

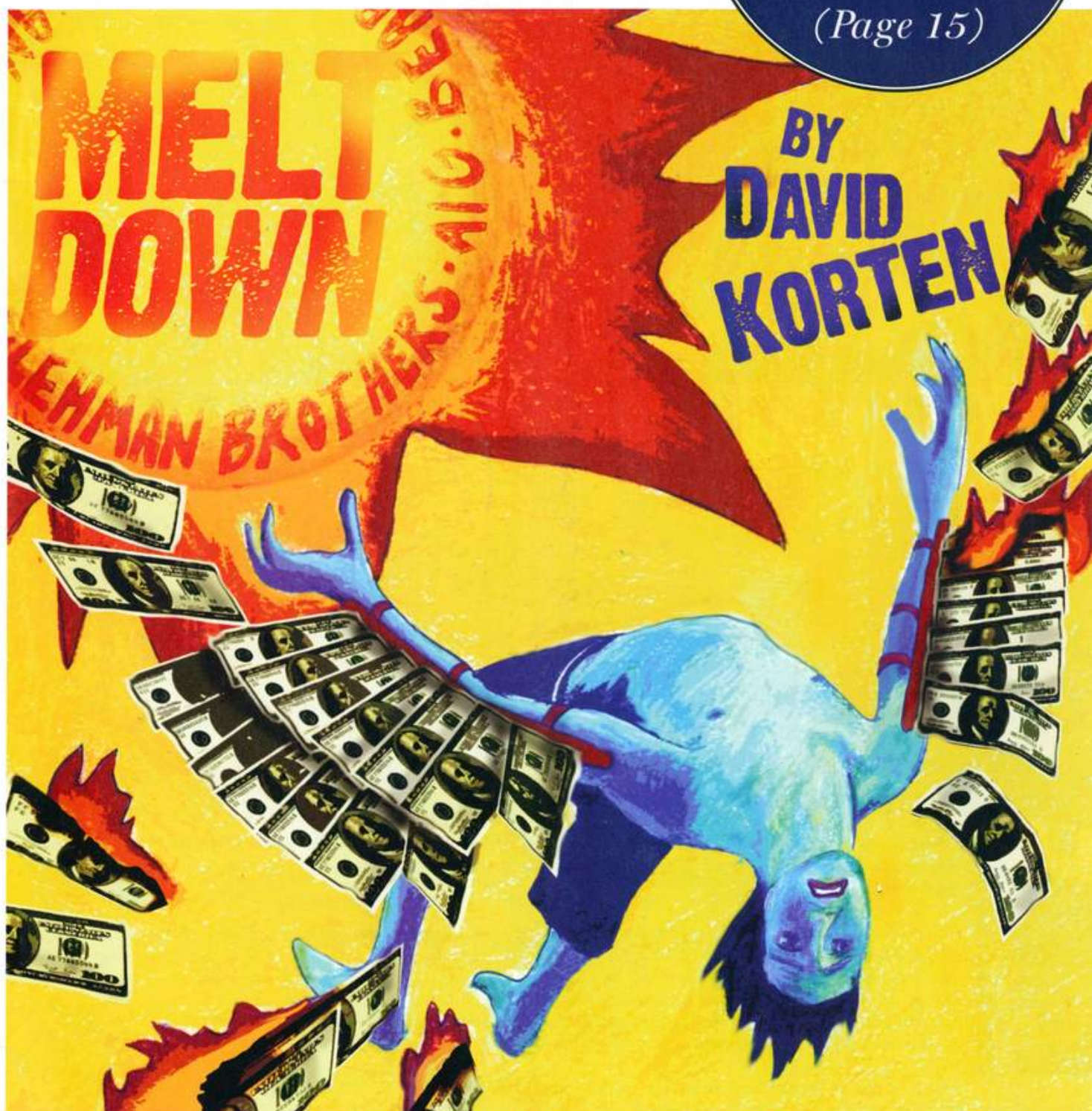
Tikkun

POLITICS+SPIRITUALITY+CULTURE

(tē·kūn) To mend, repair, and transform the world. NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2008

OBAMA ACTIVISTS
WHAT'S NEXT?

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Alix Kates Shulman: Love in Adversity | Richard Rohr: Is Christmas Christian? | Or Rose, Eboo Patel, V.V. Raman: Interfaith Theology & Action | Peter Dunlap: Awakening Our Faith in the Future

In a packed church in Antioch, California, PICO, a congregation-based community action organization, launched a national campaign on October 27 to stop preventable foreclosures, keep families in their homes, and put a floor under falling housing values. We congratulate PICO for launching this faith-based campaign. Their first event is pictured below.



STOP THE FORECLOSURES

The Network of Spiritual Progressives urges all faith based communities and spiritual progressives to organize local public events BEFORE the Inauguration around the following demands:

- ★ One-year freeze on expulsions from homes.
- ★ Reduce interest rates on loans for owner-occupied homes to the level at which they were first negotiated—for anyone who can show that they are at risk of defaulting on their payments because their mortgage payment is higher than one-third of their current income.
- ★ Use bailout funds to provide mortgages at low interest rates directly to people with incomes under \$40,000 who can make a plausible case for their ability to pay their mortgages.

These short-term measures are meant to protect middle- and lower-income families while a fully coherent governmental policy for high-quality housing is developed. This prioritizes the needs of these middle-income and poor families, not the profit motives of mortgage companies and banks.

You can be instrumental in this by reaching out to churches, synagogues, mosques, ashrams, unions, professional groups, and civic organizations to energize them to create large public gatherings around these demands. Invite to these gatherings congressional representatives, political leaders and activists, and in particular ordinary citizens facing severe economic hardships or loss of homes because of the current meltdown. It's outrageous that over \$800 billion has been expended to "reassure" the wealthy banks and commercial institutions, but no serious money has been expended to care for those on the verge of losing their homes.

Choose a date in January and make your event happen in a way that will be noticed by the media and by elected officials. This needs to happen before the Obama people choose economic advisers and policy implementers who share the assumption (discredited in our minds, but not in the minds of the Washington insiders) that the government dare not threaten the profits of the super-wealthy and their corporations. Where PICO is already doing such an event, join with them (info at www.piconetwork.org). Where it is not, make it happen! Emphasize the religious and spiritual values that make us insist that "loving our neighbor" and "not standing idly by" while they get hurt requires making sure that they have a home to live in, as well as adequate food, clothing, and health care. Turn the bailout for the rich into a bailout for those who are suffering most from the materialism-oriented economy and selfishness that generated these problems. Only you can do this—by creating something in your local area. Start planning that now! And join NSP to help us build this national movement.

www.spiritualprogressives.org





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Digital access to every issue of Tikkun magazine from 1993 until today is now available, for free, through our web site.

We are scanning in all the other magazines from 1986 on and will make them available when ready. We see this as our gift to you, our readers, and to generations of progressives to come. Please visit tikkun.org to check out some of the amazing writing and artwork we've amassed. And, if you consider what you see to be valuable and important, please help us continue this work by joining the Network of Spiritual Progressives or by making a generous donation.

ASK THE AUTHOR!

We'll interview our authors for 20 minutes, and then they'll take questions from YOU.

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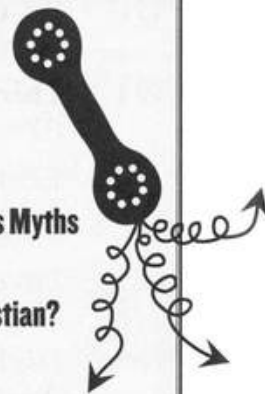
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WWW.TIKKUN.ORG



Readers Respond

A NOTE ON LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

As Tikkun increases its web presence both at www.tikkun.org and at spiritualprogressives.org and by sending out e-mailings (free) to anyone who indicates an interest to be placed on our list (requests to Generosity@Tikkun.org) we are increasingly publishing in our LETTERS TO THE EDITOR section of the magazine, as well as on the web, responses not only to the articles printed but to our web and email articles as well. We welcome your responses to our articles. Send your Letters to the Editor to Letters@Tikkun.org. Please remember, however, to not attribute to Tikkun views other than those expressed in our editorials. We send out on the email, post on our website, and print in the magazine many articles or responses with which we have strong disagreements, because that is what makes Tikkun a location for a true diversity of ideas. Tikkun reserves the right to edit your letters to fit available space in the magazine.

GLOBAL MARSHALL PLAN

WHERE IN YOUR GLOBAL Marshall Plan is the recognition of the fundamentally extractive nature of economic liberalism? We can form an NGO and donate to it all we want, but while interest-based lending dominates the global (and domestic) banking system, our other hand will be working to keep people poor. The GMP will not differentiate itself from the reams of well-meaning but ineffective rhetoric about sustainable development from the UN, and may as well be so much more paper thrown on the fire, until our economic tools reflect the humanism for which you call.

MAIJA JESPERSEN
Philadelphia, PA

WOW

A SHORT NOTE OF GRATITUDE FOR an amazing September 2008 issue—compassionate, practical, and courageous. WOW!! Well done!!

MARIA ABDIN
Seattle, WA

DAY CARE

I COULD NOT LET PASS WITHOUT A strong objection the characterization

of day-care workers as a “corps of hirelings” in Mr. Cornell’s article (September/October 2008). Instead of insulting these workers, Mr. Cornell should be praising them for doing a very hard job for which they are notoriously underpaid.

I speak from personal experience on two fronts. My daughter attended day care from the ages of four to eleven. During that time she was taught by certified teachers and by other caring women who did an excellent job. I also applied for jobs at day-care centers and learned that the pay was scarcely more than the minimum wage for people who did not have degrees. At most you were offered free tuition for your own children if you worked at a day-care center. Apparently, Mr. Cornell has no idea how difficult it is to care for children as young as six weeks in some day-care centers, nor how much work and dedication is involved in keeping these children safe, happy, and educated. My daughter had the equivalent of pre-kindergarten and kindergarten instruction while she was in day care.

I also object to Mr. Cornell’s concern about the absence of God from

day-care centers. Unless a religious institution runs the center, religion should not be taught. The same rules that apply to public schools should apply to non-sectarian day care centers. My own experience was exactly the opposite of his objection. There was a tremendous emphasis on Christmas at the center my daughter attended and almost no mention of other holidays such as Chanukah. As a Jew, I felt that I had no choice but to let her participate in the Christmas pageant and other activities, but I would have preferred a more balanced approach to the holiday season.

LAURA TROUTMAN
via email

Tom Cornell replies:

IT WAS WORSE THAN thoughtless of me to refer to child-care workers as “hirelings.” I undermined my own argument that all honest labor is worthy of a living wage and respect. I apologize and thank Laura Troutman for her correction. It remains that young children need, more than anything, consistent care from at least one parent who talks to them, reads to them, and is simply there for them full time. Child care, too often a necessity, is an inadequate substitute. National full employment and a living wage policy would go a long way to remedying our national child abuse.

The question of religious values and traditions in schools and the public square is not so simple. To privatize and marginalize religion is a mistake; Catholic Worker founder

Peter Maurin described this marginalization as the first and most serious mistake of "modernity." Surely religious institutions should be separated from the state. It is good for the state and even better for religion. But create a vacuum and something will fill it—in our contemporary case, religious fundamentalism: proselytizing, bigoted, and dangerous. It is not a simple matter to harmonize this need with respect for minorities.

In my public school, back in 1942 when I was in the third grade, Jewish refugees from Germany could sing "Jingle Bells" but not "Oh Come Let Us Adore Him." So they remained quiet. For the few who noticed, it was embarrassing. A couple of decades later, when I taught public middle school, at Christmas time I had the kids learn "Shalom Haverim," "Let Every Man 'Neath His Vine and Fig Tree," and "Dona Nobis Pacem." Now they don't do any of that. Today it would be well to recount the story of

the Maccabees and maybe have the class hear Peter, Paul, and Mary sing "Don't Let the Light Go Out," and explain why that song was so important when they first sang it in the days of the Red Scare and why their voices rang with such passion. Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, and Native Americans have stories to share, too—stories that give a glimpse of Transcendent Reality that only myth and story can give.

We cheat our students by covering over our different traditions as if they were of no importance. Dorothy Day wrote in *The Long Loneliness*, "Tradition! We scarcely know the word anymore. We are afraid to be either proud of our ancestors or ashamed of them.... We cling to a bourgeois mediocrity which would make it appear we are all Americans, made in the image and likeness of George Washington."

Today it is possible for public school students to learn of the Civil Rights Movement and never know

that Martin Luther King Jr. was a Baptist minister. Some may never know how the Exodus story has energized Black people since slavery, or how religious communities came together to stop the Vietnam war, or why religious conscience moved so many young men to refuse to take part in that war, even at a great price.

The massive evils we must overcome to achieve political, social, and economic democracy in this country—and to bring it into the community of nations under law—call for a movement of revolutionary fervor and strength. Positivist science alone will not generate the moral energy or the faith to mount that struggle. Separation of church and state, surely, but separation of religious values and traditions from education and public life, just as surely not—it is a fatal mistake.

BAILOUT

RE: TIKKUN EMAIL "JUST SAY 'NO' to the Proposed Bailouts—Don't try

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Band-Aids to keep the Tower of Babel standing."

This is excellent! I'd only add a prayer that each of the financial folks would be expected to donate some 100+ hours of community service in the tent cities and senior centers serving those who have lost most. We've all created this, and we're all responsible to some extent for where we are; at the same time, there needs to be some understanding among those working in and directing the financial institutions as to the consequences of their actions. Empathy and compassion would be great, too, as well as some sense of a shared vulnerability and commonality. Maybe you can get the "powers that be" to get each and every financial employee and CEO involved in this mess to volunteer (and live there while doing it) in tent cities and senior centers, as part of a community service project? Wouldn't this help?

The liturgy for Rosh Hashanah touched me this year in new ways; the words had an urgency and meaning that I've not felt in the past. May all of us celebrating and remembering this year be open to a change of direction. In truth, there's abundance and plenty for everyone—we must share what's been given to us, help those in need. Many blessings on you and all of life, everywhere!

SULHA SHALOM
via email

CONTRARIANS

I TOO CONSIDER MYSELF A contrarian but do not find inspiration in my fellow contrarian's views as expressed in "To McCain: Advance the American Dream" by George Vradenburg (September/October 2008). As a member of the Network of Spiritual Progressives, I believe that at the heart of America's failure to create a just, peaceful, compassionate society is not having a vibrant, real spiritual center.

We must have a fresh vision of the American Dream: one that does not

emphasize competition, gaining more material goods, or keeping our noses to the grindstone. As a result of past emphasis on the American Dream, we have an American "civilization" that has no equal in world history to its development and institutionalization of materialism, commercialism, and consumerism.

Mr. Vradenburg speaks of a better educational system that emphasizes "workforce readiness, job training, and vocational education specifically geared for the twenty-first-century economy, including clear, demand-driven career pathways to higher-paying jobs."

What about learning to think? Learning to cooperate with others? To share? To have some sense of history and the world's great cultural and spiritual heritages? We need to think globally, not nationally. To become part of the world population. To erase boundaries. It should not be our goal to be "top dog." This is not productive, realistic, or future-oriented.

As for free-market globalization, it has done more harm than good because it has been imposed, looking at the financial bottom line rather than at the good of the people involved and their needs and their desires.

Generally speaking, we should shelve the American Dream as it is discussed in this article. It's part of the past. Let's think with a "beginner's mind."

ROBERT HOCHWALT
North Canton, OH

HAMPSON—GOD WITHOUT GOD

"GOD WITHOUT GOD," BY Michael Hampson (May/June 2008) purports to discuss an "atheist spirituality" as apt for our enlightened times. Mr. Hampson writes that "the atheist argues that there is nothing" in the universe that requires, or even suggests, the existence of God. He adds, "Everything has, or will be, explained by the sciences of physics, chemistry, biology, psychology,

sociology, and anthropology."

Earlier this year, I attended a lecture in the *Great Conversations* series at the University of Chicago, my alma mater. The talk was given by Dr. Mel Shochet, a physicist on the faculty of Chicago, and one of the scientists co-credited with the discovery of the "top quark" some years ago. There were about thirty others in attendance on that snowy, wintry evening in the city. Dr. Shochet noted that the consensus among physicists today is that much of the universe simply cannot be explained and will never be understood. "This is humbling for a physicist," Dr. Shochet said, according to my notes. The current consensus in empirical physics—not theoretical physics—is that as much as 23% of the universe is made up of some sort of energy, some unknown "dark" matter. This matter cannot be probed or dissected further.

In the theology of ancient Israel, was there not the concept of *shekiniah*, or presence? Was there not the vision of the burning bush that was not really burning, but only appeared to be so? Something that could be felt but not explained? In the theology of the early Christian Church, was there not the concept of God as "uncreated energy?" These thoughts ran through my head as I listened to Dr. Shochet's lecture, and, once again, as I read Mr. Hampson's article in *Tikkun*.

It seems that Mr. Hampson and other atheist sympathizers are living, intellectually, in some bygone era, some lost phase of modernity, clinging bitterly to their Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche for solace. These atheists need to get with the times. The ancient-future faith in God is what is real, what is at the heart of the universe, what is at the heart of existence. Empirical physics and the Bible tell us so.

FATHER GENE KOPROWSKI
*Patriarchate of Kiev
and All Russia*

Current THINKING

Should Outsiders' Money Influence Elections?

MAPLight.org—a nonpartisan, nonprofit research group that illuminates the connection between money and politics—issued a report October 28 entitled “Remote Control.” The report shows the geographic origin, down to zip code, of in-district and out-of-district campaign contributions for all members of the U.S. House of Representatives. The research reveals that lawmakers raised \$700 million in campaign funds from January 2005 to December 2007. About \$551 million of these funds, or 79%, came from out of district. In other words, legislators raised about four out of every five dollars in campaign funds from

outside of where their constituents live.

“Instead of a voting democracy, we have a dollar democracy—may the biggest-spending special-interest win,” said Daniel Newman, MAPLight.org’s co-founder and executive director.

“To win an election, a House candidate has to raise an average of \$1.3 million in campaign funds—that’s \$2,500 every working day for an entire two-year term,” Newman added. “With such a Herculean fundraising effort required, what time and attention do representatives have left to address the interests of the voters they represent? We, as citizens,

pay House members’ salaries, we pay to run elections and we pay for all their spending decisions. However, we, as citizens, have handed special interests the remote control, forcing our potential leaders to grovel before PAC leaders and lobbyists to raise the funds needed to win elections.”

But, *Tikkun* asks, is this always bad? What if a Black, Hispanic, or gay candidate wants to run in a district that has few minorities—what’s so bad if that person gets money from outside the district to make her or his campaign viable? Or a working-class candidate who wants to challenge the ethos in a financially successful district—why should unions be stopped from donating, even if they don’t live in the district?

After all, some people argue, the Congress to which

the candidate may be elected makes decisions that affect the lives of people around the United States and, for that matter, around the world. Why shouldn’t others be able to donate to get the kind of world they want even if they don’t live in the district? But should that apply to people outside the United States—should they be able to donate on the grounds that decisions made in the United States shape their lives as well? And how can we make a boundary condition so that this doesn’t simply continue the tradition of the wealthy in effect having disproportionate influence over who gets elected? How should the electoral system be transformed?

You can see that there is much to consider when entering our contest! (See box at left) ■

ELECTION REFORMS—A CONTEST FOR YOUR IDEAS

CONTEST: Supply us with the best ideas for comprehensive reform of the election process. Tell us how to make our elections more democratic and less controlled by the wealthy and the powerful.

PRIZE: Ten free two-year subscriptions to *Tikkun*. You may assign them to anyone you wish.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS: Send us 200 to 1200 words, outlining in clear and accessible English your ideas for how to make the election process more democratic and more focused on the substantive issues. You can suggest technological changes (if they are feasible), political changes, changes in the media, changes in the funding laws, and changes in the process of who gets into debates that are televised. The shorter and clearer, the better.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS: January 15, 2009.

SEND TO: RabbiLerner@Tikkun.org and put in the subject line the following words: Tikkun Election Reforms.

OR MAIL TO: Tikkun Election Reforms, 2342 Shattuck Ave., #1200, Berkeley, CA, 94704

Trouble Ahead?

The venerable militarist-leaning New Republic magazine endorsed Barack Obama, with senior editor Jonathan Chait explaining that Obama is just as militarist as John Kennedy. He said Obama positioned himself “to the right” of McCain by saying that he would not respect the national boundary of Pakistan but would follow Al Qaeda wherever they went and kill Osama bin Laden. He praised Obama

for keeping his focus on “Islamofascism” as opposed to McCain, who has become distracted into making Russia his major concern. So while the peaceniks supported Obama as a peace candidate, the militarists supported him as one of their own. Now imagine how surprised liberals and progressives are going to be if Chait is right and Obama becomes the real “tough guy” on the block. ■

The Economic Meltdown is Hurting Everyone— But Particularly Nonprofit Social Change Projects

Christmas and Chanukah Gift Idea—

Instead of buying presents, why not give people on your list a note saying that for Christmas or Chanukah you've made a donation in their name to your favorite set of nonprofit organizations?

We hope that *Tikkun* and the Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP) are among the organizations you'd want to

support. The *Wall Street Journal* recently reported nonprofits are anticipating a reduction of up to 40% in donations. We may be impacted as people who normally donate hold back, not because they are actually themselves suffering, but because they fear what might happen in the future. Please consider donating online or by check.

In this time of fear, you may

also want to share our books about hope and political transformation with your friends and family. At www.tikkun.org click on "Store" to buy our books or on "Subscribe/Renew" to send gift certificates. Or send a gift membership in the Network of Spiritual Progressives to a person you know who is feeling scared and alone by clicking "Join/Donate" at www.spiritualprogressives.org.

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Good News from the Orthodox Jewish World

Widespread publicity about the abusive treatment both of animals and employees in Postville, Iowa, at the plant of Agriprocessors, the largest provider of kosher meat, has unleashed fierce debate about the need for ethical standards for declaring food "kosher." As the scandal grew deeper, the Orthodox Union set up a commission to explore how to bring kosher standards together with

ethical standards. Still, there is considerable resistance in the Orthodox Jewish world to the linking of these two sets of standards. Some Conservative rabbis, who are also officially committed to Kashrut, have set up their own process for ensuring that people are alerted to which products are produced in an ethically kosher way and which are not. It's not enough to slaughter the animals in the

correct Halachic way (i.e. by Jewish religious law). As Rabbi Jeremy Rosen points out, "Jewish Law does indeed cover issues such as the treatment of workers and animals. But as a rule all we hear in the press are Orthodox rabbis railing against immodest ladies in cycle lanes or mixed concerts. Orthodox leadership needs to come out and hammer home, again and again, the importance of ethics

and ethical treatment in addition to and as part of Halachah, not to attack those who argue for higher standards, whatever their motives." Now that Agriprocessors has been hit with the largest wage violations penalties ever levied in Iowa (almost \$10 million in fines) will more rabbis take notice? ■

Violence Against Peace Advocates

In the past few months, right-wing supporters of the Israeli settlers have escalated their attacks on Arabs in the West Bank to such an extent that both Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and his possible successor Tzipi Livni have made public statements decrying their violence. The recent attacks have been directed not only against Palestinian Arabs but also against the members of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in the West Bank. A similar phenomenon has happened inside Israel itself, where overt pogroms (a word used to describe these incidents in

Israeli newspapers) have taken place against Israeli Arabs, most notably on Yom Kippur this year.

The violence has also extended to prominent figures in the peace movement. In September, a bomb was placed outside the home of *Tikkun* author Zeev Sternhell. A *Ha'aretz* columnist, Sternhell is one of the world's most respected historians (his specialty: the rise of fascism in France). He has written in *Tikkun* about the danger of the Israeli right and the way that it has caused Israel to lose its moral grounding.

It is unlikely that this violence or threats of violence will decrease as long as the Occupation continues. All the pious statements about civil liberties and defending free speech will be useless until the proto-fascists who play a role in this violence are in prison, and the settlements that hide or protect or cheer on these violent acts have been dismantled. Israel must bring the settlers back within the Green Lines and create facts of peace instead of facts of war. It must also provide resources for protection of the Jews most well known for speaking out for peace. ■

BUDGET PRIORITIES?

Number of people killed by international terrorism per year: 1,907

Number of Americans killed by terrorism per year: 70

Number of people that die from peanut allergies per year: 140

Number of people that die from coronary heart disease per year: 450,000

Amount of money U.S. Govt. spends on "War on Terror" per year: \$162 billion

Amount of money U.S. Govt. spends on "War on Heart Disease" per year: \$3 billion

Almost 6,600 times more Americans die from coronary heart disease each year than terrorism, yet the U.S. government spends 54 times more money to save 70 lives than to save 450,000 lives each year.

Source of data: National Counter Terrorism Center and Government Accounting Office

A New Conservative Progressive Agenda

BY GEORGE VRADENBURG

AMERICA HAS A NEW LEADER. HE WILL BE CHALLENGED in ways few American presidents have. For the first time in its history, America's global position is in systemic decline relative to the rest of the world. America has throughout its history been rising relative to other nations of the world. Today, it is not. No American president, no matter how skilled, will be able to reverse that trend, because it is the result of globalizing forces this nation has championed and cannot reverse.

The near collapse of the global financial system and the onset of a worldwide recession may put the challenge confronting the next American president on a par with that facing Franklin D. Roosevelt. Yet, America's decline in relative position will not reverse simply by stabilizing the global financial system or by returning to a path of positive economic growth. America is at risk, by the end of this century, of becoming a second-tier nation characterized by declining living standards.

The sources of this relative decline are numerous. First, China, India, Brazil, and other large-population nations are experiencing rapid growth in prosperity as a result of free trade and investment policies championed by the United States. The autocratic petro-states of Russia, Nigeria, Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, as well as the Gulf states, are accumulating financial and economic power due to their control of the fossil fuels that power global development and population growth.

Second, America's financial condition is in a fragile state and its capacity to finance domestic and international priorities in health care, education, infrastructure, and foreign assistance is in question. Counting all funded and unfunded liabilities (as would be required of any private company), the U.S. government has a national debt of upwards of \$20 trillion. U.S. operating deficits next year may exceed \$1 trillion alone. Further deficits generated by stabilizing the financial sector and stimulating the economy may drive next year's deficit and the national debt even higher. Absent reform, Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security are on a path to insolvency, putting those programs at risk for future generations.

Third, America is consuming natural resources at an alarming rate. The adverse consequences of its doing so are clear: exporting the wealth of working Americans to autocratic petro-states at the rate of hundreds of billion dollars a year; fueling Islamic fundamentalism and Russian nationalism hostile to American national security; undermining America's national goals of promoting

democracy and freedom abroad; and aggravating the forces of global climate change that America seeks to mitigate.

Fourth, America's aging infrastructure and historic affinity for fossil-fueled cars will require large investments in modernization and rail in order to remain competitive.

Fifth, America's competitive position is further weakened by the miserable performance of its public education system. U.S. high school graduation rates are now ranked tenth in the world. The quality of its high school graduates is now ranked twentieth or worse on worldwide math and reading assessment tests.

Sixth, income inequality is at its highest levels in generations, putting painful pressure on the living standards of low- and middle-income Americans and their ability to finance their family homes, health care, education, and retirement.

Seventh, the political influence of America in the international community is in decline.

The new president must immediately, even before inauguration, come clean with Americans about the scale and scope of these challenges, set a new national agenda and priorities, and issue a call for shared sacrifice and bipartisan effort. A lame-duck Congress—called by the new president—that adopts a stimulus package and presents a comprehensive work plan for the coming year can set the needed tone of urgency.

The new president must, at the same time, reorient U.S. foreign policy so that it is driven by collaboration and respect, not unilateralism, as befits a more globalized world. He must oversee a gradual shift of resources from Iraq to Afghanistan and to domestic priorities, carefully and gradually, as befits the circumstances.

The new president must also be direct and honest with the American people about the constrained financial and energy environment within which Americans will have to live and work, making clear that not all challenges will be met within the first one hundred days. This candor, so dramatically missing during the presidential campaign, is urgently needed.

The new president has the mandate and the demonstrated ability to inspire all Americans to shared sacrifice. And America has the people and the assets needed to succeed. Yet, only with fiscal prudence, shared sacrifice, and balanced policy choices will America be able to address its domestic challenges and maintain a leading position in a restructured global system. ■

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The 2008 Election

IT'S AN EXCITING TIME FOR AMERICA AND THE WORLD. With Barack Hussein Obama preparing to enter the White House, we can all take a huge sigh of relief. An Obama presidency will open up incredibly important possibilities for saving the earth from destruction, moving from a militarist to a generosity-based approach to foreign policy, and addressing social justice and poverty issues. We may finally address the crises plaguing our education and health-care systems. Time to celebrate! And to bless:

Bless the millions of African Americans and whites dismissed as "utopian," "unrealistic," or "ahead of their time," who struggled not only against overt segregation but also against the subtle, pernicious forms of racism that have continued to distort our economic, cultural, and political lives.

Bless those of us who were killed, went to prison, dropped out of school to become organizers, lost jobs or career opportunities, and lost relationships and friendships because we were "too driven by our desire to fight injustice." Bless those who were ridiculed and put down, but who continued to struggle—that struggle eventually reshaped the dominant values in this society sufficiently to allow for this remarkable moment.

Bless those who will continue to struggle until people of color and poor whites, women, homosexuals, and immigrants no longer face economic discrimination, racist caricatures, police harassment, poverty, or underfunded educational and health care options.

Bless the American majority who transcended racism, refuting the left-wing cynicism that saw Americans as fundamentally racist, or stupid, or too brainwashed by the media, or forever tainted by "white-skin privilege" and unable to care for the well-being of others.

Bless the United States for preserving a democratic process that prevented the worst fantasies from coming true: that these elections would be called off or stolen, that Obama would be murdered, or that a last-minute war would be started solely to galvanize right-wing patriotism in the months before the election. Bless the leaders of the U.S. military who refused to cooperate with the Bush/Cheney crowd in ordering a war against Iran as a way to influence the election. Bless the American electorate for coming out in record numbers to utilize democratic rights that had been won in hard struggle by previous generations of patriots.

Bless Barack Obama, our first spiritual progressive president, whose psychological and spiritual sophistication—combined with his passionate commitment to social justice and peace, his powerful intellectual capacities, and his emotional stability—allowed him to liberate "the left hand of God," the voice within every person



on this planet who wants to overcome the voice of fear and give precedence to the voice of love and generosity. This second voice of kindness and hope is trapped within a set of psychological and social constraints that make us sometimes appear as though we have lost our ethical and spiritual foundations and are too afraid to hope or love once again.

Bless God for making all this possible, for making us in the Divine image, for constantly calling us back to our highest selves and to our highest capacities, and for giving us the freedom to transcend the legacy of pain and cruelty embedded in families and economic and political institutions—a legacy that has been psychologically passed from generation to generation—so that we might reach this wonderful moment of joyous reaffirmation of the possibility of real tikkun olam, real healing and transformation of our world. No, this is not the messianic age, and we are very aware of all the problems, not only with the country but with the likely form the Obama administration itself might take, but still ... this is a moment to celebrate the positive!

Most Americans will be relieved first and foremost at the ending of the George W. Bush Administration. For sheer criminality and venality, the Bush years compete with the worst excesses of the Nixon years. Nixon was an inveterate liar and, along with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, was also a certain war criminal. His



unrealized impeachment trial would have been light punishment considering that he prolonged the Vietnam War for political advantage, with millions killed or maimed along the way.

And Nixon was far worse than Bush in his systematic repression of domestic dissent, working hand-in-glove with J. Edgar Hoover. Not only did Nixon use trumped-up federal charges to jail those of us who were leaders in anti-war demonstrations, he also encouraged local lawlessness by police and the FBI.

Yet Nixon was constrained by a powerful anti-war movement that rallied tens of millions of people. The government could not contain the anti-war movement, which created a culture of dissent and open rebellion against existing social norms. The movement eventually manifested in a liberal Congress ready to challenge the sins of the administration.

No such constraints were brought to bear on the Bush administration. Most extraordinary of all was that the Bush administration asserted its right to "interpret" legislation in ways that were clearly either not implementing or overtly distorting the intention of the Congress, while the Congress simply slunk away in disgrace, rather than confronting and impeaching both the vice president and the president (as a handful of courageous congressional reps called for, though in opposition to the chicken-hearted Democratic leadership).

Faced with a capitulating Congress, Bush continued to pursue his agenda without regard to its popularity in the rest of the society. No matter how destructive that agenda has been, there is something noble in fighting for your ideas even when they are not popular. Bush's tenacity stands in stark contrast to the Democrats' failure to fight for their ideas, even though those ideas have been popular.

Even when Democrats achieved a majority in Congress, they lacked the backbone to challenge the destructive policies of the Bush White House. Elected in 2006 to stop the war, the Democrats—under the misleadership of Nancy Pelosi in the House and Harry Reid in the Senate—instead supported budgets that actually increased the funding for the war and increased the powers of the president to wiretap American citizens. They failed to pass both the Restoring the Constitution Act of 2007, which

would reaffirm that presidents cannot order Americans to torture suspects, and the Habeas Corpus Restoration Act. They have continued to fund torture and the training of torturers at the School of the Americas.

Moreover the Democratic-controlled Congress voted for a Wall Street "bailout" for the very corporate bandits who have been soaking the wealth of the country, instead of providing direct relief to the people who are suffering. Instead of bailing out corporations, they should have required banks and lending companies to forgive loans or re-

duce the interest enough so people might conceivably pay the loans off. They should have frozen all foreclosures on owner-occupied homes.

Given this situation, Barack Obama's campaign was faced with a difficult choice: either continue to articulate an anti-war, human rights, ecologically sane, and populist agenda, which could easily be portrayed as radical by the Republicans since it would be out of step with the weak-kneed Congress, or, as he eventually chose, to narrow his focus and campaign on a few issues that didn't really challenge the dominant thinking.

We regret that Obama chose the latter path. We remain convinced that Obama would have won an even larger landslide had he put forward an imaginative vision of what America could become under an Obama presidency. Instead of challenging the presumptions on which an endless "war against terror" would be fought, Obama simply insisted that the war should be shifted from Iraq to Afghanistan. Instead of putting forward a different vision of how to run our economy, Obama joined with McCain in supporting the corporate giveaways that predominated in the "bailout." Instead of standing up to the phone companies that had illegally tapped our homes, Obama voted to give them protections from legal responsibility for their acts. While both candidates tried to portray themselves as champions of the "middle class," both avoided articulating the world views from which their actual policy difference flowed.

Given this narrowing of differences between the candidates, it was not a surprise to see personal character issues getting greater focus. As it turned out, that focus played to Obama's advantage. While McCain and Palin lamely tried to revive the issue of Obama's alleged associations with Chicago criminals and Bill Ayers of Weatherman infamy, Obama's cool and centered responses to criticism, and his unwillingness to descend into personal attacks against McCain and Palin, made him appear to be positively "presidential." The rumors—spread by, among others, some Jewish Republicans—that Obama was secretly a Muslim, or a supporter of terrorism, or an enemy of the State of Israel, never got much traction outside of the retirement homes set in southern Florida, southern California, and a few other states. The contrast

with McCain's frequent shifts in direction and tone could not have been starker.

Most erratic was McCain's choice of Sarah Palin as his vice presidential candidate. The choice of Palin did what it was predicted to, energizing the McCain Christian Right base. The hockey-mom-turned-right-wing politician brought her audiences to fever pitch, with some of her election rallies eliciting cries of "kill Obama" from the audience. Yet her obvious incompetence, her behavior in using her position as governor and candidate to serve her own personal agenda, and her know-nothing extremism pushed many Republicans who might have been attracted to the earlier "McCain as reformer" into extreme disillusionment. This trend was symbolized most powerfully when Bush's own former secretary of state, Colin Powell, publicly endorsed Obama.

