring special documents that everyone has to carry. All these are so frighteningly familiar and so different from the vision of Zionism and Judaism.

When I go with my Israeli colleagues in Rabbis for Human Rights to replant uprooted trees on the West Bank, I feel ashamed. We are there replanting trees uprooted by religious settlers acting in the name of Judaism. This is nothing less than *Hilul Hashem*—the desecration of God's name. I feel closest to Israel today when I connect with those Israelis who are courageously upholding the vision of a just society: my colleagues in Rabbis for Human Rights, the soldiers in Shovrim Shtika, the women in MACHSOM Watch, the human rights advocates of B'tselem or of the Public Committee against Torture and other organizations. While they are a minority in Israel they represent the Zionist and Jewish dream. One of the most important ways in which I express my love and commitment for Israel is by supporting their work.

Yet, every week in my work as executive director of Rabbis



Palestinian women and children leaving their homes during the Nakba.

for Human Rights I talk with rabbis who struggle with the pressure on them to toe the line, not to question, not to raise open discussion about moral issues relating to Israel and Israeli policy. The subservience of the American Jewish community to Israel stifles Judaism in the United States. If we want Jews to re-engage with Israel we must open the discussion to all Jews: Zionists, non-Zionists, anti-Zionists, and the majority of Jews who care about Israel and Judaism and just want an honest and open discussion.

This year on the sixtieth birthday of Israel we do have much to celebrate: the creation of a vibrant Jewish culture in Israel, the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language, the creation of a safe home for Jews from so many countries and a vibrant democracy that exists within the green line. But, there are some very difficult truths that we need to confront.

Ahad Haam, the Zionist thinker, argued that the goal of the Jewish people is to be a people in the image of God, a community that embodies the godly values of justice, compassion and equity. This vision animated the Zionism that I was taught and it is the vision that inspired the framers of Israel's Declaration of Independence to envision a country that is based on "justice, freedom and equality as envisaged by the prophets of Israel." My love of Israel is expressed in support for all Israelis who are working towards the fulfillment of this dream. I still believe it is not just a dream. ■

Rabbi Brian Walt grew up in Cape Town. He is rabbi emeritus of Congregation Mishkan Shalom in Philadelphia, PA and currently serves as the executive director of Rabbis for Human Rights-North America.

Whom Do We Mourn?

By Arthur Waskow



MOURNING THE DEAD—ESPECIALLY THOSE DEAD OF VIOLENCE—IS ONE WAY IN WHICH societies mark their boundaries, name their enemies, and remember their histories. For Israeli-Jewish society, it has become a ritual act with quasi-religious intensity to pause for an entire day (just before Independence Day) to mourn those Israelis killed in various wars with the various Arab states and the Palestinian people over the last two generations.

More recently, there has been a concerted effort to persuade American Jews to publicly mourn especially the deaths of Israeli civilians killed in attacks by Palestinians. That effort intensified with the deaths of eight students at the Mercaz HaRav yeshiva in March, 2008.

In my view, mourning only “our own” dead who have been killed by members of another community usually (not always) sparks fear, rage, and hatred toward the community out of which their killers came.

To mourn those of both communities who have been killed by persons from the other one usually has a quite different effect: it usually sparks sorrow, compassion, and a sense of determination to end the killing.

Indeed, among some Israelis and Palestinians there has arisen a group, the Circle of Bereaved Families, made up of people whose family members have been killed by the “other side” and who have decided not only to mourn all those dead in Israeli-Palestinian violence but to work together for peace that will end this killing.

How then should American Jews, Palestinian Americans, and Americans in general respond to these deaths?

Both practices—mourning “our own” and mourning “both”—call forth a “political” and “spiritual” response. The question that faces us is which spiritual/ political response we wish to evoke in our selves and our communities.

So I invite all of us to consider publicly naming, remembering, and mourning the people—some Israelis, some Palestinians—named below. For Jews, this could be done in a special recitation of the Mourners Kaddish, which perhaps might end in a prayer for peace not only “al kol Yisrael,

for the whole Jewish people” as does the traditional Kaddish, but also “v’al kol Yishmael v’al kol yoshvei tevel—for all the children of Ishmael (the Arab peoples) and for all who dwell on the planet.”

For the other religious communities that hark back to Abraham, these names could be recited as a call to affirm the need for peace in the region where Abraham, Hagar, and Sarah once pitched their tent, open to all travelers. (The names of Americans and Iraqis killed in the present war could be added as well.)

And I invite us to begin greeting and parting from each other by saying “Shalom, salaam, peace”—words that each of our communities has said one of, internally, for centuries, and that we now need to share with each other.

It is possible for us to list these names because there is an Israeli organization, B’Tselem, (“In the Image”—that is, in the Image of God did God create the human), which keeps meticulous records of the numbers and names of Israelis and Palestinians who have been killed by violence from the other nation since September 2000. See www.btselem.org/English and click on “Statistics.”

The names of the eight Israelis murdered at Mercaz HaRav are listed below. So is the name of the Israeli killed by Palestinian rocket fire February 28 in Sderot, and after him, the Palestinian noncombatant civilians listed by B’Tselem as having been killed by Israeli Army action in February, together with some bare information about their situations.

After these names I want to say more about why I think it important to name and mourn all these dead, not just those of one side or the other.

The first eight [whose biographies appeared extensively in Western and Jewish media] were killed at Mercav HaRav. None were engaged in hostilities when killed.

Yohai Livshitz, 18, from Jerusalem,

Yonatan Yitzhak Eldar, 16, from Shilo,

Yonadav Haim Hirschfeld, 19, from Kohav Hashahar,

Neria Cohen, 15, from Jerusalem,

Segev Peniel Avihail, 15, from Neve Daniel,

Avraham David Moses, 16, from Efrat,

Roe Roth, 18, from Elkana,

Doron Meherete, 26, from Ashdod.

Roni Yechiah, 47. Student at Sapir College in Sderot. The father of four was killed Feb. 28 in a Qassam attack. (Haaretz)

The following Palestinian noncombatant civilians were killed by Israeli Army action in February.

Alaa Ayman 'Omar al-Burno

17 year-old resident of Gaza city, injured on 28.02.2008 in a-Shati' Camp, Gaza district, by gunfire, from a helicopter, and died on 29.02.2008. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Killed when standing next to a Palestinian Police position while he was talking with his friend, a police officer.

Tal'at Saleh 'Othman a-Nmeilat

21 year-old resident of Beit Lahiya, North Gaza district, killed on 28.02.2008 in Beit Lahiya, North Gaza district, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Killed when standing next to his house. Palestinians about 40 meters from his house fired Qassam rockets into Israeli territory.

Amjad Hafez Kheydar a-Sakani

16 year-old resident of Gaza city, killed on 28.02.2008 in Gaza city, by gunfire. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Killed when he and his friends tried to approach an army post after taking part in a funeral at a cemetery about 300 meters from the Israeli border.

'Omar Hussein Muhammad Dardunah

14 year-old resident of Jabalya Refugee Camp, North Gaza district, killed on 28.02.2008 in Jabalya Refugee Camp, North Gaza district, by gunfire, from a helicopter.

Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Killed when he and his friends were playing soccer near their house. Apparently, Palestinians more than 100 meters away fired Qassam rockets.

Dardunah Dib Khalil Dardunah

10 year-old resident of Jabalya Refugee Camp, North Gaza district, killed on 28.02.2008 in Jabalya Refugee Camp, North Gaza district, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Killed when he and his friends were playing soccer near their house. Apparently, Palestinians more than 100 meters away fired Qassam rockets.

'Ali Munir Muhammad Dardunah

6 year-old resident of Jabalya Refugee Camp, North Gaza district, killed on 28.02.2008 in Jabalya Refugee Camp, North Gaza district, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Killed when he and his friends were playing soccer near their house. Apparently, Palestinians more than 100 meters away fired Qassam rockets.

Muhammad Na'im Mahmoud Hamuda

13 year-old resident of Jabalya Refugee Camp, North Gaza district, killed on 28.02.2008 in Jabalya Refugee Camp, North Gaza district, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Killed when he and his friends were playing soccer near their house. Apparently, Palestinians more than 100 meters away fired Qassam rockets.

Muhammad Sa'dallah Muhammad al-Hilu

19 year-old resident of Gaza city, killed on 28.02.2008 in a-Shati' Camp, Gaza district, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Traffic policeman. Killed while at his position talking with two friends.

