Tikkun

POLITICS+SPIRITUALITY+CULTURE

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

WINTER 2011

RENEWING LIBERATION THEOLOGY

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25th Anniversary Issue

Transforming the World

Advice to the Next Generation of Activists Engaged in Tikkun Olam

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Allen D. Kanner on Bringing Down Rule

Culture Klatch by Josh Kornbluth

love of God and my love for the entire human family on Earth. I was given a perspective of our Heavenly Father's view of the planetary religions, all of which attempt to reach up to our highest understanding of Creation and of the Creator.

It turned out that in this adventure I met Jesus as a Jew, as a lad raised in Galilee, having had the identical training as did I in a Jewish family just like my own… And he brought with him into his public life the very same instincts and truth that you and I both recognize as the divine reality of God's love for each and every person and for all of Creation.

When it was given to me that Jesus was in fact a bestowal of our Creator, having come here to master the difficult life on this world of rebellion, to reveal to us the Heavenly Father's love, mercy, and power, and to show us the Father's way, I then understood what Chanukah was all about: the Father's joining with us in the celebration of the victory that saved the Jewish people who were soon to host the birth in our world of "the son of God."

Oppression is not defeated by military victories. The Maccabees did not end the oppression of the Jews; they simply forestalled it until a greater power came upon us. It is the teachings of Jesus (that have never been tried in our world, except by individuals) that will eventually rid mankind of oppression, greed, injustice, intolerance, and war.

Martin Greenhut
Marshall, N.C.

Rabbi Lerner responds:

I believe Jesus was a great Jewish prophet who, like you and me, took seriously the Torah's command to "love our neighbor" and also to "love the stranger" (the Other—*ve'ahavta la'ger*). If it helps you to do that by giving Jesus greater status than the rest of us human beings, terrific, though that doesn't work for me. What matters to me is that we arrive at the same practical conclusions, which include a desire to maximize love on the planet and to overthrow all the kingdoms of arrogance, as the Jewish High Holiday services call for (*ve'ta'a'vir memshelet zadone meen ha'aretz*). We should overthrow those governments that run the imperial systems of the West—most notably in the United States and NATO countries—and Russia, as well as the oppressive systems of the East, including those in power now in China, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria, Pakistan, Israel, and all the other oppressive realities. On a personal level, we (myself included) must overthrow the parts of our own consciousness and egos that still seek domination or excessive control and hence don't fully recognize that love, nonviolence, cherishing and rejoicing in the Other and in the earth, and responding with awe and wonder to all of existence are not only the goal, but the way to achieve it.

Tikkun

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A VIBRANT ONLINE MAGAZINE

We are proud to announce our plan to launch a beautiful new magazine website at tikkun.org this spring. We will continue in print as a quarterly. Please help us keep you in the loop by signing up for our free newsletter at tikkun.org/mail.

CELEBRATE OUR ANNIVERSARY WITH US

Join us on March 14, 2011, at UC Berkeley for a celebration of our twenty-fifth anniversary. *Tikkun* cofounders Michael Lerner and Nan Fink Gefen will present the *Tikkun* Award to Judge Richard Goldstone, Rep. Raul Grijalva of Arizona, poet C.K. Williams, Sheikh Hamza Yusuf, and Traveling Jewish Theater founder Naomi Newman.

Info and reservations: tikkun.org/celebrate

Cover Image: *Creative Process* by Samuel Bak, Image Courtesy of Pucker Gallery, www.puckergallery.com

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Online Exclusives

Tikkun is expanding online! Cheered by the popularity of our new blog, we are set to launch a beautiful new magazine website this spring. The print magazine will continue as a shorter quarterly, but to read many of our best pieces you'll have to visit us online. To lure you there we're publishing twenty-fifth anniversary pieces by some of our most significant writers as online exclusives. Visit tikkun.org in January for essays by:

Nancy Ellen Abrams and Joel R. Primack
Andrew J. Bacevich
Michael Bader
Barry Barkan
Benjamin Mordecai Ben-Baruch
Cherie Brown
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Readers Respond

A NOTE ON LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:
We welcome your responses to our articles. Send your letters to the editor to Letters@Tikkun.org. Please remember, however, not to attribute to Tikkun *views other than those expressed in our editorials. We email, post, and print many articles 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.*

JFK'S VIETNAM WITHDRAWAL

Jim Douglass's article "JFK, Obama, and the Unspeakable" in the November/December 2010 issue of *Tikkun* has the following statement, claiming to quote National Security Action Memorandum 263 of October 11, 1963, on withdrawing U.S. troops from Vietnam: "It ordered a U.S. troop withdrawal from Vietnam—bringing home '1,000 U.S. military personnel by the end of 1963' and 'by the end of 1965 ... the bulk of U.S. personnel.'" When one actually reads the text of National Security Action Memorandum 263 (instantly available on the Internet), one finds that the second alleged quote is totally absent. (Nor is it in State Department Telegram No. 534 referenced in the memorandum.) This manufactured quote severely undermines the credibility of Douglass's implication that JFK was moving toward total withdrawal from Vietnam and that this provided some of the motivation for his assassination. Please correct this serious misstatement of fact.

Edwin Shealy
Asheville, N.C.

Jim Douglass responds:

Thanks to Edwin Shealy for his conscientious critique. It takes us more deeply into the unspeakable.

National Security Action Memorandum 263's second paragraph reads: "The president approved the military recommendations contained in Section I B (1-3) of the report [of Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and General Maxwell Taylor on their mission to South Vietnam], but directed that no formal announcement be made of the implementation of plans to withdraw 1,000 U.S. military personnel by the end of 1963."

McNamara and Taylor delivered their report to President Kennedy on October 2, 1963. For the heated National Security Council meeting convened by JFK that evening, the report's most controversial recommendation (besides I B 3's almost immediate 1,000-military-personnel withdrawal) was I B 2: "[That] a program be established to train Vietnamese so that essential functions now performed by U.S. military personnel can be carried out by Vietnamese by the end of 1965. It should be possible to withdraw the bulk of U.S. personnel by that time."

The president already knew the report's withdrawal recommendations. He had written them. JFK had dictated the passages to General Victor Krulak in the White House, while Krulak's Pentagon office team was editing the data being cabled by McNamara and Taylor from Vietnam.

Acting against his National Security Council majority, Kennedy endorsed the McNamara-Taylor Report's withdrawal recommendations in meetings on October 2 and 5. He ordered them to be carried out in NSAM 263 on October 11, 1963. His courageous decision to withdraw from Vietnam was a final nail in his coffin.

HOW TO ACHIEVE *TIKKUN OLAM*

This is in appreciation for your email message regarding Chanukah and Christmas celebrations and our efforts to "triumph over cynical realism" [also posted at tikkun.org/chanukah2010; please sign up for our emails at tikkun.org/mail].

Your activism in the Spiritual Progressive movement is, in my opinion, in the forefront of our planetary tikkun olam. I am a septuagenarian graduate of Yeshiva University (class of '56) having since given my entire life to this same cause, tikkun olam.

In this dedication I was led in my spirit to "become a member of the human race," bringing with me the teachings of my Jewish training and

MORE LETTERS

Thank you for all your letters! We receive many more than we can print. Visit tikkun.org/letters to read additional letters on queer spirituality, science and spirit, the fear of presidential assassination, telling Israel the truth, disillusionment with the Democrats and the Constitution, Iranophobia, home foreclosures, and more!

A Note from the Sunny Side

BY TRISH VRADENBURG

I HAVE LEFT IT TO OTHERS TO GIVE WELL-DESERVED tributes to *Tikkun* magazine. As for me, I only signed on to be publisher because I knew the editor—my brother, Michael. It turned out to be a very smart choice.

Michael and I are both writers, though 180 degrees different in our approaches. I am a comedy writer—predominantly sitcoms in La La Land; my brother is the intellectual one. And nothing proves that more clearly than *Tikkun* magazine. *Tikkun* is a cerebral, logical, scholarly magazine. I am always looking for the accompanying Cliff Notes.

We came from a very political family. Whereas I could usually see the sunny side to locusts and vermin, Michael was tortured by the world's injustices and his inability to instantly right them. His goals have always outpaced the reality of his society. The class revolution Michael was expecting in the sixties simply didn't pan out. So that just meant he had to look deeper and work harder to develop a vision that the American public would embrace.

It has not been an easy road. Apparently compassion coupled with financial generosity is not a simple sell. Taking away money from *any* class—lower, middle, upper—is not a popular position, despite the fact it may be the morally right one. It would seem everyone thinks he is going to win the lottery and so he wants to make sure his taxes won't be too high.

Michael and I grew up in the same family with the same experiences in the same Jewish familial craziness, and yet we often had different interpretations of those realities—I was right, of course, but why nitpick? It could have been the difference in our age: I was vastly younger than he—OK, three years, three months, two days, twenty-one hours—but to a kid that's a lot. But though we may have a different take on the world, our moral standards are generally the same.

I have been proud to support *Tikkun*. Proud to be Michael's sister. Proud to share the same core values. Michael is sure of his truths. He stands by his convictions and his principles. He will not be moved. It is good to have at least one Michael in your family. ■

Turning Tikkun Olam into Action

BY GEORGE VRADENBURG

ON ITS TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY, *TIKKUN* IS wise to reflect on further steps that might be taken to enable practical implementation of its vision of generosity and caring.

Since leaving business (AOL/Time Warner) several years ago, I have lived in the world of philanthropy and civic engagement. This world is full of extraordinary individuals and institutions that have set their goals and measured their success by the extent to which they have had a positive impact on the lives of others.

Just a small sampling of the activities of the people with whom I work on a daily basis demonstrates the range of social conditions ("social" being defined broadly) in need of attention: they are engaged in emergency medical/response work to restore communities impacted by manmade or natural hazards; curing, treating, or supporting those impaired by physical or mental illness; educating and feeding children in conditions of poverty; bringing the joy, creative inspiration, and healing powers of great works of visual and performance art to those unable to afford access; protecting human rights; improving environmental conditions; and increasing skills and job opportunities for those struggling to find productive and satisfying work.

The vast scope of human needs reflects the great challenge of tikkun olam. Simply enacting a law requiring all to pledge "tikkun olam" won't do it. Notwithstanding the generosity of the American people, there is a scarcity of resources to meet all human needs, there are competing needs to be served, and there are few tools available to assess the relative social impact of different philanthropic and civic investments. Is an investment in potential cures for Alzheimer's more or less productive than *(continued on page 94)*

George and Trish Vradenburg are co-publishers of Tikkun.

THE NATURE OF EVIL
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the other hand there is that tragic acknowledgement of one's own inevitable failure and pollution, that peering into the pit of nothingness over the edge of which, so one hopes (but with absolutely no guarantees), something affirmative might finally crawl. Tragic humanism sees the need for this breaking and remaking, as liberal humanism does not. And this is in my view one of the most important ethical and political conflicts today.

Oedipus, the beggar king, stands before Athens. As he once returned an answer to the Sphinx, now his own presence poses a question to the city-state. Is it to gather this unclean thing, this stinking piece of nothingness, to its heart, or is it to cast it out as so much garbage? What is civilization to make of this ghastly parodic image of itself, at once stranger and brother, guilty and innocent, hunter and victim, man and monster, poison and cure, holy and defiled? "Am I now a man," Oedipus asks, "only when I am now no longer human?" It is a profound paradox he touches on here—that to be stripped of our culture and civilization, of all that makes for difference and specificity, is in one sense to cease to be human altogether, for it's this which constitutes our humanity; yet that in another sense nothing is more purely and simply human than this condition of utter dehumanization, that when we are stripped like Lear or the concentration camp victim of our cultural lendings to become less than human, we end up becoming more so. And then Theseus, ruler of Athens, takes an ethical leap into the unknown, inaugurating a radically original event. He welcomes the defiled beggar into the city, fearful of contamination but trusting that if he does so a great power for good will follow. That which is rejected is made the cornerstone; that which is cast out as so much excrement will prove to be fertilizing. As Oedipus is enshrined at the heart of the city, the violence that went into the making of civilization, but which then is always in danger of undermining it, is sublimated into a defense of the city itself. In a tragic action, only through self-emptying and dispossession can transcendence, risen life, be assured, and it is never really assured at all. It is not true, as the demented Lear snaps to his daughter, that nothing will come of nothing. On the contrary, the lesson of tragic humanism is that something will come only of nothing; and that those who fear that nothingness—those who refuse to acknowledge this thing of darkness as their own, who can see it only as a monstrous obscenity lurking on the threshold of their city-state—will themselves go to monstrous lengths to annihilate it. ■

FROM THE PUBLISHERS
(continued from page 5)

one in improved educational opportunity for children? How does one compare the relative social return of an investment in the Red Cross with one in the Salvation Army? In the business world, financial investors have a common language and sophisticated research tools to assess relative financial returns. In the philanthropic world, social and civic investors have neither an accepted analytic approach nor the research infrastructure needed objectively to assess relative value of different philanthropic investments. It is not enough, in my view, to say, "let's do them all," because resources are simply not unlimited.

How are these choices to be made? In financial markets, individual and institutional investors make informed choices among thousands of firms across hundreds of sectors by comparing their relative financial condition and performance as described in public financial statements speaking the common language of "generally accepted accounting principles." While different investors will make different choices among firms, the investment community as a whole will reward higher performers and punish lesser performers and will tend to allocate more capital into those sectors of the economy that are growing and hence contributing more to aggregate economic performance.

In social markets, individuals, corporations, and governments all make decisions to make social or civic investments across thousands of service providers, social sectors, and social change models. Yet, no common language or research community analytics exist for assessing either relative firm impact on social conditions or relative sector performance against aggregate social targets. As a consequence, social capital is unable to reward good versus bad performers or to focus on those social sectors that contribute more to overall social outcomes than others. Government is an important investor in improved social outcomes, but it is not the only actor, nor should it be.

Given these defects in social markets, it is no wonder that America is under-investing and mis-investing its limited social capital and not making the social progress its national wealth suggests it is capable of. To do so, the development of the following framework for assessing social health and progress would be useful:

1. Develop an agreed-upon classification of social conditions and sectors, aggregate metrics of social health conditions and performance, and an analytic framework for measuring the relative social contribution of different social sectors.

2. Develop and require use by each social actor (NGOs, for-profits, governments) of "generally accepted social accounting standards" that permit analysis by an objective research community of comparative social performance at the individual actor level.

3. Apply the sanctions provided for in existing securities law to these statements.

The time has come to turn the prophetic vision of a generous and caring society into a working reality through the development of a widely accepted set of measures and decision tools comparable in sophistication and effectiveness to those in the financial sphere. Short of that, prophetic visions will remain just that. ■

Tikkun at 25

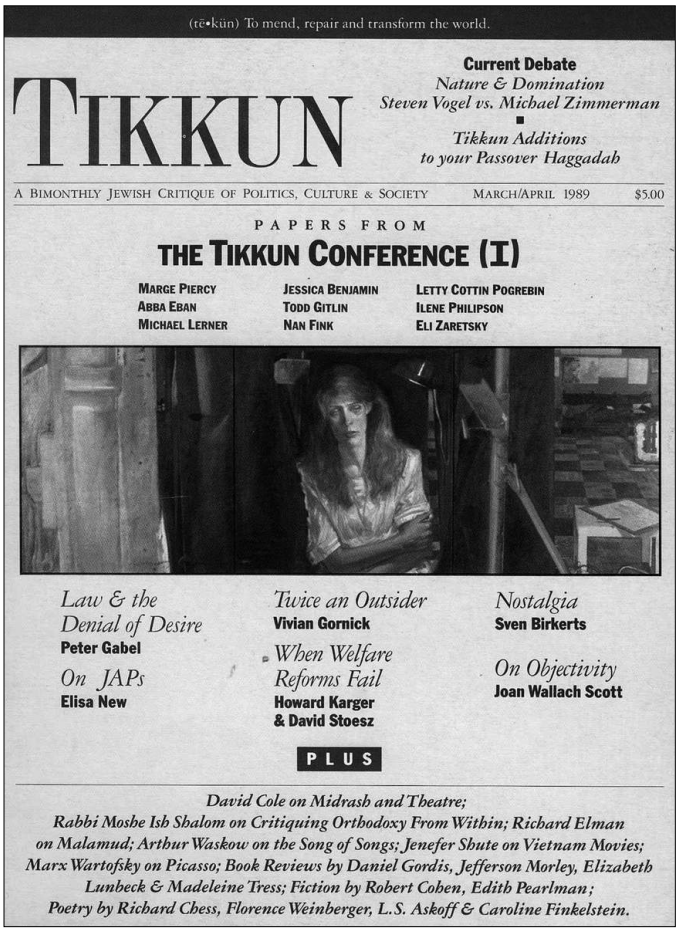
Those of us who founded and shaped *Tikkun* for the past twenty-five years have been solidly committed to supporting the manifestation of the Spirit of God in this world. In our view that means advancing the possibilities of a world based on love; kindness; generosity; individual and collective freedom; mutual recognition; thanksgiving; pleasure; joy; the evolution of scientific knowledge, spiritual wisdom, understanding of self and others, and deep levels of individual and global consciousness; the triumph of social justice; peace; equality; material well-being; environmental sanity; mutual forgiveness and caring for each other; and awe, wonder, and radical amazement at the grandeur and mystery of the universe. Our goal of tikkun-ing the world (healing, evolving and transforming it), has a long tradition in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and in other spiritual and religious communities as well. We are merely one contemporary embodiment of that tradition.

The Promise, Successes, and Problems of the NSP

Knowing that people often find that their highest progressive ideals cannot be expressed freely in their various religious communities, or at least not acted upon in those institutions, we decided seven years ago to create the Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP) to be the educational and activist arm of *Tikkun*. Even the most progressive denominations (such as the Unitarians, UCC, Quakers, and Methodists, as well as Sufi Muslims and Reform, Renewal, and Reconstructionist Jews) were sometimes—reasonably enough—afraid of causing splits within their own membership by seeming too "radical" in their pursuit of tikkun olam (the healing and transformation of the world). But this often restrained their most progressive leaders from sharing publicly what they believed privately. So progressives in these and all other religious and spiritual communities have often felt isolated, not least from their natural allies in other denominations. No such sensibilities restrained the Right from aggressively pursuing its agenda within and outside of those religious communities.

We imagined that the NSP would provide an interdenominational and interfaith home for these people so that we could team up with each other, become a self-conscious vanguard of spiritual transformation and tikkun olam, share strategies about how to work in our separate denominations or religions, and also act together when our separate religious homes were unlikely to take action that expressed our deepest understandings. We made a special effort to make clear to atheists and agnostics who had a spiritual dimension to their consciousness that they too were welcome and honored within the NSP; many such have been in leadership roles and have become known for their articles in *Tikkun* magazine. We are happy that the NSP has provided this kind of an interdenominational and interfaith home for many religious and spiritual progressives.

Yet the NSP has had its problems. The extreme religiophobia in the Left has often marginalized us and our ideas. Whereas the Right never feared to learn from its spiritual or religious wings, most of the Left, dominated by great fear of religion (in part based on real experiences of being oppressed in some religious communities, but then unfairly generalizing that to all religious or spiritual enterprises), has systematically ignored or rejected our overtures to work together and has been unwilling to support anything that uses the language of spiritual consciousness or words such as "love," "caring," and "generosity." In addition, many of those who have been turned on by our ideas remain unwilling to commit either financially or with the amount of time and energy that people in the Religious Right have. Finally, the absence of enough money to hire national and regional organizers has made


(tē•kün) To mend, repair and transform the world.