For a Democrat to find himself in the midst of the largest economic meltdown in the U.S. economy since the Great Depression—six weeks from the election—should have produced an election that wasn't even close. If the old "it's the economy, stupid" conventional wisdom were really true, then there would be no other way to account for the failure of Obama to win by tens of millions of votes than to look toward American racism. We cannot dismiss this explanation like Frank Rich did in his *New York Times* column ten days before the election because we personally have heard of too many instances in which undecided voters have acknowledged that they are having difficulty voting for a Black man. While economic concerns trumped racism for some, others could not let themselves imagine that a Black man would really be able to solve their problems.

We believe that Americans would have transcended narrow self-interested thinking and racism to a much higher level had they been called to do so by the Obama campaign. A relentless assault on the selfishness and materialism of this society had to be tempered if it could not be accompanied by a detailed alternative, and it was Obama's reluctance to articulate that alternative that made him seem almost impassive as he neared the final goalposts of Election Day. Fearful that Americans would not respond to any larger vision, the Obama campaign consistently avoided taking on the larger issues that need to be resolved for America to be healed and transformed.

This was, in our view, a tragic mistake, because without such a vision Obama is less able to claim a mandate for precisely the kind of sweeping changes that are needed for the United States and for the world. Instead, Obama will have to continue to put forward policies that do not shake up the fundamental misallocation of wealth and power in the United States. As a result he may spend tens of billions more on militarism. He may make too many compromises on health care, creating a national health care system that is overpriced because it takes into account the needs of the profiteers, just as the economic bailout catered to the interests of the powerful. He may settle for a cap-and-trade approach to the environmental crisis that gives the appearance of addressing the emergency nature of our global situation without actually doing so.

Unless ... unless a powerful movement emerges of liberals and progressives who challenge Obama to be his most visionary self,

and who simultaneously back up that challenge with a focused campaign to replace right-wing and militarist Democrats in Congress (the lawmakers recruited by Pelosi, Steny Hoyer, and Rahm Emanuel in 2006 and 2008 to ensure electoral victory, at the price of compromising liberal principles) with a new wave of Democrats more similar to Lynne Woolsey, Barbara Lee, Maxine Waters, and Robert Wexler.

Ask people inside the Obama campaign, and they will tell you that this is precisely the plan they have in mind. They've mobilized millions of people to work for the campaign, they say, and those people will form the core of an ongoing movement.

There are some tough questions that need to be asked about such a movement emerging from the campaign: Is it to be primarily a movement aimed at providing local support for the proposals of the Obama administration, or is it to be a movement that can also challenge Obama to move in a more progressive direction than the various "political realists" who surround him say is possible?

Right now, and for understandable reasons given the nature of a political campaign, the volunteers and local organizers for Obama have been organized from the top to do the tasks that the national leadership has decided need to be done, and to support policies that the leadership has adopted. That makes perfect sense if you are pursuing a predetermined goal like electing a president, or if you are popularizing a particular idea or piece of legislation. If you don't like the idea or piece of legislation or candidate, you don't have to join that organization! But when you are governing a country, the decisions that are made affect everyone whether or not they want to "join"—if they live there, the decisions made by the leaders of the country cannot be escaped (and arguably when it comes to the American empire, that may be true not only for people who live here but for everyone on the planet whose lives are dramatically effected by decisions made here). In that case, one can't opt out. So there need to be mechanisms for discussion and debate for us little guys to talk about what we like and what we don't like about the Obama administration and its policies. And there need to be ways to push for our own ideas about what is needed.

It would take an amazingly democratic and non-defensive Obama leadership to create the space for that kind of discussion, and for that kind of pushing of their own president and his administration. More likely, we will see the creation of some kind of organization that claims it will do that, but de facto will be tightly controlled from the top and will never allow substantial challenge to Obama's policies. For example, the leaders are unlikely to allow a challenge to the whole idea of a "war on terror" or to the tactic in that war of escalating the struggle in Afghanistan. They are unlikely to allow a push for single-payer health care instead of the plan that Obama has, or a challenge to cap-and-trade in favor instead of a carbon tax on all emissions.

But a more democratic process could emerge with Obama's support. Here are some of the possibilities he should consider:

- Utilizing his net roots to create a cyberspace location where his supporters (say, anyone who donated to his campaign or is willing to pay \$25 to join an ongoing Obama organiza-

tion) could present their concerns and their reactions to his policies.

- Requiring his cabinet members to each spend at least one hour a week giving a live, web-based broadcast during which grassroots Obama supporters could call in to express their concerns. The cabinet members would spend an additional hour responding to the criticisms and suggestions posted on the website. Obama would commit to do the same at least once a month.
- Asking Obama supporters to set up monthly meetings for the sake of discussing the new president's policies. This is important to keep from biasing the process in favor of those who feel comfortable in cyberspace. It would enable Obama supporters to communicate to an Obama assistant the results of any votes taken to endorse a particular policy suggestion or to critique an Obama policy.
- Creating a national coordinating committee that would be invited to meet with Obama once a month. Both the net-roots and the local meetings would elect representatives to the committee, which would also be empowered to organize lobbying of the administration on behalf of Obama supporters who want to see a different set of policies than those that Obama is implementing.

Nothing like this has ever been tried on a national level, and there would certainly be many kinks along the way, but the openness and democratic commitment that it represented would be a powerful break from the tradition of liberal politicians running on the slogan of "it's not about me, but about you, and I just want to represent you, and we'll build a movement together that will last beyond the campaign" who then, after being elected, only remember their supporters when it comes time to raise money or to mobilize them once again for the next set of elections. Yet without this, millions of Obama supporters will either be channeled into a much less democratic organization or will pin their hopes on a revival of independent progressive organizations.

Whether or not Obama supporters succeed in creating a new democratic forum, the Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP) hopes to play an active role in shaping the Obama administration's agenda. We hope to have a *Tikkun*/NSP presence at Camp Obama, a grassroots effort to sit near Obama's home in Hyde Park from January 1 until Martin Luther King Jr. Day (January 19), at which progressive groups will have a chance to present some of their ideas. Similarly, we will be involved in a religious gathering in D.C. the night before the inauguration, again intending to stress progressive spiritual ideas.

At both of these events we will be calling for Obama to take these immediate steps to raise hope:

- Support a ban on torture and close Guantánamo and the School of the Americas.
- Immediately reduce the number of troops in Iraq.
- Cease and desist in the execution of all immigration raids and immediately suspend deportations until comprehensive immigration reform is completed.
- Suspend all of the Bush administration's policies regarding



border patrol until comprehensive immigration reform is completed.

- Take all nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert and begin negotiations with other leaders of nuclear weapon states to reduce and eliminate all nuclear weapons from the face of the earth.
- Eliminate military tribunals and grant access to the U.S. court system to the detainees being held at Guantánamo and other U.S. detention facilities.
- Establish a commission to explore policy proposals that would provide universal health coverage. The proposed system should cover all pre-existing conditions, provide no less coverage than what the congressional health care plan provides, and provide health care to the greatest number of people.
- Establish a second commission to explore ways to develop and implement the Global Marshall Plan developed by the Network of Spiritual Progressives.
- Establish a ninety-day moratorium on all housing foreclosures.
- Submit the Kyoto Protocol to Congress for ratification, making a commitment to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming.
- Issue an executive order to promote transparency of the presidential archives or to open the presidential archives to the public.

And we can do this kind of work in a positive spirit—it's certainly a relief to not have to be in opposition, but rather to be in joy and hopefulness.

What is most exciting is to realize that the Obama victory opens up space for these kinds of discussions to have real impact. In their different ways, the Reagan, Bush I, Clinton, and Bush II administrations generated a huge amount of cynicism and despair about

politics, and a withdrawal from it of the most creative, ethical, and spiritually sensitive people. The Obama administration is very likely to have the opposite impact. Obama is himself someone who shares our own highest goals, however doubtful he is about whether he can actually fight for them in the ins and outs of American politics. He is almost certain to use his bully pulpit, starting with his Inaugural Address, to point toward a vision of America that will regenerate hope and move social energy toward the Left Hand of God, toward the part in each of us that really wants a world of love, kindness, generosity, peace, ecological sanity, and social justice. That opening of hope is the most we can expect from a politician working within the confines of the current reality. The

rest is up to us—to push the discourse further, to identify (as NSP already has) ways to actually build the kind of world that Obama describes. We need to organize people to turn that vision into reality.

No wonder, then, that we feel that this is a time for great rejoicing, and also a time for serious reflection and planning. We hope you'll join us at our national conference, which we hope to hold in the spring of 2009. And we hope you'll join the NSP online so that you can learn about our other projects.

In the meantime, bask in the present moment—because it's important to celebrate even partial victories. ■

EDITORIAL

Criminals Giving Each Other Pardons

IT IS TRULY HARD TO RATE WHICH OF PRESIDENT GEORGE W. Bush's outrages will get greatest attention in American history. Certainly his violation of international law by invading Iraq on the falsified "evidence" of a threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction is a major outrage. The subsequent occupation of Iraq must be one of these, and signing off on torture may be another.

There is growing discussion of the possibility that Bush may commit another such crime during his last month and a half in office—he may grant pardons to members of his own administration who committed illegal acts such as lying to Congress and the American people. Is it possible that he will also find a way to issue a pardon for his own crimes, too?

I do not believe it is appropriate to ever look at any individual as an embodiment of evil. Watch Oliver Stone's one-dimensionally sympathetic portrayal of Bush in his new movie "W." and you certainly can't help but be reminded of the vulnerability and sadness in this man who ended up doing so many horrible things. Bush has caused so much pain both to the citizens of the United States and the well-being of our country as well as to millions of people in Iraq and other places around the world. I continue to pray for Bush and for many others who served in his administration.

Yet while affirming their humanity and refusing to see them as embodiments of evil, I do believe that they committed criminal acts and deserve to be brought to justice. Even if they are not given long sentences in prison, Bush and his accomplices have committed serious crimes. They ought to face those crimes, acknowledge them, and be taken to task for them. Public repentance and atonement would do much for the United States and would help re-validate our system of laws, checks, and balances.

There have been many complaints about the process of truth and reconciliation adopted in South Africa, because criminal



acts of torture, terrorism, and repression went unpunished as the wrongdoers testified to the public about their acts of violence in exchange for freedom from prosecution. But the one clear upside of that process is that people learned the truth about the society in which they lived, rather than persisting in the bubble of fantasies created by an elite-manipulated media. America needs that as well. Instead of learning forty years later that we were being systematically lied to (e.g. in getting into the Vietnam war), it would be a huge advance in consciousness if we were allowed to break through the distortions of the Bush era. We need to learn what really went on and confront the lies about the environment, health care, torture, war, and economic breakdown. None of this will ever come out if the president is allowed to forgive himself and other lawbreakers.

This is a moment to write personal letters to Rep. John Conyers, the chair of the House Judiciary Committee, asking him what he is willing to do to block the president from granting pardons to himself or his co-conspirators, rather than stand by idly as Bush commits yet another crime against common sense and respect for law. ■

Elections in Israel

EHUD OLMERT WAS FORCED TO RESIGN AS PRIME Minister of Israel in October, in light of criminal charges against him for misusing his office for personal gain. That, in itself, is one reason to applaud Israeli democracy, where the “fuck you” attitude of Vice President Cheney has not yet taken hold. Meanwhile, Olmert continues as interim prime minister until new elections can be held in a few months, because the governing Kadima Party’s new leader, Tzipi Livni, was unable to form a new coalition government.

Livni has been hailed as the potential Barack Obama of Israel—a fresh face representing a new generation and ostensibly seeking peace with the Palestinians. While the shrinking Labor Party was happy to join her proposed new coalition government, Livni balked at the demands of another potential partner, the religious-dominated Sephardic Shas party, which exhorted Livni to refuse to engage in any negotiations with the Palestinian Authority about the final status of Jerusalem. Acceding to that demand, however, would have been tantamount to simply calling off negotiations permanently, since the Palestinians will never accept an agreement that does not give the 150,000 Palestinians in East Jerusalem some degree of self-government inside a Palestinian state and does not recognize Jerusalem as the shared capital of two states, one of them Palestinian.

But did Livni really have to go to new elections as the only way to “save the peace process?” Not everyone thinks so. Some in the peace movement point to the fact that Livni never invited the ten Arab members of the Knesset to consider joining her potential coalition government, thus continuing the disgraceful and racist policy of treating Arab Israelis (full citizens of the State of Israel) as inferior or suspect beings whose votes are somehow illegitimate.

In fact, it is this racism that will certainly weaken the Kadima Party as it seeks to be an alternative to the even more militarist visions of Benjamin Netanyahu’s Likud Party. Kadima came to power because it presented itself as a centrist coalition ready to make “painful concessions to the Palestinians in exchange for a lasting peace.” (It was composed of Likudniks who supported Ariel Sharon’s ploy of a withdrawal from Gaza, plus Labor Party centrists who joined Kadima’s ruling coalition.)

As is usual in societies where the Strategy of Domination predominates over the Strategy of Generosity, the strange bedfellows who created this supposedly moderate coalition felt that they had to establish credibility to make the “painful concessions.” After Sharon’s stroke and coma, the coalition members could no longer depend on the murderous legacy of Ariel Sharon to give them “street cred,” so they picked another path—a war with Lebanon. They justified the war by pointing to a Hezbollah attack against uniformed Israeli soldiers, amazingly labeling that as an act of “terror” (thereby conflating terror with armed struggle among competing armies).

The result was a humiliating defeat that exposed as fantasy the lightning-quick victory expected by Israeli militarists. Hezbollah proved its capacity to shell northern Israel in response to Israel’s massive bombing of southern Lebanon, and the war proved politically expensive in terms of Israeli lives lost and the insecurity experienced by half of the country. Kadima Prime Minister Ehud Olmert sought to minimize the political damage by replacing Amir Peretz—a Labor Party “dove” turned hawk for the sake of “credibility” so that maybe in the future he could negotiate peace with Palestinians—with Labor Party militarist extraordinaire Ehud Barak. But this did not prove sufficient to overcome “the shame” of military failure in Lebanon. And since Labor was bound into the same militarist logic as Kadima, public opinion shifted toward right-wing extremist Netanyahu of Likud, proving once again an old *Tikkun* theory: If people want a militarist, they’ll seek the real thing and not accept centrists who are just posing as militarists.

When Olmert was also exposed for allegedly illegal financial dealings, he was forced to resign. By a small plurality, Tzipi Livni became the candidate for prime minister in the subsequent elections. To prove her credibility as a hawk, Livni decided to reinstate in the second position on her list the super-militarist former IDF General Shaul Mofaz, whose hatred of Arabs and Palestinians might have made him more appropriate as a candidate of the far right.

With the two leading parties vying to be the toughest in negotiations with the Palestinians (and with Likud barely acknowledging that there would be a need for any agreement), the outcome is certain: The winner will be a party without a clear mandate to engage in peaceful reconciliation or the dismantling of West Bank checkpoints and roadblocks, and much less to make serious concessions on issues like Jerusalem and refugees.

Is this a perfect moment for Meretz to re-emerge as the peace party? It didn’t look that way to Yossi Beilin, who resigned as chair of the party to return to private life and pursue a peace-oriented consulting firm. Perhaps more hopeful is news that some peace activists are considering creation of a peace-oriented Green party for the coming elections. Yet we doubt any political party has much of a chance as long as it plays on the terrain of what is considered “realistic” in the currently dominant Israeli way of thinking. Peace for Israel, like peace for the United States, requires the popularization of a different way of thinking—rejecting militarism as the core of foreign policy, and giving at least equal emphasis to a Strategy of Generosity and a Global Marshall Plan. While the American media may describe Livni as “the peace candidate,” the truth is that no one can play that role without affirming the humanity of the Palestinian people and the centrality of a reconciliation of the heart between the two sides. Livni took a step in the wrong direction by refusing to consider Arabs as part of her coalition. ■

After the Victory: Engaging Obama Volunteers

by Randy Shaw

TENS OF THOUSANDS OF young people worked tirelessly for Barack Obama, and they deserve major credit for his historic victory. Not since George McGovern in 1972 has a presidential candidacy been so identified with the young. Obama's racially diverse campaign mobilized many more young supporters, even though, due to the earlier primary schedule, it required a longer time commitment than McGovern's. Obama defied the conventional wisdom that downplayed young people's interest in politics, rejecting the notion that young people are too preoccupied with personal issues to engage in a national campaign.

But now what happens to these thousands of young Obama fellows, volunteers, and campaign staffers? Electing Barack Obama was only the beginning, and many of these young people are eager to continue working for change. Moreover, their participation in the struggles ahead is critical for implementing a new vision for the nation. Members of victorious campaigns often want to keep the commitment and spirit of togetherness going; this is truer than ever with Barack Obama's historic campaign.

Labor union members, environmentalists, faith-based activists, and those whose good works are carried out through community groups have organizational vehicles for continuing their work; many of Obama's young supporters do not. This means that a new organization, likely connected to those who coordinated Obama's grassroots field campaign, must be created to accommodate this huge influx of potential full-time activists.

This organization would perform two critical tasks. First, it would provide the organizing support for the Obama administration's main initiatives on alternative energy, health care, labor rights, education, and employment. Second, through the door-to-door canvassing that brought Barack Obama electoral success, these organizers would build support for a new vision for America, one that transcends specific legislation and instead addresses a new set of



*Barack Obama with
volunteers in Austin, TX,
February 23, 2007.*

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In 1966, college students from throughout the United States (top) responded to Cesar Chavez's call to come to the California Central Valley town of Delano to help grape pickers on strike. Many of these students became life-long activists for progressive causes. Randy Shaw sees the same possibility for Obama volunteers (bottom) today. The best help they can now give the new president is to organize independently to press him to achieve his highest goals of compassion and social justice.

values based on sharing and compassion rather than the "greed is good" principle that has dominated the national landscape for nearly thirty years.

The organization would be entirely distinct from President Obama, and would not be under his control. Led by those who were energized by Obama's campaign, the organization would seek societal transformations in line with the agenda that he espoused on the campaign trail. This independent organization would also help keep Obama accountable. Recall that last July, thousands of Obama activists used the campaign's own social networking tools to protest his reversal on telecom immunity for wiretapping, forcing him to defend his actions to them, even though he did not accede to their wishes. Obama has frequently stated that he welcomes strong pressure from the grass roots to keep his agenda on track, and this new organization would enable activists to counteract pressure on the new president from less progressive constituencies.

A new organization that is spun off from the successful Obama campaign would begin with a large group of activists with demonstrated organizing skills and a commitment to work for the greater good. The advantage of transitioning existing staff to a new organization, rather than starting entirely from scratch, cannot be underestimated. This would be true even absent the series of crises facing the country; in the current climate, advancing the project of social transformation at the start of 2009 is imperative.

The UFW Model

THE FOUNDERS OF THIS NEW ORGANIZATION MAY WANT TO MODEL IT AFTER THE UNITED Farmworkers of America (UFW) of the 1960s and 1970s. Begun by a young Chicano organizer named Cesar Chavez in 1962, the UFW's capacity to enlist talented young activists in socially meaningful work on a long-term basis remains unmatched. Among the astonishing array of young talent attracted to the UFW was the now legendary Dolores Huerta; Eliseo Medina, who is now executive vice president of SEIU; Stephen Lerner, the founder of Justice for Janitors; Fred Ross Jr., whose Neighbor to Neighbor coffee boycott in the 1980s helped end El Salvador's civil war; Marshall Ganz, who helped develop the "Camp Obama" organizing model; and Jessica Govea, a key leader in the UFW's battle against pesticides. These are but a few of the many UFW activists who have spent decades working for justice.

I think there were three crucial factors that enabled the UFW to attract, train, and sustain such talent:

1. **The UFW built community.** One of the most distinctive features of the UFW was that it provided more than an activist experience: It offered volunteers a sense of community. UFW activists entered into a network of close relationships that approximated family. Many lived in "boycott houses," collective households in low-income communities throughout the country for those working on the grape or lettuce boycotts.

The UFW provided a sense of common spirit and a pervasive feeling of oneness that few organizations achieve. As a result, the UFW created such strong bonds among volunteers that many continued working together in progressive movements decades later. True, the pay received by UFW volunteers was not the best—they received a stipend of \$5 plus room and board for working over 100 hours per week—but there were few complaints. UFW volunteers became part of a national movement for social and economic justice, and obtained a sense of community often lost in large-scale movements.

2. **The UFW instilled a transformative consciousness.** The UFW took people with little or no activist experience and transformed them into lifelong workers for justice. This occurred because the UFW defined its struggle in deeply spiritual terms, rather than as a typical legislative, activist, or political campaign. Cesar Chavez first came to national attention with his 1966 "*Perigrinación, Penitencia, and Revolución*" 300-mile march from the Central Valley town of Delano to the state capital of Sacramento. The march ended on Easter Sunday with Chavez leading 10,000 others in a procession

headed by a large Virgin of Guadalupe banner. Some UFW activists were uncomfortable with Chavez's framing of the struggle in religious terms, and they left the movement when Chavez began what would become a 25-day religious fast for nonviolence in 1968. But Chavez understood the power of identifying the UFW struggle as a moral and religious duty, and both his pilgrimage and fast greatly boosted the movement.

3. The UFW had charismatic leadership. Cesar Chavez's charismatic leadership was critical to building the farmworkers movement. Such leadership ultimately had its downside, but the UFW's recruitment success was clearly affected by young people's desire to work with Cesar Chavez.

Enlisting Obama Volunteers

AN ORGANIZATION MODELED AFTER THE UFW COULD LIKELY ENLIST OBAMA VOLUNTEERS in a long-term movement for change. As noted, the Obama campaign already included many of the UFW's qualities. It built a sense of community, framed Election Day not as an end but as the starting point of a national project for spiritual and moral rejuvenation, and featured a charismatic leader.

Some would suggest that Obama campaign organizers join national service programs, such as Teach for America or Americorps. But these valuable programs are not engaged in a broader struggle for the soul of America, which is how Barack Obama framed his campaign, thereby attracting thousands of young people to his cause. National service projects are designed as short-term; the type of organization I am suggesting has a long-term view, for the moral and social transformation of the United States will take time. Barack Obama always insisted that changing the fundamental values of the United States is a long-term project, and that is the challenge that the idealistic young Obama activists would undertake to achieve.

Is a privately funded offshoot of the Obama campaign the best way to enlist young people as full-time organizers for setting the nation on a new direction? It certainly seems like the most likely vehicle that could emerge. Former Obama campaign staff would have an inside track in obtaining the necessary money, and a project administered by those who ran Obama's highly proficient field campaign would likely prove effective. But this sort of organization does have a downside: It may alienate activists who don't want to be perceived as working too closely with politicians.

Such concern is understandable. Nobody wants to see idealistic young Obama campaign activists become "yes people" for an Obama administration that is not delivering on its commitments. Activists are supposed to keep a critical perspective toward politicians. In fact, I argued in *The Activist's Handbook* that activists should adopt a "fear and loathing" relationship to elected officials to prevent their constituencies' interests from being subordinated to the politicians' needs.

But Obama volunteers have already made the decision to work for a politician. And just as many left the UFW by 1981 due to disenchantment with the union's direction, activists would soon quit the new organization if President Obama broke his commitment toward meaningful change.

A new organization spun off from the Obama campaign would benefit from the deep admiration and trust these young activists have for the new president—a trust that echoes the reverence that UFW activists once had for Cesar Chavez. Campaign workers have just finished an intense experience that has forged strong bonds and trust among fellow staffers they only met through the campaign. Like the UFW in its heyday, the Obama campaign built a sense of community that activists do not want to see end—and there is no reason that it should end when we have committed young people eager to continue working for change.

Because it would be identified with a popular new president, an Obama spin-off organization could likely raise the money needed to transform campaign activists into full-time workers for justice. A campaign that raised over \$600 million, much of it over the Internet, can certainly figure out how to get the resources to enlist a new generation of young people in

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Over forty years after co-founding the United Farm Workers of America with Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta continues her political organizing by stumping for the Democratic party as part of an effort to boost Hispanic voter turnout in 2004.

making a transformative difference in the world.

What alternatives exist for Obama campaign veterans without such a proposed new organizing vehicle? The existing progressive organizations that hire young organizers—such as the PIRGs, ACORN, the IAF, Gamaliel and PICO networks, MoveOn, and labor unions—lack the funding and organizational capacity to suddenly take on huge numbers of new staff. The nation's economic problems could also hamper their ability to increase staffing in order to tap into the new spirit of the times. Howard Dean has done a great job running the Democratic Party, but that entity is too ideologically split and still has too much baggage to become a community-building entity that instills a transformative consciousness in its organizers.

To paraphrase Barack Obama, creating a new entity with such a transformative vision will not be easy. And whereas the Obama campaign understandably had short-term goals of winning the nomination and then the presidency, this proposed new post-election organization must offer activists more than the chance to help pass a particular health care or energy bill. Such legislative victories are important, but in the absence of a broader social vision they appear piecemeal and do not evoke the more systemic need for radical change.

The UFW worked relentlessly for legislative changes and specific goals, but activists always understood that there was a broader goal of social and economic justice that individual victories could not alone address. That's why each UFW success, and even the historic winning of the nation's first Agricultural Labor Relations Act in 1975, spurred rather than weakened the commitment to *La Causa*. Sustaining the commitment of Obama campaign volunteers requires an organization that, like the UFW, frames its struggle in moral and spiritual terms. It must instill a broader vision in its activists, so that they see legislative battles as a means to a new type of society, rather than as ends in themselves.

Longtime human rights activist Sister Bernie Galvin often tells a story about a traveler passing a construction site. She asked the first man she saw what he was doing, and the man replied, "laying bricks." She asked another, who replied, "hauling cement." She then asked a third worker involved in similar tasks, who replied proudly, "I am building a cathedral."

UFW volunteers saw their work as building a cathedral. Obama campaign alumni deserve a similar chance to engage in transformative work, and a new organization will, with all hope, emerge to provide this opportunity. ■

Awakening Our Faith in the Future: Obama's Renewal of Our Liberal Identity

by Peter Dunlap

WITH AN OBAMA PRESIDENCY, LIBERALS LIKE ME CAN BREATHE A SIGH OF relief, right? Well, yes, but maybe no. Certainly when our candidates win locally or nationally we feel pride, relief, and hope. Yet, what have we really gotten with an Obama administration? As the Clinton administration demonstrated, it takes more than winning an election to move the country, especially if it seems that winning required a turn to the right.

Many people feared Obama's post-convention lean to the right. George Lakoff may have articulated this fear best when he said Obama's pull to the right would legitimize the conservatives' positions and perhaps even help make their candidates more appealing. After all, "if Obama espouses conservative positions, then why not simply vote for the real thing?" Well,

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Obama took that risk and has been elected on centrist political themes without a clear liberal/progressive mandate. Where does that leave the Left? Where does that leave issues of universal health care, offshore oil drilling, corporate accountability? While I'm certain that Obama would do the right thing if he thought he could, his turn to the right tells me he isn't so confident. He may know the way, but will he turn this country toward its moral destiny? Will he lead us toward a future that repudiates and pursues reparation for our past militarism? Will we develop alternative fuels and overcome our oil addiction? Well, I don't know. What I do know is that, like before, the opportunity does not lie so much with Obama as it does with us.

How many times have we heard that one—that the answer lies with us? How about the idea that the answer lies within? Does that sound true but unhelpful, because you feel you don't know how to turn inner change into political change, or your own concerns into community engagement? Gandhi's invitation for us to become the change we wish to see in the world risks becoming a painful cliché because it does not come with instructions. Without some sense of direction, it's too easy to infuse Obama with too much responsibility for the hopes he has released in us. He released the hope. We need to embody it, but how?

In an oft-told story, FDR said to a group of trade unionists who wanted him to promote some controversial legislation, "I agree with you—now go out there and make me do it!" If Obama is to bring about the change we want to see, we will need to pull him and the center of the country up and to the left. It's up to us. But we still don't have instructions. How do we lead, how do we change the political culture of our communities, states, and the country?

No doubt organizations pressing Obama and a Democratic Congress from the left will be able to "make them do it" on some crucial issues. But this will not be enough to radically alter the future. Obama's ascension offers us a deeper opportunity.

If we assert our political agenda in the overly rationalized manner adopted by many liberals and progressives, we will not have learned from Obama's example. Obama's evocation of hope reflects his own transformation of that traditional liberal identity; it is this transformation that's worthy of following, not his (necessarily?) centrist stance on issues. We can follow him toward the realization of a new liberal political identity, one based on his mastery of leadership capacities and our own manifestation of other emergent leadership capacities that even he has not yet embodied.

While we can learn from Obama's new liberal identity, there are many cultural leaders currently articulating and embodying other leadership capacities that will be essential for the future of liberalism and the progressive movement. My own understanding of the emergence of such capacities comes from the work of Aftab Omer, founder of the *Institute of Imaginal Studies*. I discuss the contributions of Omer, Lakoff, Michael Lerner, and other emergent progressive cultural leaders in my book *Awakening Our Faith in the Future: The Advent of Psychological Liberalism*.

Obama's Embodiment of Leadership Capacities: Religiosity and Emotional Intelligence

THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN OF BARACK OBAMA CAUGHT FIRE IN PART BECAUSE OF HIS unique leadership capacities, which have the potential to reinvigorate liberalism as both a political force and a personal political identity available to other liberals. One of Obama's strengths is his integration of a personal religious conviction (what I call his "religiosity") with his political identity: He unapologetically grounds his liberal egalitarian values and rational policy proposals in a deeper call to respond with love, as a sacred commitment to address the anguish of living in an alienated modern world. Another of Obama's strengths is his substantial emotional intelligence, which enables him to acknowledge the pain suffered by different constituencies, to forgo scapegoating and blame, and to challenge his own supporters as well as his political opponents to be more responsible as parents and citizens.

Obama's Religiosity as an Emergent Leadership Capacity

ONE CRUCIAL DIMENSION OF OBAMA'S CAPACITY TO LEAD IS REVEALED IN HIS EFFORT TO LIVE A religious life without sacrificing his egalitarian values, nor simply adopting a church to claim a

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We each need to
embody Obama's
"hope": he can't
do it alone.

religious lineage. Obama has actually thought through at a new pitch what it means to be religious. He expresses this thoughtfulness in the keynote address he delivered in Washington, D.C., on June 28, 2006, to the "Call to Renewal" conference sponsored by the progressive Christian magazine *Sojourners*.

In this speech Obama contrasts conservative and liberal relationships to religion, identifying the conservative inclination to take advantage of the gap between Americans of faith and many Democrats. According to Obama, the Democrats fearfully avoid questions of faith and hide behind the secular culture that has attempted to do away with the influence of any one religion. Obama sees this as avoidance, and in response he calls for "a serious debate about how to reconcile faith with our modern, pluralistic democracy."

For Obama, religion cannot be reduced to a right-wing fundamentalism that identifies abortion and same-sex partners as immoral. Obama believes that America's religious tendency speaks to a hunger that "goes beyond any particular issue or cause." Describing his own experience with this hunger, Obama testifies that, without faith, something is missing in our lives. He understands that people "want a sense of purpose, a narrative arc to their lives. They're looking to relieve a chronic loneliness."

During his time as a community organizer, Obama confronted his own "spiritual dilemma" through which he discovered that he had kept a part of himself "removed, detached," leaving him as an "observer" in the midst of the many people of faith he worked with. He said he learned that "without a vessel for my beliefs, without a commitment to a particular community of faith, at some level I would always remain apart, and alone." Through his community service work, he confronted his own religious alienation and resolved this dilemma by joining a faith community.

Obama's story shows us one path to reconciling our prejudices against religion with our liberal values and politics. His integration of these enable him to speak with a moral authority that is missing from both traditional religious speaking not rooted in egalitarian values and traditional liberal speaking not rooted in a faith community.

His clear awareness of the necessity of this integration is central to his *destiny*. While too easily thought to be grandiose, destiny is simply a human capacity we all can aspire to embody through whatever service to humanity, to our family and community, we are capable of offering. Unlike liberals such as John Kerry, Obama embraces religiosity, and his moral speech seems wholly embodied, not contrived or overly rationalized. This religious and moral integrity challenges at least two generations of liberals, if not five or more, to rethink their fears and prejudices about religion and moral speaking.

If we are to renew liberalism, we must follow Obama and others and take up the challenge of deepening our understanding of what it means to be religious and to make peace with those religions that historically and currently seek both justice and spiritual vitality. Of course, this peacemaking must include full accountability for all that has taken place in the name of these religious institutions. However, it is too easy for liberals to scapegoat these institutions, the way conservatives scapegoat the institutions of government. Obama is not inclined to scapegoat any institution, any one political group or politician, or any segment of our society. At a private meeting in April, he did make a dismissive comment about "bitter" working-class voters who "cling to guns and religion." This was a rare lapse and whether it revealed true feelings that he is too wise to say in public, or played to the prejudices of his audience in a way that was not authentic to his own more nuanced worldview, we can each conclude for ourselves. I go with the latter. Obama's tendency not to blame is the second aspect of his character that I will discuss. By refusing to blame others, he is modeling the liberal speech of a new moral center.

Obama's Emotional Intelligence As an Emergent Leadership Capacity

FOLLOWING OBAMA, AS SIMPLE AS THIS SOUNDS, WE MUST LEARN TO STOP BLAMING ONE another for our problems and to practice accountability and atonement with one another—

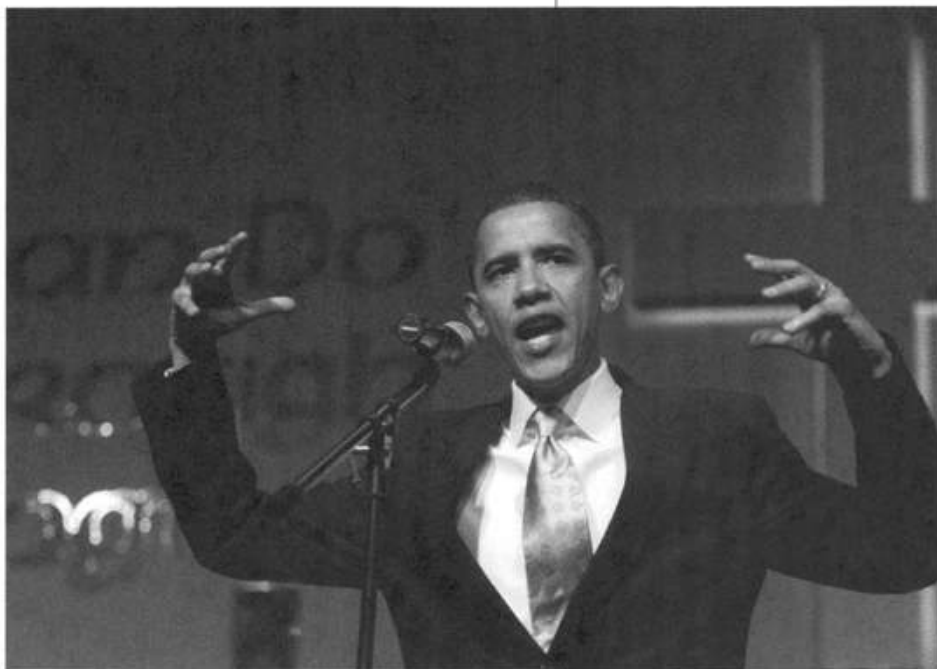
to solve problems together. Obama clearly understands this and seems to have the moral character necessary to achieve such an end. He displays a level of emotional intelligence, and his words and actions reveal his expectation that we too live with the emotional complexities of our time without reducing them to simple explanations that find a villain to blame for our difficulties.