Khalil Ibrahim Hamuda Ahel

26 year-old resident of Gaza city, killed on 28.02.2008 in Gaza city, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Killed when riding in a beverage truck near a-Shifa Hospital, Gaza City.

Muhammad 'Ali Ma'sud hashem al-Hilu

31 year-old resident of Gaza city, killed on 28.02.2008 in Gaza city, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Killed when riding in a beverage truck near a-Shifa Hospital, Gaza City.

Muhammad Suliman Mahmoud Shameyah

21 year-old resident of Khan Yunis Refugee Camp, killed on 28.02.2008 in Khan Yunis, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Did not participate in hostilities when killed.

Bilal Kamel Fakhri Hejazi

14 year-old resident of Jabalya Refugee Camp, North Gaza district, killed on 27.02.2008 in Jabalya Refugee Camp, North Gaza district, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Killed when playing near his house. Apparently Palestinians fired Qassam rockets from the area a few minutes earlier.

'Aziz Jawdat Muhammad Ma'sud

21 year-old resident of Jabalya Refugee Camp, North Gaza district, killed on 27.02.2008 in Khan Yunis, by gunfire, from a helicopter.

Muhammad Majdi Muhammad

Abu al-Hassein

21 year-old resident of Jabalya, North Gaza district, killed on 27.02.2008 in Khan Yunis, by gunfire, from a helicopter.

Hammad Murshed 'Atiyyah al-Masalhah

52 year-old resident of Gaza city, killed on 27.02.2008 in Jabalya Refugee Camp, North Gaza district, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Killed when grazing his flock about two kilometers from the Israeli border. A guard in the citrus grove was also killed.

Muhammad Khalil Suliman Hamadah

13 year-old resident of Jabalya Refugee Camp, North Gaza district, killed on 27.02.2008 in Jabalya Refugee Camp, North Gaza district, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Killed when playing near his house. Apparently Palestinians fired Qassam rockets from the area a few minutes earlier.

'Omar 'Atiyyah Salamah Abu 'Aqer

26 year-old resident of Khan Yunis Refugee Camp, killed on 27.02.2008 in Khan Yunis, by gunfire, from a helicopter.

Muhammad Naser 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Bura'i

Less than 1 year-old resident of Gaza city, killed on 27.02.2008 in Gaza city, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Six-month old infant. He was killed while sleeping in his bed when the ceiling collapsed on him as a result of the bombing of the Interior Ministry building.



Mnawar Rizeq 'Awad Abu Mandil

36 year-old resident of al-Maghazi Refugee Camp, Deir al-Balah district, killed on 27.02.2008 in Jabalya Refugee Camp, North Gaza district, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Killed while on duty guarding a citrus grove about two kilometers from the Israeli border. He was killed in the same incident in which the shepherd was killed.

Hassan Salman 'Ali Abu Sabt

31 year-old resident of al-Qarara, Rafah district, killed on 26.02.2008 in al-Qarara, Rafah district, by gunfire, from a tank. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Killed when working his farmland near his house.

Ibrahim Ahmad Zidan Abu Jarad

20 year-old resident of Beit Hanun, North Gaza district, killed on 23.02.2008 in Beit Hanun, North Gaza district, by gunfire. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Killed when on a picnic with friends about 1,200 meters from the border with Israel.

Muhammad Talal Muhammad a-Z'anin

20 year-old resident of Beit Hanun, North Gaza district, killed on 23.02.2008 in Beit Hanun, North Gaza district, by gunfire. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Killed when on a picnic with friends about 1,200 meters from the border with Israel.

Muhammad Ibrahim Mustafa Hasanein

20 year-old resident of Beit Hanun, North Gaza district, killed on 23.02.2008 in Beit Hanun, North Gaza district, by gunfire. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Killed when on a picnic with friends about 1,200 meters from the border with Israel.

Tammer Muhammad 'Abd a-Razeq

Abu Sh'ar

9 year-old resident of Deir al-Balah, killed on 19.02.2008 in Deir al-Balah, by gunfire. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Killed during the army's incursion into the area when he was standing by his house.

'Awani Muhammad 'Abd al-Hamid

Abu Taha

46 year-old resident of Rafah, injured on 17.02.2008 in Rafah, by gunfire, and died on 18.02.2008. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Killed when he was on his way to the grocery store

near his house during the army's incursion into the area.

'Abd al-Karim Muhammad

Hussein al-Ghalban

27 year-old resident of Rafah, killed on 17.02.2008 in Rafah, by gunfire. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Killed when he went to buy milk for his son during an army incursion into the area.

Ibrahim Salman Hussein Sabah

28 year-old resident of Rafah, killed on 17.02.2008 in Rafah, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Policeman killed when on duty as a traffic policeman near Rafah Crossing during the army's incursion into the area. Another police officer was wounded.

Taysir Muhammad 'Abd al-Qader

'Abd al-'Aziz

57 year-old resident of Qabatiya, Jenin district, injured on 07.02.2008 in Qabatiya, Jenin district, by gunfire, and died on 14.02.2008. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Suffered a mental disability. Killed when walking to his house, late at night, during an army action.

Muhammad Bassam Isma'il Abu Mteir

21 year-old resident of Rafah, killed on 09.02.2008 in Rafah, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Additional information: Killed when walking in the street in the Brazil neighborhood.

Hani Sha'ban Muhammad Na'im

44 year-old resident of Gaza city, killed on 07.02.2008 in Beit Hanun, North Gaza district, by gunfire. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Killed by a missile that landed in an agricultural school where he taught. Three students were injured. A half an hour earlier, Palestinians fired Qassam rockets into Israel from an area close to the school.

Soheil Ra'fat 'Ali al-Ghasin

38 year-old resident of Gaza city, killed on 06.02.2008 in Jabalya, North Gaza district, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Additional information: Killed when walking on Salah-a-Din Street.

Muhammad Mussa

Muhammad Abu S'aadeh

21 year-old resident of Bani Suheila, Khan Yunis district, killed on 05.02.2008 in

'Abasan al-Kabira, Khan Yunis district, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Policeman. Killed when at a Palestinian Police position.

Ahmad Isma'il Ibrahim Mesbah

20 year-old resident of 'Abasan al-Kabira, Khan Yunis district, killed on 05.02.2008 in 'Abasan al-Kabira, Khan Yunis district, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Policeman. Killed when at a Palestinian Police position.

'Abd a-Nasser Ibrahim

Mahmoud Abu Nasser

32 year-old resident of 'Abasan al-Kabira, Khan Yunis district, killed on 05.02.2008 in 'Abasan al-Kabira, Khan Yunis district, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Policeman. Killed when at a Palestinian Police position.

Osama 'Ali 'Ali Abu S'aadeh

20 year-old resident of Bani Suheila, Khan Yunis district, killed on 05.02.2008 in 'Abasan al-Kabira, Khan Yunis district, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Policeman. Killed when at a Palestinian Police position.

Ra'fat Ahmad Rizeq Qdeih

20 year-old resident of Khan Yunis, killed on 05.02.2008 in 'Abasan al-Kabira, Khan Yunis district, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Policeman. Killed when at a Palestinian Police position.

Wafi Hamad Muhammad Abu Yusef

23 year-old resident of 'Abasan al-Kabira, Khan Yunis district, killed on 05.02.2008 in 'Abasan al-Kabira, Khan Yunis district, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Policeman. Killed when at a Palestinian Police position.

Mu'ataz 'Abd a-Razeq A'bed Abu Shahla

26 year-old resident of Khan Yunis, killed on 05.02.2008 in 'Abasan al-Kabira, Khan Yunis district, by gunfire, from a helicopter. Did not participate in hostilities when killed. Additional information: Policeman. Killed when at a Palestinian Police position.

Why we need to mourn them all

THE ARGUMENT HAS BEEN RAISED THAT MOURNING THE LIVES OF those who died from deliberate attacks on civilians is different from mourning civilians, including children, who died by "accident" as a result of attacks on alleged terrorists.

First of all, the dead are the dead, and their death brings deep grief into the hearts of their families. It is especially true that the deaths of civilians, especially children, are likely to breed bitterness, not only grief.