TIKKUN

Current Debate
Nature & Domination
Steven Vogel vs. Michael Zimmerman

Tikkun Additions
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PAPERS FROM
THE TIKKUN CONFERENCE (I)

Marge Piercy, Abba Eban, Michael Lerner, Jessica Benjamin, Todd Gitlin, Nan Fink, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, Ilene Philipson, Eli Zaretsky

Law & the Denial of Desire — Peter Gabel
On JAPs — Elisa New
Twice an Outsider — Vivian Gornick
When Welfare Reforms Fail — Howard Karger & David Stoesz
Nostalgia — Sven Birkerts
On Objectivity — Joan Wallach Scott

PLUS

David Cole on Midrash and Theatre; Rabbi Moshe Ish Shalom on Critiquing Orthodoxy From Within; Richard Elman on Malamud; Arthur Waskow on the Song of Songs; Jenefer Shute on Vietnam Movies; Marx Wartofsky on Picasso; Book Reviews by Daniel Gordis, Jefferson Morley, Elizabeth Lunbeck & Madeleine Tress; Fiction by Robert Cohen, Edith Pearlman; Poetry by Richard Chess, Florence Weinberger, L.S. Askoff & Caroline Finkelstein.

it hard to build on the excitement and energy people first feel when they hear about the NSP and read our ideas.

Why the Right Opposes Us More Strongly than the Left Supports Us

Ironically, the Right understands the power of our ideas and has given far more attention (albeit negative) to us than the Left or independent media such as NPR or Pacifica. For the Jewish Right, attacking *Tikkun* has been a continual theme. Our progressive middle path for Middle East peace (one that acknowledges the narratives of both sides as containing substantial truths, while simultaneously criticizing both sides for their insensitivity and cruelty toward each other) has been denounced forcefully by the Jewish Right, which responds as if we were interested in destroying Israel, and just as forcefully by people on the Left who believe that Israel is totally evil and the Palestinians are "righteous victims."

The moderate path we've forged—which also incorporates a critical analysis of the role of international colonialist, imperialist, and capitalist forces that have used this struggle and sometimes advanced it through huge arms sales to all sides—has now been joined by J Street and groups such as Rabbis for Human Rights. As a result, they too now stand accused of being "extreme" and anti-Israel—denunciations that no amount of political positioning or inside-the-Beltway smarts is sufficient to head off. Our own impact in shaping the discourse in liberal and progressive circles has been limited by the effectiveness of AIPAC and the Conference of Presidents of Major (*sic*) Jewish Organizations that have sought to convince the media and the political parties that any incorporation of peace- and justice-oriented ideas would be political suicide for them. That same ruthless attempt to discredit us is now directed at J Street and Jewish Voice for Peace, just as it continues to be directed in synagogues against almost anyone who dares question Israeli policies. The more Israeli policies are seen as transparently repressive and irrational, the more the attempts to repress those who support more rational policies escalate.

Nor is this much different when it comes to issues in mainstream American politics. From the moment *Tikkun* began, but particularly after our ideas for a Religious Left or politics of meaning seemed momentarily to be embraced by Hillary Clinton in 1993, the right-wing media, from Rush Limbaugh to the once-liberal *New Republic*, has relentlessly crusaded against us, not only because of our stand in favor of ending wars and creating social justice and kindness, but also and most importantly because the Right understands how powerful a progressive movement would be if it adopted the language and spiritual consciousness that we've been promoting in *Tikkun* and the NSP.

Could it be that many from the Right, like some from the more rigid parts of the Left, are afraid of our ideas because they are afraid of the pull within themselves toward love, generosity, nonviolence, and empathy—a pull that their own inner defenses are constructed to deny, co-opt, and negate? Instead of demonizing people on the right, we need to understand that they too are moved by the same inchoate and repressed desires for love, kindness, gentleness, and generosity that all people share. Each of us represses those desires to varying degrees due to our own disappointments and the humiliations we've suffered when we've trusted these yearnings and then been smacked in the face by the existing social realities of a society based on individualism and selfishness. It is these frustrated yearnings that account for the ferocity of attacks on those of us who are willing to insist that love and generosity can and must prevail. Many people fear that if they responded to those yearnings they would again be subject to the humiliations that they experienced earlier in their lives back when they did actually hope for a world of love and kindness. This fear accounts for their anger and vehemence against progressive ideas in general and toward spiritual progressives in particular.

Tikkun's Achievements

We at *Tikkun* and the NSP are well aware of our screw-ups, and we approach our work with a spirit of humility and gratefulness at having the opportunity to use our life energies to create NSP and *Tikkun*. We have printed works by over two thousand authors in these past twenty-five years. Many of them gained access to employment in larger media, in academia, or politics or religious institutions in part through the recognition and connections they made by writing for us, mostly without any financial compensation (we haven't been able to afford to pay writers for more than fifteen years). Yet we've also had to turn down another 25,000 manuscripts, many of which were works that deserved to be in *Tikkun* but for which there was no space, given that we only could afford to publish once every two months. We ourselves contributed to the undermining of a spirit of "we" because we articulated ideals that raised hopes and then did not have the staff capacity to write individual letters to those who submitted articles explaining to them why those articles were not published. And we made many other kinds of mistakes, and still do.

Yet we've also been able to do an amazing set of things. We've brought hope to tens of thousands of readers, and hundreds of thousands of others for whom the very existence of *Tikkun* has been a source of strength that allowed them to take more seriously their own most idealistic tendencies. Over these years I've met thousands of people, particularly college students, who have told me that, though they are not subscribers, their encounters with *Tikkun* on newsstands, in bookstores, or in organic food stores have changed their thinking and deeply affected their lives and the lives of their friends. Our mantra—"Don't be realistic; spend your energy and resources to go for your highest goals and beliefs, not those that the people with power tell you are realistic"—has empowered young people as well as old, and across all the different identity lines!

We've helped tens of thousands of people who had bad experiences with religion to find for themselves a path back to the God of the universe (or Spirit, or however you want to name it).

We've played a major role in breaking through the almost totalitarian control that right-wing versions of Zionism have

exercised on the Jewish world, and we've helped to bring back to the Jewish world or to Judaism thousands of younger Jews who learned through us that they could retain their ethical sensibilities and spiritual yearnings and did not have to swear loyalty to Israel or to the sexism, racism, or homophobia that some discovered in the sections of the Jewish world in which they grew up.

We were the first magazine to publish the articles of "the New Historians" in Israel who unveiled the tragic story of the 1948 "war of Independence" for Israel and helped people understand why that was a Nakba (disaster) for the Palestinian people, refuting the narrative that put all the blame on Palestinians. We were the first magazine to publish the inside story of the suffering caused by homophobia among religious Jews who were gay. We were the only Jewish magazine to refuse to accept the false Zionist story that "there is no one to talk to" to make peace with Palestine. We were the first magazine to equally honor the contributions of spiritually progressives atheists, religious Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus—the very smart intellectuals who never get into the *New York Review of Books* or *Harpers* or *The Atlantic* because they take religion or God or spirituality seriously.

Together with sister publications like *Sojourners*, *Shambhala Sun*, *Tricycle*, and the Christian Century, the web-based *BeliefNet*, and Bill Moyers's television shows; together with organizations such as Zen Peacemakers, School of the Americas Watch, the Shalom Center, and the Zaytuna Institute; together with denominations such as the Methodists, Quakers, UCC, Disciples, Reformed churches, and Unitarian Universalists; and together with various peace organizations in the Baptist, Catholic, and Episcopalian Churches, we've had some impact on the larger society in legitimating ethical and spiritual discourse in politics. We have undermined some of the cynicism that still plays a central role in the media and have even managed to get the idea of a politics of meaning more widely heard and understood.

Tikkun's Future

We still hear the call to work with all our hearts, our souls, and our might to contribute to the healing and evolving and transformation of the world. We will do that. Although for environmental, generational, and financial reasons we are becoming a magazine that comes out quarterly and has fewer pages, we are happy to announce that we are expanding our presence as an online magazine and preparing to launch a beautiful redesigned website at tikkun.org where some of our most creative writers and thinkers will be accessible (the launching of our new website will be no later than March, but possibly earlier). And if you join our Network of Spiritual Progressives (spiritualprogressives.org) or renew your subscription, you'll continue to get *Tikkun* as a print quarterly.

As we make this transition it is vital for us to be able to reach you with information about the new site and its great content. If you don't already get emails from us, please sign up at tikkun.org/mail or send an email to natalie@tikkun.org. And please take the time to open our emails and explore the new site rather than deciding to walk away because our print version is becoming smaller starting next issue.

Our Gratitude to You

We've been sustained these many years by your generosity and the generosity of other readers. By joining the Network of Spiritual Progressives and renewing their membership yearly, by making a tax-deductible contribution, or—in the case of some—by leaving us a bequest in their last will and testament, our readers have joined with a few wealthy donors to make it possible for *Tikkun* to continue.

I feel deeply grateful to all of you who have done that for us in the past, and feel certain that at least some of you will do that even if we can't afford to sustain the print edition at all (though at the moment we will in a scaled-down form). There is nothing quite like *Tikkun*, and I know many of you feel it would be a disaster if its voice were silenced.

I'm also deeply grateful for the enormous generosity shown to us twenty-five years ago by our cofounding publisher Nan Fink (my wife at the time), whose wisdom and financial assistance were indispensable in the founding of *Tikkun*. I am deeply grateful to Danny Goldberg, who became our next publisher and financer. And I am deeply grateful to my sister Trish and brother-in-law (and *Tikkun*'s "Contrarian" columnist) George Vradenburg, who have been the publishers and financers of the magazine for these past ten years and whose generosity and kindness have given me renewed faith in the abiding importance of family. I'm proud of George and Trish for their simultaneous work to develop congressional support for the funding of research on Alzheimer's disease—a lasting memorial for my mother Beatrice Hirschman Lerner, who died of Alzheimer's.

I also want to thank my special friend and comrade in making *Tikkun* happen, Peter Gabel, who has shaped this magazine with his brilliant and insightful articles and with his moving speeches at our conferences. *Tikkun* should really be viewed as a joint enterprise from the two of us: we have worked as comrades for the past thirty four years since we started the Institute for Labor and Mental Health in 1976, and we have collaboratively developed the spiritual and political perspective that has guided this magazine for the past twenty-five years and will continue to guide it in the future.

How We Can All Assure *Tikkun*'s Future

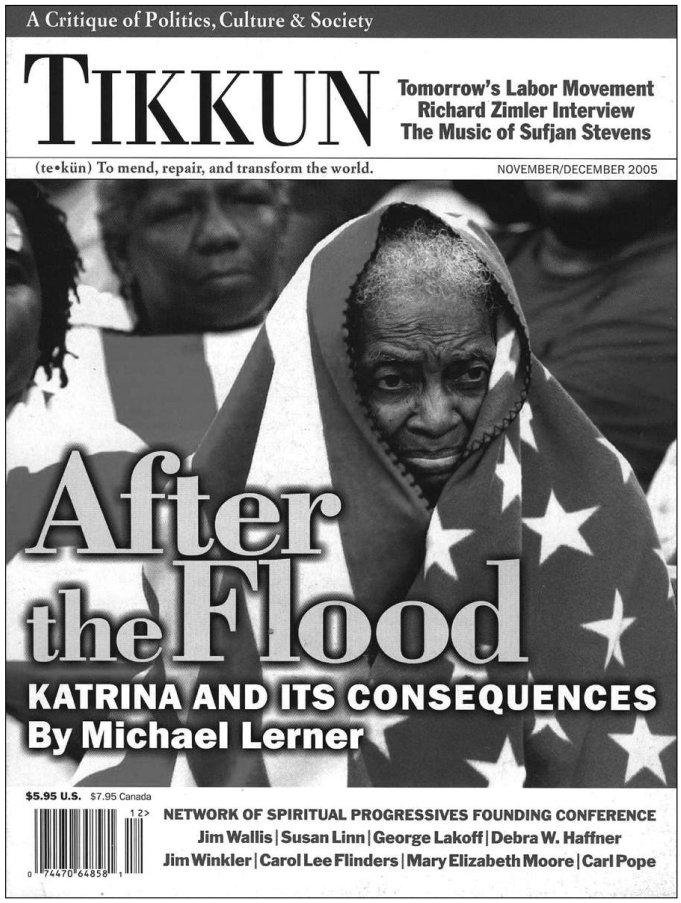
Some people have said to me, "There must be someone or some group of people out there or some foundation that would keep *Tikkun* going in the form that it has been in these past twenty-five years." Well, we haven't found them—we would need to have about half a million dollars a year more than we get through your donations and membership in the NSP. Of course, for the wealthy, the corporations, and even for some of the large institutions of the Jewish world and the liberal foundations, that is not so much money. But they haven't been willing to help. Or if you and five hundred others could commit to giving a thousand dollars

a year for the next five to ten years, that would make the difference. Obviously, if you could give that amount or more, that would be a terrific help. Indeed, whatever you can afford to give, your donation is indispensable for our future. If there is a reader who can step forward financially as a major donor to preserve the magazine in its present form, please know that at this moment we need you. Or if you have a contact with someone who can connect you with a foundation, corporation, or wealthy individual who could help us, this is the time to come to our aid. Otherwise, this will be the last issue of *Tikkun* to have this level of size and staff to put it together. However, *Tikkun* is not closing down. As I mentioned earlier, you can expect to continue to receive *Tikkun* quarterly in a print version that is half the size of this one. Our major efforts will now go into making *Tikkun* a vibrant online magazine—one of the most intellectually serious, thoughtful, and provocative voices on the Web.

Expanding *Tikkun*'s online presence opens up some terrific possibilities. While I, and many other *Tikkun* readers, love the feel of a magazine in our hands, a new generation has arisen that gets its information primarily online, and good luck trying to convince them to subscribe to a print magazine. We believe that we will reach many more people than we can through the print edition once we are a robust online magazine. If you haven't signed up for information about our online content yet, please do so at tikkun.org/mail or send an email to natalie@tikkun.org so that we can send you (probably sometime in February or early March) a digest of our first online edition. You can go there anytime: tikkun.org. And you can make a contribution at tikkun.org/donate or by sending a check to *Tikkun*, 2342 Shattuck Ave, #1200, Berkeley, CA 94704, or by calling 510-644-1200 with your credit card information 9:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Pacific Time during the work week.

Ultimately, the future of *Tikkun* is in your hands, just as we all are in God's hands. I thank God and each of you for giving me this incredible opportunity to do my best, with all my limitations, to carry forward the message of healing and evolving and transforming the world to the best of my capacities. I will continue to do so as long as you (through your support) and God (through the health I receive) allow me to do so. In preparing this issue of *Tikkun*, I went back through the past twenty-five years worth of magazines, and I have to say I'm incredibly proud to have helped make this magazine a reality. We are working now to create a full archive of past issues that will be available online, and I think if you start delving into articles in *Tikkun* from twenty-five or twenty or fifteen or ten or five years ago you are likely to be as astounded as I am now at how many of those articles are just as much on the cutting edge of culture, social theory, politics, philosophy, theology, spirituality, and psychology today as they were when we first printed them—and the poetry and fiction just as compelling!

By the way, in the online version of *Tikkun* we'll also welcome submissions for fiction, which proved too difficult to fit in to the magazine in the past ten years but which cyberspace will permit us to consider once again. But to make that vision a reality we will



need a volunteer fiction editor to select the work, just as Josh Weiner has been doing for us for poetry for the past many years. And that fiction editor will also need to have the copy-editor's eye and web skills necessary to polish and proof the stories and then format and publish them online.

We will continue to have plenty of need for volunteers and interns at our office in Berkeley, California, plus need for your help in getting our campaigns for a Global Marshall Plan and for the Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment (ESRA) to the attention of locally elected political leaders, civic organizations, professional and union organizations, and religious communities for their endorsement and support. For the larger picture of where we are as a society, please read my editorial "The State of the Spirit, 2011" which you'll find at the beginning of our special section in which many writers present some of their *Tikkun*-related wisdom, starting on page 17.

And I will continue to urge you to support our various causes, to make tax-deductible contributions and buy gift memberships to the NSP for your friends and family, to join me in campaigns and demonstrations, and to help me learn from you as we do our best to embody the ideals we hold and remain compassionate about our own and each other's limitations.

Our task is as clear today as when we started *Tikkun: l'taken olam b'malchut shaddai.* Our task is to heal, evolve, and transform the world under the guidance of the feminine (caring-oriented) Power of Transformation and Love in the universe. And as Rabbi Tarfon told his students two thousand years ago, "It is not incumbent upon you to finish the task, but neither are you free to desist from pursuing it." May we be granted the ability to do this with joy, grace, humor, and wisdom. ■

Psychedelics, Spirituality, and Transformation

by Phil Wolfson

CREATIVE COMMONS

The California ballot initiative for partial marijuana legalization (Proposition 19) may have been defeated for the moment, but nevertheless more than four million voters said "yes" to it. Between the recent reduction in California's penalties for use—now reduced to a fine for possession of under an ounce of marijuana—and the burgeoning medical marijuana industry, clearly the times are a-changin'. There are many hundreds of thousands of certified medical marijuana users in California, and twelve other states now have some reduction in marijuana criminalization as well. With scientific research into the clinical effects of psychedelics also burgeoning and a growing number of papers indicating benefit for various psychiatric conditions (post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, terminal illnesses, and drug addiction), thereby bolstering historic claims for clinical utility, and with the horrific costs of failed prohibition more and more obvious to the public, decriminalization—if not legalization—has become more of a possibility. With this as background, it is imperative to undertake a public reevaluation of where we are with respect to psychedelic use, its risks, and its potential to support personal, spiritual, and cultural transformation.

The History: Ancient and Modern

Psychoactive substance–induced alteration of consciousness is ages old, the specific history dependent on humans' particular geographic location and corresponding native plant habitats. The remarkable discovery, perpetuation, refinement of use, and sacralization of psychoactive substances in early and stone age cultures testifies to the timeless human interest in transcending "ordinary" historical and cultural realities.

Marijuana use dates at least to 4000 years BCE—the earliest cultivated plant remains known having been dated to that time. Humans and marijuana have co-evolved, influencing each other reciprocally in terms of cultivation and culture.

The use of mushrooms and other psychoactive plants in Mesoamerica is undoubtedly thousands of years old and was ineradicable despite the deliberate murder of practitioners by the Inquisition and genocidal suppression of indigenous cultures by the European colonizers.

In fact, Europe was desperately poor in psychedelics, these being limited to the toxic tropane alkaloids contained in mandrake, henbane, and poisonous nightshades such as datura (popularly known as thorn-apple, jimson weed, or devil's trumpet). European consciousness developed its particular distortions in concert with the addictive and easily manufactured toxin known as ethanol, which is of limited value for mental and spiritual transformation.

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Most remarkable is the Amazonian creation of *ayahuasca* (yage), the admixture of two separate plants that had to be bundled to create the remarkable oral dimethyltryptamine-based experience that was practiced as divination and personal transformation by native shamans. Ayahuasca use has recently spread to North America, culminating in the U.S. Supreme Court's recognition of the União do Vegetal with *hoasca* as an acceptable sacrament and indispensible part of the União do Vegetal Church's ceremonial life, much as peyote is legal for the Native American Church.

Prohibition has often arisen in tandem with use, and has tended to serve elites who, hiding behind moral authoritarianism, attempt to regulate the "mind" in order to control dissidence. On the other side, use of substances for social control has its own history. For example, the Opium Wars were aimed at securing British capitalist interests in China and sedating the Chinese and, as many have argued, the pestilence of heroin use in the ghettos of the United States was fomented by the CIA in the 1960s and '70s. Prohibition and criminalization—and, in our times, the "war on drugs" internationalized by the United States—distort the discussion of psychoactive substance use and criminalize the exploration of mind-altering drugs, as if this were an activity to be controlled by the state. That demonization makes for both propagandistic deception and overstated advocacy.

The best course has always been to provide information and education. Suppression can result in destruction of entire countries—Afghanistan, Honduras, Colombia, etc.—because "money" is the most powerful hard drug of our times and attracts so many passionate adherents globally who are fixated on the accumulation of capital and, much like hardcore drug addicts, care little for the havoc their addiction wreaks.

The Essential Safety of Psychedelics

Our epoch is unique for the mass use of psychedelic substances despite oppressive prohibition. This makes it crucial to understand why so many people defy drug laws and police to experience psychedelic effects. If the "war on drugs" is a lost cause despite the billions spent and the hordes of bureaucrats and enforcement agents who make their living off of it, why does the individual consumer still persist in driving the demand in the face of draconian penalties?