Obama's religiosity, his capacity for moral speech, and his disinclination to blame seem rooted in this clear embodiment and public use of his emotional experience. This embodiment reveals that Obama has faced his own personal suffering and found both a religious and psychological solution to it. As a result, unlike too many liberal leaders such as Michael Dukakis and John Kerry, Obama has found a depth of emotion and avoided the overly rationalized identity to which many liberals fall victim. Traditional liberals have rightly been accused of indulging in forms of rational techno-speak. Lakoff has gone so far as to say that rationalism is the "bane of liberalism." You may object that Obama's public affect is "cool" rather than emotional. Some of his supporters have urged him to be more openly emotional in his debates with McCain, for example. There may be some validity to this view; however, it is also the case that, for an African American man, erring on the side of a cautious emotional intelligence has proven crucial. Americans are not ready to integrate the shame they would feel confronted by the legitimate anger of African Americans and other minorities coming out of the historical and current immoral cultural oppression.

Even were he Caucasian, Obama would have needed to contain his emotionality. As valid as it is to accuse Democrats of being overly rational, it is also true that they have erred in the other direction. Ed Muskie lost significant ground in the polls when he cried in public, and in 2004 Howard Dean's presidential campaign was doomed when he attempted to rally his supporters with a seemingly erratic passion. Obama has not made the mistake of crying in public or showing his passions too intensely.

It's funny that when we think of publicly expressing passion, we imagine some over-the-top, almost smarmy or violent image. Perhaps there is some other way. For example, while Obama has remained emotionally contained, Joe Biden has found a little more room for a public display of passion. Remember his becoming choked up during the vice presidential debate? Biden's emotional expression was a vitalizing moment. In the future we may be able to go even further and truly integrate what we have learned from psychotherapy about the use of our emotions in our private lives, within our public and political selves, and with each other.

Obama's effective use of a public emotional intelligence was most strikingly displayed in his response to his former pastor, Reverend Jeremiah Wright. As this psycho-political drama unfolded, Obama used it to build the new moral center of our society. Instead of waiting out the drama in an effort to rationally rise above such "irrational" attacks, the way Kerry attempted to rise above the swift-boat accusations, or apologetically seeking to appease by immediately throwing Reverend Wright under a bus, Obama found a truer, emotionally intelligent path that responded to both the psychological and political needs of the situation. The people of America needed to see how he would respond to a situation that includes some of the worst manifestations of American humanity. We needed to see how he would manage our felt and denied shame, our overt and subtle hatreds. He proved up to the challenge, using the events to further define himself, prove his capacity to lead, and reveal to



Barack Obama speaks to the St. Mark Cathedral congregation on the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during a birthday celebration at the Harvey, Illinois, church. Obama made religion a signature part of his campaign through his public appearances in places where Democrats rarely venture.

Interfaith Work at the White House

by Eboo Patel

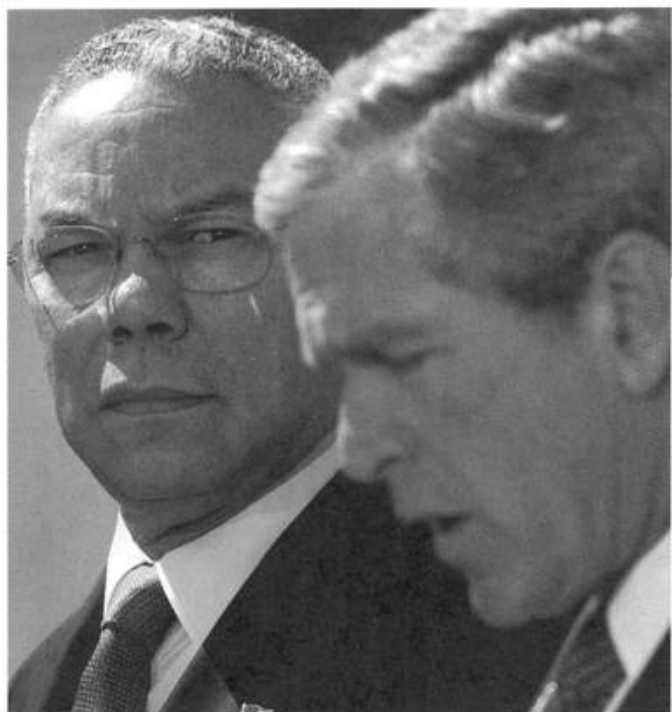
IT WAS HARD TO HOLD BACK THE TEARS WHEN I HEARD COLIN POWELL say that America was a country where people of all faiths fought under the same proud flag and for the same hopeful future. A nation where a seven-year-old Muslim child should rightly dream of being president, just as Powell, the son of Jamaican immigrants raised in the South Bronx, had long ago hoped to serve his country at the highest levels. Powell reminded the whole world of what America should stand for: equal dignity and mutual loyalty for citizens of all religious backgrounds, including those with no religion at all.

America is the most religiously diverse nation in human history and the most religiously devout nation in the West in an era of global religious revival. Every day brings fresh stories of hot religious conflict somewhere in the world, and simmering religious tension here at home. Those religious forces—fueled by youth growing up in an era of profound socioeconomic dislocation and seeking the deep identity that faith provides—could wind up making this a century marked by the clash of civilizations or a century defined by religious pluralism. If the color line was the problem of the twentieth century, the faith line is the challenge of the twenty-first. A new president should make building religious pluralism a central priority in the White House.

Religious pluralism has three key parts. The first is respect for people's religious identities. That means people of all faith backgrounds should have the same rights to establish their houses of worship, religious education programs, and faith-based institutions—and to feel free to dream big about their future. The second element of religious pluralism is positive relationships between different communities. That means that Jews and Muslims, Christians and Buddhists, Hindus and secularists should be constantly and positively engaged with one another through civic associations and citizenship activities. The third part of religious pluralism is a commitment to the common good. That means the various constituent communities in a country should seek to uphold the core principles and key institutions of the broader society, knowing that the well-being of each and all depends on the health of the whole.

Religious pluralism is a proud part of the American tradition, and a key element to building a more stable and secure world. Those who would say that America is fundamentally a Christian country where other religions are bit players at best, or those who say it is essentially a secular nation where faith has no place in our public life, forget the important statements that our founding fathers made regarding religious diversity. George Washington, for example, sent a letter to the Hebrew congregation of Newport, Rhode Island, with these words: "May the children of the stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while everyone shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid."

Eboo Patel is the founder and executive director of the Interfaith Youth Core. He writes "The Faith Divide" blog for the Washington Post. His book *Acts of Faith* was recently published in paperback.



Colin Powell, a Republican who was President Bush's first secretary of state, endorsed Democrat Barack Obama for president October 19, 2008, and criticized the tone of Republican John McCain's campaign.

That tradition of religious pluralism is more important now than ever. Conflicts in the world increasingly have a religious dimension: Tensions remain high between Catholics and Protestants in Belfast, between Sunnis and Shias in Baghdad, and between Hindus and Muslims in Bombay. Threats to stability and security are increasingly likely to come from conflicts between religious and ethnic groups *within* nations and regions.

Our new president should take the following three steps upon entering office:

- 1) State in his Inaugural Address that just as America stands for liberty, equality, and opportunity in the world, so will it be a beacon of religious pluralism;
- 2) Create a White House Office of Interfaith Affairs that can coordinate efforts for religious pluralism domestically and in foreign affairs;
- 3) Find civil society groups that employ the best practices in interfaith cooperation and fund a dramatic expansion of their programs.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Chicago Protestant leader Charles Bonney ended the first Parliament of the World's Religions with these words: "From now on, the great religions of the world will no longer declare war on each other, but on the giant ills that afflict humankind."

At the dawn of the twenty-first, an American president has the opportunity to make that vision a reality. ■

Where is Israel?

Identities Beyond Geography

by David Newman

WHERE IS ISRAEL? IT'S A SEEMINGLY INNOCUOUS QUESTION. THE ANSWER IS simple—take a map of the globe and you will find Israel located at the eastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea, on the western fringe of the region known as the Middle East, hemmed in to the north by Lebanon, to the east by Syria and Jordan, and to the south by Egypt. It's a straightforward question of geography. What could be simpler? Israel is in the Middle East.

But the question is far more complex. Asking "where" a country is brings up complicated issues of identity and self-positioning. And in a country like Israel, where the geographical region is made up of countries that do not want Israel as a neighbor, where the country was established by people who emigrated from another region—Europe—and whose ideas of nationalism and state formation were, to a large extent, imposed upon their new region, the question demands another one—where is Israel? Where does Israel belong and, perhaps more importantly, where does Israel's population self-perceive its location?

Israel in the Middle East

GEOGRAPHICALLY, ISRAEL IS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. THE ANSWER PROVIDED BY THE MAP would appear to be the correct one. The fact that the country's neighbors do not want Israel in their midst cannot change the facts. They can seal their borders and prevent contact,

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communication, and trade from taking place, but they can't alter the hard geographical facts. The map does not lie.

For many Israelis, recognition by the neighboring countries and other regional actors that Israel is an integral part of the Middle East would signify the end to conflict. Opening the borders and accepting Israel into the various regional sporting, cultural, and trade organizations encompassing countries from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf, and from North Africa to the Asian states of the former Soviet Union, would indicate to most Israeli citizens that Israel's geographical and functional locations have, after sixty years of existence, finally become synchronized, and the country has come home to rest.

Discussions of external locations feed into internal discourses of origin and sense of belonging—in short, notions of collective identity. Over half of Israel's Jewish population came from Middle Eastern and Asian countries. It is members of this Mizrahi (Sephardi) population who, having become empowered during the past decade, argue that the inability of Israel to find its rightful place among its geographical neighbors is precisely because of the strong European bias of the state's founders and the European notions of statehood which emanated therefrom. Were there to be greater understanding of the cultural context of the region, a context that could be provided by the Mizrahi population, then Israel would find it easier to fit into the region. Were the Mizrahi population to



geographically constrained in their identities, a sense which is enforced by globalization-era notions of borderless worlds, deterritorialization and identification with the global village. This does not make their individual commitment to their country of birth and its continued survival in a hostile region any less than that of their parents' generation, but the future of Israel is, for them, tied up with global developments, their country being a member of the geopolitical club whose defining elements are determined in New York, Brussels, and Beijing, not just in Jerusalem and Cairo.

A European Alternative?

PERHAPS AS ONE ALTERNATIVE TO BEING IN THE MIDDLE EAST, ISRAEL IS REALLY JUST an extension of Europe. Founded by Europeans who imposed a European legal system, universities modeled on Germany, and classical music for the elites, coupled with an initial paternalistic disdain for the Orient, Israel's model of nation statehood was a direct diffusion of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century models of political emancipation. And, despite the fact that the worst tragedy in the history of the Jewish people took place on blood-soaked European soil, the founding generation instilled the institutions of the state with European culture and mores.

Because of history, a certain ambivalence has always underlain Israeli-European relations. Strong cultural and trade links are balanced against political suspicion and memory of the past. The United States, as a friend and staunch ally, can occasionally criticize Israel and get away with it. Not so the Europeans, who, even if their criticism of Israeli government policies is identical to that of their allies across the Atlantic, are immediately accused of anti-

Semitism and continuing the xenophobic tradition of their parents' and grandparents' generations—despite the emergence of the New Europe within which respect for the “other” is assumed to have replaced the racism of the past. Relations between Israel and the European Union hit rock bottom just a few years ago, thanks in no small part to the antagonism displayed by chief EU Foreign Affairs Commissioner Chris Patten (now Chancellor of the University of Oxford). But since his departure in 2004, there has been a rapid turnaround in these relations, with the partners enjoying a postmillennial honeymoon. The shift has no doubt been helped along by the identification of global terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism as a common threat in the post-9/11 era, although it does not prevent European countries from criticizing Israel's policies toward the Palestinians.

Tell Israelis in the street that in order to achieve real lasting peace they would have to withdraw from most, or perhaps all, of the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip and, if you could convince them that real peace would result, the majority of Israelis would be prepared to undertake this withdrawal—even those who may be ideologically opposed to such a move for religious or historical reasons. But tell the same Israeli that as a result of peace, the country would finally become integrated into the wider Middle East region and would have to withdraw from the European soccer championship (in which it never gets beyond the second round) or refrain from participating in the Eurovision song contest (where it normally accuses the other countries of voting against Israel as a poor excuse for poor songs), and that would be another matter altogether.

The expansion of the EU to include countries in Eastern Europe, such as Poland and Hungary, has opened the door for many Israelis to take up European citizenship and apply for European passports. According to the EU Head of Delegation in Israel, if all of the young Israelis eligible for European passports, by virtue of having parents or grandparents who originated in Europe, were to take citizenship, almost 30 percent of the country's Jewish population would be European. For the remaining first generation Holocaust survivors, as well as the silent second generation, which will have nothing to do with Europe, the idea that their children and grandchildren are opting to become citizens of Germany and Poland fills them with incredulity and anger. But this is exactly what they are doing. Not all young Israelis share their parents' automatic knee-jerk reactions to Europe; they feel quite comfortable traveling to Europe and even consider the option of living and working there.



Is Israel part of Europe? Israeli singer Dana International celebrates her victory in the Eurovision Song Contest, May 1998.

AP PHOTO/LOUISA BULLER

There is a large, widening gap between older and younger generations in this respect, as Israel's fourth generation understands the gravity of the Holocaust era but does not see it as affecting European-Israeli relations sixty years into a new, more democratic and more humane European Union.

Ask the Mizrahi population whether they like being thought of as an extension of Europe, and their answer will be twofold and contradictory. In the first place many of them will tell you that the European Zionists imposed their ideas on a Middle Eastern culture. Perhaps they won't use exactly the words "cultural imperialism" or "Orientalism," but their feeling of discontent has become even stronger in recent years. And yet, many will also tell you that they want to be part of the "modern, cultured" world (sic), not the "backward" world of the Middle East where religious fundamentalism is on the rise. They may be accused of becoming pseudo-Ashkenazim, of falling into the trap of Europeanization—but the majority of the younger, integrated, and intermarried generations of young adults prefer the European culture model in all public surveys relating to collective cultural identity and sense of belonging. It is perhaps ironic that the push towards oriental empowerment inside Israel is spearheaded by some of the Mizrahi academic elites who have become the most integrated into the European models of higher education and the associated meta-theories through which they understand the world.

The 51st State of the Union

IF THE MIDDLE EAST DOESN'T QUITE FIT CULTURALLY, AND EUROPE HASN'T COMPLETELY brushed off its anti-Semitic tendencies, there is always the United States of America. Perhaps Israel's true destiny is as the 51st state of the USA. Israel and the United States enjoy a strong and friendly relationship, a relationship that has continued with only minor hiccups since President Truman's immediate recognition of the state after the Declaration of Independence in May 1948. At times of crisis, the United States has come to Israel's assistance. Even when White House administrations have pressured Israel a bit more, such as the Eisenhower administration during the Sinai Campaign in 1956, or the George H.W. Bush administration, which dragged the government of Yitzchak Shamir to the Madrid peace talks against Shamir's wishes, these actions were never more than aberrations in what is a warm relationship. Israel sees the United States as its one true partner, and the past two administrations of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush have proved that it doesn't make a great deal of difference whether there is a Republican or Democratic president in the White House.

But this is more than simply a political and strategic relationship. America is perceived in Israel pretty much along the lines laid down by the founding fathers—a land of equality, opportunity, and equal representation. The strong pro-Israel lobby ensures that Israel's interests are always safeguarded, while these interests do not apologize for what is increasingly seen as undue influence à la Walt and Mearsheimer (see *Tikkun*, September/October 2007). America is the number one destination for many Israelis who opt to reside outside their country of birth, with many of them having succeeded beyond their wildest imaginations in business, real estate and within the halls of science and technology. Israel is the number one recipient of U.S. foreign aid, and on any visit to Israel an American president is greeted as one of the family. There is probably no other country in the world, including the United States itself, where the degree of support for the invasion of Iraq remains as high as in Israel, not least because it resulted in the removal of a potential threat in the immediate region.

The Israeli urban and commercial landscapes have become Americanized, with out-of-town drive-in shopping malls and McDonald's where *kibbutzim* and *moshavim* used to farm their agricultural land. Western-style detached suburban housing has filled the once Spartan landscape and, until the recent collapse in the value of the dollar, it was U.S. currency rather than the shekel that determined the financial development of the country. For many Israelis, America is truly the *goldene medinah* to be aped, while success and normality is measured in relation to the levels of development in North America.

There is only one thing that troubles Israelis with respect to the United States—it is so far away. The 51st state suffers from a geographic problem. However, in an era of globalization,

cyberspace, and continuous flights between New York and Tel Aviv, the negative impact of real physical distance is slowly being replaced with the relative proximity of functional distance. And as for those whose historic or religious attachment to the specific piece of land called Eretz Yisrael is not important, they would not necessarily object if the little state of Israel were miraculously transported as a small territorial exclave inside one of the larger states of the United States—after all, Israel and all of the Occupied Territories together cover an area of land no larger than 25,000 square kilometers, equal to the smallest states of the Union, and covering no more than a minute percentage of the larger land tracts in California and Texas. Of course, this suggestion does an injustice to the vast majority of Israelis who, despite their dreams of America, are strongly attached to their ancient homeland and have no intention of physically relocating. But the United States is not Uganda of the early twentieth century and there is much about Israel today that reminds the first-time visitor of the vigor, the dynamism, and the brashness of the American success story.

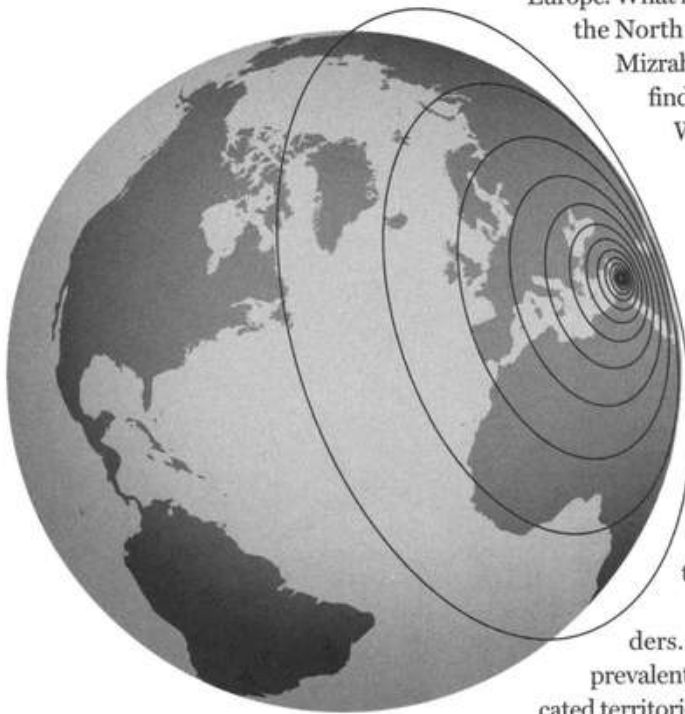
So it is perhaps not surprising that when asked which geopolitical and identity location they prefer, the majority of Israelis choose the United States over either the Middle East or Europe. What is perhaps more surprising, however, is the fact that the percentage choosing the North American dream for their preferred model of Israel is higher among the Mizrahi population than it is among the Ashkenazi inhabitants of the country. This finding seems to run in the face of the argument that Europeans maintain ties to Western culture, while Mizrahim retain stronger ties to Oriental culture. But it also tells us something about the process of economic and social adaptation of the younger generation of Israelis, who feel less tied to their parents' places of origin and see themselves as members of the global village.

A Borderless World

NOTWITHSTANDING THESE GEOGRAPHICAL ATTACHMENTS TO SPECIFIC places and their associated cultures, Israel retains its sense of uniqueness. We can identify additional concepts that break open the idea of bounded space, while still focusing on Israel as the Jewish Homeland. These concepts do not run contrary to the ideas of Israel as part of the Middle East, Europe, or the United States, but complement them and, to a certain extent, mediate the way in which many Israelis perceive their position in the world.

First is the idea that, as the state of the Jews, Israel is a country without borders. This ties in with notions of borderless worlds, ideas which have become prevalent as part of the globalization discourse—as though fixed borders and demarcated territories are no longer part of the way in which the world is ordered and managed. The Law of Return enables Jews anywhere to take up Israeli citizenship. With few exceptions (such as the infamous case of American gangster Meir Lansky), Jews around the world have been encouraged to immigrate to Israel (to make “*aliyah*”) and to become part of the Jewish national enterprise. The definition of who exactly constitutes a “Jew” remains split between cultural and strictly orthodox definitions, in a country where Jewish-Arab demography has taken on a major role in the determination of future population scenarios and the ultimate security of the state. Not surprisingly the state has favored as wide and flexible a definition as possible as a means of increasing the number of Israeli citizens; so Russian immigrants, regardless of their Jewish roots, as well as long-lost tribes in India and elsewhere, were sought out and encouraged to take up their rights of citizenship and thus swell the ranks of the Jewish majority. This is, paradoxically, the manipulation of global diversity as a means of strengthening national and ethnic exclusive identity in its political context. It enables anyone identified as a Jew (or potential Jew if simplified conversion processes are taken into consideration) to become a member of a state that, at one and the same time, is defined in narrow national terms (a Jewish state) and is increasingly multicultural and ethnically diverse.

Within this borderless (and hence global) world, Israel reinforces its exclusivity. Jews from anywhere can obtain automatic citizenship, regardless of where they were born and



grew up, or whether they can read or speak the national language. For their part, Palestinian and Arab residents of the country are at best citizens, and in some cases are even denied citizenship on the grounds that they have been away too long or cannot prove their place of birth. This is part of a political battle over demography, with demographic majorities determining the way in which long-term security, beyond the simplistic military understanding of security, is achieved by the Jewish state for the benefit of its (Jewish) citizens.

Orthodox Jews may not accept the government's definition of what constitutes a Jew, but they—perhaps more than any other group—express a borderless world. They do not identify with the secular state of the Jews, but the territory which constitutes the Holy Land of Israel is an important construct in their identity and their daily religious rituals and practices. Religious and Orthodox Jews throughout the world cross state borders as though they were of no relevance. They marry between themselves, study in each other's institutions, and closely observe and adhere to the same strict practices. One only has to look at the ultra-Orthodox websites and newspapers to see a world in which the geographical location labeled Israel plays a prominent role but is no more than one place within which the functions (such as *yeshivot*, means of sustenance), rather than location, determine each place's relative importance. Within this borderless world of Jewish Orthodoxy, Lakewood, Monsey, Williamsburg, and Stamford Hill are almost as important as Meah Shearim and Bnei Braq. Together they constitute a network of disconnected spaces and places within the borderless world of Haredi Jewry.

But the idea of a borderless, easily negotiable, world works in both ways. It is not a new phenomenon that so many Israelis have opted to relocate elsewhere in the world. Changing notions of identity means that they are no longer derogatorily referred to as “*yordim*” but simply as economic migrants. This change in attitude has meant that they now retain stronger cultural and economic links with their family of birth, and that Israel now has its own Diaspora community, linked to the country not only through ties of Jewishness, but by virtue of citizenship and having been born in the country. Globalization and the ease of travel have also given rise to a commuter population of Jews who have relocated their families to Israel but continue to work as successful businessmen and professionals in London, Paris, and New York, and who return home (to Israel) on a weekly or fortnightly basis.

At the Center of the World

ISRAEL, TOO, IS AT THE CENTER OF THE WORLD. CLASSIC CARTOGRAPHY MAY SHOW EUROPE at the center because this is how the imperial and colonial map makers drew their maps and it is how we are socialized into understanding our mental images of the globe. But it is the miniscule piece of territory on the eastern seaboard of the Mediterranean that has attracted more world attention than almost any other place, large or small, for the past decades. Rightly or wrongly, it is the Jewish state that is perceived as contributing to global instability. How can the manipulation of oil resources, the growth in Islamic fundamentalism, and a host of other global issues and crises, be explained without some recourse to Israel, Israel, Israel? At the geographical meeting place of continents (Europe, Asia and Africa—no one has ever suggested that Israel be part of neighboring Africa although it has developed strong cultural, economic, and military links with the African continent) and of the three global monotheistic religions, the “Holy Land” is at the very center of world affairs.

I recall attending a conference some fifteen years ago devoted to the subject of small states and island states. After an ivory tower discussion of what exactly constitutes a small state (is it a small piece of territory, small population, few economic or natural resources?), we spent the lunch hour overlooking Valletta Harbor in Malta, discussing less conventional definitions. One idea was to define states based on the amount of news (continued on page 69)



Israel as a magnet for Jews worldwide. Members of the Bnei Menashe, one of them holding an Israeli flag, are seen after arriving at Ben Gurion airport near Tel Aviv, Israel, Nov. 21, 2006. Fifty-one people who claim descent from a lost Jewish tribe, immigrated to Israel from a remote corner of India, the first wave of the Bnei Menashe community to arrive in nearly three years. Nearly 7,000 members of the Bnei Menashe tribe are in India's Mizoram state.



(top) The author's daughter, Cassidy, center, with her friends.



Protecting Your Child From Capitalism

by Allen Kanner

I'VE QUIT TELEVISION TWICE NOW. THE RELAPSE OCCURRED IN 2002 WHEN THE SAN Francisco Giants made the World Series. I quit again in 2004 upon learning that my wife, Mary, was pregnant.

There are two secrets I'd like to share about giving up television. The first is that after about two weeks the urge to watch goes away. I had thought the impulse would

possessions, and aspirations—endorse consumer values.

TV producers are loath to air programs that are critical of corporations, consumerism, or capitalism, for fear of alienating their sponsors. The result is that television production has built-in filters that block alternative viewpoints, a form of systemic censorship.

Through the interweaving of these three factors—the ceaseless marketing of corporate materialism, programs steeped in consumer values, and censorship of opposing perspectives—television functions as a propaganda tool for corporate capitalism. Mary and I have chosen not to expose Cassidy to such compelling manipulation, especially since far more nurturing and enjoyable activities are available.

One such activity, of course, is play. Cassidy ushers nearly all of her significant experiences into her pretend worlds. This is as it should be, for nature cleverly designed play to be essential to children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. That is why I am flabbergasted that the corporate world is attacking the realm of children's make-believe and succeeding. Many teachers, educators, and parents are reporting the demise of free play. One example: teachers are observing that children don't know what to do when left alone during recess.

As psychologist Susan Linn noted in *The Case for Make Believe*, corporate marketing is a key contributor to the American child's paucity of play. One example is the prevalence of licensed products such as dolls and action figures based on media characters. Children limit their play with these toys to the screen versions of the stories on which the licensed characters are based. Ninety-seven percent of American children under seven own at least one licensed product. Similarly, play is drastically confined by the relatively few options provided by fancy electronic toys, which are extremely popular. In sharp contrast, children's imaginations roam far and wide with simple, open-ended toys such as blocks, generic dolls, and fine arts materials.

We therefore ask our family and friends not to give Cassidy corporate presents and urge them to turn off the tube when we come around. It is tragic that we have to defend our family against our nation's economic system. But it's worth it, for in this protected space we are planting seeds for a better world. ■

Thirsty World Needs Global Marshall Plan

by Jahangir Valiani

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU TURNED ON THE TAP AND NO WATER CAME out? There is no debate about the central role water plays in sustaining life. There is also little debate about the severity of tensions sparked by shortages of such a necessary resource. But in arid areas from California to Central Asia, population increases and the effects of climate change leave local governments struggling to find enough water for their people to perform their daily activities. The difference between California and poorer parts of the world is that the former has the institutional and built infrastructures, as well as the resources, to bring water to dry communities. In the developing world, water scarcity, typically arising from poor

Jahangir Valiani is currently a Program Development Manager with Aga Khan Planning and Building Services, Pakistan. His focus includes working with villages to develop long-term water security initiatives.

ASK THE AUTHOR! Dec. 1: Allen Kanner

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management, has driven many from their homes.

Developing sustainable solutions to address the issue of water scarcity requires a spiritual context to go above investments in built infrastructure. It requires recognition that while those living at the margins have the moral right to society's compassion, they also have the right to preserve their dignity by being given the tools to control their own future. Through the framework of the Network of Spiritual Progressives' Global Marshall Plan, those with the

skills and resources can help to create sustainable solutions to the problem of water shortages in the developing world.

Every plan that is created to help break the cycle of poverty in the developing world includes a provision for financial aid. The role this aid plays should not be underestimated. While rumors of vast amounts of foreign aid dollars being channelled into the pockets of corrupt governments and their friends are not unfounded, the instances of aid building much-needed infrastructure, as well as funding studies necessary to efficiently direct future aid, are plentiful as well. The NSP's Global Marshall Plan is unique in increasing aid and simultaneously recognizing that goodwill breeds goodwill. In the instance of water scarcity in Central Asia, significant dollars have already gone to fund important studies on glacial movement in the Himalayan Mountain Range, on the implementation of meteorological stations to track precipitation, and on the existing, locally developed water delivery and storage systems. But much more is needed. Funds to purchase materials to improve the local water delivery and storage systems to protect them, not only from water losses but also from contamination from their surroundings, are necessary. High-altitude weather stations will allow scientists, environmental managers, and nongovernmental development organizations to gain a better understanding as to the climate trends in these areas and allow the villages that rely on the runoff from snowmelt and glaciers to manage their water resources more efficiently.

While technology is important, without skilled human resources, materials and technology are irrelevant. To gain an understanding of the complex interactions that result in regional water scarcity, trained hydrologists, geologists, and engineers are all necessary. It is easy to persuade young college students to uproot their lives for four months to go aid in development, but getting trained professionals to do the same is not as easy. Worries about the mortgage, children's security, and job security all take precedence over the plight of the developing world. The GMP provides immediate security for highly qualified professionals so that they may become conscious of those who enter the world impoverished and unable to improve their lot.

The greatest benefits of foreign aid are realized when the communities being helped are engaged in the development process. This engagement bolsters participants' confidence and hope, thereby fostering individual enterprise and determination. This in turn allows local people to play a larger role in community development, creating a natural exit strategy for the foreign agencies. Local knowledge of the region is also useful to maximize the efficiency of western technology. The Aga Khan Rural Support Program in northern Pakistan is an excellent example of the benefits of working directly with communities. In a little over two decades, the village organizations that have been established throughout northern Pakistan to help fund and collectively manage new infrastructure have helped to spur increases in local income and employment. The village organizations are also active in developing new irrigation schemes drawing on local knowledge of glacial movement to ensure that the channels could provide a reliable source of water year-round, an accomplishment that many western-funded irrigation projects cannot boast in this region.

The World Health Organization expects that within the next generation 2 billion people will be living in regions with absolute water shortages. The Network of Spiritual Progressives' Global Marshall Plan provides the framework for governments of the developed world to address the issue of water scarcity in a sustainable manner that allows those affected by the crisis of water scarcity to eventually direct their own destinies, to ensure that their taps are always flowing. ■



A boy drinks water from an irrigation channel in the High Altitude Village of Kamango in northern Pakistan. The snow melt which feeds this water supply will soon finish and the village will not get enough water.

AFTER THE MELTDOWN

Economic Redesign for the 21st Century

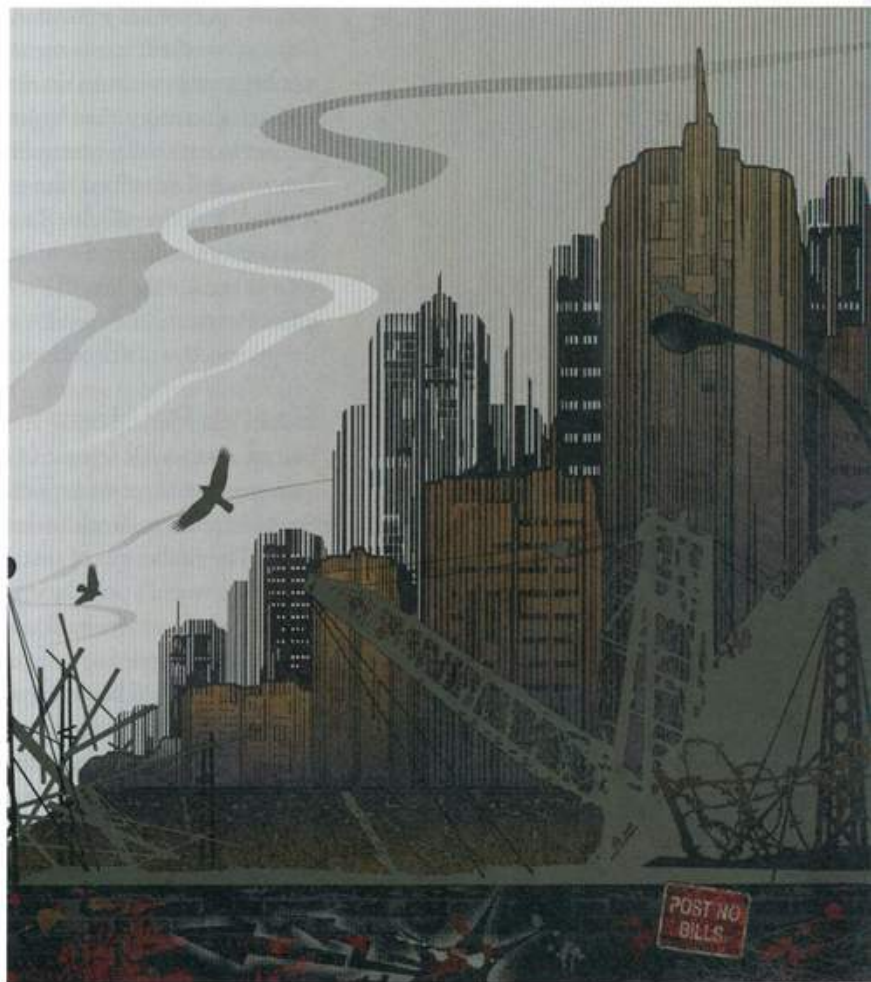
by David Korten

OUR ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SYSTEM HAS produced a credit meltdown, a shrinking middle class, stagnant wages, escalating food and energy prices, a dramatic decline in U.S. manufacturing and research capability, billion-dollar pay packages for hedge fund managers, skyrocketing consumer debt, an unstable U.S. dollar, a trillion-dollar bailout for Wall Street, and the spreading collapse of Earth's environmental systems. By any credible measure, our economic system has failed.

When economic failure is systemic, temporary fixes, even very expensive ones like the Wall Street bailout, are like putting a Band-Aid on a cancer. They may create a temporary sense of confidence, but the effect is solely cosmetic. Politicians and most pundits are looking only at the tip of the economic iceberg. Pull away the curtain to look behind the headlines, and we find a potentially terminal economic crisis with three defining elements:

1. Excess human consumption, which is accelerating the collapse of Earth's ecosystem.
2. Unconscionable inequality and the related social alienation, which are advancing the social collapse manifest in terrorism, genocide, crime, and growing prison populations.
3. An economic system ruled by financial markets, global corporations, and economic theories devoted to increasing consumption while rolling back real wages and benefits for working people to make money for the richest among us.

David Korten, author of When Corporations Rule the World and The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community, is co-founder & board chair of YES! Magazine and a board member of the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies. See davidkorten.org.





What will it take to green
our cities?
A roof in lower Manhattan.

This is a time for decisive action. The financial meltdown has shaken public confidence in the people and institutions now in charge. The transition to new political leadership creates an opening for bold action. In this article, I frame the choice before us and present my high dream of the economic address to the nation that I hope President Barack Obama might deliver shortly after his inauguration.

The Old Economy Economist vs. the New Economy Ecologist

THE TASK BEFORE US IS TO REPLACE THE CULTURE AND INSTITUTIONS OF a twentieth-century economy designed and managed to serve financial values with the culture and institutions of a new twenty-first-century economy designed to serve life values. The former undoubtedly leads to environmental, social, and economic collapse. The latter holds promise of leading to the world most humans really want for themselves and their children—a world of healthy, happy children, families, and communities living together in peace in vibrant, healthy, natural environments. It is ours to choose.