If the families of the innocents see those who belong to the "enemy" nation mourning the deaths they have suffered, the result is far more likely to be the softening of hearts and the desire to make peace. Stony hard-heartedness from either side about the deaths of the other is far more likely to breed more hard-heartedness.

From this perspective, ask yourself the question: If you are Israeli or Jewish, would you have wanted Palestinians to express their grief at the deaths of the eight students at Mercaz HaRav? (Some did.) If more had, how would that have affected you?

Now turn the question around. If you are Palestinian, or strongly sympathetic to Palestinians, how would it have affected you if more Jews had expressed their grief over the deaths of civilians in Gaza?

Secondly, I question the assumption that the recent deaths of Palestinian civilians or children in Gaza were "accidental," even when the bomb or bullet was being aimed at alleged terrorists.

I think that at the level of an individual's action, it is quite correct to say that there is no "moral equivalence" between deliberately blowing up a pizzeria or a yeshiva, compared to dropping bombs from an airplane that the bombardier personally and individually intends to kill an allegedly guilty single person, but in the doing kills totally innocent individuals, including children.

(Even in this regard, remember that there has been no trial, the accused has no chance to offer a defense, and that in a number of instances the Israeli government has admitted it killed the wrong person.)

But now look at the institutional level, as well as the individual level. First of all, it seems to me that knowing for sure that the result of allegedly targeted assassinations is going to be the death of innocents, including the deaths of children, and then using this method again and again and again, becomes morally culpable at the institutional and governmental level. Especially when there is an alternative.

What is more, the Israeli government keeps saying that it is trying to get the entire population of Gaza to dump Hamas by cutting electric power, food and medicine shipments, etc. The Israeli government's idea is that if people are deprived of these necessities, they will decide not to vote for Hamas any more. Even if this works— and mostly it doesn't, most people who suffer economic deprivation or bombing mostly blame the sanction-makers or the bombers, not their own leaders—even if it works, it is terrorism. Using violence to terrorize a civilian population into changing its political behavior is the core definition of terrorism.

Now I said, "especially when there is an alternative." What do I mean? Again and again, Hamas has offered a cease-fire, which 64 percent of Israelis supported at the last poll, and the Israeli government has refused.

Sometimes the reason given for rejecting a ceasefire is that Hamas would use the ceasefire to improve its weapons. And Israel would not? And the ceasefire could not include renewed provisions for no arms build-up? Should that be bilateral?

Sometimes the reason given is that Hamas refuses to "recognize" Israel and asserts it wants Israel to disappear. The United States for a whole generation refused to "recognize" China and wanted it to disappear. So when Nixon offered to negotiate, China should have refused? Or was the offer itself the first step toward "recognition"?

So I think we should recognize that at the social and institutional level, the Israeli government has chosen to act in such a way as to kill civilians, when it did not need to. Their deaths are not mere accidents.

To take an example that may be more familiar: Are people who die from nicotine "accidental" deaths because the cigarette companies did not choose them by name specifically to die— merely set up the situation by which some smokers were bound to die from lung cancer? (And since some smokers don't die young from lung cancer, are those who do "accidental deaths"?)

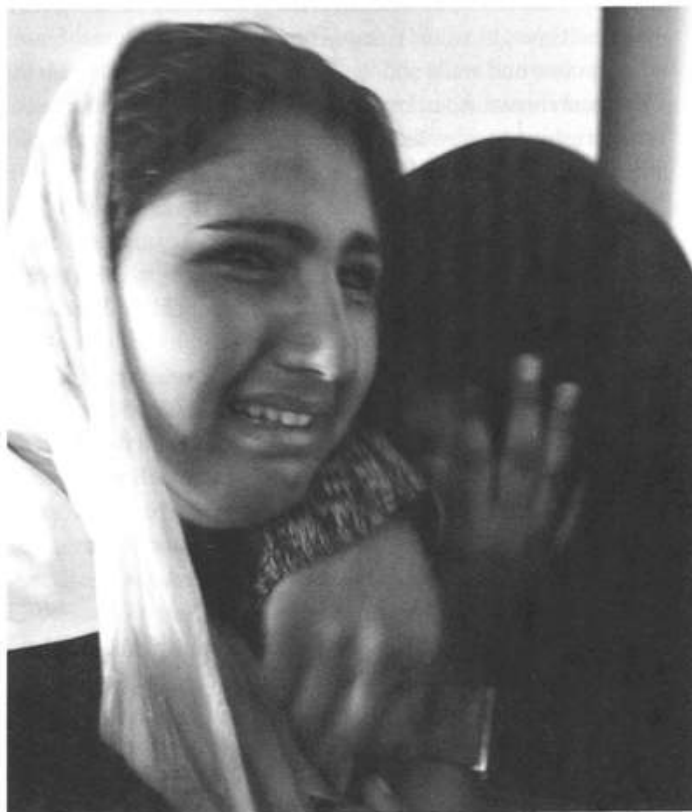
Those four kids killed while playing soccer were "un-chosen" in exactly the same way.

So the argument against "moral equivalence" of the two sets of deaths is correct at the level of individual personal responsibility, and incorrect at the level of social-institutional responsibility.

So for all these reasons, I think the Israeli and the Palestinian civilians who have been killed by the violence of each other's nation all deserve our grief and our prayers.

And for me, the biblical story of Isaac and Ishmael coming together for the first time since their decades-previous estrangement to mourn their father Abraham is a teaching in this direction. ■

Rabbi Arthur Waskow is director of The Shalom Center (www.shalomctr.org) and author of many books, most recently with Sister Joan Chittister and Murshid Saadi Shakur Chisti, *The Tent of Abraham: Stories of Hope and Peace for Jews, Christians, and Muslims* (Beacon Press).





Israel and the Liberals

by Steven Weinberg

THE GREATEST MIRACLE OF OUR TIME IS THE REBIRTH OF THE JEWISH NATION IN ITS ANCIENT home. And, with it, the transformation of an inhospitable landscape into the lovely land of Israel, with its tree-lined streets, cafes, universities, its optimistic people, its liberated women, its liberal democracy and rule of law. The continuing miracle is the survival of this remnant of a life-loving people on a sliver of land, despite repeated attacks from hostile Arab armies. Edward Gibbon wrote of the condition of European Jews in the early middle ages that, "they might be oppressed without danger, as they had lost the use, and even the remembrance of arms." Miraculously, in the twentieth century Jews learned again to use arms to defend themselves.

But though Israel has survived, it faces continued hostility, and not only from Arab irredentists, from politicians and businessmen who curry favor with oil-rich Muslim countries, and from ordinary old-fashioned anti-Semites. The most horrifying development of our time, with respect to Israel, is the worldwide conversion of many of my fellow liberal intellectuals—academics, artists, writers, labor leaders, "enlightened" clergy—to irrational hatred of Israel, the only liberal democracy in the Middle East and the only country in that region where any of us could bear to live. They sit in world forums, weirdly denouncing Israel as the worst violator of human rights, the greatest threat to world peace. They demand that Israel cease its checkpoints and walls and its other attempts to save Jewish lives. The most shameful participants in all this are Jewish and Israeli "liberals," rushing to show the world that they are not the bad Jews, but the good ones, more anti-Israel than thou.

The asserted root cause of this hostility is the supposed "occupation" of Palestinian land. Often this takes the form of a demand that Israel return to its 1967 borders. Israel has already made a complete withdrawal from Gaza and handed over most of the West Bank to the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Can anyone really suppose that clearing Jews from the small remaining area they inhabit and ending Israeli military patrols in the West Bank would bring peace? Hamas, Hezbollah, and their patrons in Muslim countries like Iran have made it clear that they will not be satisfied with anything but the annihilation of Israel. Supposed "moderates" in the PLO and some Muslim countries now say they accept the existence of Israel, but what line would they take if Israel returned to its strategically vulnerable 1967 borders? Remember, the PLO was founded in 1964, when no part of Gaza or the West Bank was in Israeli hands, and "liberation" could only mean the annihilation of Israel.

Not only is the demand for total Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank unrealistic—it is unjust. Countries that are attacked, and defeat their attackers, are not usually blamed if they then take territory from their attacker that will help to protect them from further

attacks. This is what the Soviet Union did after World War II, when it annexed East Prussia, and not even most Germans now condemn them for it. (Of course, Russia did not have the problem of ruling Germans in the land it seized, because it deported them all.) By these standards, Israel deserves to hang on to whatever part of the West Bank it needs for its security.