The addictive potential of substances such as cocaine, meth, the various opiates, and others are likely the driving force behind their consumption, but this is not the case for all drugs. The demand for psychedelic substances such as LSD, psilocybin, dimethyltryptamine (DMT), and mescaline—and their relatives, the empathogens (MDMA, 2-CB, etc.)—is not dependent on users getting hooked.

Psychedelics are relatively safe substances, especially as compared to alcohol, cocaine, meth, and other drugs. Rates of acute psychosis and incidents of physical harm are scant. Casualties do occur though, so a concern for safety and an understanding of risks (and the types of use that increase risks) is a must. For example, at the height of the Rave period of mass use of ecstasy in the U.K. between 1988 and 1997, when tens of millions of doses were consumed, often in tandem with other substances and under difficult conditions in which masses of people danced together in crowded hot spaces resulting in dehydration, the total number of deaths upon which the media became fastened amounted to 50-100. These deaths were certainly needless and stopped occurring for the most part when the causes were defined and appropriate preventive measures taken. For the United States the figure has been about one death per million users, and these figures generally reflect mixed substance abuse, with ecstasy being one component. Contrast this with alcohol-related deaths in the same period in the U.K., which amounted to 625 deaths per million users annually—yet there is an acceptance of that carnage. Such contradictions seem irreconcilably irrational, yet they occur because corporate interests have wielded their power to ensure that alcohol promotion and the alcohol-related catastrophe remain completely acceptable.

To be absolutely clear, deaths due to drugs are tragic, regrettable, and potentially preventable. Substances carry their own particular toxicities, but humans invent the circumstances that

Psychedelics like (from top) pscilocybin, peyote, and ayahuasca (made in part from this Banisteriopsis caapi vine), are all relatively safe substances, especially as compared to alcohol, cocaine, meth, and other drugs. The author writes of their potential to liberate human consciousness.

CREATIVE COMMONS: CURTIS GREGORY PERRY, ROGER BUTTERFIELD, MANUEL M. RAMOS, AYAHUASCA IN SAN FRANCISCO

European culture was cautious about psychedelics, as the continent's native varieties were mostly toxic, like mandrake (bottom) and henbane, with effects similar to jimsonweed (top), a plant in the datura family.

CREATIVE COMMONS: BEAUTIFULCATAYA AND ANITA363

harm, like jam-packed clubs. Alcohol is the most significant gateway drug to other intoxicants, yet the official focus has been on marijuana, which seems more likely to serve as a gateway to safer and less addictive drugs like psychedelics, in those cases when it serves as a gateway at all.

The Possibility of Transformation

To return to the question of the allure of psychedelics, the most potent explanation is that they offer the possibility of a transformation of consciousness. That may occur as an intimate acute experience or a form-shaking permanent alteration—it is a spectrum of effect that has incalculable personal and social consequences. The introduction of psychedelic substance use to masses of people in the sixties was part and parcel of the immense cultural change that occurred. Liberation from the suppressive, repressive yoke of McCarthyism that had penetrated darkly into the family culture of the late '40s and '50s was in part due to the mind expansion made possible by psychedelic use, which blew up restrictive mental fetters and fear of the personal imagination. This was transmuted reciprocally to and from new cultural and political formations. If the entire New Left didn't succumb to rigid and dogmatic Leninism, it was to a great extent protected from that by personal mind-expanding experiences that escaped control by all ideologies and false consciousness. But it is not a perfect record, and psychedelics were also used to corrupt and control humans. Consider, from opposite perspectives, the final catastrophic period of the Weather Underground (and its mind-numbing use of psychedelics, which facilitated a cultish, delusional, and destructive view of what made for revolution) and, at the other destructive extreme, the sinister dealings of the CIA, which has had a compulsive interest in using psychedelics adversely to extract information or to create group and personal confusion, and even madness.

Some aficionados of the pure psychedelic experience argue that the unmitigated experience itself is sufficient to deliver transformation. And there are others, such as me, who find that the transformative influence of the psychedelic experience makes a quantum leap when integrated with spiritual practice such as Buddhist contemplation or when integrated with liberating psychotherapy. Unsupported psychedelic experience is unpredictably transformative. Integrations from the spirit side with ordinary lived reality are easier if we recognize that psychedelic transformation is but one element in our efforts to free ourselves from the corporate materialist culture. That is not a simple or straightforward task.

The Varieties of Psychedelic Experience

To convey the varieties of psychedelic experience is to experience the only partially descriptive capacity of words. Without intending to reify, or circumscribe, I will present a taxonomy of experience that reflects my personal history and observations over forty-seven years, since I and a small group of new friends just commencing medical school in New York City dropped acid (LSD). With this I am attempting to convey the psychedelic allure and am using "states" rather than some hierarchical notion based on "levels"—all such states have value for transformation.

The Mundane State: Conventional allure flows from curiosity, a desire to change oneself, the temptation of forbidden fruit, and emulation of others.

The Personal/Psychotherapeutic State: In 1964, I was a young, awkward, and self-conscious male, repressed and having just finished a psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapeutic experience that had helped me to alleviate some of the pain of my hypercritical feuding parents that I had introjected. I was beginning to find my own voice and guidance. In the flash dance of a few hours, my inner structure rocked and shifted. LSD and I met, and I passed through great fear to feel my self-hate alleviated and my imagination freed to inform a creative new consciousness. Art came *(continued on page 86)*

Suggested Reading

- A lovely, illustrated history of mind-altering drug use: *High Society* by Mike Jay Park (Street Press, 2010).
- More on the sixties, the CIA, LSD, etc.: *Acid Dreams* by Martin Lee and Bruce Shlain (Grove Press, 1985) and *Storming Heaven—LSD and the American Dream* by Jay Stevens (Grove Press, 1987).
- A glorious mytho-poetic encyclopedia of psychoactive substances: the *Pharmako* trilogy by Dale Pendell (North Atlantic Books, updated editions 2010).
- For the current state of psychedelic science, policy, and controversy, subscribe to the journal from MAPS—the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Substances (www.maps.org).

The Master's Mehserle Can Never Dismantle the Master's House

by Lynice Pinkard

It wasn't so much a cop as a system that killed Oscar Grant. Above, police in riot gear defend that system during July 8, 2010, protests in Oakland, California, about the "involuntary manslaughter" verdict received by Johannes Mehserle, the police officer who shot Grant.

CREATIVE COMMONS/JONATHAN MCINTOSH

THE EMPHASIS ON THE CONVICTION AND SENTENCING OF JOHANNES MEHSERLE, the BART police officer who shot and killed Oscar Grant, an unarmed black man, in Oakland on New Year's morning, 2009, is actively preventing us from addressing the real systemic sickness that led to this death and many millions gone.

Let's be clear: The shooting of Oscar Grant in the back by BART police officer Johannes Mehserle was horrific, but it was not "crazy." It was not the act of a rogue cop or even a "poorly trained" one. In reality, the forces of unbridled self-interest and private ownership, interlinked with and supported by white supremacy, have so shaped what it means to be a police officer that Johannes Mehserle was doing little more than what he was set up to do. The job of a police officer is to "preserve order," and specifically to preserve the existing order. In the American context, this means preserving a fundamentally *unjust* order, a culturally and economically imperialist system that subjugates and exploits large numbers of people in order to secure privileges and spoils for a few.

The fictional reality of "race" has been and continues to be used to justify the subjugation and exploitation of communities of color and the consolidation of power and resources in the hands of white people. To be specific, white people seized control of national, political, and economic power; informed black people that both God and nature had divided human populations into the white race and the black race and made the white race better; imposed a system of free-market capitalism; segregated housing, jobs, health care, and education along the color line so that the white race gets the best of everything; attributed

Rev. Lynice Pinkard is a pastor, teacher, and healer in Oakland, California. Her work is dedicated to decolonizing the human spirit and to freeing people from what she calls "empire affective disorder."

Many Californians were outraged by the verdict. Here, members of the Los Angeles Coalition for Justice for Oscar Grant appealed to a U.S. congresswoman in July 2010 for support in the continuing effort to secure justice for Grant and his family.

CREATIVE COMMONS/SPOT REPORTING. PHOTO BY THANDISIZWE CHIMURENGA

the differences in life opportunities to individual merit or fortune—not race; and prohibited public expressions of race hatred or favoritism while privately nursing race pathologies that influence every sphere of public action and public policy in America *and* around the world.

As part of this same effort to "preserve order" in a racist and imperialist system, white people have maintained their power to *use* race to oppress black people and other people of color by appearing to concede that black people need some protection from "discrimination" and then giving them "race" protection. Race protection means formal race equality—that neither the white-controlled government nor certain white-owned private businesses may discriminate because of race—anybody's race, black or white. Whites are able to maintain their political and economic power because any request made by black people for help to recover from their race exclusion is characterized as "race" help, and that is the very thing antidiscrimination law has forbidden: "discrimination on the basis of race." So, whites, having aggressively seized power from blacks, now use deadly "anti-racist" reforms, like "colorblindness," as a reason to deny material assistance to blacks, because such help favors one racial group over another. As custodians of the race concept, white people decide when race is really the issue in any contest between blacks and whites, and thus effectively prevent black people from gaining, in the name of race neutrality, any benefit, i.e., affirmative action, or more to the point, any right, i.e., justice in American courts, that doesn't benefit whites equally, or indeed more.

These are the "race" facts of life in America—yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Is it any wonder that black people are angry? This anger, bred of centuries of disenfranchisement, threatens to fuel the dismantling of repressive systems and thus "requires" policing.

Mehserle as Bewildered Overseer

And that brings us back to Johannes Mehserle. As "Officer" Mehserle, Johannes Mehserle served as one of the many law-and-order functionaries of the United States, sent out to contain the potentially explosive force of righteous anger. In order for him to effectively implement his role, it is important that the white officer be confused about the system he serves and the potentially revolutionary force he must police. If he understood the system, he would understand who and what he is "serving."

Of course Officer Mehserle is bewildered by Oscar Grant when he confronts him on the BART platform, not only because his experience is incommensurate with Grant's experience, but also because the "hate" and "contempt" in Grant's eyes reflect Mehserle's true position far too well to maintain comfort. The officer is startled and confused by the loathing expressed by the colonized subject. Perhaps Mehserle eventually comes to believe that if he can just make the system work as it should and demonstrate his real commitment to the "hostile" youngsters in "chaotic" urban communities, all will be well. Of course, this is a terrible deception. The system already works as it "should." Mehserle's struggles, his failures, and even his successes have been accounted for and calculated to accelerate rather than impede the oppression of his charges—the Oscar Grants of the city.

Try to imagine Mehserle, later, after the shooting incident, looking at his name on the police report—"officer mehserle," a powerful synecdoche of his interpolation into the system he serves. Suddenly Johannes Mehserle has truly become Officer Mehserle. The title gives his role the power of the overseer, the privileged servant of the *(continued on page 88)*

Shasta and Goliath:
Bringing Down Corporate Rule

by Allen D. Kanner

Mt. Shasta, a small northern California town of 3,500 residents nestled in the foothills of magnificent Mount Shasta, is taking on corporate power through an unusual process—democracy.

The citizens of Mt. Shasta have developed an extraordinary ordinance, set to be voted on in the next special or general election, that would prohibit corporations such as Nestle and Coca-Cola from extracting water from the local aquifer. But this is only the beginning. The ordinance would also ban energy-giant PG&E, and any other corporation, from regional cloud seeding, a process that disrupts weather patterns through the use of toxic chemicals such as silver iodide. More generally, it would refuse to recognize corporate personhood, explicitly place the rights of community and local government above the economic interests of multinational corporations, and recognize the rights of nature to exist, flourish, and evolve.

Mt. Shasta is both a giant (above) and a plucky small town taking on the giants of the corporate world.

Mt. Shasta is not alone. Rather, it is part of a (so far) quiet municipal movement making its way across the United States in which communities are directly defying corporate rule and affirming the sovereignty of local government.

Since 1998, more than 125 municipalities have passed ordinances that explicitly put their citizens' rights ahead of corporate interests, despite the existence of state and federal laws to the contrary. These communities have banned corporations from dumping toxic sludge, building factory farms, mining, and extracting water for bottling. Many have explicitly refused to recognize corporate personhood. Over a dozen townships in Pennsylvania, Maine, and New Hampshire have recognized the right of nature to exist and flourish (as Ecuador just did in its new national constitution). Four municipalities, including Halifax in Virginia, and Mahoney, Shrewsbury, and Packer in Pennsylvania, have passed laws imposing penalties on corporations for chemical trespass, the involuntary introduction of toxic chemicals into the human body.

These communities are beginning to band together. When the attorney general of Pennsylvania threatened to sue Packer Township this year for banning sewage sludge within its boundaries, six other Pennsylvania towns adopted similar ordinances and twenty-three others passed resolutions in support of their neighboring community. Many people were outraged when the attorney general proclaimed, "there is no inalienable right to local self-government."

Bigger cities are joining the fray. In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, council member Doug Shields announced this August that he is about to introduce a bill banning corporations in the city from drilling for natural gas, an environmentally devastating practice known as "fracking." As Shields stated in a press release, "Many people think that this is only about gas

Allen D. Kanner, Ph.D., is a cofounder of the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood (commercialfreechildhood.org), co-editor of Psychology and Consumer Culture *and* Ecopsychology, *and a Berkeley, California, child, family, and adult psychologist.*

TOP: CREATIVE COMMONS/BEYOND THE TRAIL, BOTTOM: DESIGN ACTION COLLECTIVE

The giant killers: activists from Mt. Shasta's community rights program.

COURTESY OF SHANNON BIGGS

drilling. It's not—it's about our authority as a municipal community to say 'no' to corporations that will cause damage to our community. It's about our right to community, [to] local self-government."

What has driven these communities to such radical action? The typical story involves a handful of local citizens deciding to oppose a corporate practice, such as toxic sludge dumping, which has taken a huge toll on the health, economy, and natural surroundings of their town. After years of fighting for regulatory change, these citizens discover a bitter truth: the U.S. environmental regulatory system consists of a set of interlocking state and federal laws designed by industry to serve corporate interests. With the deck utterly stacked against them, communities are powerless to prevent corporations from destroying the local environment for the sake of profit.

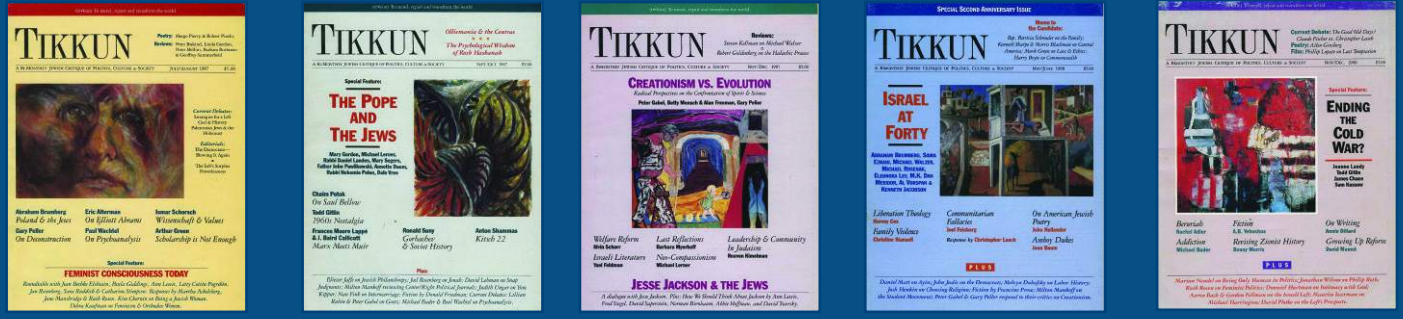
Enter the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund, a nonprofit public interest law firm that champions a different approach. The firm helps communities draft local ordinances that place the rights of municipalities to govern themselves above corporate rights. Through its Democracy School, which offers seminars across the United States, it provides a detailed analysis of the history of corporate law and environmental regulation that shows a need for a complete overhaul of the system. Armed with this knowledge and with their well-crafted ordinances, citizens are able to return to their communities to begin organizing for the passage of laws such as Mt. Shasta's proposed ordinance.

The Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund is collaborating with Global Exchange, an international environmental and workers' rights organization, to help supporters of the Mt. Shasta ordinance organize. In an interview for this article, I asked Shannon Biggs, who directs Global Exchange's Community Rights Program, if she expected ordinances of this type to be upheld in court. Biggs was dubious about judges "seeing the error of their ways" and reversing a centuries-old trend in which courts grant corporations increased power. Rather, she sees these ordinances as powerful educational and organizing tools that can lead to the major changes necessary to reduce corporate power, put decision-making back in the hands of real people rather than corporate "persons," and open up whole new areas of rights, such as those of ecosystems and natural communities. Biggs connects the current municipal defiance of existing state and federal law to a long tradition of civil disobedience in the United States, harkening back to Susan B. Anthony illegally casting her ballot, the Underground Railroad flouting slave laws, and civil rights protesters purposely breaking segregation laws.

But the nascent municipal rights movement offers something new in the way of political action. These communities are adopting laws that, taken together, are forming an alternative structure to the global corporate economy. The principles behind these laws can be applied broadly to any area where corporate rights override local self-government or the well-being of the local ecology. The best place to start, I would suggest, is with banning corporations from making campaign contributions to local elections.

The municipal movement could provide one of the most effective routes to building nationwide support for an Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution of the kind proposed by *Tikkun*. In fact, the movement is already expanding. In Pennsylvania people are now organizing on the state level. Similar stirrings have been reported in New Hampshire.

What about your community? ■



Celebrating 25 Years of *Tikkun* Magazine

The State of the Spirit, 2011

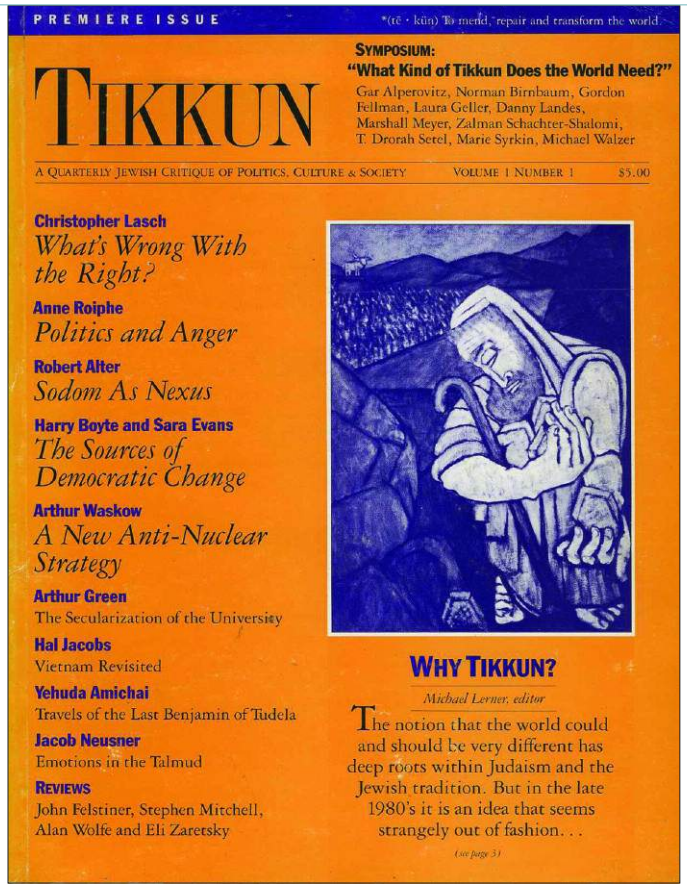
by Michael Lerner

THE BAD NEWS IS THAT GLOBAL WARMING WILL SOON be irreversible and, by the end of the twenty-first century, large parts of the earth will be under water. China is emerging as the world's greatest superpower while continuing to regiment its people and repress democratic civil liberties and human rights. Just as today the West spends its energies fighting an elusive "war on terror" generated by its fantasy that its survival depends on dominating other countries to gain their fossil fuels, in the future Western elites of wealth and power may seek to create medieval-style enclaves surrounded by private Blackwater-style armies to prevent ordinary citizens from getting at their dwindling supplies of food and other goods. Most people will be encouraged to blame each other and fight each other for the decreasing sustenance left to the majority of the planet's residents.