The choice between the path of failure and the path of possibility is framed with dramatic clarity by two influential authors—one a twentieth-century economist and the other a twenty-first-century ecologist. Jeffery Sachs, in *Common Wealth: Economics for a Crowded Planet* (2008), prescribes a Band-Aid. James Gustave Speth, in *Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability* (2008), prescribes a holistic cure grounded in a cultural and institutional transformation.

Sachs, an economist by training and perspective, is known for his work as an economic adviser to national governments and an array of public institutions. *New York Times* reporter Peter Passell described him as “probably the most important economist in the world” in the article “Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, Shock Therapist,” which was published June 27, 1993. Speth, who has degrees in law and economics, has a distinguished administrative career as founder and former head of the World Resources Institute, administrator of the United Nations Development Program, and now Dean of the Yale University School of Forestry. Sachs writes from the perspective of a neoclassical economist; Speth from the perspective of a systems ecologist.

Sachs: Painless Fine Tuning

SACHS OPENS *COMMON WEALTH* WITH A POWERFUL AND UNEQUIVOCAL PROBLEM statement that raises expectations of a bold break with the economic orthodoxy of what Sachs refers to as “free-market ideologues.”

The challenges of sustainable development—protecting the environment, stabilizing the world’s population, narrowing the gaps between rich and poor, and ending extreme poverty—will take center stage. Global cooperation will have to come to the fore. The very idea of competing nation-states that scramble for markets, power, and resources will become passé.... The pressures of scarce energy resources, growing environmental stresses, a rising global population, legal and illegal mass migration, shifting economic power, and vast inequalities of income are too great to be left to naked market forces and untrammelled geopolitical competition among nations.

This statement would have served equally well as an opening statement for Speth. Beyond the problem statement, Sachs and Speth both agree that there is an essential role for government and for greater cooperation among nations. From there, however, as I will elaborate later, we might wonder whether they live in different worlds.

Sachs assures us that we can easily end environmental stress and poverty using existing technologies. By his estimation, with modest new investments we can sequester carbon, develop new energy sources, end population growth, make more efficient use of water and other natural resources, and jump-start economic growth in the world’s remaining pockets of persistent poverty. Sachs made clear his belief that there is no need to redistribute wealth,

cut back material consumption, or otherwise reorganize the economy, during his 2007 lecture to the Royal Society in London, which was broadcast by the BBC.

I do not believe that the solution to this problem is a massive cutback of our consumption levels or our living standards. I think the solution is smarter living. I do believe that technology is absolutely critical, and I do not believe ... that the essence of the problem is that we face a zero sum that must be re-distributed. I'm going to argue that there's a way for us to use the knowledge that we have, the technology that we have, to make broad progress in material conditions, to not require or ask the rich to take sharp cuts of living standards, but rather to live with smarter technologies that are sustainable, and thereby to find a way for the rest of the world, which yearns for it, and deserves it as far as I'm concerned, to raise their own material conditions as well. The costs are much less than people think.

Far from calling for a restraint on consumption, Sachs projects global economic expansion from \$60 trillion in 2005 to \$420 trillion in 2050. Relying on what he calls a "back-of-the-envelope calculation," he estimates that the world's wealthy nations can eliminate extreme poverty and develop and apply the necessary environmentally friendly technologies to address environmental needs with an expenditure of a mere 2.4% of projected mid-century economic output. Problem painlessly solved, at least in Sachs's mind.

Sachs gives no indication of why, if we can stabilize population and meet the needs of the poor with modest expenditure, we should need or even want a global economy six times larger than its present size. As is true for most economists, and indeed the general public, Sachs simply assumes that economic growth is both good and necessary. It apparently never occurs to him to question this assumption, which Speth demonstrates to be false, as I will elaborate later. Furthermore, since Sachs maintains that there is no need for more than the very modest redistribution he estimates is required to put the poorest of the poor on the path to economic growth, he seems to assume that consumption will continue to increase across the board. He says nothing, however, about what forms of consumption he believes can continue to multiply without placing yet more pressure on already overstressed natural systems. Unless more people are driving cars, living in big houses, eating higher on the food chain, traveling further with more frequency, and buying more electronic gear, what exactly will we be consuming more of? And from what materials will they be fabricated? Sachs neither raises nor answers such questions.

Nor does Sachs mention the realities of political power and resource control—for example, the reality that in most instances poor countries are poor not for want of foreign aid but because we of the rich nations have used our military and economic power to expropriate their resources to consume beyond our own means. It is troubling, although not surprising, that Sachs's reassuring words get an attentive hearing among establishment power holders.

Speth: Redirection and Redesign

IN STARK CONTRAST TO SACHS, SPETH CONCLUDES, "THE PLANET CANNOT SUSTAIN capitalism as we know it," calling for nothing less than a complete economic redesign.

No simple back-of-the-envelope projections for Speth. He takes a hard look at the research on growth and environmental damage in relation to gross domestic product (GDP) and concludes that despite a slight decline in the amount of environmental damage per increment of growth, growth in GDP always increases environmental damage. The relationship is inherent in the simple fact, which apparently escaped Sachs, that GDP is mostly a measure of growth in consumption, which is the driving cause of environmental decline. Speth is clear that although choosing "green" products may be a positive step, not buying at all beats buying green most every time:

To sum up, we live in a world where economic growth is generally seen as both beneficial and necessary—the more, the better; where past growth has brought us to a perilous state environmentally; where we are poised for unprecedented increments in growth; where this growth is proceeding with wildly wrong market signals, including prices that do not incorporate environmental costs or reflect the needs of future

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generations; where a failed politics has not meaningfully corrected the market's obliviousness to environmental needs; where economies are routinely deploying technology that was created in an environmentally unaware era; where there is no hidden hand or inherent mechanism adequate to correct the destructive tendencies. So, right now, one can only conclude that growth is the enemy of environment. Economy and environment remain in collision.

Speth is clear that we are unlikely as a species to implement the measures required to bring ourselves into balance with the environment so long as economic growth remains an overriding policy priority, consumerism defines our cultural values, and the excesses of corporate behavior are unconstrained by fairly enforced rules. To correct our misplaced priorities, he recommends replacing financial indicators of economic performance, such as GDP, with wholly new measures based on nonfinancial indicators of social and environmental health—the things we should be optimizing. Speth quotes psychologist David Myers, whose essay “What Is the Good Life?” claims that Americans have:

big houses and broken homes, high incomes and low morale, secured rights and diminished civility. We were excelling at making a living but too often failing at making a life. We celebrated our prosperity but yearned for purpose. We cherished our freedoms but longed for connection. In an age of plenty, we were feeling spiritual hunger. These facts of life lead us to a startling conclusion: Our becoming better off materially has not made us better off psychologically.

This is consistent with studies finding that beyond a basic threshold level of about \$10,000 per capita per year, equity and community are far more important determinants of health and happiness than income or possessions. Indeed, as Speth documents, economic growth tends to be associated with increases in individualism, social fragmentation, inequality, depression, and even impaired physical health.

Speth gives significant attention to social movements grounded in an awakening spiritual consciousness that are creating communities of the future from the bottom up, practicing participatory democracy, and demanding changes in the rules of the game:

Many of our deepest thinkers and many of those most familiar with the scale of the challenges we face have concluded that the transitions required can be achieved only in the context of what I will call the rise of a new consciousness. For some, it is a spiritual awakening—a transformation of the human heart. For others it is a more intellectual process of coming to see the world anew and deeply embracing the emerging ethic of the environment and the old ethic of what it means to love thy neighbor as thyself.

Speth examines the abuses of corporate power and endorses calls to revoke the charters of corporations that grossly violate the public interest, exclude or expel unwanted corporations, roll back limited liability, eliminate corporate personhood, bar corporations from making political contributions, and limit corporate lobbying. He recommends a redesign of “the operating system of capitalism” to support the development of local economies populated with firms that feature worker and community ownership and to charter corporations only to serve a public interest.

The contrasting perspectives of Sachs and Speth on the three defining economic issues outlined in the introduction are summarized in Table 1. The differences are instructive, because any effort to address the current potentially fatal threats to the human future necessarily begins with deciding whether to focus on adjustments at the margin à la Sachs, the economist, or deep

TABLE 1: CONTRASTING POSITIONS ON THE ESSENTIAL DEBATE

	Marginal Adjustment (Sachs)	System Redesign (Speth)
ECONOMIC GROWTH	Growth in GDP is a valid measure of human progress, prosperity, and increased well-being. More is generally better. Given a combination of market forces, provision of public incentives, and a proper mix of technology there is no inherent environmental limit to economic growth.	Economic growth is disrupting the values and living systems essential to human well-being. Beyond a minimal threshold of consumption, growing community, rather than growing the consumption of stuff, is the key to increasing human health and happiness.
EQUITY	Poverty, not equity, is the issue and the proper response is to kick start the growth process within the world's remaining pockets of absolute poverty by introducing foreign aid funded technologies and social services.	Extreme poverty is the inevitable other side of the coin of extreme wealth and can be resolved only through redistribution from those who have more than they need to those who have less.
GOVERNING SYSTEM	The institutions of capitalism as currently constituted can resolve current environmental and social problems through a combination of voluntary action, modest public expenditure, and fine-tuning at the margin.	The operating systems of capitalism must be fundamentally redesigned to internalize costs, distribute ownership, and establish accountability for the human and natural consequences of economic decisions.

system redesign à la Speth, the systems ecologist.

By this point in time, given the strength of the evidence to the contrary, it is difficult to take seriously anyone who assumes, without question, that the global economy can expand by six times between now and 2050 without collapsing Earth's life support system. Unfortunately, Sachs demonstrates the intellectual myopia common to many professional economists, whose ideological assumptions trump reality. When we seek guidance on dealing with the complex issues relating to interactions between human economies and the planetary ecosystems in which they are embedded, we are best advised to turn to those, like Speth, who view the world through a larger and less ideologically clouded lens.

The Elephant Now in the Spotlight

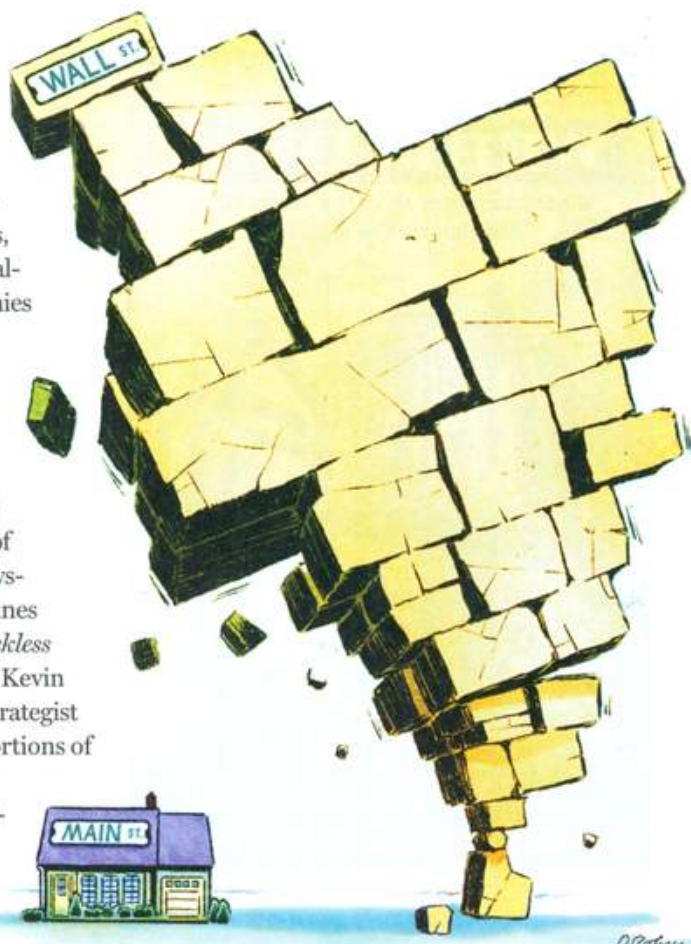
EVEN SPETH, HOWEVER, DOES NOT ADDRESS WHAT, UP UNTIL THE beginning of the subprime mortgage meltdown that began in the summer of 2007, was the largely unmentioned elephant in the room: a dangerously dysfunctional financial system devoted primarily to generating financial fortunes for its major players. So I've added a third book to the mix: *Bad Money: Reckless Finance, Failed Politics, and the Global Crisis of American Capitalism* by Kevin Phillips. The author is a journalist and former Republican Party political strategist with a brilliant record of documenting the frightening excesses and distortions of extremist right-wing politics.

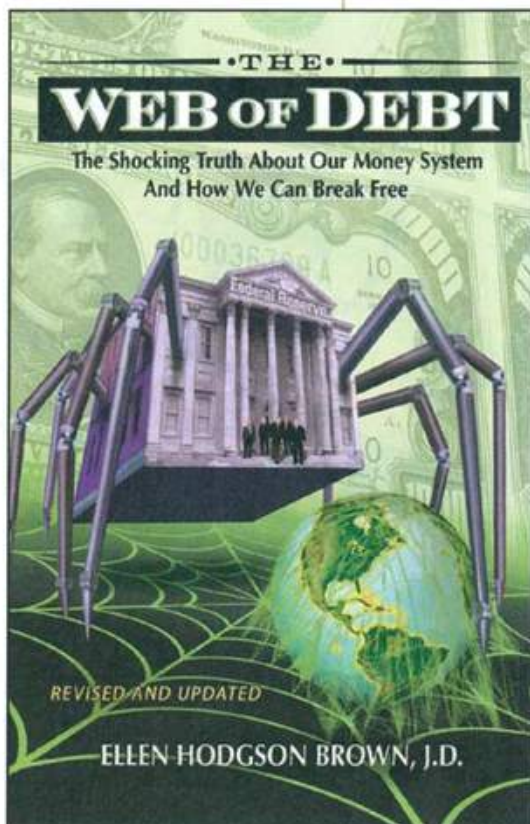
In *Bad Money*, Phillips cuts through the usual fog and obfuscation to explain the inner workings, and the larger consequences, of a Wall Street money game in which the players use money to make money for people who have money, without producing anything of value. They prey with impunity on the real economy of Main Street, on which we depend to provide essential goods and services. Through a restructuring of the economy that gained traction during the Reagan revolution of the 1980s, an alliance of Wall Street institutions and their captive regulators—the Federal Reserve and the U.S. Treasury Department—made finance the dominant and most profitable sector of the economy. In 1950, arguably the peak of U.S. global power, manufacturing accounted for 29.3% of U.S. gross domestic product and financial services for 10.9%. By 2005, manufacturing accounted for only 12% and financial services for 20.4% of GDP.

Step by step, restrictions were removed on debt-equity ratios, financial reporting, consumer interest rates and lending practices, and the formation of huge financial conglomerates that merge banking, insurance, securities, and real estate interests in a densely interconnected web of insider deals. Wall Street players used this freedom to capture gains from highly leveraged speculative trading schemes and pass the risks to others using exotic financial instruments and bogus credit ratings. Hedge funds, the high rollers at the leading edge of the speculative frenzy, proliferated from a couple hundred in the early 1990s to some 10,000 in mid-2007, by which time they had more than \$1.8 trillion in financial assets under management. "Like digital buccaneers, and hardly more restrained than their seventeenth-century predecessors, they arbitrated the nooks and crannies of global finance, capturing even more return on capital than casino operators made from one-armed bandits and favorable gaming-table odds."

Leverage—also known as borrowing—became the name of the Wall Street game. Banks used their power to create money to feed the speculative frenzy by creating a complex pyramid of loans to each other. By Phillips' calculations, in 2006 U.S. financial sector debt, which consists largely of financial institutions lending to other financial institutions to leverage financial speculation, totaled \$14 trillion, which was 32% of all U.S. debt and 107% of U.S. GDP.

Gambling with borrowed money is highly risky, as is lending to gamblers to feed their habit. At the time of its collapse, Lehman Brothers was leveraged thirty-five to one, which





means it financed its gambling in the global financial casino with thirty-five dollars in borrowed money for every dollar of equity. This can be highly profitable in a rising market, but it is disastrous in a falling market. Because they rigged the system to pass the risk to others, the managers who made the losing bets walked away with impressive fees collected during the good times and left to others the messy work of sorting things out when Wall Street's version of a Ponzi scheme collapsed. In 2007, the fifty highest-paid private investment fund managers walked away with an average \$588 million in annual compensation—19,000 times as much as average worker pay.

Over a period of roughly three decades, the Wall Street alliance used its control of the money supply and its political influence to ensure that the benefits of productivity gains in the Main Street economy were captured by Wall Street players as interest, dividends, and financial services fees. The Wall Street commitment to an upward redistribution of wealth was so successful that from 1980 to 2005, the highest-earning 1% of the U.S. population increased its share of national cash income from 9% to 19%. And most of that gain went to the top tenth of 1%.

The measures used to achieve this remarkable outcome included managing monetary policy to maintain a target level of unemployment, managing trade and tax policies to facilitate corporate outsourcing of jobs to low-wage economies, suppressing labor unions, limiting enforcement of laws against hiring undocumented immigrant workers, and using accounting tricks that understate inflation to suppress inflation-indexed wage and social security increases. As wages fell relative to inflation, and as public services were rolled back, the household savings rate fell apace.

From the beginning of 1959 to the end of 1993, the monthly U.S. household savings rate never fell below 5% of household income and it often exceeded 10%. Since April 2001 it has never exceeded 5%, and in the most recent years it has commonly been below 1%, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Desperate to find ways to make ends meet, households turned from saving to borrowing. Eager to capitalize on the opportunity thus created, Wall Street used aggressive marketing and deceptive lending practices to encourage people to run up credit card and mortgage debts far beyond their means to repay. As the borrowers inevitably fell behind in their payments, Wall Street hit the victims with special fees and usurious interest rates, creating a modern version of debt bondage.

The faster money poured into the housing market, the greater and faster housing prices inflated. The resulting real estate bubble created an illusion of increasing wealth, at least for homeowners and those who profited from speculation in the housing market. However, contrary to what some of its beneficiaries would have us believe, a real estate bubble does not create wealth. A rise in the market price of a house from \$200,000 to \$400,000 does not make it more functional or comfortable. The real consequence of a real estate bubble is to increase the financial power of those who own property relative to those who do not. Wall Street encouraged homeowners to monetize their market gains with mortgages, which Wall Street then converted into securities and sold off to the unwary, including to pension funds many of the hapless homeowners counted on for their retirement.

When the housing bubble inevitably burst, dazed homeowners walked away, many in financial ruin, from properties on which they owed more than market value. Securities based on these mortgages lost value, and the over-leveraged Wall Street players could not meet their financial commitments. In the face of escalating defaults, the whole system of interlocking credit obligations collapsed, and Wall Street turned to taxpayers for a bailout.

Phillips paints a stunning picture of Wall Street's hubris and corruption. Although his analysis underscores Speth's conclusion that we need a sweeping system redesign, he leaves it to others to identify appropriate remedies.

The Elephant in the Shadows

THERE IS YET ANOTHER SYSTEM DESIGN ISSUE THAT BEARS MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE credit collapse—an issue that has so far escaped the spotlight. Even Phillips mentions it only

in passing. The issue is the privatized money system by which nearly every dollar in circulation has been created by a private bank with a deceptively simple, accounting-related sleight of hand. Most people think of accounting as a rather boring subject, but pay attention here, because this accounting trick is the key to understanding why our current system of debt-created money makes it possible for a few people to acquire obscene amounts of unearned money while sticking the rest of us with the bill.

Most people who take out a loan think that another bank customer deposited the money they are borrowing in the bank for safekeeping, i.e., that the bank is simply serving as an intermediary between depositors and borrowers and guaranteeing repayment. That is in fact what my college economics professor taught us many years ago. It isn't true.

Unless they are holding a long-term CD, most depositors have immediate access to their money, just as you have immediate access to the money you borrow from the bank. What actually happened when the bank approved your loan is the bank's accountant entered two numbers in the bank's accounting records: Your promise to repay the bank was entered as an asset; the money the bank put into your account was entered as a liability. At first glance it looks like these entries cancel each other out. The key is that neither entry existed previously.

By this act, the bank created new money from nothing in the amount of the loan principle and caused the amount of money in the economy as a whole to increase. At the same time you acquired a legal obligation to repay the principle with interest. This, in fact, is how all money (except for coins and some special notes) is created. It should be noted that the bank-created money is electronic. It has no substance. You might say it has no existence outside the human mind. Needless to say, granting banks the power to create money with a computer key stroke and then lend it out at interest makes banking a very profitable business. These profits come at a significant cost to society in the form of economic instability and a growth imperative, concentration of wealth, and a distortion of economic priorities. Let's take them one at a time.

- **Instability and Growth Imperative:** Because the bank that issued the loan created only the principal and not the interest due on that principle, to avoid default and consequent financial collapse, the economy must continuously grow at a sufficient rate to generate a demand for new loans adequate to create the money borrowers need to make the interest payments on their previous loans as they come due. If growth falters, cascading defaults can wipe out the equity of the banks that made the bad loans, push the whole banking system into insolvency, and dry up the money supply as banks are forced to stop lending. For lack of money to facilitate exchange, businesses fall idle, workers lose their jobs, and the daily needs of Main Street families and businesses go unmet—all because banks are no longer making the accounting entries necessary to keep money flowing through the economy.
- **Inequality:** Because banks are essentially renting out the money needed to keep the Main Street economy functioning, Main Street is always in Wall Street's debt. The continuing flow of interest to Wall Street bankers assures a never-ending concentration of wealth.
- **Distortion of Priorities:** In the absence of strict governmental oversight, banks face an irresistible temptation to abuse the power inherent in their ability to create money in ways that distort society's priorities. Wall Street banks are likely to find it more profitable to make very large loans to high-stakes speculators and corporate raiders than to make smaller loans to qualified home buyers and legitimate businesses engaged in producing real goods and services—except at usurious interest rates. Desperate for money to survive,

UNDERSTANDING MONEY

The process by which money is created is perhaps the most important yet least discussed issue underlying the credit crisis and our unsustainable relationship with the earth. We must educate ourselves on the issues and develop a campaign to put monetary reform on the political agenda. Here are some useful resources for study and discussion.

Videos:

- **Money as Debt**, a 47-minute animation by Paul Grignon on video.google.com, is well suited to a group showing and discussion.
- **The Money Masters**, a three-hour documentary, provides a deeper historical and political perspective. See www.themoneymasters.com.
- **The Crash Course**, a series of video lectures by Chris Martenson, explains why the design of our money system creates an imperative for exponential growth and assures economic collapse. See www.chrismartenson.com/crash-course.

Books:

- **Creating New Money** by Joseph Huber and James Robertson (London: New Economics Foundation, 2000).
- **The Web of Debt** by Ellen Hodgson Brown (Baton Rouge, LA: Third Millennium Press, 2007).
- **The Lost Science of Money** by Stephen Zarlenga (Valatie, NY: American Monetary Institute, 2002).



The "Earthship," designed by architect Michael Reynolds (above), shows the potential for meeting our needs sustainably. Built out of tires, bottles, cans, and dirt, such houses don't use outside power, produce sewage, or pump water out of the ground—but they still offer all the comforts of home (below).



AP PHOTO/ERIC GRAPER (TOP) AND NICOLE HAND (BOTTOM)

the latter become easy prey to the predatory practices of Wall Street institutions that celebrate a sociopathic culture of greed and material excess.

Bank lending at interest isn't the only way to create money, nor is it the most preferred from a public interest perspective. There have long been calls from influential economists, politicians, and even U.S. presidents, most famously Jefferson, to replace the private issuance of credit-money with a system by which a democratically accountable public institution creates debt-free money. The public institution would create this money with its own accounting entry and then spend it into the economy to fulfill a public purpose. For example, it might pay down the federal debt or invest in mass transit infrastructure, solar technology, or public education. Under this method important public needs can be met without either taxation or loan repayment and without the usual expansion and contraction of the economy that results from the expansion and contraction of credit. The issues and options are examined at length in a number of important but lesser known books available only from their publishers, including Joseph Huber and James Robertson's *Creating New Money*; Ellen Hodgson Brown's *The Web of Debt*; and Stephen Zarlenga's *The Lost Science of Money*.

The common objection to such proposals is that giving politicians the power to create free money will lead to runaway inflation. This argument is a bit disingenuous given that the rate of inflation under our present private money system, if calculated by the methodologies in place in 1980, is actually running at a rate of between 12% and 14% (See www.shadowstats.com/alternate_data). Yes, the official inflation figures are doctored for political reasons to hide the real extent of current economic mismanagement and the rate at which wages and social security payments are falling behind the increasing cost of living.

The risk that government might fuel inflation by abusing its money-creation powers can be largely eliminated by placing the power to decide how much new money to issue in the hands of a government-owned version of the Federal Reserve that might function as an independent fourth branch of government much like the judiciary. The power to decide how to spend the government-created money would continue to reside solely with Congress as part of its overall power to authorize federal spending. This separation would substantially remove the motivation to abuse the money-creation power.

The potential to mismanage the money supply is always present, no matter how the system is designed. The advantages of public money issuance include lower taxes, the possibility of eliminating the federal debt, no growth imperative, and a more equitable distribution of wealth. Although such a proposal would elicit deafening screams from bankers, in the current context their credibility is low and there is little public sympathy for their tender sensibilities.

Economic Agenda for a New Administration

WHEN BARACK OBAMA TAKES THE OATH OF OFFICE ON JANUARY 20, 2009, HE WILL FACE the imperative to bring forth, within the span of his first term, a new economy equal to the social and environmental challenges of the twenty-first century. Having won the election with a promise of change, it will be a moment of opportunity to set the nation on a new economic course. Here is my suggestion for the announcement he might make to a nation eager to rally around a new leader with a positive vision:

My administration has come to office with a mandate for bold action at a time when our most powerful economic institutions have clearly failed us. They have crippled our economy, burdened our governments with debilitating debts, divided us between the profligate and the desperate, corrupted our political institutions, and threatened destruction of the natural environment on which our very lives depend.

The failure can be traced directly to an elitist economic ideology (continued on page 70)

Love in Adversity

by Alix Kates Shulman

IN THE SUMMER OF 1950, THE YEAR I GRADUATED from high school, my future husband and I had a forbidden but memorable love affair—after which we went our separate ways, married others, raised families, built careers, endured tragedy, divorced—but we never forgot each other. By the time we reunited thirty-four years later, we were in our fifties and with such separate, well-defined lives that we were able to build our new marriage on trust coupled with freedom, equality, and self-sufficiency—goals inspired by the feminist movement that had shaped me. During the two decades we shared our lives we prided ourselves on our independence, spending months of each year apart, separately pursuing our vocations (he as a sculptor, I as a writer) until, on July 22, 2004, in a beach house on a small Maine island, our lives were completely transformed. As my love fell from the sleeping loft to the floor—suffering (as I was soon to learn) many broken bones, internal bleeding, and multiple blood clots in his brain—his independence, and with it mine, vanished. He was seventy-five and I was seventy-two.

Seeing him lying naked and deathly still on the floor nine feet below our bed, I dashed down the stairs calling out his name. No answer. I shook his shoulder gently. Still no answer. Somehow I managed to find my cell phone and call 911.

After what felt like an eternity, but was actually perhaps twenty minutes, the door to our cabin burst open as, from every corner of the island, one by one the island's heroic Volunteer Fire and Rescue Team exploded into the room. I barely had time to put on my sneakers before I was scrambling to keep up with them as they started out the door with Scott on a stretcher, down the rickety stairs, toward the treacherous beach at high tide. The night was foggy and moonless, obscuring the path. My watch said 2 AM.

They carried the stretcher in relays across the long beach in the dark to where a dirt road began, then transferred him to the waiting fire truck, putting me in the cab—and off we raced across the island to the dock, where a rescue boat

Alix Kates Shulman has written twelve books of fiction, memoir, biography. Four years ago she became her husband's caregiver, a life recounted in her newly published memoir, To Love What Is: A Marriage Transformed.



Barrie Karp, 1984, Fear & Hope (Blue), #2, oil, wax, on paper, 30x22.5 inches. Collection of Alix Kates Shulman and Scott York, NYC.

VOICES FROM THE HOLOCAUST



The Terezín Album of Mariánka Zadikow

With an Introduction and Annotations by
Debórah Dwork

Mariánka Zadikow's autograph album that she compiled during her time in the Terezín Camp, presented here in a facsimile edition, is a poignant document from the last months of the Holocaust. The words and images include passages of remembered verse, lovingly executed drawings, and hurried farewells on the eve of transport to Auschwitz.

Cloth \$35.00



Voices from Shanghai

Jewish Exiles in Wartime China

Edited, Translated, and with an Introduction by
Irene Eber

"Irene Eber has constructed a fascinating insight into a little-known community of Jewish refugees who fled like blown leaves before the storm of Nazism, landing in Shanghai, where they clung to life, culture, and religion. Without this valuable record, a revealing piece of history might have gone unrecorded."—David K. Shipler, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Arab and Jew: Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land*

Cloth \$29.00

from Portland had arrived only moments before. As we pulled anchor and headed out to sea, I gazed back at that receding ordinary world where life proceeds by days and nights, not moment by terrifying moment, aware that our world would never again be the same.

Most traumatic brain injuries are pretty impervious to treatment. Human bones normally heal in six weeks, but for brains the course of healing is unpredictable and erratic. "It could be a year or more before we know the extent of the brain damage," warned Dr. Cushing, head of the Maine Medical Center trauma unit.

A year! I reeled in shock but never wavered in my resolve. For nearly three months of hospitalization—six weeks in the ICU in Portland followed by an equal time in a rehab hospital in New York City, where we live—I sat beside Scott from 8 AM to 8 PM, determined to protect him from the inevitable daily institutional mishaps (including another fall on his head!), soothing his terrors and waiting out his delusions, committed to restoring his health. Somehow I convinced myself that the doctor had predicted that he would recover fully within a year. As most brain healing occurs in the first few months after trauma before gradually tapering off, seeing his steady progress, I continued to believe in Scott's total recovery, even though, by the time an ambulette brought him home to our apartment, his short-term memory was still completely shot, resembling advanced Alzheimer's disease, and all his cognitive abilities were severely compromised. Although he couldn't figure out how to work the phone, bring up the names of our neighbors, or make sense of a menu, much less make art again, and he was ignorant of the century, year, season, month, and day, he recognized his family and friends, with whom he was able to exchange pleasantries as if our conversation actually made sense to him. Buoyed by each improvement, however miniscule, I embraced his recovery as my mission, my calling. My life had only one goal—to restore his life. Unwilling to trust anyone else with the responsibility of this crucial undertaking, I leaped into action, determined to keep him active and involved.

But by the first-year anniversary of his fall, I reluctantly had to admit that he was deeply and probably permanently disabled, despite his continuing gradual improvement. While physically he was much better, walking and talking almost normally again, his capacity to think or remember was devastatingly damaged. True, he was more observant with each passing week, and his attention span increased. Things that had been lost on him since his fall—like the taxi meter or a news item on NPR—occasionally began to register. And he grew steadily more affectionate. But he couldn't initiate an activity on his own or make a decision; indeed, all the crucial functions of the frontal cortex—instigating, organizing, and executing a plan, so essential to an artist; problem-solving, reasoning, and all the higher cognitive functions that are the glory of our species, as well as the "gatekeeper" functions of judgment and inhibition—were now, like all new memories since his fall, beyond his reach. He was shockingly disoriented in space and time—he couldn't find his way back from the trash chute down the hall, and every meal was lunch to him—which rendered him utterly dependent. And, perhaps most shocking, he had no memory of his accident and no understanding of the dramatic changes he'd undergone.

As it gradually came home to me that he might never recover, I sometimes felt myself slipping toward despair. Seeing me struggle to maintain my equilibrium, some concerned friends suggested that I should find some suitable home for him or hire a full-time caregiver and proceed with my life—as if his life were over and mine were something I could sever from his without consequence. But this man, with whom I went back half a century and with whom I'd lived my most fulfilling years, was too dear to me, too close for me to contemplate such a move. Whatever others might think, I knew that beneath his murky confusion, his self remained intact. His sunny optimism and charm, his aesthetic passion, his deep-rooted modesty, sincerity, generosity of spirit, and intensely loving nature kept breaking through the fog, despite the daily bouts of agitation and sporadic violent outbursts typical of traumatic brain injury.

Still, if we were ever to normalize our lives (albeit a new normal), something did have to change, now that our marriage, for so long based on freedom, was grounded in its opposite: dependency.

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When that tough-minded philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche proposed his principle *amor fati*, meaning “love your fate” or “love what is,” he wasn’t suggesting that you love only the pleasant parts. To embrace life fully meant to him to accept life with all of its inevitable limitations, no matter what fate had in store. Adapt to it, struggle with it, milk it for all you can, *love* it. We had to adjust, adapt, bend to our new reality—no less than if our lives had been suddenly transformed by the birth of a child.

Beginning in the second post-fall year, after accepting at last the truth of Scott’s permanent disability and coming to terms with my own sometimes debilitating anguish, I realized I must change. With my first year goal of his recovery essentially dead, I had to try to make our lives as fulfilling as I could, given our circumstances. For Scott, unable to do anything for himself, happiness meant only one thing: being with me, whether at home or out in the world. For me, it also meant carving out time away from him to do my work. To accomplish this I would have to wean him from his complete dependence on me.

I certainly could have used the financial and social support that any decent health care system would offer the disabled and their caregivers as a matter of course, in place of the current policy of relying on millions of women’s unpaid labor. My feminist conscience also bridled at the very structure of the family, which dictates that women do most of the world’s caregiving. But the injustice imbedded in our political and social structures did nothing to diminish my resolve to do my best for Scott—and for myself.

Once again, I jumped into action (my antidote to despair), as I had when he fell. I posted an ad on the New York University employment website and two weeks later settled on a graduate student in art to be his companion on weekdays from 9 AM to 2 PM, when she would accompany him to the bookstores, cafes, and galleries that had once been his favorite haunts. The minute he was gone I turned off the phone and returned to work.

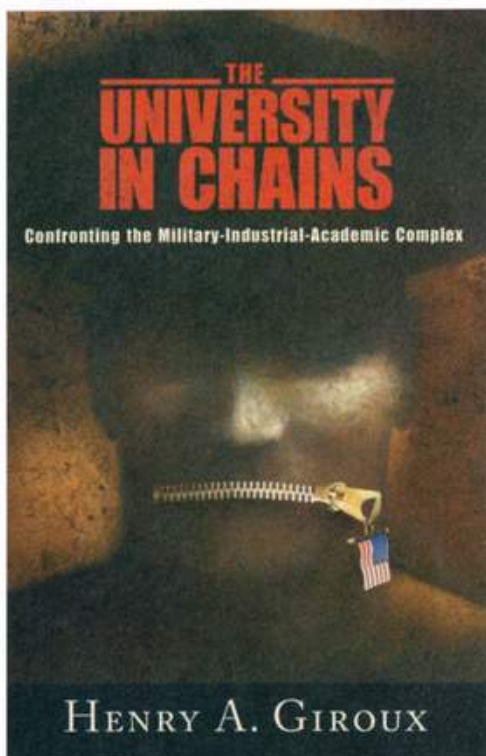
I began at once to write about the radical turn our lives had taken. And from the very start, an astonishing thing happened. Knowing that every hour was precious and precarious, since at any moment there might be an emergency with Scott, and acutely aware that my working hours were severely restricted, I found that this writing was the most efficient of my life. As never before, I wrote in an ecstasy of inspiration until, after little more than a year, I had miraculously completed the first draft of my new book, *To Love What Is*, a memoir about him, his fall, and its aftermath—which turned out to be as much a love story as a story of trauma and survival.