Then there are "liberals" who deny the legitimacy of Israel itself, and ask why there should not be a multi-ethnic state in the whole of Palestine, subject to a majority that happens to be Arab? They ignore the historical evidence that Jews cannot live freely in a country dominated by Arabs. Jews living among Arabs were subject to repeated Arab massacres, as in Hebron in 1929, and where Jews in Arab countries were tolerated, they were never more than second-class citizens, a status dictated in the Qu'ran. Jews are now prohibited from living in Saudi Arabia, and have had to flee other Arab countries. Although world law established all of Palestine as the Jewish national home, the British handed most of it (the part today known as Jordan) to England's Hashemite allies, who had no connection to Jordan. But the Jews have real connections to Palestine, their ancient home, where thousands of Jews have always lived since the Roman era. Even after the handover to Jordan, the United Nations voted to partition the remnant, leaving only half of it to the Jews. Yet the Jews accepted their half-sliver of land, and created a beautiful country.

Let us, liberals and intellectuals, Jewish and gentile, return to true liberal values. Let us at last acknowledge that hatred of the Jewish state is hatred of Jews. Let us, Jew and non-Jew alike, do what we can to help secure Jewish survivors of irrational hate in their own country. ■

Steven Weinberg, professor at the University of Texas at Austin, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics and the National Medal of Science. His latest book for general readers is Facing Up.

The Courage of Poets and Artists

by C. K. Williams

IT MIGHT BE AGREEABLE FOR ONCE TO TURN FROM THE headlines, from the tragedies and the madresses and the multitude of apparently insoluble quandaries that bedevil Israel—bedevil is surely the word, for there must be some dedicated demon whose assignment is Israel, whose vocation is mayhem, and who is compelled never to take even the shortest vacation in Miami Beach—to think of one of the more astonishing aspects of Israeli history, which is how vital and prodigious a literature has evolved along with and been woven into its history. Considering how small the population of Israel is, how brief the time during which it's had a real identity, and even a language of its own, it's brought forth a remarkable number of major poets and fiction writers.

Poets including Hayyim Bialik, Yehuda Amichai, Uri Zvi Greenberg, Yona Wallach, Dahlia Ravikovitch, Aharon Shabtai (to mention only the best known outside the country), and novelists (to name again only the most internationally noted) S.Y. Agnon, Aharon Appelfeld, David Grossman, Amos Oz, A.B. Yehoshua, and Meir Shalev—all have produced works significant not only for the audiences in their own country, but for many of the literate cultures of the world. And this doesn't count the writers who work in Arabic, like Mahmoud Darwish, Emil Habibi, or Anton Shammas, nor the perspicacious political commentators like Amos Elon; the philosophers, of whom Avashai Margalit is the best known in the United States, the filmmakers and wide range of scholars. Not only are the numbers startling, so is the variety and originality of so many of the books that have been written over the almost ceaselessly dire decades of the Israeli adventure.

And just as noteworthy is how clear-eyed, courageous, and generally optimistic the work of most of these writers has been. Even at their most torn by the difficult realities of their country's struggles, even at their most tragically aware, they've manifested in their work a ground note of joy about the existence of their country, an irrepressible, almost ecstatic delight in embodying the complexities of a nation inventing itself in a tumultuous and often vindictive world.

At the same time there's something terribly sad about how the policies of the Israeli political order have often, or usually, been at odds with this expansive and affirmative vision. The governments of Israel for the last generations, with the exception of Yitzhak



"1984" by Jacob Porat

Rabin's, can best be described as lacking anything like the generous moral imagination of its writers. There have instead been a series of spasmodic, reflexive, often impatient and irritable, sometimes frankly cruel and almost inevitably self-defeating reactions to the threats the country has had to face. The poets and writers themselves have responded to this paradox in some cases with explosive rage, as when Aharon Shabtai entitled a book of poetry *J'Accuse*—a cry of indignation that took to task the inhumanity of the country's policies towards the Palestinians—and sometimes with anguish, most poignantly when the son of David Grossman was killed, the day after Israel had agreed to a cease-fire in the latest Lebanese conflict, but had illegally extended its actions that extra, futile twenty-four hours.

I suppose the most compelling question now is how long the Israeli artists can maintain their positive outlook in the face of so much unrelenting venom on the part of the country's enemies and so little inventiveness from its own politicians. Shabtai for one certainly seems to have all but given up, and some of the other writers I've spoken to have begun to express a note of weariness, exasperation and despair I've never heard before. Whether this will darken their vision, and deplete the energy of their work, is a terrible question to have to ask. But then most questions about Israel are. ■

C. K. Williams published his *Collected Poems* in 2006. He teaches in the Creative Writing Program at Princeton University, and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.



Methodists Divesting

by Jim Winkler

I BELIEVE DENOMINATIONS SUCH AS THE ONE I BELONG TO, THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, are Israel's best friends—but we are not its uncritical friends. We fervently desire a safe and secure Israel and believe the best way to achieve this is for Israel to stand beside a safe, secure, viable, and contiguous Palestine.

We do not subscribe to the notion that the establishment of the state of Israel is a precursor to the "end times." Those who misinterpret scripture and adhere to the renegade teachings of John Nelson Darby have strayed from Christianity.

At times I have been asked why United Methodists have an "excessive" level of concern with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Why, for example, are we not giving Myanmar (Burma) or Guatemala or Indonesia similar scrutiny? The implication is that our seemingly undue level of interest must be connected to overt or latent anti-Israel sentiment.

Frankly, United Methodists do have inordinate interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because it takes place in the Holy Land.

United Methodists are deeply concerned for the plight of Christians living there today. Because of their witness and missionary work we are Christians today. They are not Christians because of our proselytizing. Thus the disappearance of the Christian population from the Holy Land is of grave concern to us.

Oftimes, we are told Christians are leaving the Holy Land because of persecution from Muslims. That is a serious charge, so we check with our Christian partners—the ancient Christian churches as well as the Baptists, Anglicans, Lutherans, and others. Repeatedly, they tell us the overwhelming reason for the exodus of Christians is due to the harsh Israeli Occupation and the impossibility of living a normal life.

Christians are an integral part of the tapestry of the Holy Land. Removing them is like trying to take a thread from the tapestry. It can't be done without the whole thing unraveling. Christians represent a bridge between Jews and Muslims. Our people are simultaneously part of the Judeo-Christian heritage as well as part of the Arab population. Their presence and importance has not been sufficiently utilized.

Tens of thousands of United Methodists have participated in journeys to the Holy Land. Usually, these are apolitical tours led by guides licensed by the Israeli government. Christians want to walk where Jesus walked and better understand the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. But, they can see for themselves the conditions under which Palestinians live and the obvious inequality between Jews and Arabs, and this eyewitness observation raises the consciousness of our people.

Currently, my agency, the United Methodist General Board of Church & Society, has submitted a petition to the 2008 United Methodist General Conference supporting the divestment of Caterpillar stock owned by United Methodist entities in protest of Caterpillar's sale of bulldozers to the Israeli Defense Forces. Caterpillar's giant machines are used in the destruction of Palestinian homes and olive groves and to construct segregated roads and the Separation Barrier.

Simply stated, we do not want our church to profit from the continuing Occupation. Similarly, our church long ago divested from corporations that produce nuclear weapons, tobacco, or alcohol. We do not invest in gambling and pornography enterprises, either. When corporations or entire industries offend biblical values, we choose to invest our funds where God's Creation can be sustained.

We are not advocating divestment from Israel. For forty years, we have passed resolutions and issued statements of opposition to the Occupation to no effect. Now, we want to examine our investment portfolios and see if any of the stock we own helps keep the Occupation going. Caterpillar products are used in some of the most egregious aspects of the Occupation.

I have been asked if we will divest from any corporations whose products are used in the creation of rockets fired into Israel. To date, we have not identified any such companies but if we do I have no doubt we would rid ourselves of such investments.

Charges are frequently made that we United Methodists are not as balanced and fair in our public statements regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as we should be. Balance is important. Neutrality is different. We should be appropriately balanced when we state our views and beliefs on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, we are not neutral. We believe the Occupation should end, the settlements should be dismantled, Jerusalem shared, and the right of return addressed. A major share of the burden rests on the Occupier. ■

Jim Winkler is General Secretary of the General Board of Church & Society of the United Methodist and a member of the National Advisory Board of the Network of Spiritual Progressives.