All this is likely to happen gradually, as American power slips away and, with it, the particular opportunities that the citizens of this partial democracy fought to win in the past. Increasingly, we in the West may be taught to believe the "common sense" that people only care about themselves and that nations will always seek to dominate others to advance the interests of their own elites—and that therefore domination, militarism, and cruelty are necessary for "us" to survive (though in fact, that "us" will be a smaller and smaller part of the entire population). And meanwhile, the pathetically inadequate safety net won through decades of citizen and labor union activism may be cut back in the name of economic frugality and keeping taxes low, at least for the wealthy who might otherwise cut back on investments and thus provide fewer and fewer jobs for the rest of us.

Meanwhile, most liberals and progressives will likely spend the next twenty years either supporting political parties that don't even begin to address these issues in a holistic way (and justifying that by pointing out that candidate *x* is really much less bad than candidate *y*), or putting their energies into building a community garden, alternative food store, or other intrinsically good local project or struggle that is satisfying because it is achievable. But these local projects will do nothing discernible to reverse our society's shift away from its founding democratic and human rights principles unless progressives embrace a larger vision to unify their local projects such as that of "The Caring Society—caring for each other, caring for the earth."

With increasing numbers of people feeling disempowered and retreating into relative isolation in personal life (an isolation enhanced by technologies that offer endless games and opportunities


PREMIERE ISSUE

*(tē · kün) To mend, repair and transform the world

TIKKUN

SYMPOSIUM:
"What Kind of Tikkun Does the World Need?"
Gar Alperovitz, Norman Birnbaum, Gordon Fellman, Laura Geller, Danny Landes, Marshall Meyer, Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, T. Drorah Setel, Marie Syrkin, Michael Walzer

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Jacob Neusner
Emotions in the Talmud
REVIEWS
John Felstiner, Stephen Mitchell, Alan Wolfe and Eli Zaretsky

WHY TIKKUN?
Michael Lerner, editor
The notion that the world could and should be very different has deep roots within Judaism and the Jewish tradition. But in the late 1980's it is an idea that seems strangely out of fashion. . .
(see page 5)

to communicate with strangers online without risking the mutual recognition and deep ethical connection that face-to-face contact arouses, as Emmanuel Levinas and Peter Gabel have taught us), these larger changes in the society and in our world are unlikely to be challenged in any serious way, even by those suffering the most. Powerlessness coupled with endlessly creative forms of entertainment and disinformation threatens to yield individuals who can't imagine ever engaging in effective struggle to change the world.

The good news is that we have a good ten to twenty years to reverse this process, and, as an old Jewish joke would have it, ten more years to learn how to live under water.

What a Conscious "We" Could Accomplish

I DON'T WANT TO MINIMIZE WHAT WE COULD ACCOMPLISH IF we could create a conscious "we" that understood what was needed. This has been the goal of *Tikkun* since we began in 1986: to foster a vanguard consciousness among tens of thousands of our readers who could understand the depths of depravity that global capitalism and the ethos of materialism and selfishness are creating, the great dangers to the planet and our human capacities, and the pressing need to build a political movement that transcends the narrow economistic legacy of the Left. This new movement must explicitly build itself around the goal of replacing the Old Bottom Line of maximizing money and power with a New Bottom Line seeking to maximize love and caring, kindness and generosity, ethical and ecological sensitivity, and awe and wonder at the grandeur and mystery of *being*.

We need a "vanguard" (think: the Franciscans, the Quakers, the Sufis, the Ba'hais, the abolitionist movement, the civil rights movement, the Jewish Renewal movement, the women's movement—all the kinds of vanguard I have in mind—but not the communist party or the Weathermen or the Watchtower crew) that creatively reaches out to the rest of the world to help people acknowledge the way their own needs for recognition, love, and participation in a society that lends meaning to their lives is actually being thwarted by the very society which, for the moment, has provided us with unsatisfying substitute gratifications. If that vanguard could embody the love and caring that it talks about and effectively use the democratic process and the available means of communication to mobilize these underlying spiritual needs into an effective political movement, then all the disasters that otherwise seem inevitable might yet be vanquished and replaced by a humanity that serves its deepest self-interest by creating a world in which people are able to overcome the concern with narrow self-interest and instead build social institutions that reward rather than undermine our loving and caring capacities. Can we bring about this tikkun-ing of the world in our time?

Well, 3,200 years after Moses, 2,400 years after Buddha, 2,000 years after Jesus, 1,400 years after Mohammed, 200 years after Jefferson, 120 years after Marx, 70 years after Freud, and 40 years after the second wave of feminism, I'm prepared to say unequivocally: I don't know.

What I do know is that history itself is an ambiguous storyteller.

The Mixed Evidence from History

ON THE ONE HAND, WE CAN LEARN THAT THROUGHOUT HISTORY tens of millions of people have contributed to advancing human knowledge and culture—from cooking and farming or building to languages, creative arts, science, and a wide array of spiritual wisdom and traditions—and have done so by sharing their knowledge and skills, learning how to cooperate, and acting on their own desires to live in a world characterized by freedom, consciousness, empathy, love, mutual recognition, and caring.

Human beings share a deep yearning to live in communities that provide a sense of purpose to their lives. Yearning to transcend the narrow visions of material self-interest, we long to connect to something of abiding value. We share a hard-wired empathy and love for others, as well as a deep need to be recognized, understood and loved not for what we can do or deliver for others, but for our own intrinsic worth (what the Torah calls being created in the image of God). And we have an irrepressible instinct to seek freedom; creativity; artistic expression; higher and higher levels of understanding and consciousness; love and caring for others; the creation and enjoyment of beauty and pleasure; and both joyous celebration of and awe-filled responses to all the wonders of life in this universe. These irrepressible elements of human nature provide an ongoing foundation for the utopian (that is, "unrealistic" from the standpoint of the present repressive "reality") hopes that we at *Tikkun* seek to nurture.

Harboring utopian dreams does not blind us to all of the violence in the world. We can simultaneously nurture big hopes and remember that, at least in the time of recorded history in the past ten thousand years, relatively small numbers of very determined men (sometimes aided by the women in their lives, and sometimes opposed by those women) have managed to

enslave most of the human race—whether physically, emotionally, or spiritually—during each new era. In the last few hundred years they have become adept at convincing those whom they dominate or exploit that the world these elites have constructed is either the best of all possible worlds or the only one that is realistically possible. They have managed to foster widespread consent or—where consent was lacking—apathy, indifference, or despair about changing anything.

Over the course of these past thousands of years, there have been major advances. Despite slavery's persistence for several million people in the modern world, the *percentage* of people enslaved as they were in antiquity or tied through a feudal arrangement to the area of their birth and labor pool into which their parents had been born has dramatically decreased.

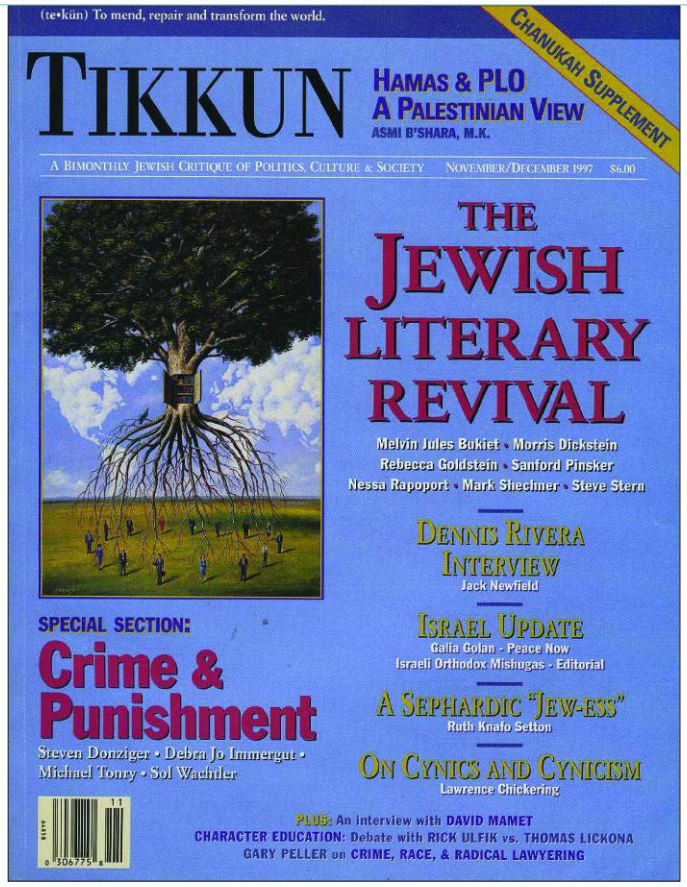
The effect of institutionalized religion throughout this history has been mixed. Judaism, Christianity, and some other religions originally generated excitement and adherents, not only by celebrating the grandeur and mystery of the universe, as all religions do, but also by challenging the economic and political arrangements of the existing oppressive social order, as well as the justificatory ideologies and consciousness behind them. Though each of those religions has eventually seen the majority of its practitioners abandon the liberatory vision and practices, a small "saving remnant" in each of them still preaches (and sometimes even practices) a commitment to healing, repairing, and transforming the world (in Hebrew: tikkun).

The Ambivalent Results of Liberating Movements

Over the past several hundred years we have also learned important lessons from the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and science, which have the potential to free our minds from many of the distortions resulting from our previous indoctrinations, as well as to create labor-saving, mind-expanding, and health-improving technologies.

We've had secular worldviews derived from the teachings of Marx, Freud, and the second wave of feminism, which have each contributed to the undermining of inherited forms of domination and control.

And we've had mass uprisings such as the American and French revolutions; the Russian, Chinese, and Vietnamese revolutions; the decolonization movements after WWII; and the second wave of feminism in the past forty years. In each of these, millions of people experienced the joy of partial liberations before the liberatory energies in these movements turned into something less liberating. Sometimes those retreats from what was most liberatory were forced upon these movements by external forces or conditions. For example the U.S., British, and French invasion of the Soviet Union in 1919 and their support for a civil war that lasted until 1924 contributed significantly to the destruction of the most revolutionary elements of the Russian working class and hence enabled the rise of Stalin and his repressive counter-revolution in the name of communism. And in a similar way, the U.S. economic embargo and continual harassment of Cuba has dramatically contributed to the evolution of the Castro regime



from a genuine people's revolution to an oppressive state apparatus. But often the undermining of these struggles was enhanced by the limits of the activists' own vision, their failure to develop an ethos of love and caring seen as of equal importance to any other outcome, their reliance on violence and on demeaning others who were not part of their movement, and their failure to incorporate a spiritual dimension into their consciousness and daily practice. The failures and distortions of socialist, communist, democratic, New Left, countercultural, psychoanalytic, feminist, anti-racist, national liberation, and Zionist movements over the course of the past two hundred years (and particularly their inability to sustain an internal culture of love, caring, and deep recognition of each other's preciousness) has left a legacy of emotional depression and provided ammunition with which existing elites have beaten back the yearnings of the world's peoples for justice, peace, environmental sanity, love, and generosity.

Remember: Ruthless Elites Are Still Human Beings

The elites of wealth and power, and the corporations they run, have shared interests. They often collaborate and have fostered institutions and social arrangements to perpetuate their power and wealth. They allow into their circles and even share their wealth with some of the brightest and most creative people who can help them in their enterprise of retaining that power and wealth and of convincing the majority of people that these arrangements are either in everyone's interest or cannot be changed without taking personal risks that are not likely to pay off and in the meantime endanger their own lives, incomes, and the well-being of those close to them. *(continued on page 22)*

Words of Appreciation

See the table of contents for articles by these authors.

Bradley Shavit Artson
American Jewish University dean and rabbi

Tikkun *is that rare oasis in the parched, partisan, war zone of modern life—an incubating womb for principled ideas, a passionate catalyst for justice and inclusion, and a brave voice challenging the timid stylized script that passes for public discourse. Rabbi Lerner has been a tireless shepherd, motivating and encouraging a motley band of sages who continue to aspire to the prophetic ideals that made ancient Israel great and may yet save our battered planet.*

Arik Ascherman
General Secretary of Rabbis for Human Rights

I remember the excitement we all felt when the first issue of Tikkun *came out. We were searching for where we could find a copy in Jerusalem. At the time there was not the plethora of public forums for thinking "out of the box" that exist today, and whatever existed was largely marginalized.* Tikkun *quickly became a platform for the open discussion of these ideas. While the times have changed, there are many additional platforms, and many ideas that were once "out of the box" have become relatively mainstream,* Tikkun *continues to offer readers a level of intellectual depth unparalleled in the progressive Jewish world.*

Richard Falk
UN Human Rights Rapporteur for Occupied Palestine

More than any other journal of opinion, Tikkun *has succeeded in creating a congenial home for progressive thinking that brings together cultural, politics, and religion framed as an emergent spiritual community of all persons seeking a world of peace, justice, and love.*

Tirzah Firestone
Rabbi and author of *The Receiving: Reclaiming Jewish Women's Wisdom*

I celebrate the idealism and endurance of our visionary friends at Tikkun *who, twenty-five years ago, stationed themselves at the crossroads of an emerging era, and are still sounding a prophetic voice, despite the enormous cultural chaos and cacophony that would drown it out. All blessings for the next quarter-century!*

Matthew Fox
Theologian and author of *Original Blessing*

I celebrate Tikkun *and its twenty-fifth anniversary—twenty-five years of honest assessing of our political and community values ranging from science to politics, religion to education and the media.* Tikkun *is one of those all-too-rare places one can go to engage intellect and heart, values and commitment, with intelligent debate of real issues that count. Bravo! Happy Anniversary!*

Henry A. Giroux
Critical Pedagogy scholar

I know of no other journal that provides so effectively a critical public sphere in which the language of critique, compassion, and hope are so effectively conveyed and the necessity for a critical formative democratic and democratic global society so meaningfully communicated. Michael Lerner and Tikkun *are a national treasure and so desperately needed in such dark times.*

Danny Goldberg
Vice chairman of Air America Radio and president of Gold Village Entertainment

Tikkun *consistently has ideas and perspectives on both politics and spirituality that do not appear anywhere else. It is fearlessly progressive while rigorously questioning conventional wisdom, left, right, and center. It is cosmic without being preachy. There never has been a publication like it.*

David Korten
Author of *Agenda for a New Economy* and *The Great Turning*

Tikkun *fearlessly engages the most important issues of our time from a deep spiritual perspective. It transcends conventional religious chauvinism and calls us all to actualize the potentials of our higher nature.*

Irwin Kula
Rabbi and author of *Yearnings: Embracing the Sacred Messiness of Life*

Twenty-five years is the perfect anniversary for Tikkun, *for as anyone who has read* Tikkun *since that first issue knows, the magazine has been twenty-five years ahead of its time on just about every issue it has covered: from Israel and the Palestinians to the Occupation and human rights, from the challenges facing the Jewish people and the Jewish establishment to the need*

for a radical reimagining of Judaism as a religious and spiritual tradition, from the need for a new relationship between science, religion, and spirituality to the ethical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of the economic, political, social, and cultural structures of America and the global community. I actually still have my first issue of Tikkun *and am proud to say that I have not missed an issue in its history, as* Tikkun *is the only magazine I know that—every time I read it—seriously gnaws at my conscience, opens my mind and heart, enlightens my spirit, deepens my ability to sacrifice for what I know is right and just, elevates my capacity for compassion, and sates my quest for meaning.*

Joy Ladin
Poet and professor of English at Yeshiva University

I have long valued Tikkun *as a rare political forum in which hard truths about injustice, violence, and oppression can be phrased and framed from a redemptive, loving perspective—a perspective from which the categories into which we divide ourselves and one another, progressive and conservative, Jew and non-Jew, dove and hawk, straight and queer, dissolve into a more capacious, forgiving, creative vision of humanness. It is a home for language that heals the world.*

Daniel Landes
Rabbi and director of the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem

Tikkun*'s incisive analysis has allowed me to articulate positions for myself and, generously, to stake out positions in its pages that are fiercely oppositional to its own editorial policy, especially regarding Israel and the West Bank. At the same time,* Tikkun *has deeply influenced me in its brilliant application of classic concepts such as Shabbat and Teshuvah to a social and spiritual vision. Infuriating and inspiring,* Tikkun *is essential reading.*

Brian McLaren
Pastor and author

As a committed Christian from an Evangelical background, I am thrilled to be associated with Tikkun. *My understanding of Jesus's core message thrusts me into the world with a sense of mission and hope, eager to cooperate with all my neighbors for the common good, and eager to receive and learn from people from many diverse backgrounds.*

Letty Cottin Pogrebin
A founding editor of *Ms.* magazine, novelist, and activist

Imagine that for the last quarter-century you could attend six fascinating dinner parties a year at which some of the world's most interesting thinkers and stimulating raconteurs gathered around the table to share their passions, peeves, opinions, and epiphanies. Now subtract the table, food, and wine, and what's left is a feast for the mind; in other words, Tikkun *magazine. Congratulations, Michael, for staying the course.*

Donald Rothberg
Teacher of socially engaged Buddhism at Spirit Rock Meditation Center

Tikkun *is an essential resource for those dedicated to do the great work of our times, to connect our spiritual lives with the healing and transformation of the world.* Tikkun *guides us; it challenges us; it connects us; it inspires us—all with both a big imagination and a modest humility. It holds a large vision of a transformed, sustainable, just, and spiritually infused world, and yet brings us toward that world step by step, with detail and grounded knowledge.*

Brian Walt
Founder of Rabbis for Human Rights–North America

As a rabbi I depend on Tikkun *as the only place where I can find a diverse and compelling discussion among progressive Jews about the crucial moral issues of our time.* Tikkun *always takes on those issues that the Jewish community avoids, as it did recently in presenting a wide range of views about the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement.* Tikkun *is an invaluable treasure, a must-read for anyone concerned about issues of justice, religion, and society. Mazel tov to* Tikkun *on its twenty-fifth anniversary!*

Paul Wapner
Author of *Living Through the End of Nature* and environmental studies professor at American University

Tikkun *is the boldest magazine available. It questions accepted "wisdom" with the compassion of the heart, and therewith unleashes political and spiritual possibility. It is the literary antidote to our troubled times.*

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

TIKKUN

Reviews: *Paul Berman, Sean Wilentz, Frank Browning, Jeremy Zwelling, Laurence Jarvik*
Current Debate: *Has Jewish Philanthropy Gone Astray?*

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY MARCH/APRIL 1988 $5.00

RETHINKING SEXUALITY
Judith Levine, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Arthur Waskow, Danny Landes & Brad Artson

Public/Private
Betty Mensch & Alan Freeman
Response by Paul Starr

Writing & Its Discontents
Sandy Levinson

Dialogal Psychology
Maurice Friedman

Fiction
Amos Oz

ISRAEL IN GAZA
Israelis Speak Out: Abba Eban, Shimon Peres, Shlomo Avineri, Hannan Hever, Yarom Ezrahi, Shulamit Aloni, Galia Golan, Eddy Kaufman, Jeremy Milgrom, David Hartman, Alouph Hareven, Stanley Cohen. Plus an Interview with Mubarak Awad.

PLUS

Sharon Cohen on Feminine Midrash, Reena Bernards & Gordon Fellman on the World Zionist Congress. Poetry by Thom Gunn, Paul Breslin, Moshe Dor, Peter Sacks, & Jon Silkin.