By the beginning of the third year since Scott’s fall, from the outside my own life looked much as it did before, though I worked a shorter day, and instead of cramming my chores into as brief a time as possible, I took Scott along and stretched them into an expedition—to the market, the doctor, the library. When I went out with friends in the evening, the difference was that I hired a Scott Watcher and tried to get home before his bedtime. Not that I didn’t have my fill of frustration, anger, and resentment, but despite what others imagined, for the most part I was fairly content, as, I believe, was Scott. Between our nightly movies, free New School chamber concerts on Tuesday afternoons, weekend interludes of Asian music at the Rubin Museum, and Sunday jazz sessions in the park—all of which piped rapturous infusions of dopamine directly into our right brains and were within walking distance of our apartment—our cultural life was, if anything, richer than ever. That Scott would forget the movie or concert or visit the minute it was over hardly mattered, since he was incapable of living anywhere but in the immediate present. Lacking knowledge of the recent past or any sense of the future, for him “living in the moment” was not a choice but the only available option, making his pleasure my priority. Was his delight a function of his cognitive deficits (“what I don’t know won’t hurt me,” he often said) or an overflow of love? I’ll go with love, which he volubly expressed many times a day.

Though our lives may be circumscribed and often difficult, it turns out that sometimes in the scales of fulfillment, devotion may outweigh independence. As of this writing (summer 2008), we’ve been lucky enough to remain together. ■

Higher Education Without Democracy?

by Henry Giroux and Chronis Polychroniou



HERE IS A GENERAL CONSENSUS AMONG ACADEMICS AROUND THE WORLD THAT higher education is in a state of crisis. Universities are now facing challenges arising from budget cuts, diminishing quality, the loss of academic community, the militarization of research, and the revamping of curricula to fit the needs of the market—all of which contradict the culture of higher education and make a mockery of the very meaning and mission of the university. One consequence of these challenges is that universities and colleges have been increasingly abandoned as public spheres dedicated to deepening and expanding the possibilities for democratic commitments, values, and relations.

The worldwide crisis in higher education has crucial political, social, ethical, and spiritual consequences. At a time when market culture is aggressively colonizing everyday life and social forms increasingly lose their shape or disappear altogether, higher education has represented a reassuring permanence. Indeed, higher education has remained a slowly changing bulwark in a landscape of rapidly dissolving, critical public spheres. But higher education in the United States and elsewhere is gradually losing its civic character and commitment to public life as it aligns itself with corporate power and military values. Corporate leaders are now hired as university presidents, tenure-track professors are replaced by contract employees, students are touted as customers, and learning is increasingly defined as instrumental, while critical knowledge is relegated to the dustbin of an impoverished and underfunded liberal arts sector. Questions regarding how education might enable students to develop a keen sense of prophetic justice, promote the analytic skills necessary to hold power accountable, and provide the spiritual foundation through which students learn to respect the rights of others—and also, as Bill Moyers puts it, “claim their moral and political agency”—have become increasingly irrelevant in a market-driven and militarized university.

The calculating logic of the *instrumentalized* university diminishes the spiritual and political vision needed to sustain a vibrant democracy and an engaged notion of social agency. It also undermines the development of public spaces where matters of dissent, public conscience, and social justice are pedagogically valued and offer protection against the growing anti-democratic tendencies that are enveloping much of the United States and many other parts of the world.

Educating young people in the spirit of a critical democracy by providing them with access to the knowledge, passion, civic capacities, and social responsibility necessary to address the problems facing the nation and the globe also means challenging the existence of rigid disciplinary boundaries, the cult of expertise or highly specialized scholarship unrelated to public life, and anti-democratic ideologies that diminish the exercise of academic freedom. Anti-democratic and anti-intellectual tendencies have intensified with the contemporary emergence of a market-based neoliberal rationality. In such a circumstance,

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higher education in many parts of the world is held hostage to political and economic forces that aim to convert educational institutions into corporate institutions defined by a profit-oriented identity and mission.

The world of American higher education is becoming increasingly divided: Even as some institutions educate the elite to rule the world in the twenty-first century, others are training students for low-paid positions in the capitalist world economy. It is increasingly apparent that the university in America has become a social institution that fails to address inequality in society and that contributes to a growing division between social classes. Instead of being a space for critical dialogue, analysis, and interpretation, the American university is increasingly defined as a space of consumption, where ideas are validated in instrumental terms and valued for their success in attracting outside funding while developing stronger ties to corporate powers.

Equally important, higher education has become a home for knowledge forms, underlying values, practices, ideologies, social relations, and cultural representations associated with the intensification and expansion of military culture. Higher education has no legitimate or ethical reason for engaging in practices that are organized largely for the production of violence.

Prominent educators and theorists such as Hannah Arendt, John Dewey, Cornelius Castoriadis, and C. Wright Mills long believed and rightly argued that we should neither allow education to be modeled after the business world nor sit by while corporate power and influence undermine the semi-autonomy of higher education by exercising control over its faculty, curricula, and students. These public intellectuals shared a common vision and a project that involved rethinking the role that education might play in providing students with the habits of mind and means of acting that would enable them to identify and address the acute challenges and dangers facing a world increasingly dominated by a mode of instrumental and technological thinking that is morally and spiritually bankrupt. All of these theorists offered us the notion of the university as a bastion of democratic learning and meaningful social values. This is a notion that must be defended in discussions about what form will be taken by the relationship among corporations, the war industries, and higher education in the twenty-first century.

A campaign must be waged against the corporate view of higher education as a training center for future business employees, a franchise for generating profits, a research center for the military, or a space in which corporate culture and education merge, thereby conflating citizenship, militarism, and consumerism. Higher education has a responsibility not only to search for the truth regardless of where it may lead, but also to educate students to demand that authority remain politically and morally accountable, thereby expanding academic freedom and the role of the university as a democratic public sphere. At a time when the meaning and purpose of higher education are besieged by a phalanx of narrow economic and political interests, it is all the more important to ask whether education should serve the public or private good, and to consider the university as the protector and promoter of democratic values.

What needs to be understood is that higher education may be one of the few public spheres left where knowledge, values, and learning nurture critical hope and a substantive democracy. It may be the case that everyday life is increasingly organized around market principles, but confusing democracy with market relations hollows out the legacy of higher education, whose deepest roots are moral, not commercial. In defending young people's ability to access and to learn from educational rather than corporate institutions, we must heed the insight of Federico Mayor, the former director general of UNESCO, who insists, "You cannot expect anything from uneducated citizens except unstable democracy." ■



The Irresponsibility of Thomas Friedman

by Jerome Slater

[Editor's Note: Jerome Slater's critique of Thomas Friedman raises important questions about the role of journalists in mis-shaping public understanding of the Israel/Palestine struggle. As we have repeatedly argued in Tikkun, the mistakes made in the creation and perpetuation of that struggle come from both sides, and any historical reading must acknowledge the continued propensity on both sides to engage in acts of violence. Palestinian extremists and terrorists are culpable too—not just Israelis. Because this magazine emerges from the West, where Israel's side of the story is well known and largely accepted blindly, while the Palestinian side is systematically kept from public consideration, we have often tried to re-balance the story by presenting the facts that the American media and the cheerleaders for the right wing in Israel have kept out of public view. Slater's critique of Thomas Friedman is part of that effort. In 2003 Tikkun published the book Healing Israel/Palestine in which we try to give a more fully balanced account of the struggle, recognizing that both sides have full culpability for the origin and continuation of the struggle, and we are proud to say that the book is as relevant today as it was when we first published it. Saying that does not diminish the importance of Slater's challenging of the deep misunderstandings of the situation perpetrated in Western media—misunderstandings which continue to constrain the possibilities of rational pro-peace intervention by the United States.]



The author argues that Thomas Friedman, above, has perpetrated untruthful mythologies that are harmful to Israeli/Palestinian peace prospects.

A CLOSE OBSERVERS OF THE CENTURY-OLD CONFLICT BETWEEN THE ZIONIST movement and the Arab residents of Palestine increasingly understand, the Zionist narrative is riddled with historical mythologies that do not stand up under close and dispassionate examination. But these myths have had the devastating consequence of blinding Israelis—and their unthinking American supporters—to their own role in the never-ending Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as in the wider Arab-Israeli conflict.

To be sure, the Palestinians and the Arabs as a whole have their own historical mythologies, and it is obvious that Israel does not bear all the blame for the ongoing conflict. Still, it is the Israeli mythologies, largely accepted by most Americans, which have been the greater obstacle to a peace settlement, especially in recent years.

Before 2000, three major mythologies were refuted by serious historians and journalists—most of them Israeli. First, there was the myth that in 1948 a weak Israeli army (David) heroically overcame a strong Arab army (Goliath) that intended to destroy the new Jewish state; in fact, the Israeli armies outnumbered and outgunned a small coalition of half-hearted Arab armies, whose primary purpose was to prevent each other from grabbing off pieces of Palestine, rather than to “drive the Jews into the sea.” Second, there was the myth that hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees voluntarily fled their homes and villages in 1947-48; the evidence is overwhelming that the main reason the Palestinians fled was either out of the justified fear they might be massacred, as had happened at Deir Yassin and elsewhere, or because the Zionist armed forces rounded them up and forced them across the borders into Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria. Third, there was the myth that both the Palestinians and their Arab neighbors “never lost an opportunity to lose an opportunity” to reach peaceful political settlements with Israel; in fact it is Israel that has repeatedly turned down real opportunities for peaceful settlements—with Egypt until the 1970s, with Jordan until the 1980s, and with the Palestinians, Syria, and the Arab world as a whole today.

In all these cases, Israel's leading enemies, as well as the Arab League, representing most Arab countries, were and still are ready not only to end their conflict with the Jewish state but to normalize diplomatic and economic relations with it, in exchange for full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, the West Bank, Gaza, and Arab East Jerusalem, followed by the creation of an independent Palestinian state with its capital in East Jerusalem. Consequently, the main reason for the continuation of Israel's conflict with the Arab world (other

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than with Egypt) is that Israel has refused to withdraw from the expanded territory it conquered in 1967.

Since 2000 there has been a new myth, one that may be even more factually wrong and pernicious in terms of its consequences in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to this myth, the last serious peace negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians, at Camp David in July 2000, broke down because Yasir Arafat and the Palestinians rejected a generous settlement offered by Prime Minister Ehud Barak. This myth says the Palestinians made no counteroffers of their own, and turned instead to terrorist violence against the Israeli population.

One of the most important purveyors of this myth has been Thomas Friedman, the lead foreign policy columnist of the *New York Times*. In part because of the position he holds as a writer for the world's most influential newspaper, in part because he often *appears* to be moderate and balanced in his analyses and commentaries, and perhaps even because of the glibness of his writing style, it is reasonable to assume that Friedman has had an important influence on U.S. understanding of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.*

The Camp David mythology underlies the policies of the Bush administration, as well as the dominant attitudes in Congress, the general American public, and the American Jewish community. Within a few months of Camp David, however, a number of important works began appearing, all of them challenging various aspects of the mythology. Within the next three years, the literature became extensive, and today no part of this mythology has survived serious examination by numerous Israeli, American, Palestinian, and European scholars and journalists, and—especially—by Israeli diplomats and academic advisors who were directly involved in the events of 2000, as well as former military, intelligence, and government officials (see box on p. 49).

Thomas Friedman, however, continued to reiterate the mythology. According to a number of Friedman columns, at Camp David Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak sought to test whether Arafat and the Palestinians were ready for a real peace, offering them a comprehensive settlement in which, in return for a definitive Palestinian decision to end its historic conflict with Israel, they would get an independent state in “virtually all” of the West Bank and Gaza; half of Jerusalem, including all the key Arab areas; the removal of all the Jewish settlements within the new Palestinian state, with territorial compensation for the areas that would be annexed to Israel; and a return to Israel of a symbolic number of Palestinian refugees and either the right of return to the new Palestinian state or financial restitution to the others.

The Palestinians failed the test, Friedman wrote, leaving the Israelis without “a partner for peace.” To be sure, Friedman concedes, Barak’s (and, later, Clinton’s) proposals had defects and were not perfect from the Palestinian point of view, but this did not justify Arafat’s decision to walk away from continued negotiations and launch the intifada: the right response would have been to make a counteroffer and then employ diplomacy or even nonviolent resistance to extract more out of Israel. The Palestinians’ alleged failure to follow this course convinced Friedman that Arafat and his followers did not want a peaceful settlement with Israel but were continuing to seek its destruction.

There is a rather bizarre contradiction between Friedman’s acknowledgement of the realities of the Israeli occupation and his condemnation of the intifada as so inexplicable as to definitively demonstrate that Arafat was an extremist with whom it was impossible to negotiate. For example, Friedman has written that the Israeli occupation is both morally and practically disastrous—in his own words, at varying times, “brutal,” “idiotic,” “lunatic,” “rapacious,” and “a cancer for the Jewish people ... [threatening] the entire Zionist enterprise” (“Dead Man Walking,” January 30, 2002).

Moreover, Friedman has conceded that Barak was negotiating with one hand while he “seized more Palestinian land for settlements” with the other; that this understandably led the Palestinians to “feel their living space was shrinking while Israel’s was constantly expanding, all under the umbrella of ‘peace’” (“Lifelines to the Future,” April 2, 2002); and that

*** Author’s Note:** Dennis Ross, the head of the U.S. delegation at Camp David and a close adviser to Bill Clinton, has been equally influential, and equally misleading, in placing most of the blame for the breakdown of the peace process on the Palestinians in general and Yasir Arafat in particular. It is unlikely, however, that Ross had much influence on Friedman’s thinking, because Ross’s book on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, *The Missing Peace*, appeared in the spring of 2004, whereas most of Friedman’s columns on Camp David and the intifada appeared in the 2001-03 period. I have criticized Ross’s arguments in “The Missing Pieces in The Missing Peace,” *Tikkun*, May-June 2005.



One such myth, the author contends, is that “the last serious peace negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians, at Camp David in July 2000, broke down because Yasir Arafat and the Palestinians rejected a generous settlement offered by Prime Minister Ehud Barak.”

Above, left to right: Ehud Barak, President Clinton, Yasir Arafat, at Camp David, MD, July 11, 2000.



Palestinian Fatah activists hold axes, firearms, and a portrait of Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat during a march to mark the 13th anniversary of the 1987 Intifada in Gaza City, Saturday Dec. 9, 2000.

the continued expansion of the settlements, checkpoints, and fences are "shameful act[s] of colonial coercion" ("It Only Gets Worse," May 22, 2001) that have "transformed the West Bank into a series of cages ... that will become factories of despair" ("One Wall, One Man, One Vote," September 14, 2003).

Yet, Friedman professes not to understand why the Palestinians resorted to an uprising. While on one occasion observing that the Palestinians could hardly be expected to "just roll over and take it" ("Six Wars and Counting," May 29, 2002), he nonetheless on various occasions characterized the intifada as "idiotic," "brain-dead," "insane," and "a reckless, pointless, foolish adventure." According to Friedman, Arafat never explained why an uprising was necessary or what its precise objectives were, never "offered a peace plan of his own that explicitly lays out for Israelis how their own Jewish state will be accepted by the Palestinians" ("A Mideast Policy for Mr. Bush," January 19, 2001), and refused even to begin to prepare his people for the historic compromises a settlement would require. What he should have done, Friedman argued, was to have built on Barak's "opening bid" and continue the negotiations; instead, Arafat preferred "to play the victim rather than the statesman," and sought to "provoke the Israelis into brutalizing the Palestinians again" ("Arafat's War," October 13, 2000).

Friedman on Palestinian Intentions

IF THE INTIFADA WAS UNJUSTIFIED AND UNNECESSARY, WHAT CONCLUSIONS SHOULD be drawn about Arafat's purpose in "launching" it? Friedman can't quite make up his mind about this crucial question, for at varying times he has offered four quite different answers:

1. Even if Arafat is still seeking a two-state solution, he will not accept it by means of a peaceful negotiations process; he and the Palestinians, "blinded by narcissistic rage," didn't want a state handed to them by Israel and the United States, preferring "to win their independence in blood and fire" ("Suicidal Lies," March 31, 2002).
2. Anyway, Arafat will not settle for a two-state solution, for his rejection of the Barak/Clinton offers "leads to only one conclusion: that the priority of the Palestinians is not achieving an independent state. Their priority, apparently, is to kill Jews ... [and] attempt to eliminate 100 percent of Israel" ("The Intifada is Over," December 5, 2001).
3. The violence has no political purpose at all. The suicide bombings inside Israel demonstrate that "the Palestinian national movement was being taken over by bin Ladenism, which is the nihilistic pursuit of murderous violence against civilians, without any political program and outside of any political context" ("Intifada is Over").
4. In a variation on the no-political-purpose explanation, Friedman suggests that the intifada can be explained by symbolism or, alternatively, Palestinian self-hatred: "Palestinian youths [are] lashing out at the symbol of their failure to build a modern society ... [and] at the instruments of their decline—their own leaders. Their message to Israelis is: 'We are somebody. We may not be able to make microchips, but we can make you miserable and we will do that even if it is making us destitute'" ("The New Mideast Paradigm," March 6, 2001).

Camp David Demythologized

A DETAILED REVIEW OF THE VOLUMINOUS LITERATURE AND EVIDENCE THAT HAS DECISIVELY refuted the Camp David/intifada mythology is beyond the scope of this article, but the main points can be briefly summarized. To begin with, Barak was the wrong man to negotiate a peace settlement with the Palestinians, which inevitably would require serious Israeli concessions and Palestinian trust that the concessions would later be implemented in good faith. In fact, the Palestinians had excellent reasons to distrust Barak: he had been a lifelong hawk who had opposed all earlier partial Israeli-Palestinian agreements and who regularly and publicly denigrated Arabs in general and Palestinians in particular, sometimes in

barely disguised racist language. Even more importantly, as prime minister, Barak had continuously expanded the Israeli settlements in the West Bank—at a pace that exceeded even that of his hard-line Israeli predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu—and had refused to carry out several of the Israeli troop withdrawals and other measures that had been mandated by the 1993 Israeli-Palestinian Oslo agreements. All of this could hardly inspire Palestinian confidence that Barak would be willing to implement a genuine peace settlement that would necessarily go far beyond Oslo, requiring a near-complete Israeli withdrawal of settlements and armed forces from the occupied territories.

Even at Camp David, it was unclear how far Barak was prepared to go to reach a peace agreement—evidently even to Barak himself. Although at some level he had apparently come to believe that some kind of settlement with the Palestinians was a practical necessity, Barak continued to be of two minds on the matter. Moreover, even at the Camp David “negotiations,” astonishingly Barak refused to meet with Arafat and in other ways treated him with contempt. Later, a number of Palestinian and Israeli commentators, including members of the Israeli delegation, described Barak’s treatment of Arafat as a puzzling and gratuitous humiliation, and one which could hardly inspire Palestinian confidence in Barak’s willingness to reach a true peace settlement.

That aside, Barak made no concrete or verifiable offers at Camp David on any of the many specific areas of dispute, refusing to put anything in writing until the entire package he had in mind was agreed to by the Palestinians. Indeed, Barak now actually brags that he gave less to the Palestinians—in fact, as he puts it, “not a thing”—than did his hard-line Likud predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu.

Even so, there is a general consensus on the broad outlines of what Barak verbally seemed to be offering at Camp David: a demilitarized Palestinian state in some 85-90% of the occupied territories, but with Israel retaining (1) most of Jerusalem, (2) most of the largest Jewish settlements, typically located on the most fertile lands in the West Bank and some of them extending far from the Green Line into the Palestinian areas, (3) most of the West Bank water aquifers, and (4) direct military control over the Jordan River valley and adjacent mountains.

Thus, if Arafat had accepted Barak’s concept of a “fair and generous” settlement, the Palestinians would have gained only a tiny, impoverished, water-starved Palestinian “state,” divided into at least three different enclaves—in effect, Bantustans separated from each other by Israeli armed forces, roads, and settlements. Moreover, the Palestinians would be denied full sovereignty and control even over Arab East Jerusalem and the Muslim religious sites on the Temple Mount.

In short, Barak’s past history, his continued contempt for the Palestinians, and his ongoing policies of deepening and expanding the Israeli occupation suggested—and not merely to the Palestinians, but to Israeli critics as well—that his true goal was to make only the minimal concessions necessary to allow Israel to prolong and solidify what were, to him, the most important areas of the Israeli occupation.

No Palestinian Counteroffers?

EVEN SO, IT IS DEMONSTRABLY UNTRUE THAT ARAFAT REFUSED TO ARTICULATE HIS GOALS, refused to make counteroffers, walked away from diplomacy, and launched the intifada. First of all, in 1988, again in the 1993 Israeli-Palestinian Oslo agreements, and publicly reiterated on many occasions thereafter, Arafat and other Palestinian leaders formally and publicly recognized and accepted the state of Israel within its pre-June 1967 boundaries and called for a two-state solution, with the Palestinian state to be created only in what was left of Palestine after the establishment of the state of Israel and its further expansion in the 1948 war. None of this stopped Friedman from writing that “If I had a dime for every time someone agreed to recognize Israel on behalf of Yasir Arafat, I would be a wealthy man today” (“Ballots and Boycotts,” January 13, 2005).

Put differently, Arafat personally and the Palestinian leadership generally committed itself to accept the established fact that Israel composed 78% of Palestine as defined by the

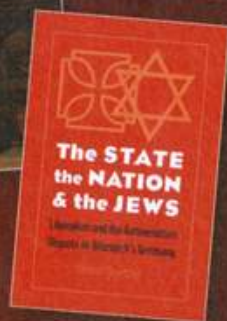
“The literature became extensive...”

It includes Hussein Agha and Robert Malley, “Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors,” *New York Review of Books*, August 9, 2001; Agha and Malley, “Camp David and After: A Reply to Ehud Barak,” *New York Review of Books*, June 13, 2002; Moshe Amirav, interview with *Ha’aretz* journalist Aryeh Dayan, “Barak Began Referring to ‘Holy of Holies,’” December 9, 2002; Shaul Arieli, interview with Akiva Eldar, “They Just Can’t Hear Each Other,” *Ha’aretz*, March 11, 2003; Yossi Beilin, *The Path to Geneva* (New York: RDV Books, 2004); Beilin, “What Really Happened at Taba,” *Ha’aretz*, July 15, 2002; Akiva Eldar, “On the Basis of the Nonexistent Camp David Understandings,” *Ha’aretz*, November 16, 2001; Charles Enderlin, *Shattered Dreams* (New York: Other Press, 2003); Gershon Gorenberg, “The Real Blunders,” *Jerusalem Report*, November 20, 2000; Akram Hanieh, “The Camp David Papers,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Winter 2001), pp. 75-97; Baruch Kimmerling, “From Barak to the Road Map,” *New Left Review*, Vol. 23 (September-October 2003); Menachem Klein, “Shattering the Myths of Camp David,” *Ha’aretz*, August 8, 2003; Robert Malley, “Israel and the Arafat Question,” *New York Review of Books*, June 13, 2002; “Palestinian Response to the Clinton Proposal,” December 30, 2000, text in *Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories*, (Washington, D.C.: Foundation for Middle East Peace, January-February 2001); Jeremy Pressman, “Visions in Collision: What Happened at Camp David and Taba?” *International Security*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Fall 2003): pp. 5-43; Ron Pundak, “From Oslo to Taba: What Went Wrong?” *Survival*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Autumn 2001), pp. 31-45; William B. Quandt, “Clinton and the Arab-Israeli Conflict,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Winter 2001), pp. 26-40; Yezid Sayigh, “Arafat and the Anatomy of a Revolt,” *Survival*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Autumn, 2001), pp. 47-70; Jerome Slater, “What Went Wrong? The Collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process,” *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. 116, No. 2 (Summer 2001), pp. 171-199; Deborah Sontag, “A Special Report: Quest for Mideast Peace,” *New York Times Magazine*, July 26, 2001; Clayton E. Swisher, *The Truth About Camp David: The Untold Story About the Collapse of the Middle East Peace Process* (New York: Nation Books, 2004).

Malley was a member of the U.S. delegation to Camp David; Amirav, Arieli, Beilin, Klein, and Pundak were either members of the Israeli delegation or close military or political advisers to Barak; Hanieh was a member of the Palestinian delegation. The others are Israeli, American, and Palestinian scholars and journalists.

More recently, two other major books by participants at Camp David have blamed the failure of the negotiations on both Barak and Arafat, though more so on Arafat; even so, they are far more balanced than Friedman, and provide plenty of evidence of Israeli rigidities: Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Scars of War, Wounds of Peace: The Israeli-Arab Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), and Gilead Sher, *The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Negotiations, 1999-2001* (London: Routledge, 2006). Ben-Ami was the Israeli Foreign Minister under Barak and Sher was the chief Israeli negotiator at Camp David.

—Jerome Slater



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League of Nations in 1919, so long as the Palestinians could get their own state in what remained. Indeed, not even quite that, for at Camp David Arafat agreed to accept the incorporation into Israel of settlements near the Green Line and a number of Jewish neighborhoods in formerly Arab East Jerusalem, as well as the principle of Israeli sovereignty over the Jewish parts of the Old City of Jerusalem.

As Abu Ala (Ahmed Quray), the chief Palestinian negotiator at Camp David, put it in an interview with an Israeli journalist in October 2001, "We have agreed to settle for the borders of 1967.... We get to keep only 22% of the historic land of Palestine and you get to hold on to all the rest. We have recognized Israel and agreed to its demands for secure borders and security arrangements.... You did not consider all this to be concessions on our part. You pocketed these incredible concessions and made more demands. You wanted massive settlement blocs that would have turned us into a state of cantons.... As far as you are concerned, Palestine is all yours, as though we never existed" (*Ma'ariv*, October 28, 2001).

In short, it is hardly the case that the official Palestinian goals are unknown—it's just that Friedman simply refuses to believe that they are so limited, mainly because of the rather odd inferences he insists on drawing about the Palestinian resort to violence. First, there appears to be no evidence at all that Arafat rejected Barak's offer at Camp David because he wanted to win a Palestinian state only through "blood and fire"—it would appear that this assertion is uniquely Friedman's. Furthermore (as I shall argue below), there is no basis for the inference that the Palestinian uprising could only be explained by the desire to destroy Israel rather than simply to gain an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.

The Intifada

ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, FRIEDMAN WROTE THAT, AFTER CAMP DAVID, ARAFAT "WALKED away" from further negotiations and "launched" the intifada. The facts are clearly otherwise, however. To begin with, the intifada did not erupt until two months later, and the precipitating cause was not a negotiations deadlock but Ariel Sharon's highly provocative "visit" (accompanied by over 1,000 Israeli police officers) to the Temple Mount. Before that—and even afterwards—there continued to be a variety of contacts between Palestinian and Israeli officials. As a result of these secret negotiations as well as the "Clinton Plan" for a settlement, both sides met again in December at the Taba conference. At these meetings the Israeli delegation, this time led by Yossi Beilin and including other prominent peace activists, made significant new concessions over Jerusalem, the settlements, the territorial disputes, and the extent of a continued Israeli military presence in the West Bank. In turn, the Palestinian delegation effectively (though not in so many words) dropped its demand for a large-scale right of return of Palestinian refugees to Israel, made concessions of its own over several Jerusalem issues, and agreed to accept an international force in the Jordan River valley. Tragically, the Taba conference came too late, in part because Barak began backing away from the concessions of his own negotiating team, and in part because there was no doubt that the impending victory of Ariel Sharon in the Israeli elections of January 2001 would render irrelevant any agreement reached at Taba.

Furthermore, there is no known evidence that the intifada was ordered by Arafat, despite Friedman's repeated assertions, as in: "Please don't tell me you can't control your own people. You've sold us that carpet one too many times" ("Dear Ariel and Yasir," October 23, 2001). The best evidence today strongly suggests that the intifada was a grassroots and spontaneous explosion of Palestinian rage—indeed, one that was directed not only at the occupation but at Arafat's failure to have ended it. It is probably the case that Arafat later gained a significant degree of control over the non-Islamist groups participating in the intifada, and therefore over some of the Palestinian violence; even so (Friedman to the contrary notwithstanding), few informed observers believed that Arafat controlled the suicidal terrorists from Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

In short, far from following a "strategy" that employed the intifada as its main tool, Arafat was riding on the back of the tiger. That was the conclusion, in effect, of the Mitchell Commission, a blue-ribbon international commission headed by former Senator George

Mitchell whose task was to investigate the Palestinian intifada and the Israeli response. Friedman was not pleased that the Mitchell Commission found no persuasive evidence Arafat ordered the uprising; his response was, "Take all the Mitchell reports, make a big pile out of them, and set them ablaze into a gigantic bonfire" ("It Only Gets Worse," May 22, 2001).

Subsequently, much of the Israeli intelligence establishment, including Military Intelligence and the Shin Bet, confirmed the findings of the Mitchell Commission. One could hardly find a more decisive refutation of Friedman than that of Ami Ayalon, who headed the Shin Bet in 2000:

"[Yasir] Arafat neither prepared nor triggered the Intifada. The explosion was spontaneous, against Israel, as all hope for the end of occupation disappeared, and against the Palestinian Authority, its corruption, and its impotence. Arafat could not repress it ... he can fight neither against the Islamists nor against his own base. The Palestinians would end up hanging him in the public square" (*Haaretz*, January 7, 2002).

What If Arafat Had Launched the Intifada?

STILL, FOR THE SAKE OF ARGUMENT, LET US SUPPOSE THAT ARAFAT DID ORDER THE intifada: What would that prove? For centuries it has been an established tradition in the West (and certainly in the United States) that an oppressed people who have exhausted political methods of redress have a right of armed revolution. In that case, it was hardly unreasonable—let alone "idiotic," "insane," etc—for the Palestinians to have concluded in 2000 that political methods of redress had failed.

To be sure, armed revolution must be distinguished from terrorism; attacks on an oppressive state and its military forces may sometimes be legitimate, but attacks on innocent civilians can never be. It has been widely (and conveniently) forgotten, and not only by Thomas Friedman, that in its early stages the Palestinian uprising did not employ terrorism. Indeed, there was very little Palestinian armed violence against *anyone* in the first few weeks of the intifada, during which hardly any Israelis were killed—although hundreds of Palestinians were shot dead by Israeli police and military units.

Even after the Palestinians turned to violence, Arafat and other Palestinian leaders repeatedly stated that the intifada was not directed against the state or the people of Israel proper (i.e. within its pre-1967 boundaries) but only against the continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Its behavior was generally consistent with this claim; with but a few exceptions, until the election of Ariel Sharon in early 2001 ended all chances of a negotiated political settlement, Palestinian violence was directed at either Israeli military forces or the most extremist settlers within the occupied territories.

Thus, while the Palestinian resort to terrorism after 2001 can never be justified, neither can it be ignored that it was most likely a response to the increasingly repressive and violent Israeli occupation. Indeed, Israeli journalists, intellectuals, retired military and intelligence officials, and even some politicians have publicly drawn an explicit connection between Israeli actions and the Palestinian response. Not Thomas Friedman, however. On the contrary, Friedman wrote: "The world must understand that the Palestinians have not chosen suicide bombing out of 'desperation' stemming from the Israeli occupation. That is a huge lie. Why? To begin with, a lot of other people in the world are desperate, yet they have not gone around strapping dynamite to themselves.... Let's be very clear: Palestinians have adopted suicide bombing as a strategic choice, not out of desperation" ("Suicidal Lies," March 31, 2002).

The question of Palestinian terrorism aside, no fair examination of the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can avoid discussing Israel's own attacks, direct and indirect, on Palestinian civilians—which under Ariel Sharon included the deliberate devastation of the Palestinian government bureaucracy, economy, and even society as a whole, including schools and universities, and even public health institutions. Remarkably, in one of his rare (though backhanded) acknowledgments of the connection between (continued on page 72)

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Ariel Sharon, right, makes his highly provocative "visit" (accompanied by over 1,000 Israeli police officers) to the Temple Mount, September 28, 2000.

Is Christmas Christian?

by Richard Rohr



be aghast at the consumer- and group-defining feast that Christmas has become. He merely replicated the drama of the stable with live animals and music.

For Francis and the early Franciscans, *"incarnation was already redemption,"* and the feast of Christmas said that God was saying yes to humanity in the enfleshment of his Son in our midst. If that were true, then all questions of inherent dignity, worthiness, and belovedness were resolved once and forever—and for everything that was human, material, physical, and in the whole of creation. That's why Francis liked animals and nature, praising the sun, moon, and stars, like some New Ager from California. It was all good and chosen and beautiful if God came among us *"as Emmanuel"* (Isaiah 7:14).

But groups need and create their identity symbols, and the celebration of Christmas became the big one for Christian Europe, just as Jewish people need Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and Muslims need Ramadan and pilgrimage. The trouble is *that*

AS A FRANCISCAN PRIEST, I think I have the right to ask that question. Frankly, it is much easier to ask in a non-Christian owned magazine!

We from the Catholic tradition too easily presume that because the title is right, the train following it is on the right track. We are not often open to asking if the train has anything to do with the direction of the original engine. In this case, the birth and message of Jesus of Nazareth.

We all know that the date of December 25 is not derived from Christian tradition. It instead traces back to the third-century Roman feast of the Rebirth of the Sun—normally celebrated as soon as they could observe the same, sometime after the Winter Solstice. Right away, that tells us that the first few centuries of the Common Era had no interest in knowing when Jesus was born or even celebrating it. That came with calendars and the demarcating of precise time.

Frankly, we must confess that it was likely our founder, St. Francis (1182-1226), who began to make Christmas the sentimental celebration that it has become, although his intention was never at all in the direction it has taken. He was the great lover of poverty and simplicity, and would

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the meaning became group-defining instead of life-transforming. As we say today, it got “off message”! It was no longer God’s choice of the whole, but God’s choice of us! (In fairness, most religions make the same mistake at lower levels of transformation).

At those lower levels of civil religion or any religion as a “belonging system,” the original meaning is always lost and often even morphs into its exact opposite. Strange and sad, isn’t it? In this case, the *self-emptying* of God into humble and poor humanity (Philippians 2:7) became an excuse for us to fill, consume, dominate, use, and spend at staggering levels for ourselves. In fact, the days leading up to December 25 are the economic engine around which the entire business economy measures itself in Christian-influenced countries. One might think that the fasting of Ramadan and Yom Kippur might have been a much clearer act of solidarity with the actual mystery celebrated.

Well, this year we might be *forced* under duress to celebrate the feast of Jesus’ humble birth with honesty! Our economic meltdown is showing for all to see what our real gods have been. It is not the Lord of Israel or his Son that we love, nearly as much as we do our limitless growth, our right to empire, our actual obligation to consume, and our sense of entitlement to this clearly limited planet.

In Christian circles, when I call these false gods into question, I am invariably criticized on other grounds of heresy and church protocols, almost so we do not have to look at what our real loyalties have been and are. “Let’s keep talking about Biblical interpretation or papal infallibility so we never have to look at our lifestyle.” For far too many of us, our final loyalties have been to the system of America, to the free market, to the protecting of the top and not the bottom where Jesus was, and to what Pope John Paul II called “rigid capitalism.” He said in several of his encyclical letters that capitalism had to be critiqued and regulated just as much as socialist communism (e.g., *Laborem Exercens*). Strange that most western Catholics never quoted him on that theme!

So, come, let us celebrate the feast anew! May we who have consumed the mystery of Jesus now consume his whole meal, and may it free us from needing to consume so much of everything else. If you really have *the One*, you should not need more and more of *the other*. Maybe our humble Jesus is stealing our idols from us, and inviting us back into his Bethlehem stable. ■

The Art of Fasting:

A Question of Attention

by Yahia Lababidi

I WAS FASTING AS I WROTE THIS, OBSERVING RAMADAN, ONE OF THE FIVE PILLARS OF Islam. During this holy month, fasting is practiced daily from dawn to sunset. The wisdom underlying the choice of this month for this sort of worship is that this was the month in which the Qur’an was revealed. I take this to mean that Ramadan offers an occasion for personal revelation or the courting of inspiration. Something about my sensibility makes this particular observance appealing to me. Perhaps, it has to do with the ascetic ideal as I see it.