The Poisons of Nationalism

by Howard Zinn

I was not long out of the Air Force when in 1947 the U.N. adopted a partition plan for Palestine, and in 1948, Israel, fighting off Arab attacks, declared its independence. Though not a religious Jew at all, indeed hostile to all organized religions, I had an indefinable feeling of satisfaction that the Jews, so long victims and wanderers, would now have a "homeland."

It did not occur to me—so little did I know about the Middle East—that the establishment of a Jewish state meant the dispossession of the Arab majority that lived on that land. I was as ignorant of that as, when in school, I was shown a classroom map of American "Western Expansion" and assumed the white settlers were moving into empty territory. In neither case did I grasp that the advance of "civilization" involved what we would today call "ethnic cleansing."

It was only after the "Six-Day War" of 1967 and Israel's occupation of territories seized in that war (the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, the Sinai peninsula) that I began to see Israel not simply as a beleaguered little nation surrounded by hostile Arab states, but as an expansionist power.

In 1967 I was totally engaged in the movement against the war in Vietnam. I had long since understood that the phrases "national security" and "national defense" were used by the United States government to justify aggressive violence against other countries. Indeed, there was a clear bond between Israel and the United States in their respective foreign policies, illustrated by the military and economic support the United States was giving to Israel, and by Israel's tacit approval of the U.S. war in Vietnam.

True, Israel's claim of "security," given its geographical position, seemed to have more substance than the one made by the U.S. government, but it seemed clear to me that the occupation and subjugation of several million Palestinians in the occupied territories did not enhance Israel's security but endangered it.

I was reinforced in my view during a spirited discussion of the Israel-Palestine conflict I was having with my large lecture class at Boston University. A number of Jewish students were fervently defending the Occupation, whereupon two young women who had been silent up to that point rose, one after the other, to say something like the following: "We are from Israel. We served in the Israeli army. We want to say to you who love Israel that the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza will lead to the destruction of Israel, if not physically, then morally and spiritually."

As the years of the Occupation went on, the cycle of

violence seemed endless—a rock-throwing intifada met by over-reaction in the form of broken bones and destroyed homes, suicide bombers killing innocent Jews followed by bombings which killed ten times as many innocent Arabs.

The invasion of Lebanon in 1982 was a particularly horrifying episode in that cycle: rocket fire from the Lebanese side into Israel brought a full scale invasion and ruthless bombing, in which perhaps 16,000 Lebanese civilians were killed. The culmination was the massacre of hundreds, perhaps thousands of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. An Israeli commission put the responsibility on General Ariel Sharon.

I have for a long time considered the nation-state as an abomination of our time—national pride leading to national hatred, leading to war. It always seemed to me that Jews, without a national territory, were a humanizing influence in the world. The charge against them by Stalin, that Jews were "cosmopolitans" was exactly what I thought the great virtue of Jews.

So for Jews to become just another nation-state, with all the characteristics of the nation-state—xenophobia, militarism, expansionism—never seemed to me a welcome development. And the policies of the State of Israel since its birth have borne out my fears. Some of the wisest Jews of our time—Einstein, Martin Buber—warned of the consequences of a Jewish state. Einstein wrote, at the very inception of Israel:

"My awareness of the essential nature of Judaism resists the idea of a Jewish state with borders, an army, and a measure of temporal power, no matter how modest. I am afraid of the inner damage Judaism will sustain...."

Of course, there is no turning back the clock and it may be that an independent Palestine alongside an independent Jewish state is the best interim solution, but since the poison of nationalism will undoubtedly infect both states, the ideal of a democratic, secular community of Jews and Palestinians should remain a goal of all who desire lasting peace and justice. ■

Howard Zinn is a historian, playwright, and social activist. His best-known work is A People's History of the United States.

Hope and Healing

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Jeffrey C. Goldfarb

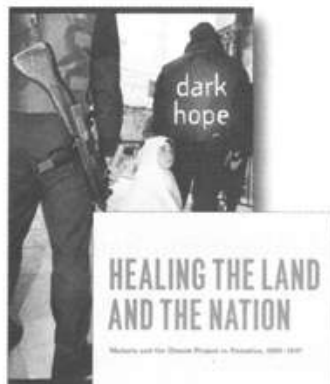
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GOD WITHOUT GOD

(continued from page 17)

Yahweh Elohim

THE HEBREW BIBLE CONTAINS GREAT wisdom around the mystery of God. It uses two names for God: Elohim/Eloah, and Yahweh. Elohim has the form of a masculine plural, Eloah has the form of a feminine singular. Both are translated into English as God. Elohim and Eloah emerge from a great melting pot of cultures and civilizations stretching from India to Ethiopia (Esther 1:1-2), where many gods are honored, both male and female. 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one Lord' is not a pointless tautology, but the radical proclamation that all the gods are one. The continued use of Elohim/Eloah throughout the Hebrew Bible acknowledges a reality that is complex and mysterious, unconstrained by gender, often appropriately plural, containing and embracing all goodness, all divinity, and ultimately all existence.

The one God who is Elohim/Eloah is given a more specific name, revealed to Moses at the burning bush. It is derived from the verb to be, and is often rendered in translation as I Am. It could equally be 'the existing one,' or the very concept of existence and reality itself, 'the ground of all being.' The name is regarded as too holy to be spoken. It is represented in the Hebrew text by four letters—the tetragrammaton—which would be passed over during recitation, or replaced with the Hebrew word Adonai, meaning Lord. This style is deliberately reproduced in the classic English translations, where the word is rendered in four capitals as LORD. We speak the word today as Jehovah or Yahweh.

These are ideal names for the mystery that lies at the heart of our existence: Elohim/Eloah, the sum of all divinity, with its structures both male and female, both singular and plural; and Yahweh, the ground of all being, to be used with such caution that it is barely to be spoken at all. The two names are used together—Yahweh Elohim—as naturally as Jesus and Christ. Together they

encompass all that we hold sacred, and the fundamental concept of existence itself.

This dual name is carried forward into the original Greek of the Christian New Testament. Elohim/Eloah becomes Theos, translated as God: the context once again is a plurality of gods. For Yahweh/Adonai, the New Testament uses Kurios, translated as Lord. In general use, *kurios* can mean anything from the politeness of 'sir' to the absolute of 'master.' In the New Testament, and in the life of the early church, it resonates with meanings ranging from polite deference to the unspeakable majesty of the ground of all being. There is an almost playful ambiguity in its routine use: 'The Lord be with you.'

In acknowledging God who is the ground of all being, we find ourselves in profound communion with the whole human race, for there is only one humankind, only one creation, and only one ground of all being. The Hindu faith recognizes Brahman, the limitless one, ultimate being, beyond all the icons and incarnations. The Buddhist kneels in silence seeking to disconnect from the pain of this world and to connect instead with an essence or non-essence far more profound that lies beyond. The Sikh reaches out for the one God of all humankind, known in all authentic faiths, in meditation, worship and selfless service. The Buddhist seeks Buddha nature within each human soul, the Hindu faith speaks of *atman*, the presence of God in each individual, and the Hebrew Bible sees the image of God as the very essence of humankind (Genesis 1:26-27). All who seek to understand what it means to be human in the world, and who seek the potential for good in every human being, are reaching out for the same mystery. This includes those who assume the titles atheist or secular humanist to indicate their entirely proper rejection of many arbitrary and ultimately trivial images of God.

The Light and the Silence

THERE IS A GROUP EXERCISE, USED ON parish days away, where each person chooses a candle to represent him- or

herself from a randomly mixed collection. Each explains his or her choice, and they begin to interact. They move around in a field of play representing the church or the world. God is sometimes added to the game as a wider and taller candle than all the rest combined—a typical image of God—but this candle gets in the way: nobody can relate to it, and it disrupts all the other interactions. If we remove that false image of God from the scene, a better image remains. God is not the biggest candle: God is the flame and the oxygen, the energy in the wax, the laws of physics making the whole thing possible, the potential in each one of us, the flame passed from one to the other, and the gentle breeze; the essence of existence itself, and the ultimate origin of everything; not the largest or the finest or the best, but literally beyond compare.