The priorities of education are oriented around the paradigm of a world of competing nations and corporations, so the task of a "good education" increasingly promoted by both liberal and conservative forces is to prepare one to compete effectively in the global economy. This orientation is then strongly reinforced when one enters the world of work, which is similarly organized to channel people into a global economy in which competition of all against all prevents rationally compassionate allocation of material resources or human skills and wisdom. It is an economy that results in the production of unnecessary goods that contribute to the looting, polluting, and destruction of the earth.

The major media are organized to provide the bread-and-circus element and to support passivity, alienation, false information, distortion of our collective historical memory, and a decreasing capacity to pay attention to any theme for longer than a few minutes. Meanwhile, the society's resources are misallocated to provide huge funding for global military bases and advanced military technologies, armies, navies, air forces, police forces, surveillance operations, intelligence operatives, homeland security forces, and mass imprisonment to back up laws, lawmakers, and judges who have proven their usefulness and loyalty to the established order of injustice, violence, inequality, poverty, suffering, and wars. And the funding priorities of the few wealthy people on the Left are usually oriented toward economistic or narrowly measurable outcomes—not more visionary outcomes such as building a cohesive worldview or developing a new ethos of love and caring within social change movements or in the larger society.

Yet when we talk about these elites we risk failing to notice that they are human beings who are made in the image of God like the rest of us. A good guy–bad guy dichotomy distorts the far more complicated picture: that these people are engaged in the same struggle as each of us, the struggle between the voice of fear that leads us to believe that we are alone in the world and that our safety depends on our ability to get power over others, and the voice of hope that leads us to believe we could achieve safety, security, and the fulfillment of our needs through love and generosity and caring for others (what I have called "the left hand of God"). Just as many of us choose passivity or despair when the voice of fear becomes dominant in us, so many of those who are situated in circumstances where they can economically, politically, or socially dominate others choose that path because of fear that if they chose paths based on the possibility that love and kindness could prevail and provide them with fulfillment of their needs, they would be betrayed by those they trusted. So they imagine it is less self-destructive to rely on opportunities for power over others. Having a compassionate attitude toward these people does not in any way vitiate our righteous indignation at their actions or our commitment to transform the system that benefits them at the expense of the rest of the human race and the planet's animals, plants, trees, water, and air.

The Spirit Reasserts Itself

Despite all that, the Spirit of God (or YHVH, the Christ, Allah, Eros, the Shechinah, the Force of Healing and Transformation, the Buddha, the Goddess, species being, human essence, the Goodness of the universe, or however else you choose to language it) that is manifested in every human being continues to reassert itself in every generation. It will never be fully crushed, no matter how effective the technologies of domination become.

That Spirit, manifested through past struggles, will always be available to us and is pushing us toward liberation. Because of that, we ordinary folk have been able to create ideas embedded in documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the U.S. Declaration of Independence, and the charter of the United Nations, and institutions such as trial by jury, democratic elections, the right to put propositions or reforms of state constitutions on state ballots, the right to assembly, free speech, and freedom of religion. These laws are supposed to apply equally to everyone. When they are, they give citizens some (small but still very important) mechanisms for limiting the arbitrary use of power by the elites. Though those elites have used their vast array of resources to employ others to work constantly to limit and undermine these past victories, and those struggles continue on a daily basis both in the United States and around the world, we have something to celebrate in having achieved some important victories at very high costs. And we've been able to use those victories to limit the impact of sexism, racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, and other solidarity-destroying human pathologies.

But we have not been able to sustain a social movement with which all who seek to be fuller expressions of God and who yearn for peace, environmental sanity, justice, and a world filled with love could be part. We have not been able to sustain the conviction that we are part of a "we." Political movements have been formed around specific issue areas like higher wages, unemployment,

immigration reform, environment, human rights, peace, and health care—and yet most of the participants and supporters of these movements have been unable to see that their own success depends upon the success of all the other movements. As a result they have been unable to develop ways to share their resources, personnel, fundraising, and access to the media.

Why We Fail to Create the "We"

Crippled in part by their own need to show themselves to be "realistic" and tough-minded, many of these movements have rejected any spiritual consciousness; instead they frame their programs in the most narrow technocratic language. And in part because of a justified outrage at repressive elements in some streams of the religious world, most of these movements have not allowed themselves to learn from the wisdom that has been accumulated in the spiritual and religious worlds for the past several thousand years. Crippled by a pervasive religiophobia, our movements for liberation have rarely been able to create sustaining rituals that publicly express our values.

We've been narrowly focused on the present and have not given the energy needed to create enough schools and camps and youth organizations to prepare the next generation to continue the struggle. In large part because of the extreme individualism of the society, which all of us have internalized, few of us are willing to make a long-term consistent commitment of time and energy, or the serious commitment of tithing—sharing materially—to our movement. Raising money is absolutely essential if we are to sustain a new consciousness and bring it to our neighbors and friends. So, instead, we've relied on momentary upsurges of energy, like that which we could find at a large anti-war rally or during an election campaign. Those can be wonderful and important, but their impact has not lasted very long, particularly given the way the media ignores them unless they are run by the Right or by television comedians.

As we've pointed out before, the current emotional depression sweeping through much of our world today was fostered in part by the great hopes that were invested by tens of millions of people in Barack Obama, and by the subsequent disillusionment when Obama not only did not fight for what we had expected him to fight for, but did not even present policies that reflected the ideals he had himself articulated. He did not provide the indispensable element: a coherent worldview. Yet as Associate Editor Peter Gabel pointed out in an email we sent out after the elections in November, what we should have learned from this was something that past movements already understood—that the kinds of societal transformations we hope for can only come through the building of a powerful mass movement that uses electoral politics as one of its expressions but not as the central and determining one. This is crucial because electoral politics feeds into the fantasy that we just need to elect the right person and then watch as our hero battles for us.

It simply never works that way—the forces aligned against social change are overwhelming, and our elected officials only respond to democratic pressure when we are mobilized in an ongoing movement that has many other non-electoral dimensions and is working in a coherent and powerful way to change consciousness and institutions using every possible nonviolent method, including disruptive civil disobedience, to push forward its agenda and worldview. That is why we are still hoping that people will respond to the programs and worldview we've put forward in the Network of Spiritual Progressives, particularly our Spiritual Covenant with America, our campaign for a Global Marshall Plan, and our campaign for the Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (please reread the details of all of these campaigns at www.spiritualprogressives.org).

Of course, we recognize and honor the huge energies and efforts being made by millions of dedicated liberals and progressives working in movements and local organizing projects around the country. Yet we are convinced that these efforts do not yet build on each other and are not able to sustain themselves for very long or to move the consciousness of tens of millions of people not yet reached by them. They will not until large numbers of activists are able to unify around a shared worldview and leadership that has been empowered by them to articulate their views in the public domain.

Instead, most of these groups make themselves much less effective than they could be because of an unwillingness to unite with groups doing other kinds of work and to develop with those groups a shared worldview. They are hamstrung by a continuing anti-leadership and anti-intellectualism bias, and by divisions

"Finding Home #46 Tikkun ha Olam" *by Siona Benjamin.*

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along the lines of class, race, sex, religion, and more. The triumph in the liberal and progressive world of "identity politics" was a short-term necessity to counter the destructive impact of racism, classism, homophobia, sexism, and anti-Semitism. Yet its abiding presence has also contributed to the difficulty so many people have in seeing beyond their own group interests to recognize that those interests will never be adequately addressed until we create a movement that speaks to the general interest of everyone, addressing the fundamental shared human need for love, caring, kindness, generosity, and ethical and ecological sanity, as well as for communities that enhance our capacity to recognize each other and our common aspirations.

The Movement We Need

Until that working together happens, all the liberal and progressive forces will appear to be little more than an assemblage of "interest groups" with no higher moral appeal than the interest groups of the Right or of the ruling elites themselves. It is only when that interest-group politics gets transcended by a politics that speaks confidently and powerfully about the needs of humanity as a whole, and does so with a language that evokes the deepest yearnings of the human soul that the Left has any chance of being heard by those who today experience us as just another set of groups clamoring for attention and power. We so desperately need a politics expressed with a spirit of generosity and sensitivity to what our ally Rabbi Irwin Kula calls "the sacred messiness of life." We need a Left that speaks with gentleness, humility, humor, and uses art, dance, music, and other creative forms.

We know that we need a political party or at least a powerful movement organization that can unite all the liberal and progressive forces, but our experience has taught us that there is no point in creating such an organization or party unless it is composed of people who feel unequivocally committed to affirming that they want a New Bottom Line of love, kindness, generosity, awe, wonder, radical amazement and behavior grounded in ethical and ecological sensitivity. That is why nothing short of a spiritual progressive party, the party of Love and Generosity, the party of Environmental Sanity, the party of Peace and Justice, or the party of Awe and Wonder (OK—what name would *you* give it?) can possibly transform the contemporary mess in politics.

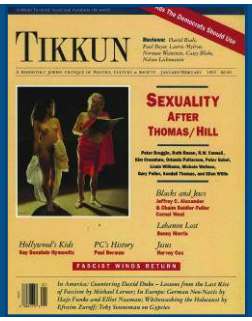
I hope you've read our critique of scientism in previous issues (particularly in the Science and Spirit section of the November/December 2010 issue of *Tikkun*). Because of the widespread unconscious allegiance that many liberals and progressives feel to scientism, with its belief that all these spiritual, ethical, and love-oriented commitments are not really substantial because they can't be measured or verified through methods deemed "objective" (which is to say, related to empirical sense data), such commitments are dismissed as having no legitimacy in our public life, and the idea of a *spiritual* progressive party is perceived as laughable or deeply mistaken or utopian. The result is that progressive movements are severely limited and unable to remain centered on love and caring or on helping each other manifest our creativity, beauty, kindness, and generosity. The very yearnings that lead people to progressive movements and that energize those movements are simultaneously denied if not disparaged by the official worldviews that dominate the Left.

Yet it is the deprivation of these central human needs in contemporary capitalist societies that is actually the central cause of pain in people's lives and the real source of human misery. Despite all the repetition of capitalism's mantra that "it's the economy, stupid," the truth is that many people who lived through the Great Depression of the 1930s, or who came from other countries with materially far less than most people in the Western world have access to, report that the human solidarity that existed in those materially deprived circumstances provided people with a sense of mutual recognition and caring that yielded higher levels of satisfaction and happiness than they see in materially flourishing Western societies today.

How come? Because those who live in a society where people care for each other are far richer and far safer than many who have endless material riches and armies to protect themselves. Yet the Left remains stuck in the fear that it would discredit itself if it were to call for a society based on love and generosity. As a result it renders itself more powerless than it needs to be, even given its unequal access to media and money, etc. I describe these dynamics in detail in my book *Surplus Powerlessness* and some in my book *The Left Hand of God*, and have also analyzed them extensively in *Tikkun* for the past twenty-five years.

History is not over, and we are all immensely blessed to live at a time when the possibilities for human liberation and the need for overcoming all forms of separation among the peoples of this planet have become a survival necessity. I hope you'll help us keep *Tikkun* and tikkun.org alive and growing in influence through the next twenty-five years. We owe that to ourselves, our children, and to the human race. I bless us all that we can participate together in good health and with much love and humor in creating the movement and the world we so badly need! ■

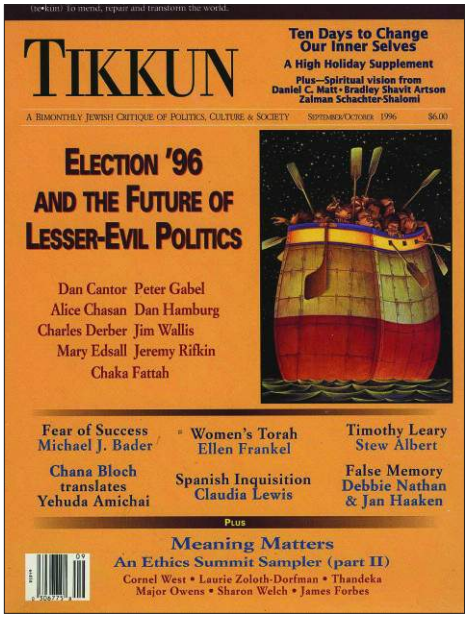
25 YEARS OF TIKKUN



The Social Movement as a Parallel Universe

by Peter Gabel

In "Yes, We Can?"—my recent Tikkun Daily blog post about the midterm elections—I argued that the response of progressive forces to the Republican victory and the depression it has generated should be to form ourselves into a "parallel universe" to provide ourselves with an independent base or ground on which to stand and recover from the unrequited hope we extended to Barack Obama in 2008. Some readers mistook this to mean that I was suggesting withdrawing from the existing political world into some kind of private space or respite from the existing system, when what I meant to say was that we now have to recover our collective social being from the dependency "we" developed on Barack Obama at the time of the euphoria of the 2008 election. I put "we" in quotes because the unity formed at the time of the election was a thin band of reciprocating recognition mediated through and too heavily dependent on all of us watching Mr. Obama on television during the six-month period from the start of the primaries through the presidential election. The dissolution of that thin band, which achieved some finality in last November's midterm congressional election, has cast us back into isolation and the pain of disappointed hope attendant to that, but it also has created the opportunity to re-form into a more solidly constructed form of mutual recognition, which is what is actually required for us to be effective in changing the world.



As I wrote here long ago in a piece called "What Moves in a Movement"—and as we've in different ways emphasized throughout the twenty-five years of existence that we are commemorating in this issue—a social movement can only emerge and gather steam as a social force if it acquires the density of authentic mutual recognition, if through our participation in it we gain a new sense of our social worth, power, and authority in our very collective being. In a social movement, no one actually physically moves anywhere; the word "movement" actually refers to the acquisition of social gravity that results from the invisible force of a new kind of authentic mutual recognition, a vitalization that occurs collectively through a new inter-experience that provides the ground or support for new idealistic social values. Values without this ground are mere concepts, indeterminate abstractions like freedom, equality, and community that can mean anything and that are given their actual meaning-in-the-world by the life force (or lack of it) present in the social field that gives rise to these values and expresses them in public. What moves in a movement is the life force that animates it and that in turn results from the authenticity of mutual recognition—of spiritual communion

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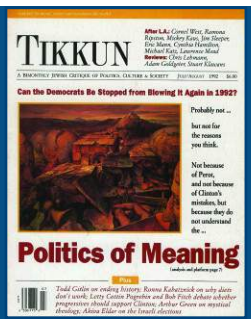
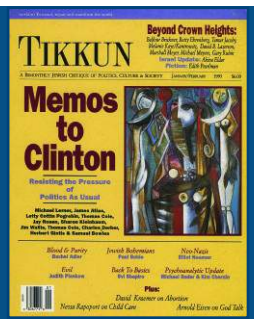
Peter Gabel is associate editor of Tikkun *and the author of* The Bank Teller and Other Essays on the Politics of Meaning *(available through our online store at www.tikkun.org).*





25 YEARS OF TIKKUN

and understanding—that provides the movement with its social weight and capacity to influence the social field as a whole.

For a movement to gather this force and to gain the influence to bring about social change, it must find a way to form itself on a ground independent of the society of the whole, and yet within that society. The problem with the Obama victory was that it generated a very widespread but thin unity that could only have brought about the "change we can believe in" if Obama himself—who was excessively responsible for the initial unity as the charismatic mediating embodiment of it—had remained fully expressive of the transcendent idealistic quality that we saw in him long enough for actual groups to form in support of him. This would have required a conflict-filled initial two years in which Obama would have had to fight for an idealistic new vision against the Republicans and Fox News and the cynical "reality police" (as Michael Lerner calls them) long enough for pro-Obama groups to have formed on college campuses, for movement-building demonstrations to have emerged in public space, and for other forms of social activism to have achieved manifestation in new group formations that could then have provided the embodied collective life force to alter the social energy field. Obama's failure to provide that leadership in a circumstance that was totally dependent on him has revealed the inherent weakness or vulnerability of that initial situation, and the recent elections have officially deflated our collective balloon. Unsupported by a wider movement stitched together and vitalized out of real and consistent public activism, the Obama moment has expired without Obama, leaving us facing in mutual solitude the awareness that in these circumstances, "No, we can't."

However, the very failure of the Obama moment can serve to remind us that it is we ourselves who must provide the support within social being itself for our hopes for a loving and idealistic world. To say that a social movement must emerge in a "parallel universe" is to say that a new sense of We must arise as a quasi-independent source of personal and social identity alongside our social self within "the system," within the existing social nexus in which we occupy conventional professional and familial roles. Many of us who are in later life and who read and write for *Tikkun* experienced this side-by-side double reality during our youth in the movements of the 1960s, when the culture felt palpably contested as a struggle between two social and existential realities, "our" reality, which for a time was based on a transcendent sense of social connection and possibility, and the inherited reality, which was more artificial, fear-filled, and even robotic in its social quality. Our movement reality was in this sense parallel to the received one but also engaged with it, in struggle with it, and making demands of it that are still being negotiated to this day in a social space influenced by the pull of both worlds and by the ongoing struggle of hope versus fear that distinguishes these two worlds, a struggle that we have addressed in these pages in virtually every issue since our founding.

To continue to fight for the transcendent spiritual-political vision, to give it new life and to spark a renewed confidence in it, we must find a way—probably mainly not through the media—to anchor each other in social space through our own parallel and autonomous rotation of recognition and solidarity, through our own liberatory circle of mutual confirmation. It is on the basis of this that we will reacquire the collective strength to emerge from our current withdrawn state and to exert actual "pull" on the empty and artificial mutuality and chatter that out of fear demands that we give up our utopian longings and accept the leveled-down state of the world as it is. When we engage in tikkun olam, we stand together in a future space and pull the present toward it, but on the basis of a present, felt intimation of that future that is not itself dependent on the world as it presently is. In just this way, a mountain climber throws his pick upward well beyond where he or she currently stands to gain an anchor point ahead, and then uses the taught line thereby established to measure each step of his or her forward motion. ■

The "How To" of Caring Community

by David Belden

These are lean times for utopian thinking. We know too much about its dangers and failures. What within previous utopian experiments, from communism to kibbutzim to '70s communes, undermined them? Human nature? Our particular cultures? We fear it was both, and that it's beyond our power and skill to remedy. Half of us can't even maintain our committed couple relationships, so how are we going to pull off a caring community?

So instead we focus on the reforms that have made life under capitalism better for so many of us: the New Deal, trade unions,

David Belden is the managing editor of Tikkun.

OSHA, minority rights, etc. These we can believe in. So we adjust to becoming reformists, not revolutionaries… but only until we recall that the people who raised hell and made these things happen often *were* revolutionaries. If you imagine, believe in, and strive with utmost energy for socialism, maybe you get a New Deal; but if you only strive for a New Deal, maybe you get today's Democratic Party.

These are also lean times for inspiring leadership. Today's activists, steeped in anti-racism, feminism, GLBTQ perspectives, and other deconstructions of Western ideologies reject the hierarchical models of old, including those that Dr. King and Gandhi were able to leverage to good purpose. Charismatic politicians can still briefly inspire hope across a wide spectrum. But the most committed left activists—those who must create vibrant movements if the Obamas are to be pushed into effectiveness as FDR was—have yet to develop the nonhierarchical leadership models we need to be effective.

What is missing? *Tikkun* has worked ceaselessly to enable left-wing activists to become spiritually grounded and savvy about the mass political psychology of the heart, and to inspire spiritual utopians to become political.

But the only way to convince activists today that non-alienating national movements are possible is to actually build viable, functional, nonhierarchical, caring ones. Is this even possible?

Is an orchestra possible? Or science? Or indigenous life in the Australian Outback? Or the Balinese terraced rice fields? Of course, but only through very painstaking acquisition of traditional or newly invented skills—both craft and relational skills.

The critical idea now is that it's the skills, not the ideas, that we are lacking in creating a caring society. For many, in addition to a struggle, the sixties were a romance: a falling in love with love, peace, and connection. But this romance rarely matured into a working marriage. We lacked the "how to" knowledge. It was the dream of a symphony without the training it takes to learn the orchestral instruments and play them together. The epiphany without the technique. A psychedelic vision of Oz, without the yellow brick road: no way to get there.