A figure transfigured, seated amid implacable calm. Stillness surrounds him, emanates from him, the harvest of a lifetime passed in quiet quest of exalted pursuits. The gaze is

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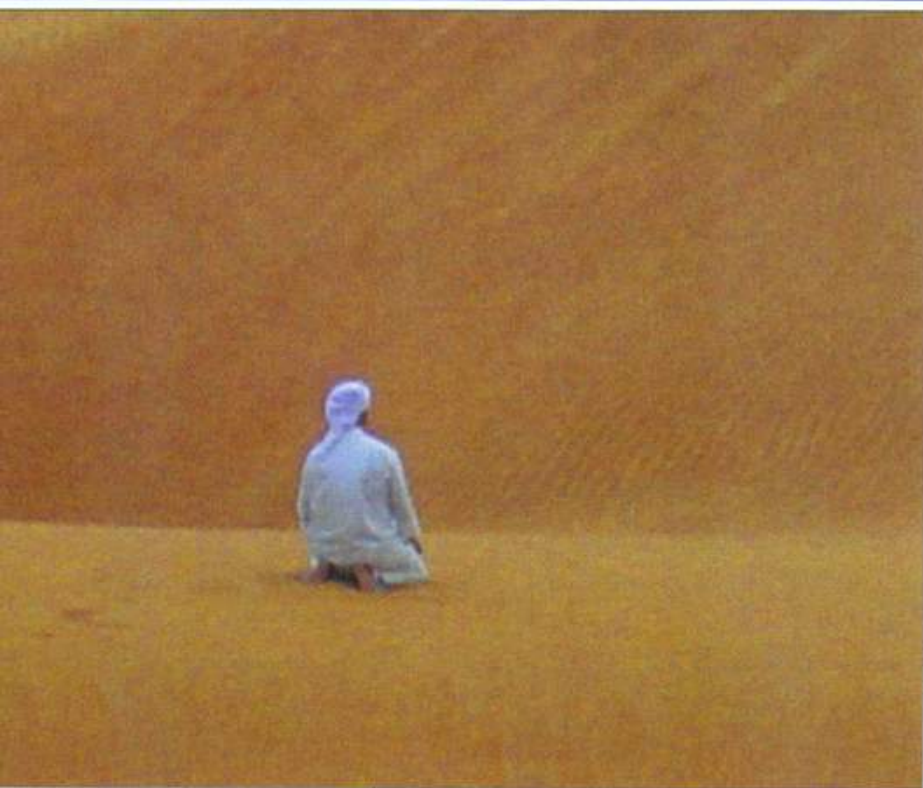
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steady, of one accustomed to looking from dizzying heights at unfathomable depths—free of ill will, guile, or self-interest. Arms and legs neatly folded, he sits, lost in thought, found in peace. Conversely, the ascetic ideal conjures an image of the desert-ravaged hermit, spewing prophecies and lusting for divine union. The first ideogram is of one who has overcome; the second is of one who has fused.

What is common to both is the suggestion of being transported, or of entering the presence of something unknown and unknowable. How else to justify the existence of intuition, intimation or inspiration other than seize upon the fallen crumbs from that ineffable table? Perhaps such mysticism transcends religion altogether, if religion is understood as an unseeing belief in the written, and mysticism as unwritten faith in the unseen. Yet, this meditative/ecstatic state is one that, I believe, can be accessed through religious practices such as fasting.

“There is only one religion, but there are a hundred versions of it” said George Bernard Shaw, and

the same may be said of the practice of fasting. Besides Muslims, Baha’is, Buddhists, Catholics, Copts, Hindus, Jews, Mormons, Pagans, Protestants, and Eastern Orthodox believers all engage in some variation on the theme. The fast may take place anywhere from a day to around half a year, yet it appears to be conducted in differently similar manners, for similarly different reasons. People abstain from food and drink, or solid foods, or meat, dairy products and eggs, or fish (on some days but not others).

The reasons are as free-ranging as the human imagination: spiritual nourishment, spiritual improvement, and/or spiritual warfare. This translates into purification, freeing the mind, freeing the body, compassion, solidarity with the poor, practicing austerity, resisting gluttony, control of carnal desires, tempering the power of habit or the violence of instinctive desire, sharpening the will, enhancing concentration, penance for sins, closeness to God, petition for special requests from God, to advance a political or social-justice agenda (as Gandhi made a way of life and diet) or even as a counterbalance to modern consumer culture (there is a television and entertainment fast). What emerges from this diversity is an innate human balancing system, feasting and fasting along the slippery road to moderation.

The discipline of fasting seems to express a kind of body/spirit antagonism: Fasting, which clearly serves some basic human function, is in effect a punishment of the body. How to feed a god and beast, at once? It’s a dilemma of human existence. In this light, fasting acts as an undoing of the body and a dimming of its din. The suggestion being: if you wish to have an out-of-body experience, you must deny the physical body, experience a sort of semi-martyrdom or dying to the flesh in order to feed the spiritual body. It is a reminder of our other-body selves, our spirit-body and the otherworldly food it hungers for. This is perhaps why street magician David Blaine and his ascetic spectacles capture so much attention and speculation.

No stranger to punishing practices, Blaine is a hybrid of showman and fakir, perpetually testing the limits of his powers. One of his feats of endurance (September 2003) involved starving himself in solitary confinement, suspended from a crane by the River Thames in a glass box for 44 days. The illusionist believed that living without food and human contact, he’d experience “a higher spiritual state,” which would lead to “the purest state you can be in.” At first, the public repaid him for his efforts by pelting him with insults, paint-filled balloons, tomatoes, golf balls, and other forms of violent distraction; i.e. trying to cut off his water supply, and flying a remote controlled helicopter carrying a burger up to his box.

In Franz Kafka’s story *The Hunger Artist*, the protagonist faces the same sort of hostility

as Blaine. The parallels are unmistakable: both suffer from the mob's suspicion, nay, outright hostility toward the exceptional. Perhaps people are loath to be reminded of their own neglected human possibilities, but over time the public comes round, demonstrating a less complicated appreciation.

At the end of his six-week spell, witnessed by some 250,000 pilgrims, Blaine emerged from his glass box pronouncing tearfully: "I have learned more in that box than I have learned in years. I have learned how strong we are as human beings." Nevertheless despite the triumphant tone of his parting speech, and "considering the peculiar nature of his performance," as Kafka described it, the uncanny similarities with Kafka's disquieting moral parable linger.

Whatever else *The Hunger Artist* may be, it is an allegory of spiritual dissatisfaction, opening with the line, "During these last decades the interest in professional fasting has markedly diminished." The strangely affecting, self-dramatizing, contrary narrator proceeds to chart this decline from the morbid curiosity of the marveling crowds and their grotesque merriment, to their eventual revulsion, malice, and crushing indifference to the "suffering martyr" who perversely fasts on and on, even after everyone, including himself, has stopped keeping track of the records he has broken. Interestingly, the longest period of fasting fixed by the hunger artist's impresario was at forty days, the length of Christ's fast. "Just try to explain to anyone the art of fasting! Anyone who has no feeling for it cannot be made to understand it," exclaims the narrator in exasperation, at one point in the story.

The unhappy ending of this human experiment, mercifully unlike David Blaine's, is the burial of the crazed old artist. And rather than leave his "perfectly good cage standing there unused," he is replaced by his antithesis: a young panther, his "body furnished almost to bursting point with all it needed." But, more than anything else, it is the haunting dying words of the hunger artist that best communicate the incommunicable: "I couldn't find the food I liked. If I had found it, believe me, I should have made no fuss and stuffed myself like you or anyone else."

With this in mind, I believe fasting to be a form of practical mysticism, or a belief in privileged moments. Perhaps this is the "artist's metaphysics" that Friedrich Nietzsche described, but I do think that fasting can stir whisperings of another world or glimpses into uncharted regions of the soul. "Only something supernatural can express the supernatural," says Ludwig Wittgenstein, which does not make it any clearer to the uninitiated. Yet fasting is this, too—a pursuit of clarity. And, just as regular baths are prescribed during longer fasts, so fasting is a hygiene of the spirit.

To put it differently, when poet Philip Larkin writes, "Deprivation is to me what daffodils were to Wordsworth," he voices the bitter-sweetness of self-sufficiency. It is not deprivation per se that he is enamored with. It is having fallen in love with a pain, not for how it impoverishes but how it enriches: fortitude, profundity, insight. Likewise, Michel Foucault does not explicitly speak of redemption through sacrifice, but he does hint at the transformational process in his own terms when he writes of "a sacrifice, an actual sacrifice of life ... a voluntary obliteration that does not have to be represented in books because it takes place in the very existence of the writer."

Naturally (and unnaturally) there are other ways to willfully enter this altered state. Whether such experiences go by other names—Martin Heidegger's "unthought" or Karl Jasper's "boundary experience"—is immaterial. The point of the exercise is the salvaging of truths not afforded by everyday experience. For in the act of fasting, it is not merely food one renounces, but thoughtlessness. This is also evidenced in Eastern mysticism in the practice referred to as "immaculate speech." To maintain immaculate speech, oftentimes silence is required, another renunciation. In the final equation, it is a question of attention, sustained attention—an idealistic attempt to align what is thought with what is said and done. Whether one can approach and enter this state having diligently sought it or having been mysteriously granted it, fasting offers a gradual awakening or gentle shock out of soul-deadening routine. To fast is to slow down, almost to stillness, and distill what is necessary. ■

What Christians Think About the Jews and the Holy Land

by Tony Campolo

Evangelist John Hagee addresses a crowd of his followers and Israeli supporters at a rally at the Jerusalem convention center, April 6, 2008. Hagee announced donations of \$6 million to a number of Israeli causes and declared that Israel must remain in control of all of Jerusalem. Hagee, who has been in the news for his endorsement of U.S. Presidential candidate John McCain and his criticism of the Catholic Church, brought hundreds of backers on a solidarity trip to Israel. Hagee's group, Christians United for Israel, gathered in Jerusalem to show solidarity with Israel and protest the land for peace agreements with the Palestinians.



IT'S STRANGE THAT CHRISTIANS CAN BE ANTI-SEMITIC, GIVEN THAT THEY WORSHIP a Jew and that Judaism provides the foundation for their beliefs. Add to that the fact that all of Christ's disciples were Jews.

The Roman Catholic Church attempted to justify anti-Semitism by claiming that Jews were responsible for crucifying Jesus—when in reality He was sentenced to death by a Roman ruler and nailed to the cross by Roman soldiers. It has only been of late that the Roman Church has admitted the evil of blaming the Jews for the death of the Christian savior. It is amazing that it took the papacy so long to acknowledge this, considering that, according to their teachings, the first pope was Jewish.

The Protestant tradition has not fared any better when it comes to anti-Semitism. Reading through some of the things that Martin Luther wrote about Jews is enough to turn the stomach of any person who senses that Christ called his followers to live out love and justice. Nevertheless, Christians have no difficulty, in spite of their long history of anti-Semitism, in declaring the Jews to be “God’s Chosen People.”

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Adding to the ambivalent attitude of many Christians toward Jews is the very special place that the Jewish "land of promise" holds in Christian prophecy. The role that the Holy Land plays is crucial in the eschatology of many Christians and, consequently, has had profound effects as Christians have influenced our nation's policies in the Middle East.

I

PERHAPS THE GREATEST INFLUENCE UPON OUR GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS IN THE HOLY LAND, and specifically upon the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, comes from that segment of the fundamentalist Christian community that adheres to a particular theology invented by a nineteenth-century renegade Anglican priest in Plymouth, England, named John Nelson Darby. This particular theology is called Dispensationalism, and if you want to know more, a good brief history is Barbara Rossing's *The Rapture Exposed* (2004). Although Darby was a Johnny-come-lately to Protestant theological thinking, his intricate interpretation of Scripture has become so dominant among fundamentalist Christians that Dispensationalism and fundamentalism have almost become synonymous within American Christianity.

Key to understanding the Dispensationalists is recognizing their awareness that all the promises made to Israel by God have not been fulfilled. The Hebrew prophets had predicted that the Jews would one day come to live everlastingly in a land marked by social and economic well-being (Isaiah 65:17-25). Those of the Diaspora would be returned to the land promised to the seed of Abraham (Genesis 15:18), and all nations would look to Israel with hope for a better world. Only then, Dispensationalists believe, would the second coming of Christ occur (see Craig C. Hill, *In God's Time*, 2002).

Most Dispensationalists argue that prior to Christ's second coming, all non-Jews would have to vacate the Holy Land, and those who refuse to leave willingly would have to be driven out. A discussion I had with a prominent Dispensationalist preacher during a radio interview highlighted the extremism that exists in the Dispensationalist community. The preacher told me that if the Arab people who presently live in the Holy Land refuse to leave, they will have to be killed.

When I exclaimed that this would be nothing short of ethnic cleansing, he answered, without hesitation, "Well, wasn't ethnic cleansing what God ordered when the Jews invaded the Holy Land under Joshua?"

I tried to remind this radio preacher that the Arabs were also the seed of Abraham via Ishmael and, according to his understanding of Genesis 15:18, they are just as entitled to live in the Holy Land as the Jews. Furthermore, I pointed out, the land promised to the seed of Abraham reaches from the Euphrates River to the Nile—which would mean wiping out Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. But nothing I said in any way swayed him from his horrific declarations.

Given this kind of thinking, it is easy to understand why Dispensationalists provide the primary impetus for the growth of the Christian Zionist movement, which is much more of a threat to the implementation of President Bush's peace plan than even the most extremist Jewish Zionists.

For instance, when Ariel Sharon tried to clear out Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip in anticipation of the creation of a Palestinian state, Dispensationalists were furious because they were convinced that Sharon was giving away land that God had ordained for the Jews. At one point, Pat Robertson, a rabid Dispensationalist, actually suggested that the stroke Sharon suffered was God's judgment on him for withdrawing the settlements.

With President Bush's popularity plummeting, and fundamentalist Christians in the Dispensationalist tradition being one of his bastions of support, the president became very concerned about their reaction. Consequently, he organized special meetings and extensive conversations with the leaders of this segment of the Christian community in efforts to appease them, but his problems with them were by no means over. In the future, Dispensationalists will continue to throw up barriers to any attempt at a two-state solution to the struggles of the peoples living in Palestine.

The popularity of Dispensationalism among fundamentalists can be traced to the early 1900s, when Oxford University Press published the Scofield Reference Study Bible. This particular version of the King James translation of the Bible provided footnotes at the bottom of each page that interpreted the Scriptures in accordance with Darby's Dispensationalist theology. Over the years, Scofield Reference Bibles have been sold to millions of Christians and have been used by countless fundamentalist preachers and Sunday school teachers as they preach and teach. Also, Dispensationalism was taught in scores of seminaries and Bible colleges, which were established throughout the twentieth century to train fundamentalist missionaries and preachers. As of late, Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins have made this same theology very popular among a huge segment of the Christian population via the publication of their immensely popular *Left Behind* books. To date, as many as 50 million copies of the books in this series—which incorporates Dispensationalist theology into adventure novels—have been bought by Americans.

At first glance, Christian Zionists with their Dispensationalist theology would appear to be the best friends that Jewish Zionists ever had. One of the most prominent among them, television evangelist John Hagee, has been especially friendly toward Israel. He has declared to his huge following over and over again that, according to the Bible, the Holy Land must belong to the Jews *exclusively* (John Hagee, *From Daniel to Doomsday*, 1999). To this end, he, along with another famous televangelist, Pat Robertson, has been a strong supporter of the State of Israel and has raised millions of dollars to finance the Jews of the Diaspora to return to the Holy Land. Some Jewish Zionists, however, are wary of the overtures of such Dispensationalists because they know that these preachers claim that those Jews who do not accept Christ as their Messiah and Savior will ultimately be condemned to Hell. Dispensationalists, and especially those who are part of the Southern Baptist Convention, consequently have targeted the Jews with special evangelistic efforts.

II

A SECOND PERSPECTIVE ON JEWS' RIGHT TO OCCUPY THE HOLY LAND IS AN EXACT opposite of that which is held by Dispensationalists: It is an eschatology that recognizes no special role for the Jews and the State of Israel. This is a view held by a variety of Christians in the Protestant community, along with most Roman Catholic thinkers, who believe that the only hope for the salvation of the Jewish people lies in their being incorporated into the Christian community by accepting Christ as their Messiah. They believe that only by trusting in the saving work of Christ, through His death and resurrection, can they inherit eternal life. Picking up on what the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 10 and 11, they declare that the Jews have had their chance to be the special chosen people of God. But because they did not accept Christ as their Messiah, they have, in the Apostle Paul's words, been "cut off," and a "new branch"—the Church, composed of peoples from all ethnic groups—has been grafted into their place. The Church, they contend, is the new Israel. The Jews, they say, can be "saved," but only by becoming Christians. Those who are of this persuasion find New Testament support for a belief that there is no need any longer to define a specialness about the Jewish people, nor do they see any need for the Jews to occupy the Holy Land as a precondition to Christ's return.

III

STILL ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE ON JEWS' PLACE IN THE HOLY LAND IS THE ESCHATOLOGY espoused by many Christians, especially those in the Calvinist tradition. These are Christians who affirm what has been called a "covenant theology." According to these Christians, God can be counted on to keep His word and uphold His covenants. They believe, therefore, that what God promised to the Jews will one day be delivered. Since

God promised the Jews salvation in the covenants made with them in ancient days of Israel, these Christians believe that evangelizing the Jews is unnecessary (see Robert McAfee Brown, *Saying Yes and Saying No*, 1986). What God promised for the salvation of the Jews, they claim, still stands, and insofar as the Jews live out the prescriptions of the Torah and the Prophets according to their own religious tradition, God's salvation will be theirs. Generally, there is a belief among some of those who hold this covenant theology and call themselves "pre-millennialists" that the Jews will one day return to the Holy Land, but only *after* the second coming of Christ. They claim that, following His return, Christ will establish His throne in Jerusalem and from there will reign over all the earth. Then, according to these pre-millennium believers, the world will enter into what they call the Millennium reign of Christ, in which the Kingdom of God will be established on earth.

IV

FINALLY, IT MUST BE ADMITTED THAT most Christians are both theologically and biblically illiterate (perhaps many fundamentalists being the exception) and think very little about eschatology and a possible returning of the Jews to the Holy Land

in the future. What is generally accepted among most Christians, on the other hand, is that there is something very special about the Jews, and they feel indebted to them in that the Hebrew Scriptures are a major part of their Bible, and that it was from the Jews that their Savior came. Furthermore, most Christians believe that the Jews deserve a homeland after having endured the Holocaust and a long history of persecution through the centuries before it. To them it seems that having a land that they can call their own is something that is due to the Jewish people. Add to this the antipathy that has grown toward Muslims in general, and to Arab Muslims in particular, since September 11, (see Lee Griffith, *The War on Terrorism and the Terror of God*, 2002) and it is easy to understand why Christians have overwhelmingly sided with the struggle of the Israelis to establish for themselves a homeland with secure borders. Furthermore, among most American Christians there is a commonly held belief that Israel is the main outpost of democracy in the Middle East and is a partner in standing against the religio-political forces of that region that threaten the wellbeing of the western world. The Jews, therefore, can count on support for the State of Israel from most Christians into the foreseeable future. Each and every candidate vying for the presidency of our country had better be declared as being pro-Israel if votes are to be gleaned, not only from the Jewish community, but also from the vastly larger Christian population. This does not mean that anti-Semitism has disappeared among Christians, but it does give evidence that most Christians in America see the survival of the State of Israel in their own self-interest. It remains to be seen as to whether, in the days that lie ahead, these same Christians might trade support of Israel for the huge supply of oil that Arab nations can make available to them. Jews have been betrayed before by those who claimed to be their friends. If I were Jewish, I would be a little nervous about this recent support that Christians provided for the State of Israel. ■



Christians led by John Hagee (bottom left) in support of Israel hold U.S. and Israeli flags as they march in Jerusalem, April 7, 2008.



Religious Tolerance in a Pluralistic World (A Hindu's Perspective)

by V. V. Raman

TWO CENTURIES AGO, WHEN EUROPEAN ENLIGHTENMENT THINKERS articulated the principle of religious tolerance, they did not realize that they were echoing an ancient vision—a vision enshrined in the Vedic scripture of the Hindu world as a pithy phrase. For here it states explicitly and clearly that there is but one God (referred to as Truth), and that He is described by the learned in different ways: *ekam sat, viprāt bahudā vadanti*.

In Sanskrit the word *sat* (pronounced *sutt*) means truth, essence, and also God. In this vision God is none other than Ultimate Truth, the quintessence of the Cosmic Whole. Quintessential Truth, however, is infinite, and it can be grasped by finite human minds only as glimpses. So every description of the Divine, whether from revelation or through speculation, whether from reading or by reflection, can only be partial. So it is said that those who have pondered the Mystery proclaim it in different ways. One is not right and the other wrong in this matter; we all obtain an incomplete picture of the Ultimate. Truth about the Ultimate is like the glitter of a gem; it shines in different ways when viewed from different angles. For the enlightened heart and mind, therefore, God can be seen in the Star of David as in the Christian Cross, in the contemplation of the Buddha as in the Crescent of Islam, in the Adi Granth of the Sikhs as in the abstract sound of the sacred Om of the Hindus.

Every religious tradition has something unique, meaningful, and universal to offer to humanity. To me, this affirmation of multiple approaches to the Divine is the most significant contribution of Hindu thought. It is of greater relevance today than ever before. More than two centuries of the European Enlightenment seem to have had little effect on the minds of millions in our own times: they are still functioning in the framework of bygone eras which were characterized by interfaith hurt and anger, and swayed by passions motivated by religious bigotry. Some of the more extreme members of misguided groups, whose hearts have not been touched by the love and charity that all religions emphasize—or ought to—and whose minds have not awakened to nobler religious visions, are wallowing in a fanaticism that should be unconscionable and anachronistic in the age in which we live.

Economic lust has not been the only urge for militaristic expansionism through the ages. Conquests were not always undertaken by marauding horsemen to plunder other lands. Rather, they were often born of a deep-felt belief, indeed an inner certainty, that one's vision of God and the hereafter constitutes the Truth, the Whole Truth, and Nothing but the Truth, and that all other systems were wrong and deserve to be destroyed. Echoes of that conviction, faint or harsh, still linger in the hearts and minds of many supposedly religious people.

We cannot deny that there are political misunderstandings to be resolved, economic injustices to be corrected, moral wrongs to be righted, and many more things to be done to make ours a fairer community of nations. But even in a utopian world where all live in abundance, where arts flourish as much as sciences, there may not be peace and happy harmony as long as doctrinal intolerance persists.

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From the Hindu spiritual perspective, it is important that we have reverence for the symbols and sounds of every religion in so far as they don't hurt anyone. That is why, no matter how some practitioners behave, I as a Hindu respect Judaism as an inspiration from a Covenant with a Higher Power, Buddhism as a call for compassion, Islam as a proclamation of peace and surrender to God, and Christianity as a pulpit for love and caring. I know that at its core every religion has something positive to teach.

In my view, this acknowledgment is what constitutes religious pluralism: not the abandonment of one's own faith, nor a naïve declaration that all religions say the same thing, nor an uncommitted lip service to all. Religious pluralism is rather the deep-felt conviction that there is wisdom in every tradition, magnificence in every spiritual aspiration, and a sublime core in every religion.

In the current context of religious confrontations, it is important to recall the ancient Hindu vision in our search for a religiously pluralistic world. The challenge for religious people is not faith and loyalty to the religion of one's affiliation, but tolerance of, and respect for other faiths and loyalties. Monotheism is a lofty vision, or would be if the term only implied belief in a single God. Sadly, it often includes a condescending corollary: that the One God is the God that *I* worship, and that there can be no prophet other than my own. It is this subtext, implicit or explicit, that has been responsible for many bloody confrontations among religions.

Leaders and practitioners of all religions, and that includes many Hindus in our changing world, would do well to consider Hinduism's core insight on this matter.

At the most basic level, we pray for our own well being, for recovery from disease, for success in an enterprise, or for experiencing spiritual ecstasy. But at a more sophisticated level, we seek guidance to go from *asat* or Untruth (the mono-vision of truth) to *sat* or Truth (recognition of its multiple appearances).

As long as we are constrained in the conviction that our own parochial vision of Truth is all there is, we are groping in darkness. We must therefore seek guidance for being led to *gyoti* or Light, which reveals the splendor of multiplicity from the *tamas* or darkness of ignorant narrowness.

As long as we are struggling in the dark dungeon of intolerance, we are mortals in spirit as well as in body. As long as we linger in our own rigid modes, unable to get out of it to see and feel with others, we are as good as dead for we are without profound perceptions. Immortality is not living forever, but getting a glimpse of the Infinite and the Eternal. We achieve this in the mortal frame when we emerge from narrowness, bigotry, intolerance, and the like. We therefore need to be guided from death to immortality.

So we have this trans-denominational prayer in the Hindu world:

asatomâ sat gamaya: From Untruth lead us to Truth!

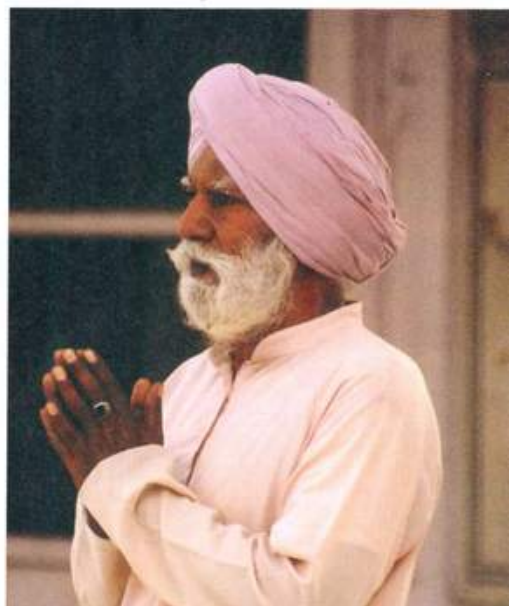
tamasomâ jyotir gamaya: From Darkness lead us to Light!

mrtymomâ amrtam gamaya: From Death lead us to Deathlessness!

As elsewhere, Hinduism has its local enrichments in music and mythology, in doctrines and dogmas, but many of its followers also betray shocking dissonance between theory and practice. But there is this nugget of insight in the Hindu world that is indispensable if we ever hope to have religious harmony in the world: that no matter how we picture the Unfathomable and no matter by what name or form worship It, all modes and forms of worship ultimately reach one and the same Principle. So, when a youth is spiritually initiated in the Hindu world, he is taught to repeat every day the following mantra:

<i>âkâshât patitam toyam</i>	As waters falling from the skies
<i>yatha gacchati sâgaram</i>	Return to the self-same sea,
<i>sarvadevanamaskârah</i>	Prostrations to all the gods
<i>shri keshavam pratigacchati.</i>	Reach the same Divinity.

A very simple idea this certainly is, yet so difficult to practice when the mind is clouded by self-righteous doctrine and dogma. Until and unless this idea is internalized by practitioners of all faiths, the ugliness of religious intolerance and the pernicious behavior it provokes will never be erased from the list of problems confronting our poor species. ■



In the Footsteps of Hillel: Judaism and Religious Pluralism

by Or N. Rose

*In loving
memory of
Edie Howe:
a woman
of valor*

OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS I HAVE HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF SERVING AS A teacher and administrator at the Rabbinical School of Hebrew College in Newton, MA. Among my most meaningful experiences has been helping to develop a multidimensional interfaith program between Hebrew College and its neighbor, Andover Newton Theological School. Through joint text study, prayer, and social justice initiatives, I have learned a great deal about Christianity and the practice of interfaith dialogue. These experiences have also helped me to explore more deeply my Jewish identity and to clarify my understanding of the relationship of Judaism to other religious communities. This essay is my first attempt at articulating my views on religious pluralism. It is my hope that this brief reflection will be helpful to others working to foster greater interfaith understanding and cooperation.

Epistemological Humility

AS A THEOLOGICALLY ORIENTED PERSON, I BEGIN MY COMMENTS WITH A DISCUSSION OF God and the limits of human knowledge. Foundational to my understanding of life is the fact that all human knowledge is finite. This is true of matters secular and religious. Absolute truth is unavailable to any individual or community. The greatest of these mysteries for me, as a religious person, is God. While I have experienced what have felt like genuine encounters with the Divine—in nature, in conversation, and in prayer—I am left with more questions than answers. Is God a personal being or an impersonal force? Does God intervene in human affairs? Can human beings affect the Divine? Answers to these and other theological quandaries must always be considered partial and unfinished.

One powerful articulation of this point is the medieval Jewish mystical notion of *Ayin*, a description of the Divine as “No-thing.” This is not an atheistic statement, but an assertion about God’s radical transcendence. God is the One who surpasses all “things”—all thought or description. As the thirteenth-century German pietist, Eleazar of Worms writes, “When you contemplate the Creator, realize that His encampment extends beyond, infinitely beyond ... in front, behind, east and west ... infinitely, everywhere.” Translating this spatial metaphor, the kabbalists say that God is *Ein Sof* (Infinite), beyond the limits of space and time, and, therefore, beyond the human mind.

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We can approach this unknowable deity, say the kabbalists, because God is also immanent, revealing something of Herself to us at all times. Our task is to open our eyes to the reality of the Divine presence (*Shekhinah*) and to shape our lives around these moments of insight.

This paradoxical theological stance is expressed ingeniously in the opening pages of the Zohar (the masterwork of Kabbalah) in a reflection on the ancient Hebrew word Elohim, the most generic name for God in the Hebrew Bible. The Zohar authors deconstruct this name, reading it as two separate words: *Mi* and *Eleh*, "Who" and "These." This wordplay reminds us of the precarious nature of theology: On the one hand, all we can say about God is *Mi*: "Who are you? And what do you want of us?" On the other hand, we are given the freedom to engage imaginatively in God-talk: "*Eleh*, these are the ways in which I experience the Divine. And it is based on these encounters that I wish to shape my life." This dual message of theological humility and creativity remains as relevant today as it was for the medieval sages who articulated it centuries ago.

Human Interpretation

IF I ACCEPT THE REALITY OF GOD'S MYSTERY AND THE LIMITS OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE, then I must also acknowledge that Judaism, like all other religions, is an imperfect attempt by my forebears at translating their religious experiences, ideals, and values into a communal culture with specific religious symbols, rituals, spaces, and times. Abraham Joshua Heschel articulates this position powerfully in *God in Search of Man* when he writes, "As a report about the revelation at Sinai, the Bible is *itself* midrash." That is to say, even the texts we consider to be foundational to our religious traditions are products of human interpretation (*midrash*), and because they are the work of finite beings, they are necessarily imperfect. This does not mean that the Hebrew Bible and other canonical sources do not possess great wisdom, or that they are not divinely inspired, but they are *not* the unmediated word of God.

As one who views the Hebrew Bible as an edited work, produced by various writers over generations, I recognize that within the Tanakh there are differences of opinion on matters large and small. As Jon Levenson writes in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, "The Bible is an anthology of writings composed over a period of about a thousand years, in several lands, and by authors of different sorts." He further observes that the writers of such works as Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes (all a part of the "Wisdom" literature) make no mention of the revelation at Sinai, a central event in the Pentateuchal and prophetic traditions.

Just as the biblical authors held divergent views, so will each and every interpreter of the Torah and other sacred texts. This hermeneutical principle is captured dramatically in the rabbinic statement, "Just as the hammer splits the rock into many pieces, so will a scriptural verse yield many meanings" (B. Sanhedrin 34a, based on Jeremiah 23:29). As David Stern comments in *The Jewish Study Bible*, "It is often remarked that what is Jewish about the Bible is not the Bible itself, or even the Hebrew text of the Bible, but the *interpretation* of the Bible."

It is this appreciation of the plurality of human interpretation that leads the early rabbis to record majority and minority opinions on every page of the Talmud. Though Hillel may be deemed the winner of nine out of ten debates, Shammai's opinions are always recorded alongside those of his chief interlocutor.

Rabbi Abba stated in the name of Samuel: For three years there was a dispute between the School of Shammai and the School of Hillel.... Then a Heavenly Voice announced, "The utterances of both are the words of the living God" (B. Eruvin 13b).

Not only are Shammai's rulings considered sacred—"words of the living God"—but later mystics assert that his judgments will become law in the messianic age. Commenting



Two images of Aleph by Pat Allen. Aleph, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, begins the name Ein Sof, the "Infinite." This name for God acknowledges the One within and beyond all of creation.

on the rabbinic approach to exegesis, Elliot Dorff remarks in *To Do the Right and the Good*, “one must learn to live with that indeterminacy and open one’s mind to the multiplicity of meanings inherent in both the law and lore of the Torah.” This does not mean that we cannot take strong positions on a range of issues (after all, the rabbis in our text do argue for three years!), but our sages instruct us to do so with an appropriate measure of humility, knowing that God’s truth is infinitely more complex than we can fathom.

A Partnership Perspective

THE DIALOGICAL APPROACH OF THE EARLY RABBIS CAN SERVE AS AN IMPORTANT MODEL for interfaith relations, even if the rabbis of the past could not envision it as such. Just as the sages engaged in impassioned discussions about the nature and meaning of life, so too should people of different religious communities. The goal of such conversation is not unanimity, but a respectful exchange in which individuals learn from one another, critique one another, and agree to disagree about matters of substance.

In my experience with interfaith dialogue, participants often find it difficult to speak openly about real differences of opinion, not wanting to offend others or fearing that the conversation will devolve into dispute. The Hasidic sage Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav teaches in *Likkutei Moharan* that *makhloket*, disagreement, is among the highest forms of human communication. Drawing on earlier Jewish mystical imagery, the Bratslaver asserts that all forms of creation—Divine and human—require space. In his myth of origins, God, the Infinite One, initiates the creation of the cosmos by making space for life. Through a primal act of self-limitation, the Divine fashions an empty vessel (or void) into which He pours forth His creative energy, giving shape and form to the universe. Nahman suggests that human beings can replicate this Divine process by engaging in spirited conversation. When we disagree with one another, when we take sides, we create the necessary space for the emergence of new and unexpected

ideas. Without *makhloket*, says the Bratslaver, the horizon of human discovery would be severely limited.

The importance of engaging respectfully in these sacred deliberations is spoken of in the same Talmudic text quoted above:

Since both are the words of the living God, what was it that entitled the School of Hillel to have the law fixed according to them? Because they were kindly and modest, they studied their own rulings and those of the School of Shammai, and they [were even so humble as to] mention the opinions of the School of Shammai before theirs.

Given the tragic history of religious disputation, this insight is particularly important for contemporary inter-religious conversation.

Despite the long history of conflict among religious groups, rival communities often share a number of core ideas in common and influence one another’s worldviews. Having cited the book of the Zohar above, it is worth mentioning that my teacher Arthur Green, a leading Kabbalah scholar, argued in a recent monograph that the Zohar’s bold teachings about the female figure of the *Shekhinah* were likely influenced by contemporaneous Christian teachings about the Virgin Mary and the rise of the cult of Marianism in thirteenth-century Spain. This is but one of countless instances of cross-cultural exchange between these two communities. History demonstrates that Jews, Christians, and Muslims



Chevrutah (peer) study is an ancient rabbinic model of sacred conversation carried out at the Rabbinical School of Hebrew College and many other contemporary Jewish educational institutions.

(even when they could not admit to doing so) have all adopted (and adapted) teachings from one another over the centuries.

Religious seekers are wise to heed Irving Greenberg's call for the development of a "partnership perspective" in which we actively participate in shared interfaith learning experiences, knowing that each community has developed ideas and practices that can be beneficial to others. As he writes in *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*:

Thus, a follower of Islam marveling at the perfect submission that Islam teaches would affirm the relevance of another path (Christianity), in which God intervenes to suffer with and lift up humans, and a Judaism that places tremendous emphasis on human action and responsibility in the world.