There was much intellectual sparring between atheist and Christian in the high school years. Eventually one longtime atheist found himself lying awake staring out of the window at the stars, half demanding and half pleading that God would send some tangible sign. He waited, and there was nothing: only the vast emptiness of space, and the silence. And he recognized God in the waiting, and in the emptiness, and in the silence.

We reject the God of presumptive monotheism—the wrathful, autocratic, vengeful and demanding king—and acknowledge and seek the God who is Yahweh Elohim, the ground of all being, and the essence of all that is good.

Catholic Christianity

GOD WITHOUT GOD GOES ON TO EXPLORE what happens to classic Catholic-spirited Christianity when the God of presumptive monotheism is removed. Far from being destroyed or diminished, the tradition flourishes in its liberation. With care taken to avoid all presumptions and hypocrisies, the tradition emerges as an egalitarian, humanistic spirituality that challenges and defies all earthly powers in its celebration of the realm of the spirit, the realm of the divine. Even the Trinity becomes a life-affirming choice instead of a topic of dogma and dispute.

To choose the Trinity is to choose to name love as our God, to choose to name Jesus of Nazareth as our leading inspiration, our icon and our guide, and to choose to believe that there is a spark of divinity—of holy spirit—in everyone and everything. Nobody can take these choices away on moral or intellectual grounds—and they lead to such richness of life. None of this is for the sake of any notional life beyond death: it is for the sake of the best possible life for today. There is no pressing need for the supernatural: the natural world is wonder and beauty enough.

The full book follows the outline of the mass and addresses each of the seven sacraments in turn—those points where the divine is made tangible. The major sections are God, Ethics, Bible, Creed, Prayer, the Sacrament of Community, and 'Home life, Sex and Gender.' God is the ground of all being and the sum of all divinity, the ultimate reality and mystery at the heart of our existence. The ethical system is the call to full humanity: integrity and compassion in place of disintegration. The bible and the creed come alive with new insights once the false god defined and rejected by atheism is removed from the frame of reference. And the final section on home life, sex, and gender leads the reader further into, not out of, the tradition, to discover a love that embraces all that it is to be human, and holds a special place, 'higher than that of sons and daughters,' for our LGBTI brothers and sisters, with the transgendered and the intersex represented directly in scripture calling all the rest—and all of us—to our liberation. The whole tradition emerges with a timeless and profound integrity for body, mind, and spirit. ■

Extracted, with original introduction and conclusion, from God Without God: Western Spirituality Without the Wrathful King, O Books, June 2008 (www.godwithoutgod.com).

Michael Hampson has degrees in Philosophy, Psychology and Theology, and worked as a Church of England priest for thirteen years. He now works full time as a writer and retreat leader, and lives in Lancashire, UK.

Culture

BOOKS | FILM | MUSIC

[BOOK]

Parentheses of History

OLD WAR by Alan Shapiro
Houghton-Mifflin, 2008

Review by Elizabeth Arnold

ALAN SHAPIRO'S NEW BOOK OF poems depicts one man's present good luck caught in the parentheses of history—thus the title, *Old War*—a perspective made possible in large part by his past bad luck: the premature deaths of two siblings in quick succession, a divorce—subjects of many of Shapiro's earlier poems. But here, first-hand experience of loss opens the door to vivid imaginings of war, suicide bomb blasts and other forms of violent death, and the movement between personal and public is seamless, even blurred.

The sheer speed of the poems is partly responsible for this effect. Take, for example, how many of the titles are the first words of the poems' first sentences, further amplifying the breakneck movement (especially in poems made up of only one long sentence), and thereby creating a near recklessness fueled by the poet's fear that at any instant life will stop.

In this (Shapiro's tenth) book, the poems are dominated by what seems to be a paradoxical reverse-Heraclitean certainty—stasis being the dreaded constant rather than change—which reveals a new brand of panic in poems dramatizing our condition as mortal beings. The old paradox is made new by the very structure of Shapiro's sentences: "My voice forever scattering/away in echoes voices/I will never hear might sound?"; "I stopped where the snow/I had to stomp through/not to slip on/wouldn't break"; "so that she's nowhere/more like a girl, a child,/than in this/new way she's not." This kind of skewed syntactic logic recurs so often

that the fact of our plight as mortals becomes a kind of drilling static which, by the time you've put the book down, sends you as if over a cliff, feet still churning like electric beater blades, moving too fast to be seen. You know to expect the screeching halt and plummet. And yet there's time in the terror of the moment to be transformed before the crisis of the catastrophic physical transformation. It's a whole new way into the ineffable that Shapiro's engineered, of being hurled into a space, into an experience where no one can exist while alive, propelled by the running start the poems cumulatively produce.

As in bebop, the speed is violent. It is channeled but buoyant rage. Shapiro's book could be said to be about fear of loss, but these poems speak specifically for and of an age that's going increasingly too fast, accelerating beyond our ability to comprehend the life it's engendering, coming close to exceeding the bounds of art itself.

Remarkably, in this breathless atmosphere, we find the beautiful lyrics one has come to expect of Shapiro, that play within the literary tradition they hope to extend. But the poems of *Old War* have a new formal quality, a jittery or fast-paced jagged movement driving them, as if the urgent need to keep up is meant, as well, to keep the reader from resting in any comfortable idea of tradition, beauty, or lyricism.

Some of the strongest poems in this quasi-lyric mode catch at fleeting moments with great subtlety, such as "Mist," which carries us through a cascade of associations inspired by the protean qualities of mist—"white ink in white water"—which then



becomes the ghosts of Shapiro's deceased siblings, "brother mist and sister mist," their eyes "subsiding into mist," which vision becomes the "wordlessness that's opening to it" of a sleeping homeless person's open mouth, mist through which a bus then passes, mist flowing everywhere in the "spectral city" (with "grates"), mingling with the bus's exhaust, terrifyingly merging with it.

This threat of annihilation is felt to be everywhere, including in poems about love whose intensity is fed by a preternatural awareness that love will end, in illness, in death; or it is fated to turn into indifference, into hate. Thus, the intensity of love at its height—love of another person, love of life itself—is what stays with the reader, with a depth and density that distinguishes this volume as one of Shapiro's more outstanding achievements. ■

Elizabeth Arnold's most recent book of poems is Civilization, published by Flood Editions in 2006. She lives outside Washington, D.C.

[FILM]

CHOOSE LIFE

A SACRED DUTY (Jewish Vegetarians of North America, 2007)

Review by Adina Allen

THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS that we are now facing is unlike any problem humanity has previously faced. The peril to our life-supporting ecological systems is an issue that cuts across the divides of race, class, nationality, and religion. This is a crisis that calls upon us to cooperate on a global level, despite our differences. We need a fundamental shift in the way we approach the world, one that opens us to the sacredness of all life. To bring our actions in line with this view of life, the wisdom of our religious traditions may be one of our most useful resources.

The recently released film *A Sacred Duty* provides an in-depth look into the state of our environment and the teachings that Judaism offers to steer us on a sustainable path. Professor and leading Jewish activist Richard Schwartz, together with educators, environmentalists, and leaders from all parts of the Jewish world show how the unique insight of Torah can guide us as we join with others in confronting this challenge to help heal our planet and, in so doing, heal ourselves.

It is written in the Torah that God spoke to the Jewish people saying, "I place before you two choices: life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life that you may live, you and your offspring" (Deut. 30:19). Choosing life, the film argues, means recognizing the interconnectedness of all life on the planet and beginning to take seriously the knowledge that what we do in one part of the globe affects the whole world. By drawing on important Jewish texts and interpretations, the film shows the responsibility and power that religious communities have to help lead humanity towards a sustainable future.

Divided into two distinct sections, *A Sacred Duty* focuses on the environmental

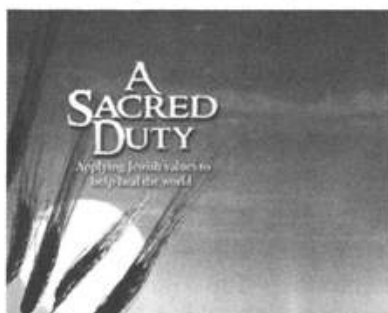
destruction of the Land of Israel, and the ethical ramifications and environmental impact of our diet. In terms of the daily choices that we make and our ability to create a more sustainable world, diet may be the most central issue. The film cites the results of a study by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, which shows that 18 percent of all greenhouse gases come from the raising of livestock agriculture. *A Sacred Duty* takes the viewer inside the industrial meat industry and provides an in-depth and probing look at our food system.