Many people have been working at it. The cutting edge of social transformation today is in the technique, the *how to* overcome our toxic conditioning and learn to cooperate, lift each other up, help each other lead, meet each other's needs, and have empathy for friends and enemies, even while building viable political movements. I see it happening, slowly, in various places—restorative justice circles, nonviolent practices, grassroots interracial work, twelve-step groups, some nonprofits and seminaries, some teamwork in corporations.

It is said that it takes ten thousand hours of practice to master any major set of skills. But socialists and would-be builders of a caring society have rarely imagined they would have to devote so many hours to practice changing themselves and developing interpersonal and organizational skills just in order to create a functional caring organization and wider culture—even though that is, after all, one of the hardest things to create. But maybe that's what it will take. Maybe, to get the powerful results we want, we have to develop cultures and apprenticeships as exacting as a scientist's, a hunter-gatherer's, a musician's. Trade unions and progressive churches have long schooled their people for social change in hierarchical organizations. But in our time we have barely known what training is needed for nonhierarchical organizations to become strategic, dynamic, and successful. How do we employ the abilities of charismatic personalities to the full without giving up the dream of horizontal power-sharing? It depends on the cultural forms we create, the training we all manage to acquire.

Over the next twenty-five years I fully expect the emergence of a new role: the relationally expert activist who will teach the rest of us how to work with each other while still giving our energies and creativity to changing the larger society. ■

A Note from Michael Lerner about the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Section

In celebration of our anniversary, we asked some of the authors we've published over the last quarter-century to share a short piece (either prose or poetry) about the aspect of their thinking, writing, spiritual practice, work, or social activism that they believe to be most relevant to *Tikkun*'s goal of helping heal, repair, and transform the world. We also urged many to offer advice to the next generation of activists. I still feel great excitement about most of the over two thousand authors we've printed in these past twenty-five years so I would have loved to have included a piece from each of them below! But we simply could not find the space for even a tenth of all the wonderful authors we've been privileged to run in our past twenty-five years. Since *Tikkun* is shifting its focus online (we're launching a beautiful new magazine website this spring and scaling the print magazine back to a shorter quarterly), we've decided to publish some of the very best anniversary pieces from the authors we esteem the most online rather than in the print magazine. Visit tikkun.org in January to read these great pieces and learn about our anniversary celebration scheduled for March 14 in Berkeley, California.

Listen, Laugh, Love

by Frances Payne Adler

Four support beams that have sustained me through twenty-five years of social action tikkun work:

1. Listen to what you know through your body. Our minds are often cluttered with what we're "supposed" to think and do, rather than what we know to be the truth. Your body remembers, your body knows what's just.
2. Don't let fear stop you. Name it, address it—take whatever physical and/or emotional steps are necessary—and keep going.
3. Collaborate. Work with people you trust and whose work you respect. The days ahead will be challenging; there will be dark times. Work with friends who can lead when you're not up to it, and through whose dark times you can lead.
4. Maintain balance: laugh, love, take breaks. Your stamina and your health depend on it. If there's no laughter, there's no revolution. ■

Poet Frances Payne Adler founded the Creative Writing and Social Action Program at California State University Monterey Bay. Her most recent books include Making of a Matriot *and* Fire and Ink: An Anthology of Social Action Writing.

Democratizing the Economy from the Bottom Up

by Gar Alperovitz

We are entering one of the greatest long-term crises in American history, one that could potentially lead to a breakdown and radical move to the right. Traditional liberalism is stalemated in many areas and limited in others to reducing the pain whenever possible. War continues. The era is unusual; economic stagnation is present, yes, but Depression-style crisis, the kind that may generate a quick response, does not appear likely. Proudhon once wrote: "Decay, decay … All the traditions are worn out, all the creeds abolished but the new program is not yet ready.…This is the cruelest moment in the life of societies."

My own work has been a long, long attempt to answer two questions: First, "If you don't like corporate capitalism and

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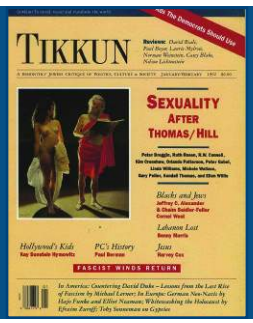
Gar Alperovitz is Lionel R. Bauman Professor of Political Economy at the University of Maryland, and a founding principal of the Democracy Collaborative. His most recent books are Unjust Deserts *(with Lew Daly) and* America Beyond Capitalism.



Workers at Ohio Cooperative Solar (left) and Evergreen Laundry take part in a strategy to capture ever-greater shares of spending in health, energy, and other key sectors for an integrated, large-scale network of worker-owned businesses.

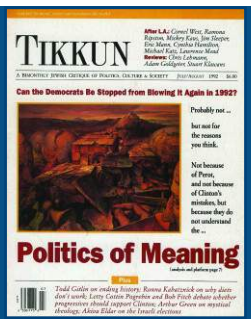
JANET CENTURY

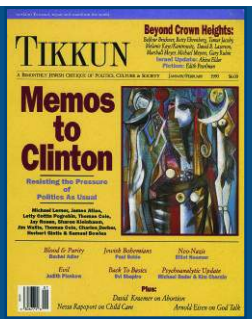
you don't like state socialism, what do you want?" Second, "And how can we get from here to there?" In part following Martin Buber, in part following teachers like William Appleman Williams and Joan Robinson, my answers—in books and in projects—have aimed at an "evolutionary reconstructive" approach, starting in the here and now, to rebuild and democratize in very practical ways the ownership and nature of the economy, from the bottom up. My hope is that some of these ideas, and some of these projects, may contribute to a broader movement-building politics that can take us past the dead ends we now face.

I'd like to offer one illustration and one comment about theory. Our Democracy Collaborative team is working in Cleveland, Ohio, to help create the Evergreen Cooperative Development Fund. The goal is not just one cooperative but rather an integrated, large-scale network of worker-owned businesses financed by a revolving fund designed to continuously expand the network and to keep jobs anchored in the community. The strategy aims to capture ever-greater shares of spending in health, energy, and other key sectors in a way that both changes ownership patterns and helps stabilize the local community economy. The approach is also thoroughly "green": Ohio Cooperative Solar, one part of the complex, installs solar panels on the roofs of the city's largest nonprofit health, education, and municipal buildings.

But the goal is not simply green jobs; it is "green ownership." Nor, from my perspective, is the goal simply building cooperatives—it is thinking through the requirements of a larger systemic theory and vision that is practical, democratic, and achievable, even if over a long time span. The design principles of the Cleveland effort suggest principles that take us beyond both traditional capitalism and traditional models of socialism.

Consider, for instance, what might happen if the stock the government and union currently own in General Motors were ultimately used to reorganize the company along full or joint worker ownership lines—and if the new GM product line were linked to a serious plan to develop the nation's mass transit and rail system, all of the funding for which will inevitably come from taxpayers in any event. Along with many other movement-building efforts, such efforts, starting locally but thinking far ahead, suggest ways that I hope can one day help move our own thinking—and ultimately our politics—forward to and through the deepening crisis in a positive, community-affirming way. ■





25 YEARS OF TIKKUN

Solidarity with Palestinian Activists

by Rebecca Alpert

I HAVE SPENT MANY YEARS WORKING TO PROMOTE the understanding of difference; being involved with identity-based groups of which I am a member to foster our rights and learning from that model to be an ally for others who find themselves mistreated or ignored by society. I see these roles as connected—identity matters to me only as a means to understand and therefore to combat oppression, putting into action my interpretation of Hillel's notion that if I am not for myself (and people who are like me), no one will be for me, but if I am only for myself and my "kind," what indeed am I? It is in the role of an ally to the people of Palestine that I have felt called to get involved with campaigns that support nonviolent grassroots strategies to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

I believe my greatest contribution to tikkun olam has been my participation in the rabbinic cabinet of Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), an organization that supports the radical notion that "inspired by Jewish tradition [we must] work together for peace, social justice, equality, human rights, respect for international law, and a U.S. foreign policy based on these ideals." You can learn more about them at www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org. I have also signed on to some of the campaigns they sponsor in support of the Palestinian movement for boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel.

Having long decried the violent means that some Palestinians have used to call attention to their plight, we in the American Jewish community cannot now turn our backs on a Palestinian movement that uses nonviolence to work for peace. Rather we must do everything in our power to raise Jewish voices, rabbinic voices, and proclaim our solidarity with them.

Young Jewish activists with Jewish Voice for Peace disrupt a speech by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in New Orleans, November 8, 2010.

Making this public declaration makes me and the rabbis in whose courageous path I follow open to attack. We are proclaimed enemies of our people and told that we are "anti-Israel" by the ADL. Although supported wholeheartedly by my rabbi, I have been subjected to the public criticism of my fellow congregants in the Reconstructionist synagogue that I helped to found and to which I belong.

But I cannot imagine a more pro-Israel position than calling on the leadership of the country that acts in my name as a Jewish state to do what is right: to end the economic and cultural stranglehold on Gaza, and to stop building settlements on the West Bank that have made a two-state solution close to impossible to achieve. I call on Israel to recognize the common humanity and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to share the land to which both peoples make historic claim. ■

Rabbi Rebecca Alpert is an associate professor of religion and women's studies at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Hope and Healing—A Moment of Mishnah

by Bradley Shavit Artson

EMBEDDED IN THE MOST DRY AND TECHNICAL concerns, we sometimes uncover an eruption of light that can break through the smothering darkness. In our lives, in our sacred writings, and in the innermost chambers of our souls we can uncover these sparks of light, warmth, and hope.

Consider the ancient rabbinic discussion of the laws of purity and impurity. The question at hand—itself brittle and dry—is about the kind of vessels that should be used to carry sacrificial material. *Zevahim* 88a (Mishnah) opens with

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MATTHEW TAYLOR

a simple assertion: "The vessels for liquids sanctify liquids, and the measures for dry matter sanctify dry matter. A liquid vessel does not sanctify dry matter, nor does a dry [measure] sanctify a liquid." Dry works for dry; wet works with wet. This is the way the world appears when we are despondent—bad things happen to me, good things happen to someone else. Why does it seem as if other people's lives are charmed?

But the Mishnah refuses to leave matters in this depressive trap. It isn't enough to assert that dry goes with dry and wet goes with wet. What happens when life is more complex than our sorrow and our fear might suggest? What about when something that once worked becomes broken in the course of its use?

"If holy vessels were perforated yet they can be used for the same purpose as when whole, they sanctify [what is placed in them]; if not, they do not sanctify." Here the Mishnah speaks to the hole in our heart: I was once robust; I was once strong; I was once invincible. The passage of time, the weight of the tasks, and life's wounds have punctured my imperviousness. I am breaking. Does that mean I am now useless? Human garbage? No, answers the Mishnah's anonymous (and hence authoritative) voice: even when broken, if we can still perform some of what we were intended for, still serve some of the role we are called to, then we still sanctify. We still have a holy mission and a purpose. We still reflect the divine image of God.

The Mishnah concludes with one last insistence: "And all these sanctify only in the holy." Whole or broken, disabled or not-yet-disabled, all are holy. The place where we can carry each other, sanctify each other, is a place of holiness. And, for us, the place of holiness is the place in which every one counts—a place of dignity, inclusion, and love.

A last word: After Mishnah comes Gemara; after description comes reflection. The rabbis of the Talmud (specifically the great sage Shmuel) offer a profound image of the blessing to be found amid challenge, illness, and loss. Shmuel said: "The service vessels sanctify only when *whole*. They sanctify only when *full*, and they sanctify only from their *interior*." Whether the vessels are broken or whole, whether they function still or no longer, their holiness abides in these three virtues: wholeness, fullness, and interiority.

When we are *whole*—not in a superficial, corporeal way, but whole in our own centeredness, in knowing who we are and what we stand for—and when we are *full* (full of love for ourselves, for each other, for creation, for God), and when we shine to the world our truest selves (isn't that what *interiority* is all about?), then whether physically broken or not, whatever our degree of function, we are able to connect to the holiness just under the surface—ours and God's—to continue to sanctify ourselves, each other, and Creation. ■

Balancing Activism and the Cosmic

by Arik Ascherman

The death of my father last April caused me to reflect anew on where we agreed and where we disagreed. When I was a college student, we would debate capitalism and socialism. Over the years I came to realize that people would be much better off under the capitalist system he envisioned than under any of the capitalist or socialist realities today. Our generation has seen the atrocities that capitalism, socialism, and every other existing "ism" can lead to.

As a rabbinic student (and later as a young rabbi), I would comb Jewish sources for the ultimate texts affirming my Jewish commitment to social justice. I still enjoy discovering a text. However, I eventually realized that what we most need to know can be found in the first verses of the Book of Genesis: First, God created the heavens and earth (Genesis 1:1). As important as we humans are, there is something above and beyond us to which we are beholden. And second, human beings are created in God's Image (1:27). The Torah does not teach that only Jews or only the wealthy are created in God's Image, and it makes a point of emphasizing that both men and women are so created.

The key determining whether various systems will succeed

Rabbi Arik Ascherman is the general secretary of Rabbis for Human Rights.

in improving the human condition or increase human suffering is whether those implementing the system internalize and act upon these principles. I also learned at Harvard that intellectual endeavor divorced from truly honoring God's Image will not bring about tikkun olam. We nevertheless need the tools that our religious traditions, philosophy, political science, psychology, sociology, and other disciplines provide us because there are situations in which people who genuinely wish to honor God's Image disagree about how to do so.

So, how do we accomplish tikkun olam? With all of my years of experience, and even some modest accomplishments, I should have more strategic insights than I do. I still believe in "shooting in all directions." We still have a long ways to go to a repair and sanctify the world. I am comforted by the knowledge that many people's lives have been concretely improved as a result of my work and the work of others. I know that each of us has a thread to add to the warp and woof of history. As many have heard me say, on those days when I feel like I am beating my head against the wall, I find inspiration in the talmudic teaching that we must look at life on both the personal and cosmic scales as two perfectly balanced scales (Kedushin 40b). We never know whether the act that seems insignificant, pointless, and ineffective at the time will be the act that tips the scales one way or the other. To some this no doubt feels like a terrible responsibility and burden. For others, it is a relieving message of hope. In fact, it is both. May we have the wisdom, the courage, and the faith to tip the scales in the right direction. ■

PHOTO BY LITTLEGREENFOOTBALLS.COM/CHARLES JOHNSON
PHOTOSHOP BY AKILE KABIR

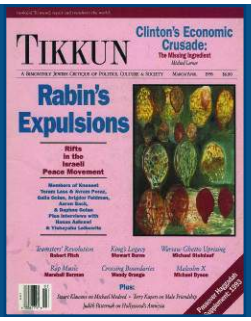
My Advice
(Short and to the Point, in the Spirit of Hillel)

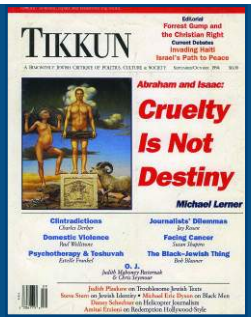
by Jeremy Ben-Ami

STUDY THE GAME.
Learn the rules.
Know what it takes to compete.
If you're losing, study the leader.
If you don't like the rules, work to change them.
But don't complain.
To change the world, play hard at all times.
And win. ■

Jeremy Ben-Ami is founder and executive director of J Street, a pro-peace, pro-Israel lobbying group in Washington, D.C.

25 YEARS OF TIKKUN





Tikkun Olam Starts at Home

by Paul Von Blum

In 1957, my parents and several other families helped the first African American family move into Levittown, Pennsylvania. That post-war suburb had been previously all white because the developer, William Levitt, a rabbi's grandson, refused to sell houses to blacks. The dramatic Levittown events of more than a half-century ago generated extensive national publicity. At fourteen, I witnessed the twisted face of bigotry: howling racist mobs, egregious racist violence, and even a KKK cross burning at my parents' home.

These traumatic events catalyzed my life of social activism, intellectual curiosity, interdisciplinary writing, and passionate university teaching, all inseparably linked to my lifetime objective of improving a badly damaged world—fighting racism, sexism, homophobia, war, and the gross disparity of wealth and power, among many other causes, over the decades. The searing, life-altering events of 1957 also helped me rediscover and solidify the secular Jewish identity that has informed my entire range of personal and professional activities.

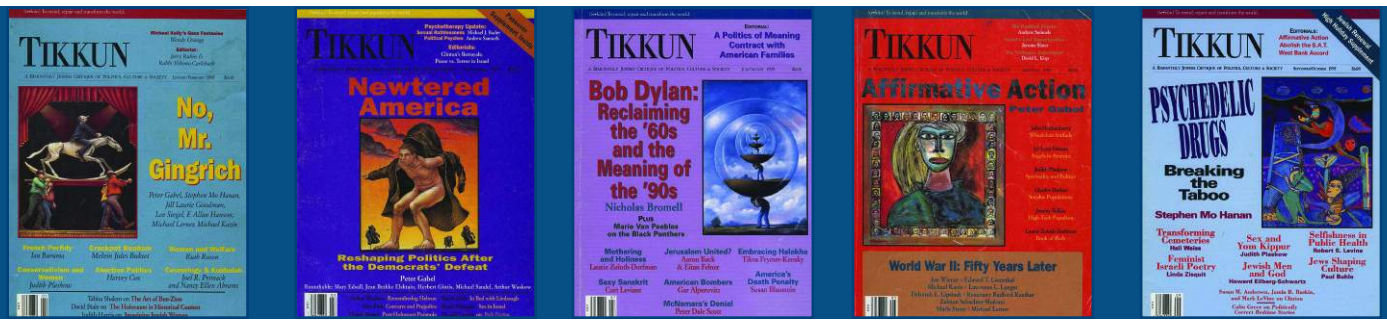
Before the Levittown integration crisis, I was a typical self-absorbed teenager, concerned with baseball and friends and marginally interested in reading and the world, although my parents' left-wing background had rubbed off on me even then. The savage racism propelled me into a new arena of intellectual discovery. I read avidly about race, connecting my efforts to the burgeoning American Civil Rights Movement in the late 1950s. When I finished high school in 1960, I had deepened my intellectual perspective, ranging far beyond race and embracing the tradition of Marxist humanism and a broader tradition of radical dissent.

That journey included a systematic discovery of the Jewish connections to both my growing identification as a '60s radical and an increasing consciousness as a second-generation Holocaust survivor. This fusion gave rise to the activism that has remained a constant throughout my life. From high school on, I understood my Jewish identity to require a commitment to the world—in short, tikkun olam. And with the Holocaust hovering over my family's history, I felt an especially strong incentive to take to the streets in the battle against racism.

From my university days as a civil rights worker in the South and elsewhere to now, racial justice has been the touchstone of my political consciousness. Throughout my student days, I continued to read more comprehensively. Inspired by iconic figures like C. Wright Mills and others, I resolved to connect my intellectual work to my politics.

In 1967, I entered academic life as a university teacher, continuing to the present, mostly at the University of California. I have challenged the educational mediocrity and corporate complicity of that institution for more than forty years. More than any other battle, this has proved frustrating, even intractable. Despite the personal costs, my protracted struggle reflects a powerful extension of my Jewish political perspective since Levittown. Activism belongs in the workplace as much as in the streets. And despite the occasional disdain of academic colleagues, it also belongs in my published writings. At sixty-seven, I have no plans to slow down. ■

Paul Von Blum is a senior lecturer in African American studies and communication studies at UCLA and author of a new memoir, A Life At The Margins: Keeping The Political Vision.