Though none of these ideas are absent from the sacred teachings of the other, historically each group has emphasized one or another of these concepts to a greater or lesser extent. Greenberg suggests that through interfaith conversation, we have the opportunity to explore various themes that might play a more minor role in our own tradition and to ask how these ideas might challenge and deepen our religious lives. We also have the opportunity to offer and receive constructive criticism from people whose beliefs and experiences are different from ours.

The Non-Jew in Classical Jewish Literature

WHILE I HAVE DRAWN ON A NUMBER OF ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL JEWISH SOURCES TO construct my theological position, it would be inaccurate to describe these pre-modern thinkers as religious pluralists (certainly not by contemporary progressive standards). In truth, my forebears often spoke in negative terms about non-Jews and their spiritual traditions. This negativity is attributable to a number of factors, including doctrinal differences, human competition, and my ancestors' repeated experiences of persecution—physical and spiritual—at the hands of other nations.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find many derogatory statements about non-Jews and their religious traditions in classical Jewish sources. One such example is the allegorical comment by the rabbinic sage Rabbi Azaryah on the verse from the Song of Songs, "Like a lily among thorns, so is my darling among the maidens." Azaryah interprets this to mean that Israel is the "rose" among the "thorns and thistles" of humanity. He asserts that if the Jewish people had not come into existence and accepted the Torah, God would have destroyed all of creation. It is only by the merit of Israel and of the Torah that the world was saved (Song of Songs Rabbah 2:3).

Despite the existence of statements like this one, many traditional rabbinic authorities agree that non-Jews are capable of living decent and upright lives without taking on the yoke of the Jewish tradition. This is articulated most famously in the Seven Noahide Laws (Y. Avodah Zarah 8:4), a brief list of moral norms created by the early rabbis. The assumption is that if non-Jews live by this modest code of conduct, they can fulfill their responsibilities to God and humankind. This line of reasoning leads the sages of the Talmud to state that "the righteous of all nations have a share in the world to come" (B. Sanhedrin 8b).

Nonetheless, the fact remains that my ancestors viewed the Jewish people as God's chosen people and Judaism as the highest form of spiritual practice. Rabbi Akiva, a fabled sage and martyr, is quoted as saying that all people are created in the Divine image and that God loves all of humankind, and yet *only* the people of Israel are God's children. Further, God gives His children the ultimate gift, the Torah—the very instrument with which He brought the cosmos into being (Pirkei Avot 3:18).

Of course, the Tanakh is full of examples of Israel's failure to live up to God's expectations. Even so, the Divine remains faithful to them, fulfilling His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. While God may grow angry with His beloved people and punish them severely, He never gives up on them. Rather, God says, "I will betroth you to Me forever. I will betroth you with righteousness, with justice, with love, and with compassion" (Hosea 2:21-21).

The Chosen People Today

THE ANCIENT BELIEF THAT THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL ARE GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE HAS been a theological pillar in Jewish life for centuries. The idea that the Divine has a special relationship with Israel provided my ancestors with the necessary support to survive many painful episodes in our tumultuous history. For even in their darkest hour they could tell themselves that ultimately God would redeem them (or their descendants), punish their oppressors, and announce to the world the truth of their ways. "As the vine is the lowliest of trees and yet rules over all the trees, so Israel is made to appear lowly in this world, but will in the hereafter inherit the world from end to end" (B. Avodah Zarah 3b).

While I acknowledge the power of the doctrine of chosenness to sustain my forebears, I cannot uphold this position. I do not believe that the Hebrew Bible is the literal word of God, nor do I think that Judaism is better than other religions. I have simply met too many outstanding non-Jews and learned too much from non-Jewish religious and secular sources to make such an assertion. While the classical religious teachings of my tradition are of inestimable value to me, in this case I must remain faithful to my own life experience.

In seeking to revise my understanding of the relationship of Israel to God and to other religious groups, I find the following statement in *Exploring Judaism: A Reconstructionist Approach* by Rebecca Alpert and Jacob Staub helpful:

Instead of regarding the Jews as "chosen from among all peoples," we understand ourselves—and all other peoples—as being "called to do God's work." That is to say, we follow a specific path to salvation through the preservation and development of our inherited tradition. Other peoples follow their own paths; ours is not necessarily superior to theirs, nor can we be certain that, on any particular issue, it is divinely grounded.

The specific phrase that Alpert and Staub cite is significant because the words "chosen from among the peoples" is a key expression in several important Jewish prayers, including the blessing over wine on *Shabbat* evening and the blessing one recites when approaching the Torah scroll in synagogue. Following in the footsteps of Mordecai Kaplan, founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, these authors challenge us not only to consider how we think about our relationship to God and humanity, but also to reflect on the role of ritual in shaping our thought and behavior. I must admit that I am inconsistent in my own prayer practice. Sometimes, I recite the traditional text seeking to maintain continuity with the past (while reinterpreting the meaning in my mind), while at other times I change the language, feeling a need for greater consistency.

Particularism and Universalism

WHILE I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE JEWISH PEOPLE ARE GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE, I DO believe that Judaism is the only true religion for *me*. To quote John Hick, "... it has formed me and nourished me, it has so to speak made me in its own image, so that it fits me and I fit it as probably no other can" (see *The Myth of Religious Superiority*). Every morning, as I awake from bed, I thank God for making me a Jew. But as a religious pluralist, I recognize that this is a sentiment shared by people of different religious communities around the globe. Just as I treasure the sacred teachings and practices of my tradition (even when I struggle with certain of them), so does the Buddhist or Hindu seeker. Just as I cannot fathom living as anything other than a Jew, the same is true for the Christian or Muslim devotee.

In an interview conducted with Abraham Joshua Heschel several days before his death, the ailing theologian was asked the following question: "Would it be a better world if we were all of one religion? Heschel responded in fine rabbinic fashion, answering a question with a question:

If I were to ask the question whether ... the Metropolitan Museum should try to introduce [the policy] that all paintings should look alike, or I should suggest that all human faces should look alike—how would you respond to my proposal?

While humankind has suffered greatly from centuries of religious strife, the answer to this problem is not to eliminate religious diversity through the introduction of one universal religion (syncretistic or hegemonic), or to replace it with one form or another of secular culture. As Jonathan Sacks states in *The Dignity of Difference*,

The paradox is that the very thing that we take to be the antithesis of tribalism—universalism—can also be deeply threatening, and may be equally inadequate as an account of the human situation.

Absolute universalism is dangerous, as it denies people—individuals and communities—the opportunity to express their individuality. It leads to the idolatrous belief that there is but one true path for all of humankind. While God may possess ultimate truth, no human being or community should ever make such a claim. Ironically, when either particularism or universalism (or any other “ism”) is taken to an extreme, the result is the same—idolatry. Simply put, ultimate truth is unavailable to any of us. It cannot be reduced into any one form, concrete or abstract.

As Sacks writes, “We are particular *and* universal, the same and different, human beings as such, *but also* members of this family, that community, this history, that heritage.” Every person lives within a complex web of relationships, with more and less intensive connections to people, places, ideas, and practices. The challenge of pluralism is to understand that just as I love my wife and children, my God and religion, others have equally strong interpersonal relationships and religious and cultural commitments. What is universal is that every person’s life has a particular shape, unique in its texture and detail.

We live in an age of globalization, in a world in which people are connected to one another in ways unimaginable even a decade ago. While most of us recognize the intricate manner in which various social, political, and economic systems interact across great distances, we have not yet adequately explored the connections among the religious communities of the world. As Heschel stated more than forty years ago in an address to Protestant students and faculty at the Union Theological Seminary,

Parochialism has become untenable.... The religions of the world are no more self-sufficient, no more independent, no more isolated than individuals or nations.... Energies, experiences, and ideas that come to life outside the boundaries of a particular religion or all religions continue to challenge and to affect every religion. Horizons are wider, dangers are greater.... *No religion is an island.*

Heschel’s statement about the interdependence of the world’s religions in the modern period remains as relevant today as it was four decades ago. The question is whether or not people of different spiritual traditions are willing to engage in meaningful interfaith endeavors. Will we participate in honest and respectful dialogue, sharing our wisdom with one another and identifying commonalities and differences? Will our dialogue experiences help us to work cooperatively on issues of social justice and environmental responsibility? As we contemplate the challenges of this sacred undertaking, let us recall that the great heroes of our religious traditions were brave seekers who journeyed into the unknown to meet their God and to fashion lives of holiness. May we be blessed with the vision and determination to renew the courageous spirit of our ancestors in, and for, our time. ■

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us our own destiny through his moral vision.

In his response to the complex psychological, moral, and political needs of this event, Obama spoke of the suffering of African Americans and of the imperfections in the African American community, including the anger of this community. His honesty was courageous. In discussing this anger, Obama placed the expectation on the rest of us to understand the psychological impact of oppression. He accomplished this without any dramatization or minimization. He simply said that this anger is "real; it is powerful; and to simply wish it away, to condemn it without understanding its roots, only serves to widen the chasm of misunderstanding that exists between the races."

However, he did not stop by only acknowledging the anger of the African American community; he also noted the anger within much of the white community. He spoke of how, for many, being white does not bring with it privilege but much suffering in the face of the social and economic inequities of our history and current circumstance. This attention to the emotional pain caused by the social and economic suffering in America, his recognition of its historical and current reality, precludes blame. He simply is able to speak openly about all human suffering without having to find a simple solution in blaming someone or some institution for our ills.

Now Obama is not the only liberal, or conservative, with significant emotional intelligence. However, due to his more integrated religiosity and his deep liberal consciousness, he is better able than other emotionally intelligent politicians to speak in a new way. What we identify as eloquence is really more than that. If we try to capture it by simply calling it charisma, we lose the opportunity to see the extent to which he actually has achieved something that we are all capable of doing.

Very few can match the eloquence or charisma that is part of Obama's genius. However, following Omer's unique understanding of how emotion can be transformed into capacity, we are all capable of working our way through our fear, anger, grief, and shame in a manner that would evoke our capacities for courage, fierceness, compassion, and humility. To do this we must address our prejudice against any institution, whether religious or governmental, and approach the task of institution building and renewal from the perspective that identifies responsibility and not blame. This will help us to become part of the new moral center for our society.

Following Obama, we can find whatever talents lie in our own sensitivities and the ways that we too have suffered. This is our responsibility. Obama's religiosity and his embodied and articulated emotionality successfully overcome key limitations in the modern liberal identity. While there is much more to the mystery that he represents, a renewed liberalism must embrace at least these two strengths.

Obama's ability to evoke hope in the American people is a direct result of his embodiment of these capacities. He causes people to feel different about themselves and their future. I suspect that this experience of hope includes an experience that we are not alone, that our suffering is seen, and that *we can face our society's crises together as a people*.

Obama has activated our hope that he has become the transformation we need. However, we cannot take his success too literally or follow it too closely. Instead, we can learn more about his breakthrough by attempting it ourselves, becoming our own version of what the world needs. Whether Obama can become the kind of president we need will depend on how many of the rest of us become the change that we search for, by fulfilling our own particular destinies as citizens.

Renewing Liberal Identity

LIBERALS AND PROGRESSIVES ALIKE MUST LEARN HOW TO FIGHT FOR OUR LIBERAL HERITAGE, identify and assert our distinct egalitarian values, and reclaim a moral position oriented toward a sustainable human future. These tasks will be more easily accomplished if we balance our focus on political *issues* with a comparable focus on remaking our political *identities*. This new identity will, in part, be made up of those leadership capacities we identify in leaders like Obama. Through the embodiment of these (continued on page 68)

AWAKENING OUR FAITH IN THE FUTURE

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capacities we will find ourselves speaking with the new voice of liberalism, which will enable us to articulate our values, reconnect to one another, and engage our communities in political action.

In order to renew liberalism, we have to accept responsibility for the limitations of our current political identity. We must speak with a voice that will resonate with those who have found liberalism to be too weak a political language. That will help us create new forms of community engagement to meet the current conservative domination of our country's political discourse.

Bridging Values of Justice and Self-Responsibility: the New Voice of Liberalism

GEORGE LAKOFF HAS TAUGHT US OF THE importance of framing traditional liberal political issues in ways that echo both egalitarian and traditional values. His insight is helping create a new generation of liberal discourse. Unfortunately, the new discourse is limited by the traditional overly rationalized political identity of liberals themselves. Lakoff's crucial understanding of "reframing" won't be utilized to its full capacity until we construct such a new liberal political identity. Remaking our identities requires learning to face our own problematic attitudes, to identify subtle prejudices such as the prejudice against religion or the public use of emotion, which limit our effectiveness, and to overcome the isolation we feel due to our alienated and fractured modern culture.

Obama's conscious or intuitive political identity exemplifies much of what will be needed in order to bring us together as a people and renew our mutual faith in the future. Obama appears to be able to form a connection between the community-minded values of liberalism and the self-responsibility values of conservatism.

Inclusiveness at a New Level of Political Development

CENTRAL TO OBAMA'S SPEECH IS THIS inclusiveness, this refusal to be divisive.

He is helping us remember that we are a people, that we are not forever fractured by differences. His unwillingness to play on people's fears, his compassionate recognition of the suffering we all experience, and his ability to meet prejudice openly, enable us to imagine that we are a people, that we are together. Radicals, liberals, and conservatives alike are all Americans; and, whatever shame being American requires, we also can find a deep pride in our American identity. We can come together in our shame, our pride, and in our determination to be a moral people.

Obama's integration of liberal and conservative values can be and must be distinguished from his post-convention turn to the right. Like too many liberals, Obama may have confused the need to integrate conservative and liberal values with the perception that he must not appear to be too liberal regarding political issues. This confusion suggests that he may have underestimated the power of his own genuine presence; as a new type of leader he too is in unknown territory: being the mapmaker includes making such mistakes.

Obama's turn to the right suggests that he may not understand the way in which a new moral center need not split the difference between conservatism and liberalism. Such a center can be wholly liberal and wholly moral while identifying and articulating an effective way of representing the profound need to conserve and express the traditions that make conservatism a force to reckon with. While speaking a language of inclusiveness, Obama need not cater to the conservative language of our day that distorts the idea of the "middle," thus hiding our current off-kilter spin to the right. Instead, by simply recognizing the moral authority conservatives hold, by connecting their politics to both religion and individual responsibility, he could re-create a language of liberalism without alienating the more appealing values of conservatism.

Creating A New Moral Center

IN ORDER TO CREATE A NEW MORAL center for our society, we will need to

transform political culture. Such change will only come about when we learn to *come together in public* holding both the values of healing and political action. When we come together, we cannot just talk about political issues or the delight and angst of raising children. Instead we must find our way to a new intimacy with one another within which we talk about what it is we have to contribute to our communities. We each have a political destiny, which can help bring all of us back to a new moral center.

In order to explore this new center, we must also be willing to talk about our prejudices. While liberals have a lot more to learn about racism, classism, and sexism, we have made enough progress in these areas to turn part of our attention to other, subtler prejudices. When we gather we need to talk about our prejudices against the use of our own moral authority, against religion, and against the public use of emotion. These prejudices undermine our relations with one another, our ability to build and sustain effective political organizations, and our ability to draw the attention of the American public.

So long as we on the Left have a hard time recognizing our own natural authority, we will not know who to follow when. This severely undermines our capacity to support effective leadership on the Left. We must learn to talk openly about leadership and we must relearn the value of surrendering to genuine authority.

Lastly, we must learn what our emotions are for, including the way they support decision-making, provide us with political energy, and bring us together as a people. So long as we allow ourselves to remain too rational, we are sterile. The alternative is not an overt, reactive public emotionality. Learning how to speak openly about our emotional experience and how to identify and welcome the emotions of others will be difficult but will strengthen our relationships and our organizations.

Now that the election is over, now that we have tallied our wins and losses, it is time to move past strategizing. Starting this winter we should gather

together and reflect upon our election victories and failures. We also should take the time to attend to each other's injuries and begin the work of healing the suffering that is at the root of all prejudice. Like the seasonal task of growing a crop, we work in the summer and fall and reflect privately and together while we seek restoration in the winter. This is the work of renewing liberalism. ■

WHERE IS ISRAEL?

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inches in the world media. Everyone around the lunch table agreed that based on such a definition, only one state in the world would qualify as a "mega-state": Israel.

Israelis are ambivalent about their state being the center of world attention. On the one hand, they would prefer that the world leave them alone, let them get on with their problems quietly and out of the eye of the global camera. Why, they ask, does attention always return to them while the other "insignificant" global problems such as Darfur, Tibet, Iraq, Bosnia, and Rwanda (to name but a few) disappear from the media headlines after a few days? Perhaps, they argue, it is because the world has an insatiable appetite for the state of the Jews; dare they say for reasons of anti-Semitism? But take Israel out of the headlines for too long, have a conscious decision to ignore the problems of Israel/Palestine, and the pro-Israel lobbies will be up in arms claiming that the world has lost all interest in little Israel, that it is not interested in the fate of the Jewish Homeland created out of the ashes of the Holocaust; in short, that the world is anti-Semitic and does not care what happens to Israel.

But not to worry, it will not happen. It is not surprising that the anti-Israel boycott proposal by British journalists (which was passed and then overturned in 2007) recommended that journalists boycott goods produced in Israel, but did not (unlike the academics, the architects, the medical personnel, the actors, and a host of other professions who have recently become part of the boycott) suggest boycotting the coverage of news in

Israel/Palestine. It would appear that Israel's location in the center of world attention is ensured for some time to come.

Inward or Outward Looking? The Clash of Identities

THIS ESSAY CANNOT BE CONCLUDED without mentioning one locational definition which, probably more than any other, is anti-global in its very essence. Exclusive, insular and predominantly Jewish in its interpretation, the ideology of the settler movement and Greater Israel perceives Israel in its raw and pristine form. A God-promised land (the "Promised Land," not the "Holy Land," the latter being a predominantly Christian concept), the borders are determined in the Bible and, in their widest form, run from the Euphrates and Tigris in the east, to the Nile in the south. It is a territory in which physical location determines ritual function, and in which Judea and Samaria take precedence over the West Bank. But even here, borders are flexible. For political reasons they are extended as far as possible, while for some ritualistic reasons (such as the observance of the Sabbath laws in which the land must be allowed to lie fallow at great economic loss to the farmers) the borders are shrunk to their minimal extent. A functionalist approach makes life more flexible and easy to deal with, even for the most nationalistic groups, which are inward-looking and rally against notions of globalization and external influences which, in their view, "dilute" the only true and pure cultural identities.

Contrast this neo-Zionist identity with that of post-Zionism. While the former focuses on the unique and the exclusive, the latter argues that Israel cannot continue to be defined as an exclusive nation-state in the era of "post-nationalism." Internal borders have to be broken down, two-state solutions to the conflict have to be abandoned as behind their time, and all of this must be replaced by a single, secular, binational state between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River in which all are equal. Specifically Jewish/Zionist symbols of statehood, such as the Hatikva anthem or the Magen David flag, have to be replaced by universal

symbols. Only then will Israel (or whatever the state will be called) be part of the global family of political entities known (at least for the moment) as states.

It is fair to say that neither the neo-Zionist nor the post-Zionist identity carries a large support amongst Israeli (Jewish) citizens; nevertheless they indicate the wide gulf that exists between different population groups and the ways in which they view their state and its place in the political ordering of the world.

Concluding Comment

PERHAPS THE LESSON OF THIS ESSAY IS that Israel's geographical and geopolitical location is, at the end of the day, determined by functional concerns. These, in turn, are mediated by the unique nature of the state as constituting the Jewish Homeland in its ancient heartland. Those who seek global identities and locations see this as a way of strengthening Israel in the real world of contemporary globalization. Those who seek more exclusive identities equally see their exclusivity as a way of strengthening the collective identity through the preservation of internal homogeneity. But none of these identities are totally exclusive—they are complementary. An average Israeli (if there is such a creature) will adopt any combination of the identities discussed here. The collective identity of the state will be mediated through the complex relationship governing the ways in which these six locations—geographic and non-geographic—are expressed through the eyes and aspirations of their citizens. This is the dynamic complexity of Israel at sixty. It is a healthy dynamic, one which throws up, again and again, the self-questioning and the self-seeking. It is one that pits the uniqueness of the Jewish state under siege against its desire to be a leading player in global change and world development. And it is a dynamic that will continue to be played out long beyond its sixtieth anniversary as Israel hands over its leadership to a post-Holocaust, self-assured generation of young adults who see the world with very different eyes from their parents' and grandparents' generations. ■

AFTER THE MELTDOWN

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that says if government favors the financial interests of the rich to the disregard of all else, everyone will benefit and the nation will prosper. A thirty-year experiment with trickle-down economics that favored the interests of Wall Street speculators over Main Street businesses and working people has proven it doesn't work. We now live with the devastating consequences. It has given us a disappearing American middle class and a crumbling physical infrastructure; weakened our schools; left millions without health care; made us dependent on imported goods, food, and energy; increased our burden on Earth's living systems; and created an often violent competition between the world's peoples and nations for Earth's remaining resources.

Wall Street has become so corrupted that its major players no longer trust one another. The result is a credit freeze that is starving legitimate Main Street businesses of the money they need to pay their workers and suppliers. Pouring still more taxpayer money into corrupted institutions won't fix the fundamental problem.

Corrective action begins with recognition that our economic crisis is, at its core, a moral crisis. Our economic institutions and rules, even the indicators by which we measure economic performance, consistently place financial values ahead of life values. They are brilliantly effective at making money for rich people. We have tried our experiment with unrestrained greed and individualism. Our children, families, communities, and the natural systems of Earth have paid an intolerable price.

We have no more time or resources to devote to fixing a system based on false values and a discredited ideology. We must now come together to create the institutions of a new economy based on a values-based pragmatism that recognizes the simple truth that if the world is to work for any of us, it must work for all of us.

We have been measuring economic performance against GDP, or gross domestic product, which essentially measures the rate at which money and resources are flowing through the economy. Let us henceforth measure economic performance by indicators of what we really want: the health and well-being of our children,

families, communities, and the natural environment.

GDP is actually a measure of the cost of producing a given level of human and natural health and well-being. Any business that sought to maximize its costs, which is in effect how we have managed our economy, would soon go bankrupt. We will henceforth strive to grow the things we really want, while seeking to reduce the cost in money and natural resources.

I call on faith, education, and other civic organizations to launch a national conversation to identify the indicators of human and natural health against which we might properly assess our economic performance, taking into account what we know about the essential importance of equity, caring communities, and the vitality, diversity, and resilience of nature to our overall physical and mental health and well-being.

No government can resolve the problems facing our nation on its own, but together we can and will resolve them. I call on every American to join with me in rebuilding our nation by acting to strengthen our families, our communities, and our natural environment, to secure the future of our children, and to restore our leadership position and reputation in the community of nations.

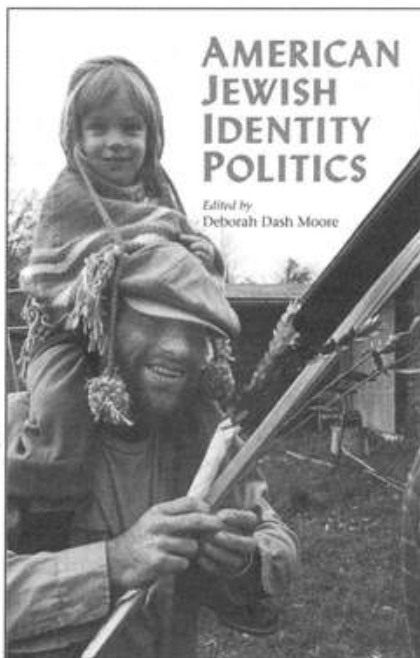
Like a healthy ecosystem, a healthy twenty-first-century economy has strong local roots and maximizes the beneficial capture, storage, sharing, and use of local energy, water, and mineral resources. That is what we must seek to achieve, community by community, all across this nation, by unleashing the creative energies of our people and our local governments, businesses, and civic organizations.

Previous administrations favored Wall Street, but the policies of this administration will favor the people and businesses of Main Street—people who are working to rebuild our local communities, restore the middle class, and bring our natural environment back to health. Together we can actualize the founding ideals of our nation as we restore the health of our nation and its economy.

- We will strive for local and national food independence by rebuilding our local food systems based on family farms and environmentally

from michigan

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friendly farming methods that rebuild the soil, maximize yields per acre, minimize the use of toxic chemicals, and create opportunities for the many young people who are returning to the land.

- We will strive for local and national energy independence by supporting local entrepreneurs who are creating and growing local businesses to retrofit our buildings and develop and apply renewable energy technologies.
- It is a basic principle of market theory that trade relations between nations should be balanced. So-called "free trade" agreements based on the misguided ideology of market fundamentalism has hollowed out our national industrial capacity, mortgaged our future to foreign creditors, and created global financial instability. We will take steps to assure that our future trade relations are balanced and fair as we engage in the difficult but essential work of learning to live within our own means.
- We will rebuild our national infrastructure around a model of walkable, bicycle-friendly communities with efficient public transportation to conserve energy, nurture the relationships of community, and recover our farm and forest lands.
- A strong, middle-class society is an American ideal. Our past embodiment of that ideal made us the envy of the world. We will act to restore that ideal by rebalancing the distribution of wealth. Necessary and appropriate steps will be taken to assure access by every person to quality health care, education, and other essential services, and to restore progressive taxation, as well as progressive wage and benefit rules, to protect working people. These policies are familiar to older Americans because they are the policies that created the middle class, the policies with which many Americans grew up. They were abandoned by ideological extremists to the detriment of all.

- We will seek to create a true ownership society in which all people have the opportunity to own their own homes and to have ownership stakes in the enterprises on which their livelihoods depend. Our economic policies will favor responsible local ownership of local enterprises by people who have a stake in the health of their local communities and economies. The possibilities include locally owned family businesses, co-operatives, and the many other forms of community- or worker-owned enterprises.

My administration will act at the national level to support your efforts to advance these objectives at the local level by engaging in a fundamental reordering of our national priorities.

Because the world can no longer afford war, the foreign policy of this administration will build cooperation among people and nations to eliminate terrorism and its underlying causes; resolve conflicts through peaceful diplomacy; roll back military spending and demilitarize the national economies of all nations; restore environmental health; and increase economic stability. We will work to replace a global system of economic competition with a global system of economic cooperation based on the sharing of beneficial technology and the right of the peoples of each nation to own and control their own economic resources to meet their needs for food, energy, shelter, education, health care, and other basic needs. We will work to protect the rights and health of working people and the environment everywhere.

An unprecedented concentration of power in transnational corporations that owe no allegiance to any nation, place, or purpose undermines democracy, distorts economic priorities, and contributes to a socially destructive concentration of wealth. The only legitimate reason for a government to issue a corporate charter giving a group of private investors a legally protected right to aggregate and concentrate economic power under unified management is to serve a well-defined public purpose under strict rules of public accountability.

There will be no government bailouts of

failed corporations during my administration. Any private corporation that is too big to fail is too big to exist. We will institute vigorous anti-trust enforcement to break up excessive concentrations of economic power and restore market discipline. Because absentee ownership invites irresponsibility, we will create incentives for publicly traded corporations to break themselves up into their component units and convert to responsible ownership by their workers, customers, or small investors in the communities in which they are located. Through a public legal process, we will withdraw the charter and force the dissolution of any corporation that consistently fails to obey the law and fulfill a legitimate public purpose.

There is no place in a life-serving twenty-first-century economy for financial speculation, predatory lending, or institutions that exist primarily to engage in these illegitimate practices. We will act to restore integrity to Wall Street by rendering its casino operations unprofitable. We will impose a transactions tax, require responsible capital ratios, and impose a surcharge on short-term capital gains. We will make it illegal for people and corporations to sell or insure assets that they do not own or in which they do not have a direct material interest. The brain power and computing capacity now devoted to trading electronic documents in speculative financial markets will be put to work solving real social and environmental problems and financing life-serving Main Street enterprises that create living-wage green jobs.

To meet the financial needs of the new twenty-first-century Main Street economy, we will reverse the process of mergers and acquisitions that created the current concentration of banking power. We will restore the previous system of federally regulated community banks that are locally owned and managed and that fulfill the classic textbook banking function of serving as financial intermediaries between local people looking to secure a modest interest return on their savings and local people who need a loan to buy a home or finance a business.

And last, but not least, we will implement an orderly process of monetary reform. Most people believe that our

government creates money. That is a fiction. Private banks created virtually all the money currently in circulation when they issued a loan at interest. The money is created by making a simple accounting entry with a few computer keystrokes. That is all money really is, an accounting entry.

Many years ago our government gave private banks the exclusive power to create money through the issuance of debt. This means that someone has borrowed and is paying interest to a private bank for virtually every dollar in circulation. The more our economy expands, the greater the debt owed to the bankers who create the money essential to economic exchange.

This makes banking a very profitable business, but it creates inherent economic instability as credit expands and contracts. Furthermore, because banks create only the principle loaned, but not the interest, the debt-money system creates an imperative for perpetual economic expansion to generate new loans to create new money at a sufficient rate to allow borrowers to pay the interest due on their loans. This means the economy must grow to keep the money supply from collapsing and assures that as a nation we are mired in ever-growing debt.

U.S. household mortgage and credit card debt stood at \$13.8 trillion in 2007, roughly the equivalent of the total 2007 GDP, and much of it was subject to usurious interest rates. The federal debt inherited from the previous administration stood at \$5.1 trillion in 2007, before the Wall Street bailout was approved, and it cost taxpayers \$406 billion a year in interest alone, the third largest item in the federal budget after defense and income transfers like social security. This debt hamstringing the government and places an intolerable burden on American families that undermines physical and mental health and family stability. It also creates a massive ongoing transfer of wealth from the substantial majority of households that are net borrowers to the tiny minority of households that are net lenders. This engenders a form of class warfare that has become a serious threat to the security of America's working families.

There is another serious consequence of giving control of our money supply to Wall

Street. When Wall Street banks stop making the accounting entries needed to fund Main Street, the real economy collapses, even though nothing has changed in terms of willing workers with needed skills, the needs of our families, physical infrastructure, or natural resources. The economy stops solely because no one is making the necessary accounting entries to allow real businesses to function. We cannot allow the moral corruption of Wall Street to bring down our entire economy, indeed our entire nation.

My administration will act immediately to begin an orderly transition from our present system of bank-issued debt-money to a system of public issuance. To this end I have instructed the Treasury Secretary to take immediate action to assume control of the Federal Reserve and begin a process of monetizing the federal debt. He will have a mandate to stabilize the money supply, contain housing and stock market bubbles, discourage speculation, and assure the availability of credit on fair and affordable terms to eligible Main Street borrowers. We will use public issuance to fund economic stimulus projects that build the physical and social infrastructure of a twenty-first-century economy to the extent consistent with our commitment to contain inflation.

By recommitting ourselves to the founding ideals of this great nation, focusing on our possibilities, and liberating ourselves from failed ideas and institutions, together we can create a stronger, better nation that secures a fulfilling life for every person and honors the premise of the Declaration of Independence that every individual is endowed with an unalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

This is a moment more crucial than the situation Franklin Roosevelt faced when he assumed the presidency in 1933. In addition to dealing with an economy in steep decline, President Obama must address a potentially terminal environmental crisis and do it quickly. The solutions he puts forward must restore economic confidence and achieve a dramatic reallocation of resources to reduce our economy's overall environmental burden, while meeting the

basic needs and improving the quality of life for every person. It is a daunting challenge, and half-measures will not suffice. He must act boldly to capture the momentum of the mandate of his first hundred days, guided by a vision of hope and possibility.

As we consider the need for bold initiatives by visionary leaders, we must also keep in mind the deeper questions that rarely find their way into political debates or public discourse: What is the source of true happiness and well-being? What is the purpose of economic life? What does it mean to be human on a living spaceship with finite resources? What is the human role in the great drama of evolution's continued unfolding?

These are deeply spiritual questions that call us to an epic quest of discovery and the great work of redesigning our societies to bring forth the world of our shared human dream. There is a need for people of faith to step forward to make these questions a part of our public conversation through initiatives such as the Network of Spiritual Progressives and through our churches, synagogues, mosques, and our other religious and spiritual institutions. ■

THOMAS FRIEDMAN
(continued from page 51)

this Israeli behavior and the Palestinian response, Friedman blamed Arafat rather than Sharon: "By provoking Israel with repeated suicide bombings, Mr. Arafat triggered an Israeli retaliation that didn't just destroy Arab cities—as he did in Amman in 1970 and Beirut in 1982. This time he provoked the destruction of Palestinian cities" ("Six Wars and Counting," May 29, 2002).

However bizarre the upside-down moral analysis implied in this kind of argument, it doesn't necessarily follow that Friedman was wrong in recommending to the Palestinians that they "oppose the Israeli occupation with nonviolent resistance ... and build a Palestinian society, schools, and economy, as if [there was] ... no occupation." Had the Palestinians done so, he concluded, "they would have had a quality state a long time ago" ("The Core of Muslim Rage," March 6, 2002). The problem, of course, is that Friedman's blithe confidence in the efficacy of nonviolent resistance was woefully disconnected from the

harsh realities of the Israeli occupation. First of all, there is no evidence that even Barak, let alone Sharon, would have responded to the largely moral pressures of nonviolence and ended the Israeli occupation. Even more importantly, in recent years Israeli actions in the occupied territories have been clearly designed precisely to prevent the Palestinians from building a viable state, economy, or functioning society.

Even so, in retrospect and in light of what we now know about the consequences of the intifada, it is hard to deny that the Palestinians should have at least tried nonviolent resistance. However, that was hardly clear at the time, especially because the historical record of Israel's occupation of the West Bank after 1967 had made it unmistakably clear that the longer the "peace process" was stretched out, the more Israel would take advantage of its unconstrained power to create "facts on the ground." Moreover, there was ample historical evidence to show that Israel might change long-held policies if subjected to high costs, but *only* if subjected to high costs, as it did in its withdrawals from Egypt's Sinai Peninsula after the 1973 Yom Kippur War and from Lebanon in 2000 and again in 2006. Indeed, it was only after the first Palestinian intifada in the late 1980s that Israel agreed to recognize Arafat and the PLO as the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people and enter into negotiations with them.

Does Anti-Semitism Explain Western Criticism of Israel?

IT PROBABLY IS THE CASE THAT THERE IS no country in the entire world—not even Israel itself—that is less critical of the Israeli occupation and repression of the Palestinians than the United States. Perhaps that is to be expected in the Arab and Muslim world, or maybe in the non-Western world in general; however, the anger and disillusionment with Israel is also widespread in the democratic and previously strongly pro-Israel societies of Western Europe.

Thomas Friedman's explanation for the growing hostility to Israel is anti-Semitism, including in the West. Indeed, he has been *especially* vitriolic about Europe. In 2002, in several of his more remarkable columns,

he denounced "the European fools who now rush to protect Mr. Arafat" ("What Day Is It?" April 24, 2002). Not only was Arafat seeking the end of Israel rather than just an independent Palestinian state alongside of Israel, but so were the Europeans, he argued, writing, "Yes, yes, many Europeans really do just want an end to the Israeli occupation, but the anti-Semitism coming out of Europe today suggests that deep down some Europeans want a lot more: They want Mr. Sharon to commit a massacre against Palestinians ... so that the Europeans can finally get the guilt of the Holocaust off their backs and be able to shout: 'Look at these Jews, they're worse than we were'" ("Nine Wars Too Many," May 15, 2002).

About a year later, as if to demonstrate that he had not merely temporarily lost his head, Friedman essentially repeated the charge. After accusing the Europeans of focusing only on the plight of Arabs living under Israeli occupation while ignoring those living under Arab dictators, he wrote, "We all know what this is about: the Jewish question." In case his readers did not quite understand what he meant, Friedman then approvingly quotes a friend of his that the Arabs are of interest to "many Europeans" only because of their desire "to stick it to the Jews" ("The Gridlock Gang," February 26, 2003).