Through the documentary footage in this film, we learn that most kosher and non-kosher meat is processed through industrial methods that rely on practices that harm human workers/consumers, the environment, and the animals themselves. The industrial meat industry functions by confining animals to overcrowded feedlots, where they are forced to exist in close and often filthy living quarters and are injected with hormones and antibiotics to combat the inevitable diseases that result. In addition to the cruelty inflicted on these animals, there are serious externalities. These include: unnatural concentrations of manure that pollute water and release high amounts of the greenhouse gas methane, the often unsafe and violent working conditions of the slaughterhouse, and the monopolization of wealth and power among big production plants and drug companies while small-scale organic producers are driven out of business. Many of us are becoming more familiar with the shocking details of the meat industry as discoveries of contaminated meat—a result of unsafe and unethical practices—cause instances like the debacle in the California Hallmark/Westland Meat Packing Co., which recently had 143 million pounds of beef recalled, making it the largest beef recall in U.S. history.

Looking through a Jewish lens, the film urges Jews to expand our current standards of *kashrut* (dietary laws), to include the impact of our food choices on the environment

and on the animals themselves. *A Sacred Duty* calls upon us to live from the highest values of our tradition and to realign ourselves as partners with the Creative Source in being *shomrei adamah* (guardians of creation). In every faith there are valuable teachings that can help us to confront the global challenge of climate change. It is time for each of us to ground ourselves in the texts and wisdom unique to our traditions that together we may bring healing to the earth. ■

Adina Allen is Assistant Editor of Tikkun. She was recently awarded a Weener Fellowship, and will begin rabbinic studies at Hebrew College in the fall of 2008.



[FILM]

THE BANALITY OF EVIL

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Documentary by Errol Morris (Sony Pictures, 2008)

Review by Karin Luisa Badt

ERROL MORRIS' controversial new documentary *Standard Operating Procedure* consists of riveting interviews with five of the young men and women responsible for the three months of torture at Abu Ghraib. Positioned to the right of a foggy-grey wide screen, the talking heads gain empyreal stature and eerie visibility as each smiles and discusses the infamous photos. In marked contrast to their open, American faces, serene and grinning, we see the Iraqis covered in black hoods, only their naked bodies apparent. The effect is the reenactment of a hierarchy in which the military personnel are humans playing devilish pranks and the Iraqis are headless beasts.

Yet Morris surprised journalists at the Berlinale premiere by defending these soldiers as "victims" of the media. They

received the brunt of the blame, Morris explained, because "the bad apples were convenient to the Bush government." In his words: "The movie gives them back their humanity. You may not like what they did, but they are still people."

While Morris says that he would like us to perceive the soldiers as "still people," his own film reveals that they themselves did not perceive their "victims," the Iraqis, as people at all. Emmanuel Levinas argued that the basis of ethics is to regard others as not truly others—"the face is what one cannot kill"—a premise that has been picked up by Holocaust scholars to explain how Nazis were able to commit genocide and torture. Once you perceive your victim as a faceless non-human, dehumanizing policies are possible. Morris's contribution to the understanding of the Iraq war is to show that the same is true of American soldiers and, by extension, of U.S. military policy-makers.

Sabrina Harman, a grinning blonde young woman with girlish curly locks and soft twangy voice, explaining why she gave a radiant smile and thumbs-up-sign in the photo of her cradling the bruised head of an Iraqi corpse, quips: "Hey, when you get into a photo, you automatically smile, doncha?" She adds, in a rather numbed tone, "Look I even got some blood on my uniform. I felt kind of bad."

Sabrina, like her colleagues, justifies her behavior with a "just following orders" argument reminiscent of the Nuremberg trials: "It's your job. You can't walk out of this."

What Morris does is expose Abu Ghraib as worse than the pictures, those static glimpses of cruelty, were able to reveal. He brilliantly adds the dimension of time; turning to a photo expert who broke the time-codes of the five divergently clocked cameras and came up with a consistent chronology. Hence we experience the claustrophobic day-in, day-out torture of the hooded prisoners over the course of three months. The soldiers apparently were devising new ways to entertain themselves at the prisoners' expense around-the-clock. All of this was masterminded by an older soldier, Charles Graner, with whom two of the women were in love.

One of these women is Lynndie

England, the soldier who tugged an Iraqi on a dog-leash. In her testimony, she is more perturbed by the charismatic effect Graner had on her than by her own actions. Not only does she protest that she "wasn't tugging. Look closely, the leash is *slack*," she speaks of herself as a manipulated victim of heartbreak. She would have done anything to please Graner and was outraged when she discovers Graner's involvement with another woman. "This was going on *behind my back*," she explains.

The film concludes powerfully with England's damning last testimony. Asked if she had any remorse, England responds: "I wouldn't change anything. If I did, I wouldn't have Carter [her son with Graner], and I wouldn't do that for the world. That's the way the world turns, isn't it? People stabbing other people in the back. It's life, you have to live it."

A moment of silence follows. By ending the film with such a reflective moment on this sobering vision of a dog-eat-dog world, Morris raises the stakes of his films from a denunciation of U.S. war policies to a contemplation of the banality of evil.

I asked Morris if he would consider his film to be a meditation on evil. After all, several of his previous projects, such as the memorable *Mr. Death: The Rise and Fall of Fred A. Leuchter, Jr.* (2000), demonstrated a similar fascination with humans who violate the code of ethics to the extreme.

"Evil is interesting and interests a lot of people including myself," Morris responded firmly. "The phrase 'banality of evil' has been used in many contexts. I looked up how Hannah Arendt defined it: 'absence of thinking/reflection.' I don't think this is true of these guys. Not the banality of evil, but confused. Sabina's letters home express three or four personalities at the same time."

The difference between "confusion" and "absence of thinking/reflection" is not so clear in the film, as, in reenactments of the torture, we see black snarling dogs let loose to gnaw at the prisoners' legs.

Yet it is true that Morris shows these soldiers losing their humanity, which does inspire our compassion. The worst night—the night of the human naked pyramids—is a special night for England. "Was it your birthday?" England is asked. "Yes," she



responds in a subdued tone. "At midnight." She had not expected to celebrate her twentieth year in this way.

I surmised that Morris downplayed the subtext of evil both to keep the emphasis on U.S. policy for those who would misinterpret the film as blaming the soldiers once again, and also to protect his professional relationship with the soldiers. He was asked how he cajoled these soldiers to speak so openly. He brushed the question aside, with a quick shrug and one-sentence response: of course the soldiers wanted to talk, and he was there to listen. Perhaps they were told that more than gaining an audience, it would be their chance to be humanized. "Of course there would be no movie if there were not these personal narrations," Morris noted. "Without these people, there is no movie."

Whatever his comments, Morris's film speaks for itself: as a wake-up call to the facility of dehumanization and to the horrors of Bush administration policies. "This is a very dark period of U.S. history," he said. "Abu Ghraib is the smoking gun."

Abu Ghraib, he points out, "got turned around, so the soldiers ruined the war, undermining the war effort, so no one takes responsibility for Abu Ghraib." The soldiers' participation in the banality of evil reflects that of Americans as a whole. ■

Karin Luisa Badt is an associate professor of theatre and cinema at the University of Paris VIII. For more information on her film reviews, prose, and photography, visit www.kbadt.free.fr.

DEMOLITION

They hang a big tube from the side of an office building
and through this esophagus the size
of an elevator shaft

they throw down furniture and
wire, chunks of plaster, ceiling tile and glass
shag carpet track lighting

swivel chairs and lathe
crash and bashing into giant bins five floors below
boing and banging down and this goes on for seven days.

I may be a grown man but that doesn't mean
I don't enjoy
the ingenuities of violence against matter

which means I stand across the street with all the others guys
— wheelchair vet and hot dog vendor,
junior attorney and the retiree—
in a little cluster of hypnotized testosterone.

I too am made of joists and stanchions,
of plasterboard and temperamental steel,
mortgage payments and severed index fingers,
ex-girlfriends, and secret koolade-flavored dawns.

We gaze at the destruction and linger
the way a woman might stare
at a too-expensive dress
in a big store window,

the way that moonlight looks at
an island in the middle of the sea—

island unnamed, and unashamed,
touched by the tide.