25 YEARS OF TIKKUN

On Relinquishing and Receiving

A Christian Approach to Tikkun Olam

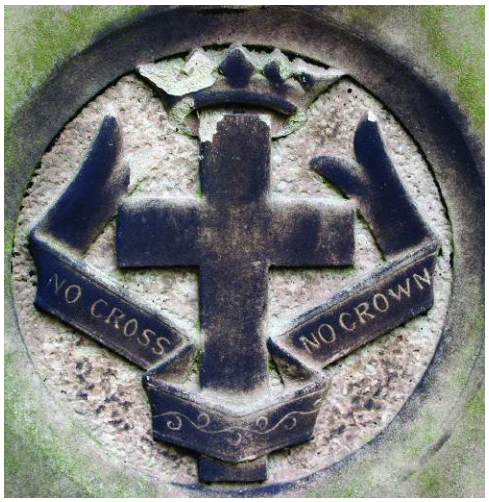
by Walter Brueggemann

It is an ancient realization, always relearned in resistant, recalcitrant ways, that we cannot receive what is new without relinquishing something of what is old. The anniversary of *Tikkun* is a time to notice that *Tikkun*, from the outset, has advocated receiving what is new for Israel and the Palestinians.

The Hebrew Bible is saturated with that learning. Abraham and Sarah had to "set out" in order to receive the new land. The Egyptian slaves had to "depart" to the risk of the wilderness to get to their new place. And Isaiah (43:18-19) reminded the generation of deportees that a "new thing," a restored Judaism, required the relinquishment of old, treasured miracles:

> Do not remember the former things,
> or consider the things of old.
> I am about to do a new thing,
> now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

In sports parlance, it is "No pain, no gain." In Christian confession, in popular summary, it is "No cross, no crown," by which it is asserted that the Friday death of Jesus was essential to Easter newness in the world.



Put in such poetic or theological ways, the cost of newness seems clear enough. It is less clear and less compelling when put to the test of real issues. And that is what *Tikkun* has been doing all this time, testing such hope against the unforgiving facts on the ground. The hope of *Tikkun* and its many readers is for a safe, peaceable, viable "Holy Land" with a guaranteed existence for the state of Israel. That is what we hope to "receive." But we cannot, so it seems, get from here to there. We cannot because we variously cannot relinquish old claims and old imaginations, old claims for a "Greater Israel," or old imaginations for a land without the nation of Israel. So we go round and round without relinquishing. And we learn, many times over, that there are no new gifts given in such resistance.

We of course may know this, because the same truth is given in the great insight of Freud that has led to contemporary psychotherapy. The process to health is the acknowledgement and relinquishment of old patterns of self, and the embrace of new self, the incorporation of what has been denied and resisted. For the most part, consequently, we choose to remain our less-than-healed old selves, finding relinquishment too demanding.

The same hard learning presses against imperial dimensions of the American dream. We are now, manifestly, at the end of the "American Century" (Henry Luce). We are finding our economy less than viable, with old extravagances now obsolete. We are finding (since Vietnam) that our military prowess is unable to meet local realities. We are finding our imperial policies less than effective; the sugar plums that have danced in our heads are no longer in full supply. It would of course be possible to "receive" a more realistic American dream. But old posturing and pretense die hard, and we keep imagining that more effort, more expenditure, or one more casualty will somehow let us be the way we were. We would like to embrace *Tikkun* magazine's teaching that "homeland security" can no longer be achieved through domination of others, but rather through generosity based on a new understanding that must emerge in the West (an understanding that our well-being depends on the well-being of everyone else on the planet and the well-being of the planet itself). This message emerges from the holy scriptures not only of the Jews and Christians but also of most spiritual and religious traditions of the world. Yet the resistance to this new understanding is intense.

It is a Christian insight, appropriated from Israel's exilic experience, that Holy Saturday—just between Good Friday and Easter—is a null point that was (and is) reached in historical reality, in liturgic performance, and in risky imagination, from which may come new life. But of course we fear the null point when the old dies: we are left no longer in control and at the behest of what will be given next. That, however, is the only venue in which new gifts are given in the historical process. We live in hope, but mostly grudging and fearful, remembering the old "flesh pots" amid old enslavements. ■

Walter Brueggemann is professor emeritus of Old Testament at Columbia Seminary, an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, and past president of the Society of Biblical Literature.

CREATIVE COMMONS/LEO REYNOLDS

What Is a Superpower?

by Jimmy Carter

American military expenditures are now equal to those combined for all other nations, and it is good to know that our nation's defenses against a conventional attack are impregnable. It is also imperative that America remain vigilant against threats from terrorists. But the admirable characteristics of a nation are no more defined by its size and physical prowess than are those of a human being.

What are some of the other attributes of a superpower? Once again, they might very well mirror those of a person. These would include a demonstrable commitment to truth, justice, peace, freedom, humility, human rights, generosity, and the upholding of other moral values.

There is no inherent reason that our nation cannot be the international paragon of these virtues. Whenever a person in any nation faces a challenge or a problem, it would be good to have them look to Washington for assistance or as a sterling example.

Our government should be known, without question, as opposed to war, dedicated to the resolution of disputes by peaceful means, and, whenever possible, eager to exert our tremendous capability and influence to accomplish this goal.

We should be seen as the unswerving champion of freedom and human rights, both among our own citizens and within the global community.

America should be the focal point around which other nations of all kinds could marshal to combat threats of global warming and to enhance the quality of our common environment.

We should be in the forefront of providing humane assistance to people in need, willing to lead other industrialized nations in sharing some of our great wealth with those who are destitute.

In achieving all these goals, our great country should strive in every practical way to cooperate with other nations, most of which share these same fundamental ideals. We should also be willing to communicate with those who differ with us on some issues. There is an unprecedented opportunity as all nations face common challenges to use our unequaled influence wisely and with a generous spirit.

There would be no real sacrifice in exemplifying these traits. Instead, our own well-being would be enhanced by restoring the trust, admiration, and friendship that our nation formerly enjoyed among other peoples. At the same time, all Americans could be united at home in a common commitment to revive and nourish the religious faith and historic political and moral values that we have espoused and for which we have struggled during the past two and a half centuries.

I am grateful that Michael Lerner and *Tikkun* have been advocating this same message for many years, both for the United States and for Israel. ■

Jimmy Carter was the thirty-ninth president of the United States.

ISTOCKPHOTO/NIKADA

Tikkun of the Fertile Soil

by Ellen Davis

"BEATITUDE" BY MARGARET ADAMS PARKER (MARGARETADAMSPARKER.COM)

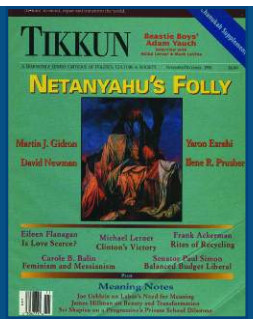
THE VERY FIRST TOPIC THE BIBLE ADDRESSES AT ANY length is food sufficiency for all creatures.

In Genesis 1, the only feature of "the dry land" that receives extended attention is the primordial food chains: the wealth and diversity of "seed" that God has provided. "Here, I have given you all this for eating," God says: grains and tree fruit for humans (meat-eating comes later, after the flood) and green plants for the other animals (Genesis 1:29-30). Notably, this careful delineation of the food supply follows immediately after the divine charge that humans should "exercise skilled mastery among" the other creatures. (This is a better translation of Genesis 1:28 than the conventional rendering, "have dominion over.") So we should probably infer that this is the primary and enduring form of skilled mastery that humans are meant to exercise: recognizing the God-given sufficiency of food for all creatures, and then working to perpetuate this sufficiency.

If that is indeed the special role of humans *among* the creatures (not "over" them), then we have fallen far short of our charge in this generation. In our time, largely as a result of our current practices of industrialized agriculture, the fertility of "the dry land" is severely compromised all over the world; food chains and ecosystems are collapsing and extinction rates are soaring; human food systems—involving food production, processing, transport, and distribution—are strained, fragile, or broken; and hunger is again on the rise. In this generation, we must attempt tikkun olam by learning what is required for all creatures, including all humans, to eat sufficiently. And we must learn how to restore and protect our soil and water supplies in perpetuity. Eating faithfully, doing tikkun of the fertile soil—these are the hopeful and healing forms of skilled mastery we must exercise, for the sake of our children's children and the world that God has made. ■

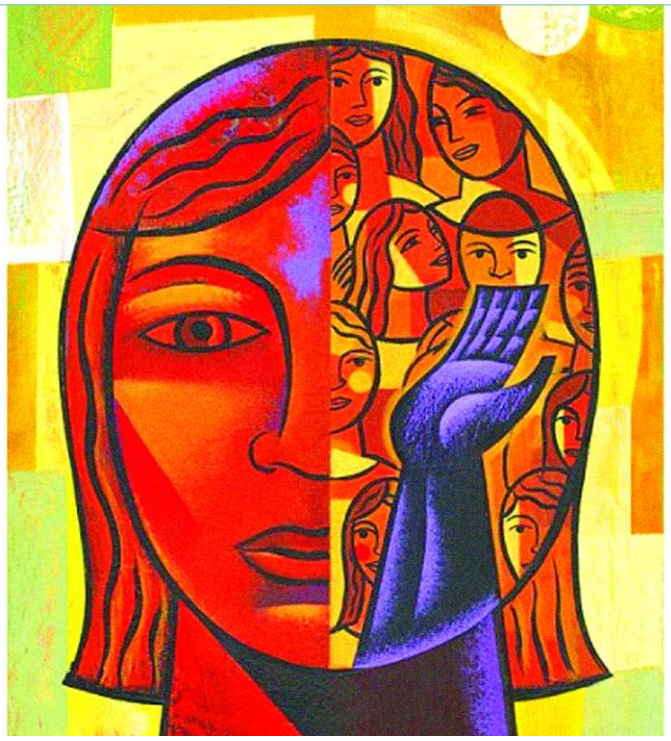
Ellen F. Davis is the A. R. Kearns Distinguished Professor of Bible and Practical Theology at Duke Divinity School, Durham, NC, and author of Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible *(Cambridge, 2009).*

25 YEARS OF TIKKUN



Rejecting Cultures of Domination

by Riane Eisler



"MANY AS ONE" BY RAFAEL LOPEZ (WWW.RAFAELLOPEZ.COM)

HERE IS WHAT I'VE LEARNED FROM MY RESEARCH and my life: healing and transforming our world requires particular attention to gender and parent-child relations. This is because people first learn to respect the rights and dignity of others, or to accept violence, cruelty, oppression, and discrimination as "just the way things are," through what they experience and observe in these foundational relations.

Despotic and violent cultures recognize this—although many people who think of themselves as progressives still fail to do so. For example, for the despotic and violent Nazis, a priority was pushing women back to their "traditional place" in a "traditional family"—code words for a rigidly male-dominated family where children learn it's very painful not to obey orders, no matter how unjust. We see this same priority in violent and despotic religious "fundamentalist" cultures or subcultures—be they Eastern or Western, Muslim or Christian—where "deserved" violence against women and children is accepted as "traditional" and "moral."

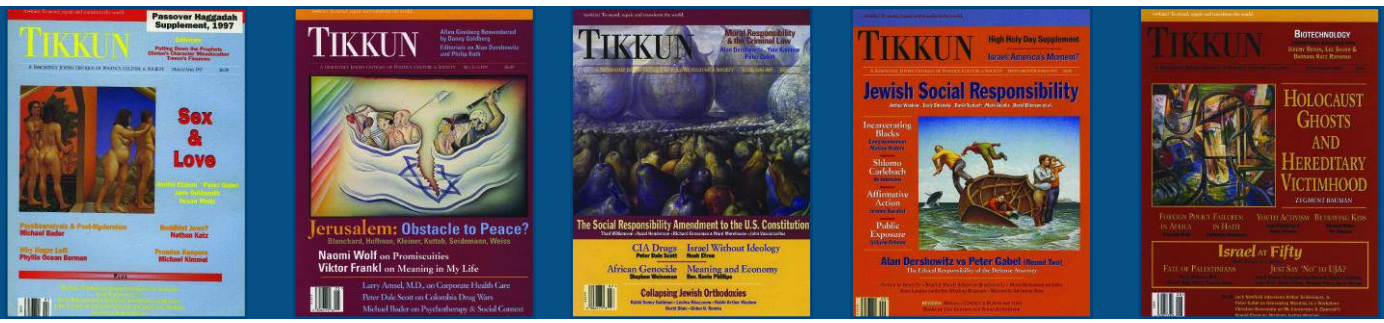
These traditions of domination and violence are our heritage from earlier times when authoritarian rule was the norm in both the family and the state or tribe. So in parts of Southeast Asia, little girls are given less health care and food than boys. Genital mutilations of girls and women are still condoned by custom and religion in parts of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, as are so-called honor killings. The World Health Organization reports that a huge proportion of women worldwide have been physically abused by an intimate partner and that rape is still endemic. Yet all this violence is ignored by most progressives, who relegate it to the ghetto of "gender issues."

It should be enough to say that this violence must be stopped for the sake of its many millions of victims. But it has not been enough. So we also need to look at the larger picture and educate others to do the same.

We then see that in cultures and subcultures where people are taught that men should dominate women and highly punitive families are the norm, discrimination based on race, religion, and other differences is also accepted. And it should not surprise us that when the most fundamental difference in our species—between female and male—is equated with superiority or inferiority, dominating or being dominated, being served or serving, people have a model for viewing other out-groups, such as different races or religions, the same way. Nor should it surprise us that when children observe or experience violence, they're taught that it's acceptable, even moral, to use violence to impose one's will on others.

It's time to move past the tired debates about Right vs. Left, Eastern vs. Western, socialist vs. capitalist, and so on. It's time to think of tikkun olam in ways that include *both* halves of humanity and both our intimate and our national and international relations. Only then can we seriously talk about human rights, human dignity, and true spirituality. ■

Riane Eisler is a systems scientist and cultural historian, president of the Center for Partnership Studies, and author of the international best-sellers The Chalice and the Blade *and* The Real Wealth of Nations. *See www.partnershipway.org.*



25 YEARS OF TIKKUN

The Ethical Challenge for Diaspora Jews

by Tirzah Firestone

Having just returned from a ten-day human rights trip to Israel and the West Bank, I am faced with the painful and inevitable question: *What's the point?* Do the goodwill efforts of North Americans really matter there? Does our solidarity with the beleaguered (and dwindling) Israeli Left have any impact at all?

To be sure, the situation is bleak in Israel, and growing more so, despite Bibi's salutations in the direction of peace. With violence against Israelis down, there is little incentive for them to make concessions. On the contrary, a feeling of immense security, unquestioning self-confidence, and a booming economy prevail, at least on the surface. That democratic values in Israel are quickly unraveling, that time is running out for a Jewish majority there—two facts that are frequently voiced in the United States—seem to go unnoticed.

Rabbi Tirzah Firestone plants an olive tree in the Palestinian village of Beit Surik, on land accessible to a family that has been cut off from the land it owns by the separation barrier, October 2010.

EMMA MISSOURI

Worse yet, the suffering of Palestinian farmers and villagers at the hands of the Occupation and vigilante-style Settlers does not seem to be a big issue for the majority of Israelis. The continuing appropriation of Palestinian land, water, and olives trees; the flagrant negligence of untreated sewage on their lands; the violence against Palestinian farmers, elders, and children, often under the blind eye of the army—are waved away with the coolest of explanations. Armed against all forms of criticism, the Israeli public is increasingly sequestered in its own psychological fortress. Two responses that dominated my discussions with Israelis were: *It is just a chain reaction. You should only know what they have done to us; and Why are you here? Go home and tend to your own country's problems.*

Both of these are justifiable comments. But I am a Jew, and even though I have chosen to live in the Diaspora, I am deeply attached to Israel. It matters to me how this miraculous gift of Jewish sanctuary turns out. Moreover, I do understand that the oppression I experienced in the West Bank must be understood in a larger context, a lethal system of the interlocking traumas of two peoples. Still, the kind of obliviousness that I encountered on the part of Israelis blights the otherwise beautiful features of Israeli culture.

Nevertheless, or perhaps *because* of this extreme callousness, the voices of Diaspora Jews and the voices of concerned activists everywhere are crucial now. The picture of Jews, both secular and with covered heads, working side by side Palestinian farmers in their olive groves, harvesting and planting and thereby serving as human shields against extremist Settlers, breaks down the sinister stereotype of Jew, for both Arab and Jew alike. Likewise, the weekly demonstrations by Israelis and internationals held in Sheikh Jarah against the judaization of East Jerusalem neighborhoods matters, as much to the evicted residents as to Jews around the world who want to hold Israel to a higher standard of political ethics.

Do these and many other acts of righteousness solve the problem of Israel's Occupation? Of course not. But every time we break out of our own callousness and take a stand, we are saving a dream, holding Israel to its original values, as declared to the world in 1948: to "foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; [Israel] will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisioned by the prophets of Israel."

Israeli civil and human rights organizations such as Rabbis for Human Rights, New Israel Fund, and B'Tselem are under fire now from Israel's draconian right-wing government. They deserve our solidarity. Will our efforts pan out? Only the future will tell. In the meantime, for many of us, there is no other way to be a Jew in this world. ■

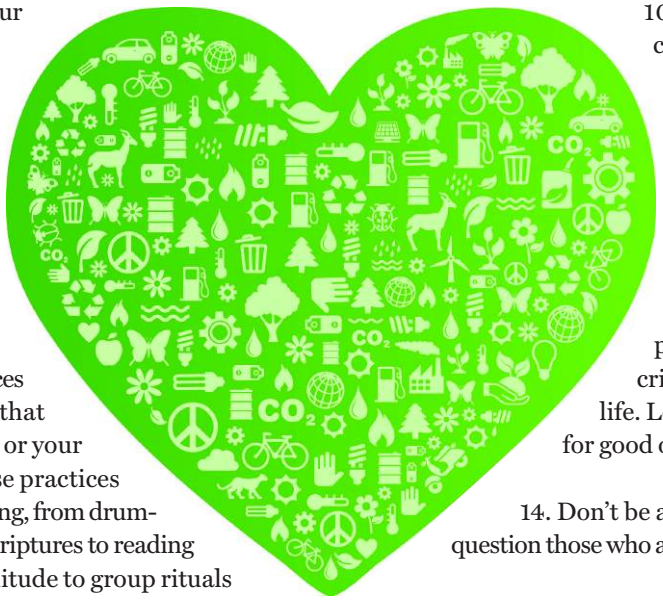
Rabbi Tirzah Firestone is an author, therapist, and congregational rabbi in Boulder, Colorado. She serves on the board of Rabbis for Human Rights–North America, for whom she leads human rights tours to Israel-Palestine. The next tour is scheduled for November 2011.

Nineteen Ways to Heal and Transform the World

by Matthew Fox

1. Fall in love with creation. This is possible even if you're not in love with what humans do with creation. Keep practicing this love. Study nature and its evolutionary unfolding, and reflect on humans' place in the sacred story of creation's development. Make yourself vulnerable to animals and plants, stones and mountains, trees, waters, and sky.

2. Let this love affair dictate your responses to human history, which is shaped by the choices we make as communities, nations, tribes, religions, professions, and citizens. In other words, speak out and act out when what you cherish—namely creation and its rules of justice and love—is in jeopardy.



3. Do whatever spiritual practices develop your heart-strength so that fear never penetrates your heart or your ultimate decision-making. These practices may range from chanting to dancing, from drumming to studying, from reading scriptures to reading the mystics, from silence and solitude to group rituals that are alive, challenging, and joyful.

4. Be suspect of all institutions and those who wage power in their name. Question and learn the truth and speak that truth to power in whatever forms it needs to hear and listen. Be creative and imaginative like the prophets were (and are)!

5. Learn from those who suffer differently from you or who are different from you—and go out of your way to meet them.

6. Live your life with as much integrity as possible given that we live, as a rule in this time in history, in toxic economic, political, media, educational, and religious environments.

7. Dare to love. Dare to fail. Dare to experiment. Dare to be happy. Dare to pray. Admire those who live lives of daring and show us the way.

8. Let love and justice be the bottom line in all your decision-making.

9. Question greed and other dangerous addictions. Question how they spill out into policies and laws and relationships that entrap the human spirit.

10. Don't criticize others without criticizing yourself.

11. Laugh a lot.

12. Seek out beauty wherever you can find it.

13. Prefer wisdom to knowledge and the truth to popularity. Study and develop critical thinking and an intellectual life. Love ideas and respect their power for good or ill.