The Irresponsibility of Thomas Friedman

IN THE INTRODUCTION TO HIS 2002 BOOK that reprinted many of his columns on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (*Longitudes and Attitudes: Exploring the World After September 11*), Friedman boasts that he has "total editorial freedom to take whatever stance I want on an issue," that no one but the copy editor sees his column before it is published, and that the publisher of the *Times* has never commented on anything he has written. "I am completely home alone," he writes in his preface.

It shows. In his columns on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, especially in the first three or four years after Camp David, Friedman utilized this complete freedom from criticism and accountability (1) to make arguments, statements, and charges that had been repeatedly demonstrated to

be factually wrong; (2) to make a number of assertions for which there was no evidence, as if they were so self-evident that no evidence was required; (3) to oversimplify and even, on occasion, vulgarize the issues; and (4) on several occasions to indulge in emotional diatribes that managed to be simultaneously unpersuasive and self-contradictory.

At least on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, then, Friedman's unbounded self-confidence in his own views is an unearned one, for he has not been seriously interested in learning in depth about the events in recent years, or in correcting his many errors or poorly-grounded arguments as new information and analyses became available. As a result, Friedman's discussions of the breakdown of the peace process at Camp David and after, as well as his analyses of the causes of the Palestinian intifada, are neither intellectually respectable nor, given his great influence, morally responsible. ■

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Culture

BOOKS | FILM | MUSIC

[FILM]

Sex and Satire

BURN AFTER READING, Focus Features
TOWELHEAD, Warner Independent Pictures

Review by Katje Richstatter

"SATIRE IS A LESSON, PARODY IS A GAME."
—VLADIMIR NABOKOV

SATIRES, PARODIES, DARK comedies, darkly funny dramas—these classifications attempt to get to the meaning and perhaps the intent behind a film or novel, the “why” rather than the “how” of its creation. Good satire gives us wit, irony, and exaggerations for a purpose: It holds a mirror to society in some way, however distorted, that enables us to recognize ourselves and, perhaps, choose some other route. Lately, it seems there have been a lot of films with, at the very least, satirical overtones, like Woody Allen’s *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*, released earlier this year, and the two films reviewed here, the Coen brothers’ *Burn After Reading* and Alan Ball’s *Towelhead*.

Burn After Reading is uniformly critical of every character that populates it, as well as of marriage, sex, the government, and the modern cult of self-improvement. *Towelhead* takes on the suburbs, racism, teenage sexuality, and the hypocrisy surrounding each. Categorization and genres aside, one of these two feels more successful when examined on its own terms, within its own contained world (hint: it’s the one that



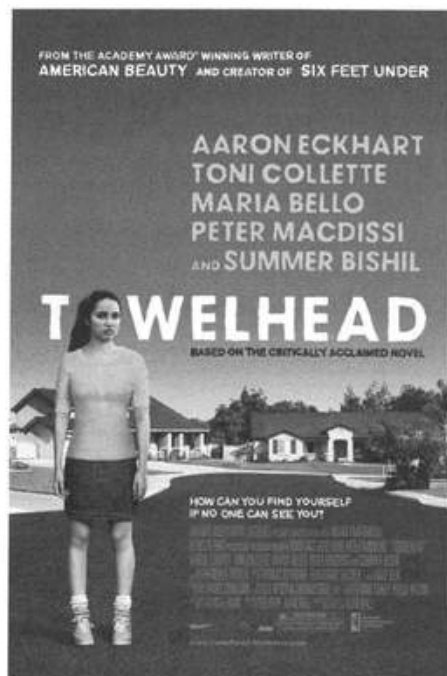
Brad Pitt stars in Joel and Ethan Coen’s dark spy-comedy *Burn After Reading*, a Focus Features release

has been seen, to date, by about 1/100th the audience of the other).

Filmed around the same time as Oscar victor *No Country for Old Men*, *Burn After Reading* is saturated with star power and, to be fair, the expectations that follow such a cast. But if there’s one thing that’s consistent about the Coen brothers, it’s their inconsistency; they have graced us with gems like *Fargo* but also with turkeys like *Intolerable Cruelty*. You can count on them to be prolific but not much else. In the light/dark espionage/caper vein, *Burn After Reading* delivers cleverness, usually in the form of its predominant emotional tone, vitriolic anger, in a Washington, D.C., that’s

populated entirely by assholes and idiots. On the asshole roster is Osbourne Cox (John Malkovich), spitting out the best of the vitriol, his wife, Katie Cox (Tilda Swinton), coldly conducting an affair with one of their mutual acquaintances, who happens to be both an asshole and an idiot, Harry Pfarrer (George Clooney.) On the pure idiot list is Linda Litzke (Frances McDormand), Chad Feldheimer (Brad Pitt), and Ted Treffon (Richard Jenkins), worker bees at a gym called “Hardbodies” that might as well be called “Hardheads.”

The plot chugs into motion around Cox’s demotion from a CIA post for his alcohol problem (showcased during the rest



of the film), and we quickly learn of his wife's affair, her disdain for Cox's post-job memoir project, and her intention to secretly assess what he's worth and divorce him. A CD of their finances and his tell-all ends up in the hands of Linda and Chad, who attempt to blackmail Cox. In retrospect, this may be the film's funniest sequence, though overall there were too few laughs, even uncomfortable ones, to consider it a comedy. Linda and Chad are almost cartoonish in their dimness, trying desperately to get a leg up in the world and seeing this as their opportunity, like "slipping on the ice outside of a fancy restaurant." Linda Litzky, in particular, spouts self-help truisms such as "maintain a positive attitude" and "don't sweat the small stuff" like it's her job—she's a true believer in transformation, which she hopes to achieve through plastic surgery, paid for with the blackmail money.

In Litzky, we are not meant to see ourselves, or even the sickness of our improvement culture; she is merely an object of ridicule. This is where the film misses countless opportunities to transcend parody and deliver something more substantial. We are instead presented with blanket misanthropy: characters that we are meant to laugh at, not with. In this childless world that strangely connects the most disconnected characters, marriages are untenable, but even the alternatives, internet dating and affairs, are devoid of passion or even modest fulfillment. The story connects the characters only to distance

them from us, to form a world that is thoroughly without meaning. The sport of mocking this empty world might be tolerable, if only it were entertaining.

The world of *Towelhead*, based on Alicia Erian's novel, is not a gleeful place, either: it is an ugly Texas suburb shadowed by the first Gulf War and its "These Colors Don't Run" patriotism, and populated with characters enduring the pain and confusion of growing up. Fans of Alan Ball's HBO series *Six Feet Under* know not to expect much glossing-over of hard realities, but he does craft his characters with care, making even the most flawed and unlikely actually seem human. The story centers around Jasira Maroun (Summer Bishil), a half-Lebanese, half-white teen who is sent to live with her father in Houston after her mother's boyfriend is caught trying to shave the thirteen-year-old's pubic hair. The mother blames her boyfriend's inappropriate act on Jasira. The troubles in Jasira's life orbit around her awakening sexuality, the curiosity and shame of it, attracting attention that is both unwanted and desperately wanted. There's also the casual racism pervading her life, both directed at her by others, and espoused by her own father, Rifat Maroun (Peter Macdissi), who forbids her to date a black student in order to preserve her reputation. Rifat is alternately overbearing and unavailable, not a bad parent exactly, but an inconsistent one, leaving Jasira to her own impulses. An immigrant, he seems to look at his adopted world with disdain and superiority, while simultaneously buying into the "American dream" mentality.

The neighborhood functions like a small town, paradoxically isolating and brimming with secrets. Enter the family of an army reservist, Travis Vuoso (Aaron Eckhart) and peace corps wife Melina Hines (Toni Collette), pregnant with her first child. Both become, let's say, overinvolved in Jasira's life: Travis by acting inappropriately, and Melina by becoming a surrogate parent, getting a crash course in what it means to mother a girl. If there is instruction here, it comes through our discomfort at watching adults ignore or transverse adult-child boundaries, both in speech and action. Blinded by his own

desire, Travis doesn't seem to realize until it's too late that Jasira, while sexually maturing, is still a child in many ways. Yet somehow Eckhart's monster is more pitiable than hateful, in a way that refuses to draw a clear line that would make Jasira victimized and wounded for life by his actions. At times, *Towelhead* seems too much like an after-school special, but it is saved by Summer Bishil's heartbreaking performance. This film is slyly stylized, in contrast to the verité feel of films like *Raising Victor Vargas* or *Kids*, but it has the same sharp eye for human vice, shortcomings, and unforgivable missteps.

On the surface, the intertwined lives in *Burn After Reading* may show a tentative form of connection, but the isolated suburbia of *Towelhead* is infinitely more relatable, which goes a long way toward keeping the audience's attention. Following an explosive (literally and figuratively) year of incredible—albeit overwhelmingly masculine—films (*No Country for Old Men*, *There Will Be Blood*, and *Michael Clayton* come to mind), 2008 has been a big ol' dud, marked by disappointment. Are we really being forced to choose between mindless pap, usually aimed at the womenfolk (*Sex and the City*, *Mamma Mia!*, *The Women*) and terribly bleak, cynical stabs at entertainment, like *Burn After Reading*? There is something about the cleverness of it, the attempt to send something up while floating, untouched and unimplicated, above it. Maybe coming of age in the ironic 1990s has made me too earnest, or at least resistant to meaning-free irony. Maybe it's the economy, stupid—the chaos and uncertainty, paired with a political arena more bizarre than any fiction you could have dreamed up even a year ago. You really don't have to make anything up these days. This kind of humor, expressed in visual language is, at its best, cutting and smart, exposing false postures and paring them down to the complex truths of being human. At its worst, it's glib, cruel, and pointless. ■

Katje Richstatter is a writer and editor whose work has appeared in the Utne Reader, Turning Wheel, SOMA, Punk Planet, and others. She can be reached at katjericstatter@gmail.com.

[BOOKS]

REBUILDING HOMES, BUILDING PEACE

AN ISRAELI IN PALESTINE: RESISTING
DISPOSSESSION, REDEEMING ISRAEL

by Jeff Halper, Pluto Press, 2008

Review by Ed Gaffney

THIS VOLUME IS FULL OF HOPE. Not naïve Panglossian *optimism* that imagines that “things always get better and better in this best of all possible worlds” (any attentive visitor to the Palestinian Occupied Territories will have observed the very opposite). But courageous *hope* that remains steadfast in the face of enormous obstacles to a humane, just resolution to the longest-running conflict in the modern world. Hope that responds to a violent situation not with more violence, but with the bold willingness to interrupt a seemingly endless cycle of retaliation by a refusal to continue to act out the role of enemies of the other community.

An anthropologist by trade, Jeff Halper has written a book that is sometimes autobiographical but never self-important. The most telling of these personal accounts took place on July 9, 1998, when a very large contingent of the Israel Defense Forces came to destroy the home of his friends Salim and Arabiya Shawamreh. Halper just happened to be in the area when Arabiya called him on his cell phone to report the traumatic events. When Halper arrived on the scene with two busloads of Israeli peace activists, the soldiers fired shots in their direction warning them to back off. Halper managed to reach the front door and tried to persuade the commander to cease and desist. The commander took out a pile of maps and started explaining why demolishing homes was “just doing my job,” as he put it (with no sense of irony in the invocation of Eichmann’s defense in Jerusalem in 1961). As a Caterpillar bulldozer rumbled up the hill toward the Shawamreh home, the academic knew with certainty that the

situation demanded much more of him than just doing his job: He could not simply observe this unjust situation; he had to resist this injustice with all his might. He threw himself in front of the bulldozer, an action he has taken many times since then. In that moment Halper moved from notional or theoretical opposition to the Occupation to active resistance. This shift forms the basis of the hope that undergirds his narrative and analysis.

The point of sharing his own experience is to encourage us as readers to make turns (sometimes U-turns) in our lives in ways similar to his shift from academic anthropologist to critical “Israeli in Palestine.” Perhaps the most fundamental shift on the part of most Americans would be to simply become better informed about important things happening in our name, but rarely—if ever—mentioned in our mainstream media. Attention to data abounds in this book. Halper provides us with a great deal of information. He documents his sources at critical junctures in his argument. And he offers a more than ample bibliography for further reading.

But data do not “speak,” any more than “facts on the ground” do. We must probe just what these data or facts really mean. Halper offers not just information, but alternative explanations—called “reframings”—that stretch our minds to make sense of the apparently nonsensical. In short, we must be intelligent, rigorously so, as we seek the real rationale for the policy of home demolition, which on its face and in its effects does not promote the one thing that Israelis crave more than anything else: security. Halper grounds the home demolition policy historically in the British policy of home demolition (by dynamite rather than by bulldozers) in the period of its Mandate over Palestine. In so doing he neglects to mention that the British also destroyed the homes of Irish dissidents (by



Jeff Halper under arrest for blocking the bulldozer that demolished the Shawamreh home.

torching thatch-roofed cottages rather than by dynamite) prior to Britain’s rule over Palestine. And he omits centuries of dispossession of Jews by Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, and—most devastatingly—by emperors, kings, and petty princes of city-states throughout the Christian centuries.

Whatever the precedents for the current Israeli policy of home demolition, Halper argues that this policy is only comprehensible as an act of neocolonial oppression of the indigenous people, and that this particular policy and related oppressive policies—checkpoints, settlements, bypass roads, and the Wall—are all aspects of a twofold plan to maximize Jewish control over the entire land and to minimize the presence of Palestinians by their overt or indirect transfer elsewhere (where precisely is a matter of indifference; it could be Jordan or Lebanon, Chicago or Detroit).

If this interpretation seems implausible to some of Halper’s readers, he is the first to encourage them to find some better hypothesis to explain a policy so profoundly insensitive and inhumane, so inattentive to centuries of Jewish experience at the hands of Europeans who expressed contempt for Jews by subjecting them to homelessness, and who made them wanderers by expelling them from their homelands.

At several turns in his argument, Halper relies on history to shed light on conflicting interpretations. Fortunately, Halper knows Zionism much better than most admirers of its current excesses. To be sure, he is aware of the exclusivist strain that surfaced as early as Herzl and that



Jeff and others rebuilding the Shawamreh home.

came to dominate Zionism. Halper refers, for example, to the Hagana's Plan Dalet of 1947, and to the following 1965 statement by Joseph Weitz, the director of the Jewish National Fund: "There is no room for both peoples in this country ... and there is no way besides transferring the Arabs from here to the neighboring countries. Except maybe for Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Old Jerusalem, we must not leave a single village, not a single tribe." But Halper emphatically denies the deterministic historicist claim of inevitability for this exclusivist vision of Zionism. He notes, for example, that as early as 1891, Ahad Ha'am, a significant voice in the movement of Cultural Zionism, wrote: "There is certainly one thing that we could have learned from our *past and present history*: how careful we must be not to arouse the anger of other people against ourselves by reprehensible conduct. How much more, then, should we be careful, in our conduct toward a foreign people among whom we live once again, to walk together in love and respect, and needless to say in justice and righteousness."

Halper has no crystal ball to predict the precise political futures of Jews, Palestinians, and their other Arab neighbors over the next decade or two. He points out the improbability of Palestinian acceptance of a two-state solution that does not include contiguous land or a viable state. But he offers no prediction about Israel as a single state with equal rights for all inhabitants, or as part of a confederation in a comprehensive regional solution.

Whatever form a new reality takes, Halper is not a deterministic pessimist who

cannot see beyond the status quo. On the contrary, precisely because "Israel did not have to become a colonial state," it need not and should not remain colonialist much longer, even if this shift might now seem improbable or just too difficult to accomplish. He writes, "Israel, like all colonial regimes who managed to redeem themselves from their oppressive pasts, must traverse a long and painful trail from decolonization through reconciliation to a new form of political life that is just and inclusive of all the country's inhabitants." That may not sound hopeful to those who are wedded to an endless preservation of the present lose-lose situation. To me, however, it reflects the only way out of the present mess and into a win-win solution for both communities.

One reason why Halper seems so hopeful to me is that he is an educator committed to the possibility of rational inquiry. The "essence of learning," he writes, is that "if people are provided with the rudimentary tools of understanding—facts, context, concepts and an ability to figure things out for themselves—they can and will change their opinions and behavior." Halper, moreover, is an anthropologist who studies the world from the ground up, not from the top down. He proclaims: "If we, the people, lead, our governments will follow. But we have to empower ourselves."

Halper empowers his readers when he informs us that Israel destroyed over 20,000 homes in the Golan Heights in 1967 to make way for settlements, and over 18,000 Palestinian homes since then; and that five agencies of the Israeli government currently have power to demolish homes

for various "reasons," none of which has anything to do with security. His hope is that persons of good will understand the enormous scope of the Israeli home demolition project and its devastating impact on Palestinian families. The most moving account of human pain in this book is Halper's description of the deep trauma inflicted upon the Shawamreh family (and by extension on all Palestinian families like them). As Salim notes, "A home demolition is a family demolition." The message of the bulldozers, Halper states, is not just the shattering of physical walls, but also the wiping out of a family's life savings, the abrupt end of any semblance of healthy family life, the complete destruction of everything that any of us would hold dear when we use the word "home" in all of its primal significance.

Halper describes not just the narrative of his arrest after confronting the bulldozers at Salim's home. He also shares his self-critical reflection about his experience, which led him to conclude that the NGO he coordinates—the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions—should rebuild demolished homes as a nonviolent act of political resistance to a policy that epitomizes what is wrong with the Occupation.

Halper has written not just for his readers, but also about us. When he describes his own willingness to take decisive and creative action to change the things he can and should resist, he challenges us to become more responsible for things we do or leave undone. He wishes us to experience both the helplessness he felt on the ground with Salim and the empowerment that comes with the realization that resisting dispossession is the only way to redeem the Jewish hope of a homeland safe not only for them, but also for the Palestinians. Because the fulfillment of this promise is conditional on our response, this book is full of hope only if we are. ■

Ed Gaffney is a law professor at Valparaiso University, where he teaches international humanitarian law. He is producer-director of "Holy Land: Common Ground," a documentary film on Israelis and Palestinians who refuse to be enemies.

ODES AND CONVERSATION

CREATURES OF A DAY by Reginald Gibbons

Review by David Danoff

REGINALD GIBBONS IS A POET who does not turn away. He is not blind to the suffering of the world, and he is not deaf to the voices all around him. The physical details of the world, the stories of the people he passes, the weight of both memory and history behind him—all this he absorbs in his poems, transforming the flotsam of passing lives and suffering into a series of quiet and tender emblems of enduring art.

Often, the poet plays the role of conversationalist, not unlike the old man described in the poem “Ode: At a twenty-four-hour gas station.” The man sits up late in a dingy waiting area, observing the people who pass through and reaching out to make small connections through the sharing of stories.

The speaker of the poem is uneasy, out of his element. The physical details are captured with a squeamish precision: next door, the “chain restaurant that serves breakfast and inert heavy pie all day and night”; in the garage waiting room, the “beat-up conjoined seats transplanted from some failed theater” and the perpetually heated carafe of “thick cooked coffee.”

In this place of unloveliness and manual labor, where young men come to make some money with their hands, the speaker thinks uneasily of his own bookish vocation. Assessing the Mexican garage mechanics, the Italian owners, and initially the garrulous old man too, he sees only difference: “not like me,” he thinks, “not like me.”

But a connection is made: The old man is a Polish Jew who came to Chicago years earlier to work in the garment industry; the speaker mentions his own half-Jewish heritage from Lodz. And the poem concludes that, in spite of the struggles in the world, and in spite of the material challenges each person must face, “in every moment there is some possibility that the last moment did not have, some other jalapeño or orchid or

high heel, some other radiator repair, some other young man who has left home to find work.”

Throughout the book, Gibbons displays this same concern with work and emigration, with the quotidian details that constitute a record of life, and with people telling their stories. Many poems center on observations of a single figure: a homeless woman in Chicago; a blind man in a bar; a bus-stop grifter with a grotesquely swollen hand; a onetime schoolmate of the poet’s daughter, now reported dead due to suicide. Sometimes the figure is physically present, sometimes only in memory or imagination. Differences and divisions are tenuously bridged. Connections are continually made.

The book contains a series of “Odes,” written in long, flowing, Walt Whitmanesque lines, which alternate with groups of sparer poems in which short lines measured syllabically are meshed across a central break, like the teeth of a zipper.

In the Odes, the conclusion of one line is often picked up by identical or echoing words at the start of the next, as in “Ode: I had been reading ancient Greeks”:

In spring the snow-melt around where I lived
sometimes used to raise the water table so
high that

That a backyard water-well like ours, sunk not
very deeply into a gentle limestone slope,
became

Became temporarily a spring....

The effect is of one thought running irresistibly into another, just as the scenes and lives described cannot be divided; each one picks up from the preceding, and none stands alone.

In the shorter poems, the disjointed line breaks correspond to the divisions so many of these pieces address. In every line as in every life, there comes the break, the dislocation. Viewed on the page, the overlapping lines seem to waver, as though threatening to pull apart in opposite directions. But they still form one braided column, one poem, and the voice of the poet weaves through them, suturing each gap.

Many of the most powerful pieces juxtapose Gibbons’s personal memories and the stark, timeless themes of an inherited tradition. This is apparent in “My

Herakleitos,” an elegy for a fellow poet who shared Gibbons’s interest in classical Greek. Gibbons echoes a poem by the fastidious, anti-heroic, Alexandrian poet and scholar Kallimakhos, who in the fourth century BCE declared to his friend Herakleitos:

“Your poems still sing—that plunderer,

“Death, will not get his hands on those.”

But will this prove true? The poems of Gibbons’s own friend, alas, were the sort which

praise neither the accomplices
of power nor those who resist
it; your poems memorialize
no conquerors or rebels and
neither sort will
notice your poems.

How can such poems endure in the world, without interest or assistance from the powerful? What’s more, the speaker sees his own quiet poems risking the same neglect, as he and his friend alike would both

labor at fine detail as
though with mouse-whisker
brushes, like
Persian painters long
forgotten—because
in this way we revive some-
thing old that we believe to
be always good.

The anxiety is real. No simple or sentimental answer can be offered. But the literary tradition, however improbably, with its long braid of accumulating contributions from artists in every age, somehow stretches like a bridge across the violence of armies, the upheavals of history, or the more insidious destructiveness of simple cultural forgetting. Gibbons asserts the value of a carefully made poem, as each poet’s verses preserve and transmit to a subsequent listener at least a small fragment of the world before it’s lost:

Kallimakhos
remembers his friend,
and you remembered
Kallimakhos, and
I remember you. ■

David Danoff is a student at the University of Maryland, where he is working toward his MFA in poetry.

A Public Warrant

[To all the interested parties]

What in any case
justifies this loneliness—
more than anything
how disappointing
it all is, the holding on,
still, when everything's gone,
the holding on throughout the haze,
and that old despairing daze—
what justifies it:
it's the simple, biting fact:
we have nowhere to go;
and we can't go back.

In clear nights, the air,
it freezes; the scenery is spare.
And sometimes it rains,
and sometimes it's hot.
And beautiful bodies and faces
sometimes smile, sometimes not—
sometimes he, sometimes she complains.

The landscape is simple
and totally clear,
angels don't climb down the ladder,
and they don't climb up from here.
And sometimes we hate,
and sometimes we love:
such a thing as we,
few friends thereof
and usually enemies;
but there's passion in all of these—
the flowing on, as you were,
like a river, singular
in some odd light someday;
and if young and always dreaming
why not stay that way—
dreaming in a rhythm,
onward in the light of day,
dreaming just as you were,
just like a river dreams, singular,
to flow, to flow...
Only our aging flesh will know.

And what, in any case,
justifies this loneliness—
more than anything
how disappointing it all is—
though you already know,
and clearly, that it must be so—
then there's the blinding
stiffness of that knowledge:
that finally what justifies,
or seems to, all the despair,
it's the simple fact in there,
that penetrating, biting fact:
we have nowhere to go;
and we can't go back.

Our bodies age from day to day,
and we, like a river in daylight, flowing away—
this glowing, brightly flaring stream—
what justifies the terrifying dream,
what justifies the great despair,
and all that this knowledge may bring,
what justifies it more than anything...

* * *

[P.S.]

The nights are clear
and freezing, with a freezing air,
there's power, there's energy there,
but there's no love,
and already no smile,
and already no words; and above,
where our hopes like to gather,
angels aren't ascending or descending the ladder.
Poems, as they are, can never show
what words cannot presume to, and so
they toss themselves off and away,
into the big, big sea, where the waves have gone,
up and down, up and down.

-David Avidan
translated from the Hebrew by Ishai Barnoy

Dear Swami

Where Swami answers your questions, and you will question his answers

BY SWAMI BEYONDANANDA

Dear Swami:

There certainly doesn't seem to be anything good—let alone funny—about the current financial crisis and bailout proposal. The headlines and stories are grim and depressing, and that's why I'm writing you. No matter what the situation, Swami, you always seem to have something worthwhile to offer. So how about it—do you have anything positive to say about us being in deep financial doo-doo?

Bernadette Daly

Bellingham, Washington

Dear Bernadette:

Absolutely. I am positive we are in deep financial doo-doo.

This should come as no surprise, what with our body politic afflicted with Mad Cowboy Disease, Truth Decay, and Irony Deficiency, all of which have led to the most devastating condition of all, Deficit Inattention Disorder. As for the bailout plan, unfortunately most of the perpetrators have already bailed out using their golden parachutes, so when the crash comes they will have nothing to worry about. Meanwhile, according to the final Greenspan Report, the average American family barely has enough "green" to span the average month. So those of you spiritual folks who've long envisioned a moneyless society, your patience is paying off. We're almost there!

Fortunately, money isn't wealth. In and of itself, it is worthless. If you doubt that, try this simple experiment: Eat your money. While high in fiber, paper money has little nutritional value. And here is something even more amazing: A hundred dollar bill has no more nutritional content than a dollar bill.

So here's the real good news. As surely as the sun comes up every morning, we have more abundant wealth than we

know what to do with. Wealth is energy, and how that energy is used. Not only have we been given solar energy to grow our food and power our lives, we've been given soul energy as well—to use and magnify our resources wisely. With the collapse of the house-of-credit-cards economy, we can finally get real. We can use the two most underdeveloped resources on the planet, love and imagination, to regrow our garden and have a heaven of a time doing it.

Dear Swami:

Having heard you speak recently, I know you have taken a stand in the upcoming election for Barack Obama. As a Swami, don't you think you should be above politics? And when you are speaking in front of a group of Republicans, what do you say to them?

Saul Twarter-Taffee,

Atlantic City, New Jersey

Dear Saul:

Thank you for your thoughtful question. Believe me, I have tried to rise above politics. Unfortunately, the perpetrations of the current regime stink to high heaven, so even up here in my spiritual high-rise they are inescapable. Actually, my real mission is to help the American people choose a new precedent—government of the people, by the people, for the people—where the government does *our* bidding, not the bidding of the highest bidder. Obama becoming president will help us move toward that precedent. Of the two candidates who can win, he is the one who can really offer political climate change.

As for what I say to Republicans, it is simple. I say, "I am sorry for your loss." No, I am not talking about their losing the election. They can still win it by activating the base—fear, prejudice, and



arrogant ignorance, the basest instincts of the body politic. And of course, they can win it if they use their energy—what the Chinese call *chi*—to keep voters from going to the polls, or keep votes from being counted fairly. *Chi-ting*, it is called.

The sad loss I refer to goes far deeper than one election. The loss is, the party of Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, Eisenhower, and Barry Goldwater becoming the party of Bush, Cheney, McCain, and Sarah Palin. The Republicans who ended slavery, started conservation, warned against the military-industrial complex, and reminded us that free people don't need a police state to protect them are all no doubt flipping in their crypts right now.

Now it is up to the American people to set things right by realizing we are the leaders we've been waiting for. It's time to fire the first big shots, and launch the evolution. ■

Swami Beyondananda is the comic alter ego of Steve Bhaerman and can be found online at www.wakeupaughing.com

THE HIDDEN SPIRITUALITY OF MEN

Matthew Fox

New World Library, 2008

MALE SPIRITUALITY? WELL, WHY NOT, AFTER so many books on women's spirituality? Matthew Fox remains one of the most creative religious thinkers of our time, despite having been kicked out of his Dominican Order by Cardinal Ratzinger, now the Pope. In this exciting synthesis of many of the most creative ideas about contemporary spirituality, Fox manages to awaken for men the hidden longings that are at the heart of contemporary spiritual crises in the West, and increasingly around the world. Carefully sensitive to the wisdom of women, and of earth-based religious traditions, Fox produces for us an interpretation that is an amazing experience to read and at the same time a powerful cultural critique. No wonder we are proud to have him as a writer for *Tikkun* and member of our Network of Spiritual Progressives' (NSP) advisory board.

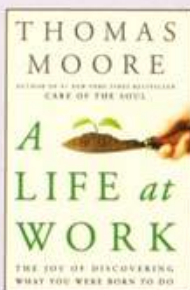


A LIFE AT WORK

Thomas Moore

Broadway Books, 2008

TALKING ABOUT WISDOM, THOMAS MOORE has frequently been an inspiration, particularly for the "spiritual but not religious" types, many of whom are part of our NSP. In *A Life at Work* he focuses on "the joy of discovering what you were born to do." Moore focuses on the many obstacles we face in this quest—for example, the chaotic way that our lives often unfold, the failures we've faced, and our tendencies to try to find quick solutions rather than go through the process of really learning who we are, what we need, and what we are needed for. Moore is brilliant at weaving together our personal needs with social realities, escaping the narcissistic traps of so many self-help books.

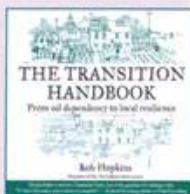


THE TRANSITION HANDBOOK

Rob Hopkins

Chelsea Green Publishing, 2008

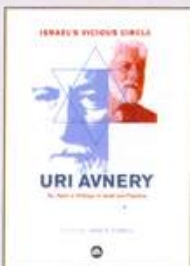
HOPKINS DOES AN EXCELLENT JOB OF SHOWING how cities and towns in the Western world could move "from oil dependency to local resilience." This is precisely the handbook that every person serious about healing the planet and averting cataclysmic climate change will find indispensable. Hopkins not only analyzes the problem but also develops a positive vision of what a transformed society could look like within the next twenty-two years. Particularly impressive is Hopkins's attention to the psychological dynamics that keep people addicted to oil. His book is a perfect antidote to those who have grown cynical about the possibility of saving the planet—the future is still in our hands!



ISRAEL'S VICIOUS CIRCLE

by Uri Avnery, edited by Sara R. Powell
Pluto Press, 2008

URI AVNERY IS ONE OF THE GREAT PROPHETIC voices raging in Israel at the distortions of Jewish and humanistic values that have accompanied Israel's treatment of Palestinians. He was a member of Knesset and the first Israeli to meet face-to-face with Yasser Arafat. His weekly



columns have been selected and edited, and they constitute the very best way to get a feel for the debate in Israel and the voice of the Israeli Peace Movement as it continues to struggle against overwhelming odds. Here you will find all the nuances in the struggle that you'd never learn from the major media (except from *Tikkun*, which frequently publishes Avnery's work at www.tikkun.org and in the magazine). Avnery is an inspired guide for all of us who wish to build peace.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MEDIA

Robert W. McChesney

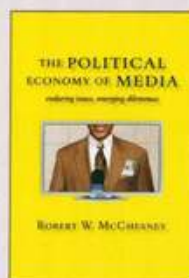
Monthly Review Press, 2008

MINDFUL ECONOMICS

Joel Magnuson

Seven Stories Press, 2008

IN THE MIDST OF THE CAPITALIST MELTDOWN, here are two powerful books whose messages should have been heeded long ago. McChesney is the Left's preeminent media expert, and his account details precisely how it happens that we, the public, are under-informed and systematically misled by a media that serves the interests of the powerful, and hence are unprepared for the current economic meltdown. McChesney shows the destructiveness of neoliberalism and of market fundamentalism, manifested in Democratic and Republican ideology alike. He also charts the policy decisions that have shaped journalism and mass media, and shows how contemporary media undermine democracy. While sharing the Left media's tendency to ignore the Religious Left (McChesney fails to mention *Sojourners*, *Tikkun*, or any of the other progressive religious or spiritual media), this book is nevertheless a "must read" for spiritual progressives.



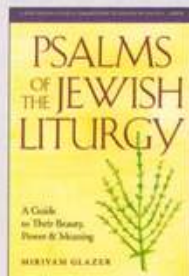
Magnuson gives us all the tools we need to understand why the U.S. economy is so destructive to the world and to our society. He provides us the foundation to participate intelligently in debates about how best to rebuild an American and global economic system. His analysis shows why there is an unsolvable conflict between our environmental needs and the logic of capitalist economic growth. All this he presents in a style easily accessible to those who fear that this topic is above their heads or "too boring for comfort." And his insistence that "a mindful economy is based on respect for all life and natural processes" provides a ground for reconciliation between the spiritual and the economic needs that we face as an immediate challenge.

PSALMS OF THE JEWISH LITURGY

Miriya Glazer

Aviv Press 2008

MIRIYA GLAZER, A PROFESSOR OF LITERATURE at American Jewish University in Los Angeles (the old U.J.), is a creative liturgist. In this little volume of new translations of the Psalms, she does not literally stick to the ancient texts so much as creatively encounter the deep meanings held by these ancient liturgical poems. Her readings reveal a freshness and creativity more aligned with great interpreters of the liturgy such as Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Shlomo Carlebach than with the plodding and un inventive work of Robert Alter or literary-theory drenched interpreters.



THE ECONOMIC MELTDOWN IS HURTING EVERYONE BUT PARTICULARLY NONPROFIT SOCIAL CHANGE PROJECTS

CHRISTMAS AND CHANUKAH GIFT IDEA

Instead of buying presents, why not give people on your list a note saying that for Christmas or Chanukah (or Kwanza or Eid) you've made a donation in their name to your favorite set of nonprofit organizations?

We hope that *Tikkun* and the Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP) are among the organizations you'd want to support. And we badly need that support, given the current economic crisis.

The *Wall Street Journal* recently reported that nonprofits may face a reduction of up to 40% in their donations. And donations are what make *Tikkun* and the NSP possible. We've discovered that many of the cutbacks in donations are not based on immediate financial problems, but on the anxiety that such problems may materialize in the future. In the meantime, some important projects may go down the drain—and we hope that you won't let *Tikkun* and the NSP risk that.

Donations to *Tikkun* and NSP are tax-deductible. We welcome your contributions—and very badly need them! If you also want to make such contributions in honor of a person, family, or institution, send us their name, address, and (if possible) email, and we will rush them a holiday card telling them that you've bought this in their honor or as a present for the holiday (tell us which holiday)—we'll do our very best to get it to them by Christmas or Chanukah. If you donate \$40 or more, we'll give them a free membership in NSP (which includes a free subscription to *Tikkun* Magazine). If you want to buy them a subscription to *Tikkun*, you can do that at our SPECIAL HOLIDAY RATE of \$18 per year. As many gifts as you wish—just send us your list of gift recipients and a check. Or donate online. They'll feel more honored by your giving a gift in their honor toward the goal of healing and transforming our world (tikkun) than by some material object that they may not need or particularly want. And you'll help us survive these tough times!

Know people who are feeling scared or alone? They'll feel less so if you buy them a gift membership in the NSP or a subscription to *Tikkun* or one of our inspiring books (find the books by clicking on "Store" at www.tikkun.org).

You can send a check to:
Tikkun/NSP (attn: Holiday Gifts),
2342 Shattuck Ave., #1200,
Berkeley, CA 94704.
Or for a speedier response,
please pay by credit card at:
www.tikkun.org or
www.spiritualprogressives.org.