—Tony Hoagland



DEAR SWAMI

"Where Swami answers your questions, and you will question his answers."

BY SWAMI BEYONDANANDA

Dear Swami:

I have to wonder what kind of collective mental illness we have in America where a public-minded prosecutor like Elliot Spitzer can be brought down in days when he runs afoul of Wall Street. Meanwhile, the Bush Administration has violated national laws, international laws, and our collective moral sensibilities, and somehow that's okay. I wouldn't put it past them to bomb Iran while they're still in office. I'm concerned, and I'm wondering if there is anything we can do to head off that horrific possibility.

Tristan Schaute,
Cambridge, Mass.

Dear Tristan,

I'm afraid we now have a new affliction to add to the panoply of diseases our poor body politic is suffering from. Along with Mad Cowboy Disease, Deficit Inattention Disorder, Irony Deficiency and Truth Decay, we now have Spitzerphrenia. That is where you can be nailed for screwing a prostitute, but if you screw the entire world, you get off scot-free.

Regarding your other question, we must bring the Iranian and American people together to face the one danger we share in common—our lowest common dominator misleaders under the influence of unfun fundamentalism, motivated by fear instead of love. This mutually-reinforcing terror is a loco motive that has us on track for a train wreck.

That is why the unarmed forces of

both nations must be willing to take up arms in a totally new way. Yes, that's right. Arms. Only this time, we are to use our arms in the only appropriate way—for hugging. Imagine a preemptive peace ceremony where ordinary American and Iranian citizens stand in front of one another in complete attention, present arms, and hug. And then the whole world can be put at ease.

Dear Swami:

I'm thinking of hiring you as a spiritual adviser. How accurate are your past predictions?

Randi Holway-Holm,
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Dear Randi:

Past predictions? One hundred percent accurate. I can predict the past with uncanny accuracy. If it's already happened, you can count on me to tell you. If it hasn't happened yet, that's trickier. After all, this is a universe of infinite possibilities. You've heard of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle? Well, now they're not even sure that is true. Even so, the best way to predict the future is by accurately assessing the present. In other words, if we keep going where we are headed, we are likely to end up there. As for making me your adviser, I have to tell you it is not advisable. For one thing, anyone who asks me for advice is already in so much trouble, that it is doubtful I can help. So, here is my policy: I am happy to offer you advice, provided you promise not to take it.

Dear Swami:

I noticed a while back you suggested a name change to an individual suffering from bad luck. I may have a similar problem. I'm sure my Vietnamese parents didn't mean me any harm, but I think they've put me at a distinct disadvantage. Not only that, but I recently had my astromusicological chart done and found out I was born under the song sign, "I Can't Get No Satisfaction." Can you help me, Swami?

Ho Lai Minh,
Santa Clara, California

Dear Ho,

Wow. Having said that, I realize you're in more trouble than I imagined. So, yes. A name change can make a huge difference. Like the guy who came to me with money issues. His name was Osborne Poe. We made the switch, and now he's Richard Denhue. Then there was the unsuccessful football player, Ben Schwarmer. He became Linus Grim-mage, and his name is synonymous with football. For you? Well, you might try Hugo Farr. And while you're making changes, change your birthdate. They won't let you do it in California, but if you just drive to Nevada, you can legally change your date of birth. You'd only have to become six months older to be born under the Beatles, "I Feel Fine." ■

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1948: THE FIRST ARAB-ISRAELI WAR

Benny Morris
Yale University Press, 2008

ARMY OF SHADOWS

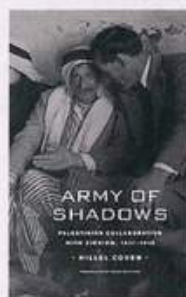
Hillel Cohen
University of California Press, 2008
BENNY MORRIS WAS ONE OF the first Israeli "New Historians" to detail the role of the Israelis in forcibly expelling Palestinians, putting to rest forty years of Israeli propaganda about the Arab population voluntarily fleeing in 1948. The subsequent development of the intifadas in the late 1980s and early 2000s had a profound impact, changing Morris from a hero of Peace Now to a bitter opponent of Palestinian rights. In this book Morris reinterprets his data and puts an anti-Arab spin on the history, justifying Israeli positions and vilifying Israel's Arab enemies. Morris' transformation, exhibited here, is a striking study in how ideology can transform the study of history.

Hillel Cohen's less ideologically-driven history of Palestinian collaboration with Zionism 1917-1948 raises some important questions about "who is a traitor?" and "was it reasonable for some Arabs to see Zionism as a positive development for their Palestinian society?" At least some of those who collaborated were ethical humanists, while others felt that collaboration was a better path for their own people than the path of armed struggle and confrontation that dominated the majority of Palestinian nationalist consciousness. What Morris describes as the collapse of Palestinian society in 1948 can be more complexly understood when one realizes that some Palestinians were precisely attempting to preserve Palestinian society by collaborating with the Zionists.

DOES ETHICS HAVE A CHANCE IN A WORLD OF CONSUMERS?

Zygmunt Bauman
Harvard University Press, 2008

ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST sociologists and social theorists, Bauman mapped the impact of modernity and post-modernity on contemporary consciousness, and addresses the impact of the decline of state authority as globalization produces a new form of disintegration. Inter-human bonds lose their institutional protections, "which are increasingly viewed as irritating and unbearable constraints on individuals freed of choice and self-assertion," and become increasingly frail and short-lived. Bauman seeks a new kind of global public space that is based on a truly planetary responsibility and aims to regenerate and reform the web of global interdependencies. Instead of purely local defense against planetary environmental disintegration, Bauman calls for a global solidarity of strangers. This is a powerfully prophetic book whose wisdom should shape our plans for twenty-first century global survival.



DOES ETHICS
HAVE A CHANCE
IN A WORLD OF
CONSUMERS?

**LAST LAST CHANCE**

Fiona Maazel
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008

FIONA MAAZEL'S NOVEL IS A ROMP OF life-affirmation in the midst of tragedy and despair. The world blames Lucy Clark's dead father for a superplague that is about to kill off most humans. As growing awareness of the end of life on earth permeates the consciousness of those around her, Lucy, certifiably insane, is the one person whose perverse awareness allows her to charm us into believing that the erotic spiritual energy of the universe has not yet been squashed into nothingness. This novel might well become a lasting classic for those facing the environmental devolution of society, unless a politics that eludes Lucy and her author finds a way to overcome the extreme individualistic consciousness that imagines love in the personal sphere to be the answer to all things. Meanwhile, it's pure pleasure to dip into Maazel's brilliance as a writer.

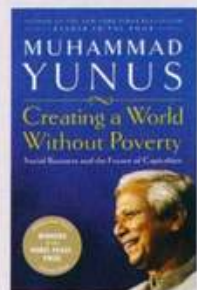
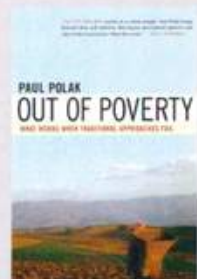
Last Last Chance**CREATING A WORLD WITHOUT POVERTY**

Muhammad Yunus
Public Affairs, 2008

OUT OF POVERTY

Paul Polak
Barrett Koehler 2008

MUHAMMAD YUNUS WON THE NOBEL PEACE prize for his innovative work with micro-finance in third world countries. Paul Polak is the founder of International Development Enterprises, which assists rural farmers in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, India, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, Vietnam, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Both are courageous fighters for an end to world poverty. These two books provide much guidance for those of us who share this goal. Their reliance on market mechanisms and incentives must be included in the planning for how best to implement the Global Marshall Plan. These books are filled with concrete on-the-ground stories of previous failures to end poverty and their own stories of what they did which worked (albeit to very limited degrees). Two books from which we can learn much in grounding ourselves for the practical realities of poverty-elimination.

**CONSTANTINE'S SWORD**

A film by Oren Jacoby

JAMES CARROLL'S BOOK HAS NOW been released as a movie, and it will hopefully be seen widely. Carroll is a former Catholic priest who now writes for the Boston Globe, and his book and the movie tell the shameful story of Catholic-generated anti-Semitism throughout the ages. The movie includes disturbing footage on the harassment of Jews and non-evangelical Christians at the Air Force Academy, something Carroll says would have been inconceivable when his father was an Air Force general.



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