14. Don't be afraid of solitude and silence, and question those who are.

15. Honor friendships but expect betrayals. Don't let a broken heart deter you from loving anew.

16. Reject boredom. Embrace awe and wonder.

17. Find ways to grieve and assist others to do so. Otherwise we carry a heavy burden of anger locked up inside of us, and our creativity cannot flow.

18. Dig deeply into your own soul to bring your creativity forward with all its uniqueness and bestow your deep gifts generously onto the community.

19. Above all, praise! ("Praise precedes faith," says Rabbi Abraham Heschel.) And drink in the wellsprings of gratitude and reverence that praise sets flowing. ■

ISTOCKPHOTO/ROCCOMONTOYA

Matthew Fox is a spiritual theologian, the author of Original Blessing, A Spirituality Named Compassion, *and* The Hidden Spirituality of Men, *and founder of YELLAWE, an alternative education experience for inner city youth.*

Polarities to the Rescue

by Everett Gendler

Even those who believe that God is One know that we are not God and that, as individuals, we are far from being one. We are not internally unified or individually coherent. Here on this precious planet disparity is our lot, multiplicity our fate. We're not going to "get it all together," much as we might wish or hard as we might try.

One of the profound gifts of Kabbalah is the example of reducing multiplicity to polarities, thereby making them manageable. This acceptance of duality has helped me remain engaged and energized over the decades. Two examples will illustrate.

Heaven and earth is a duality that for me has had immense symbolic value. Listening to Bach's "Goldberg Variations," to almost anything of Mozart, and to much of Beethoven, it is clear to me that I inhabit heaven. How else can I explain the joy of these abundant gifts? More generally, how is there something rather than nothing? The questions confront us with a mystery, a wonder: that there is a created world, that we are inheritors of and participants in it, and that we are aware of this miracle.

You are less moved by music? No problem. What is your passion? Find it—or let it find you—and, from that ecstasy, act to make the world better, more just, more joyous. It is only from such ecstasy, from such an energy-producing position outside of (ex) the fixed place (stasis) of things, that tikkun comes about. This feels directly related to William Blake's "Poetic or Prophetic character" that helps us move beyond "the same dull round over again."

At exalted moments we may inhabit heaven, but mostly we live on "the earth God hath given to humans" (Psalm 115:16). Care for the earth, the ground of our subsistence, is our daily round, our regular beat, our primary responsibility. Ecclesiastes had it right—"Even a king is subject to the soil" (5:9, Gordis translation)—as does midrash on Ecclesiastes, which instructs to guard the earth, preserve it, and "do not corrupt and desolate my world, for if you corrupt it, there is no one to set it right after you."

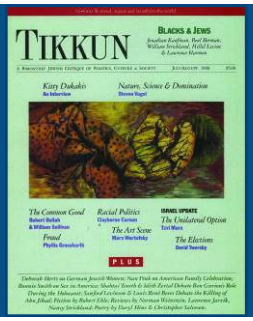
Tune in to heaven, but keep feet on earth. And never forget: wonderful as is the internet—and it is wondrous—not by connectivity alone shall humankind subsist. To sustain soul, sustain soil!

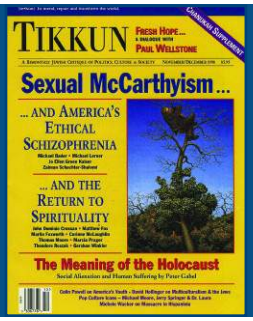
Another invaluable polarity for tikkunistas is the kabbalistic *chesed* and *gevurah*: kindness and severity, compassion and judgment. Yes, the Slonimer Rebbe is surely right in construing Psalm 89:3 as meaning, "the entire world was constructed by the attribute of chesed." He quickly adds severity/judgment as the necessary counterbalance. Politically speaking, acceptance along with assessment, entitlements together with responsibilities, and rights related to duties are crucial in restoring and sustaining the credibility of a politics of compassion in our world today. ■

MELISSA WALLEY (WWW.MELISSAWALLEY.COM)

Rabbi Everett Gendler has served congregations in Mexico, Brazil, Princeton, N.J., and Lowell, Mass., and is chaplain and instructor emeritus at Phillips Academy in Andover, Mass. He has long been active in issues of social justice and liturgical renewal.

25 YEARS OF TIKKUN





Formative Culture in the Age of Imposed Forgetting

by Henry A. Giroux

Culture has become a pivotal educational machine, often commercializing, brutalizing, and infantilizing what it touches. We need a formative culture unfettered by the forces of consumerism and violence. The cultural politics of casino capitalism has numbed our sense of social and moral responsibility. Against this moral coma, with its theater of cruelty and legalized irresponsibility, we need to recast the language of politics. We must create public spheres and pedagogical practices that celebrate the public good, civic courage, compassion, and meaningful spirituality. Both pedagogy and the educational force of the cultural apparatus are crucial to any viable language of democratic politics.

If it is true that a new form of authoritarianism is developing in the United States, undercutting any vestige of a democratic society, then it is equally true that there is nothing inevitable about this growing threat. The long and tightening grip of authoritarianism in American political culture can be resisted and transformed. This dystopic future will not happen if intellectuals, workers, young people, and diverse social movements unite to create the public spaces and unsettling formative educational cultures necessary for reimagining the meaning of radical democracy. In part, this is a pedagogical project—one that recognizes consciousness, agency, desire, spirituality, and education as central to any viable notion of politics. It is also a project designed to critique and make visible the commonsense ideologies that enable neoliberal capitalism and other elements of an emerging authoritarianism to function alongside a kind of moral coma and imposed forgetting at the level of everyday life.

Evidence of such a project is visible in the multidimensional political and pedagogical work being done at *Tikkun* and *Truthout*. It is also visible in the Freechild Project, which organizes youth groups to fight against the many injustices young people face in the United States. All of these organizations engage in cultural practices and forms of public pedagogy that make visible the exercise of ruthless power on a number of fronts. They engage in a form of memory work and public pedagogy that creates the conditions for individuals and groups to develop alternative public spheres in which dialogue and exchange combine with varied forms of political intervention.

But such a project will not gain momentum if the American public cannot recognize how the mechanisms of authoritarianism have impacted their lives, restructured negatively the notion of freedom, and corrupted power by placing it largely in the hands of ruling elites, corporations, and different segments of the military and national security state. Such a project must work to develop vigorous social spheres and communities that promote a culture of deliberation, public debate, and critical exchange across a wide variety of cultural and institutional sites in an effort to generate democratic movements for social change.

At stake here is the construction of a politics bolstered by a formative culture that creates the ideological and structural conditions necessary for a broad-based social movement that can move beyond the legacy of a fractured left/progressive culture and politics in order to address the totality of the society's problems. This suggests finding a common ground in which challenging diverse forms of oppression, exploitation, and exclusion can become part of a broader challenge to create a radical democracy. We need to develop an educated and informed public that embraces a culture of questioning capable of interrogating society's commanding institutions. We live at a time that *demands a new language for thinking through politics and about the promise of democracy*, one that recognizes that without an informed citizenry, collective struggle, and viable social movements, democracy will slip out of our reach. ■

Henry A. Giroux is a professor in English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University in Canada. His most recent books include Politics After Hope: Obama and the Crisis of Youth, Race, and Democracy *(2010) and* Zombie Politics and Culture in the Age of Casino Capitalism *(2011).*

25 YEARS OF TIKKUN

My Two Cents

by Danny Goldberg

TWO CENTS FROM A HIPPIE-GENERATION ACTIVIST to those dedicated to healing the world:

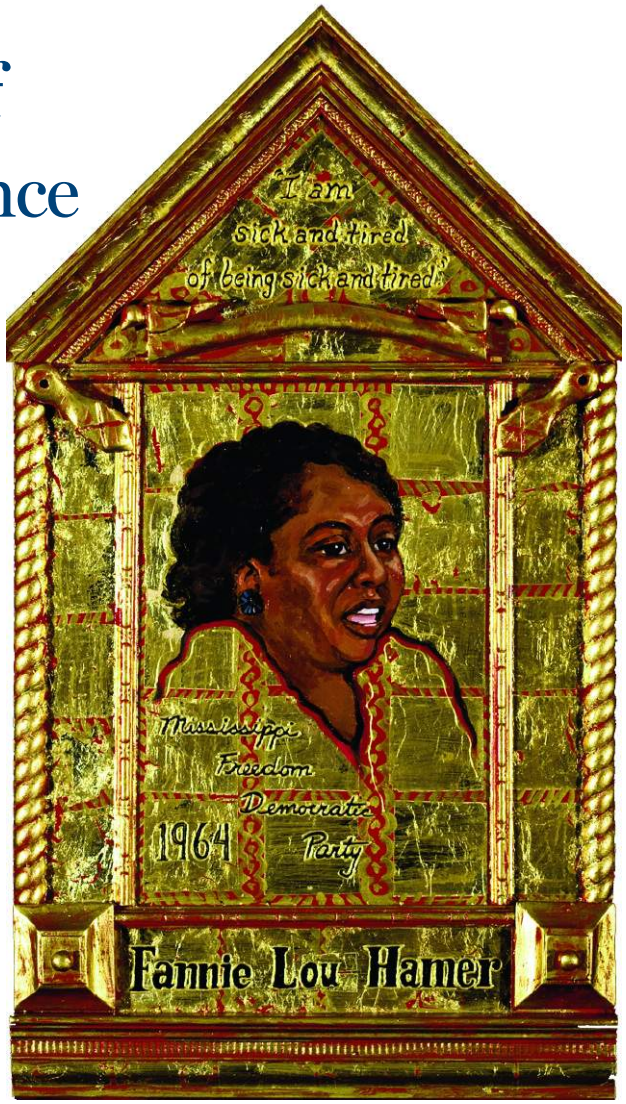
You should not assume that others know what you know, have read what you've read, have seen what you've seen, or have heard what you've heard. To touch people's hearts, you must learn their cultural language and reach them through it. Moreover, you cannot touch people's hearts without getting their attention. If the first sentence of anything you say or write is not sufficiently focused and interesting, many people will tune out the rest.

And of course remember to look within to your highest self, daily and before making any big decision. And remember Martin Luther King's words: "Although we live in the colony of time, we owe our allegiance to the empire of eternity." ■

Danny Goldberg manages the careers of rock musicians, is the author of the books How The Left Lost Teen Spirit *and* Bumping Into Geniuses, *and is a former publisher of* Tikkun.

Tikkun Olam: The Art of Nonviolent Civil Resistance

by Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb



PAMELA PURDY

EVERY GENERATION COMES TO A CROSSROAD. Tangled lengths of history tug at our heels; a mountain of stories hovers over us like a wedding canopy, or is it a tomb? In the middle of the path where the road divides, a sign is posted on the way. Two arrows point in opposite directions. One arrow points to the Path of the Book, the other to the Path of the Sword. Which path shall we choose? Our elders taught, "If the sword, then not the book. If the book, then not the sword." About this, Torah says: "Record this instruction. Resist the way of the sword with the way of the book."

Every day, I choose the path of nonviolence, that is, *shmirat shalom*, which I believe has the potential to make the greatest contribution to Jewish and global well-being. As it is written, "Who is the greatest hero? The one who turns an enemy into a friend." One doesn't accomplish the goal of turning an enemy into a friend by brutalizing one's enemy or one's neighbor, or by furthering the languages of fear and hate, or by using retribution and punishment to subdue the quest for freedom. Faith in militarism is on the rise in the Jewish community, and yet, violence, as Hannah Arendt reminded her generation, always leads to more violence.

Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb is cofounder of the Community of Living Traditions, a multifaith residency devoted to nonviolence in study and action. She is also cofounder of the Shomer Shalom Institute for Jewish Nonviolence and the Muslim Jewish PeaceWalk, as well as a performing artist, author, and percussionist.

Nor can one be engaged in constructive peace-building without alliances in solidarity with those who are suffering the direct impact of systematic violence, whether it is the violence of an unjust prison system or the weight of occupation. Those who enjoy economic, spiritual, and political privilege in a network of relationships cannot create a solution on their own. They must rely on the vision and efforts of those who suffer the pangs of systemic injustice to articulate the way forward. This insight is crucial to the work of healing and reconciliation.

Frederick Douglass wrote: "This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one, or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will." Gandhi, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Rosa Parks, Fannie Lou Hamer, Rabbi Michael Robinson z"l, and thousands of other practitioners of nonviolence have also taught us that waging peace inevitably leads to nonviolent direct action. When people struggling for human rights attempt to gain those rights through official channels and fail, activists will turn to boycotts, sit-ins, freedom rides, strikes, and other forms of direct action. It is this kind of pressure, and not moral persuasion or armed struggle, that leads those who hold power to change. When the status quo becomes too costly to maintain, those at the grassroots, and their allies, can hold out for their demands. Only then can the process of true reconciliation begin. During this phase of struggle and movement building, solidarity activists and allies must also shift their tactics. Knowing how to be a solidarity activist is one of the most important aspects of doing the work of tikkun olam. ■

Justice and Trauma: Reflections on Terrorism and Empire

by Roger S. Gottlieb

Political struggles marked by long histories and extensive violence are founded along two dimensions: justice and trauma.

In the dimension of justice, we work to defeat the accumulated power of the oppressor and use concepts like comrade and enemy, our side against their side, winning and losing. We ask, "What must be done to overthrow the powerful in favor of their victims?" Here we are not concerned with the fate of the oppressor. If making society more just bothers corporations accustomed to polluting without penalty, third world dictators who shoot union leaders, or imperialists destroying native cultures, so much the worse for them.

In the second dimension we find mutual trauma: histories of collective antagonism, victimization, and deep loss without a clear division between oppressor and oppressed. In this dimension a too simple view of either side's moral standing usually engenders new injustice, with the traumas of violence reproduced from one generation to the next. Here we implore: "Tell me about your pain, and please listen to mine." We try to remember that people on both sides carry painful memories and urgent fears that distort their perception of themselves and others and may lead to collective violence. Here we dare to hope that greater understanding of our common suffering might bring us together in a way that will allow us and our descendents to live without continuing carnage. We seek not victory but reconciliation—and, possibly, forgiveness.

The failure to recognize the way both justice and trauma shape violent social conflict is reflected in many responses to terrorism that focus solely on the aggression of the terrorists or the history of American imperialism.

When this happens we may see only reasonless violence, perceiving terrorists as religious fanatics who kill innocents simply because of a maniacal hatred (as if fighters for al-Qaida or Hezbollah grew up without history), or perceiving U.S. actions as the soulless machinations of a Machiavellian American Empire whose foot soldiers could not really believe they are defending their country or feel truly threatened by the rise of Muslim hostility to the United States. In both cases we will have failed to take into account the irrationalities to which trauma can give rise—traumas such as the psychological effects of a catastrophe like September 11, the ongoing presence of a foreign power on one's soil, or the looming threat of secret bombs on airplanes or the world's most powerful air force. The bureaucratic violence of

Visit www.tikkun.org for an expanded treatise on trauma and justice by Roger S. Gottlieb.

Roger S. Gottlieb is professor of philosophy at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, contributing editor for Tikkun, *and author of* A Greener Faith: Religious Environmentalism and our Planet's Future, *and the (forthcoming)* Engaging Voices: Tales of Morality and Meaning in an Age of Global Warming.

empire may seem a stark contrast to the monstrosities of the fanatical terrorist. On deeper analysis, however, the pilot-less drones reflect the dialectics of trauma and justice no less than does the suicide bomber's dynamite belt.

Ignoring the reality of trauma can lead us to wish simply to obliterate the evil ones: as if bombs and bullets could erase all those who threaten us; as if we could ever win a war on terror; as if September 11 (or Israel's bombing of Gaza, the latest suicide attack in Tel Aviv, or America's assault on Iraq) were the first killing of innocents—without events that preceded them and made them possible; as if there were no grief beside our own; as if the commonplace dislocations of modernity—life without soul, spirit, place, or authentic culture—would not necessarily create some people who are incapable of moral connection; and—perhaps most important—as if understanding violence and having compassion even for the murderers were equivalent to condoning the murders or abandoning self-defense.

Yet too simplistic a trust in compassion and reconciliation has its own dangers. We might be told to trust in the power of love and care, told to forget that a history of trauma can create people who are compelled to reproduce the violence they have experienced. We might be tempted to believe that cynical opportunists, impervious to love, do not manipulate suffering into hatred on both sides; that compassion alone will overcome entrenched social power; that particular groups of people—politicians, leaders of "resistance" groups, makers of weapons, and entrenched social elites who deflect social criticism "as long as there is a war on"—do not benefit from perpetuating the conflict; or that the fundamental psycho-sexual structures of patriarchy do not often serve as a template for brutality and aggression.

Can anything be done? Each side might begin to soften its stance of implacable moral certainty. We might develop new skepticism toward the empire's endless self-congratulation over democracy and technological power or toward terrorism's un-Islamic militant spiritual arrogance. Each side could discover within its own tradition an openness to the other—in scripture, law, philosophy, or the exemplary lives of unquestioned heroes such as Martin Luther King or Rumi. Each side can look very carefully at the sufferings of the other and develop an all-too-rare honesty about its own motivations: How much is self-defense and how much is oil and realpolitik? How much is legitimate national pride and religious fervor? And how much patriarchal violence and a terror of modernity?

We are left with a simple but often nearly impossible ideal: to recognize the world's pain, and our own, and to change the world so the pain is lessened. Every dream of a better world is a dream of a place where it is easier, if perhaps not easy, to be kind. But with so many people of power, attached in so many ways to social structures that are rife with cruelty, how much unkindness will be required to get to that point? ■

Villanelle: Tikkun Olam (Repairing the World)

Should I ask the obvious? Why would God
create a world requiring repair?
And what was He thinking when He called it good?

Unless *the perfect is the enemy of the good*
was His motto too. Maybe Voltaire
was making an obvious reference to God,

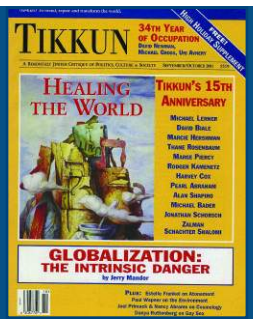
who clearly got in way over His head —
as if banning a piece of fruit was the answer,
not to mention thinking knowledge of good

and evil was the great sin to forbid.
My guess is He didn't imagine murder
until Cain made it obvious. Poor God.

No wonder He had that temper tantrum-cum-flood.
But He couldn't follow through, couldn't bear
to think of forfeiting whatever good

He had, albeit haphazardly, created
and so this somewhat slipshod world's still here.
Do you think *we* might do it any good?
Obviously, there's no point asking God.

— Jacqueline Osherow



Inner Courage and Love: The Path to Disarmament

by Jonathan Granoff

Decades of work as a political activist have convinced me that peace begins as an inside job. My work to achieve nuclear disarmament may at first seem like a purely external, public pursuit, but in fact it has taught me much about the power of a prayerful inner life and the centrality of love and prayer to success. Since I speak as a full-time political activist rather than as a religious leader, readers need not fear that my goal is proselytization for one religion or another when I say that the transformative power of prayer is crucial to our personal growth and political struggle for global peace.

The evidence of real prayer is whether it opens the heart to love, regardless of whether we pray quietly, out loud, within a tradition, out of a tradition, facing the east, the west, up or down. If it's prayer, it opens the heart to God's love. If it doesn't, it's not prayer.

As Bawa Muhaiyadeen said:

> If each of you will open your heart, your action, your wisdom, and your conduct, and look within, you will see that every face is your face ... all sorrow is your sorrow.... When that state develops inside you, that is God's love ... If that love develops, you will not hurt any other living thing. You will not cause pain, you will not reject any life. And you will not torture any other life. Because if you hurt anyone, it will hurt you.

Feeling the joy and sorrow of others brings one into an active sense of responsibility, awakens conscience, and leads to action. Being effective in the realm of action means using skills, intelligence, political insight, and practical knowledge, but always in the service of that greater responsibility to the Source.

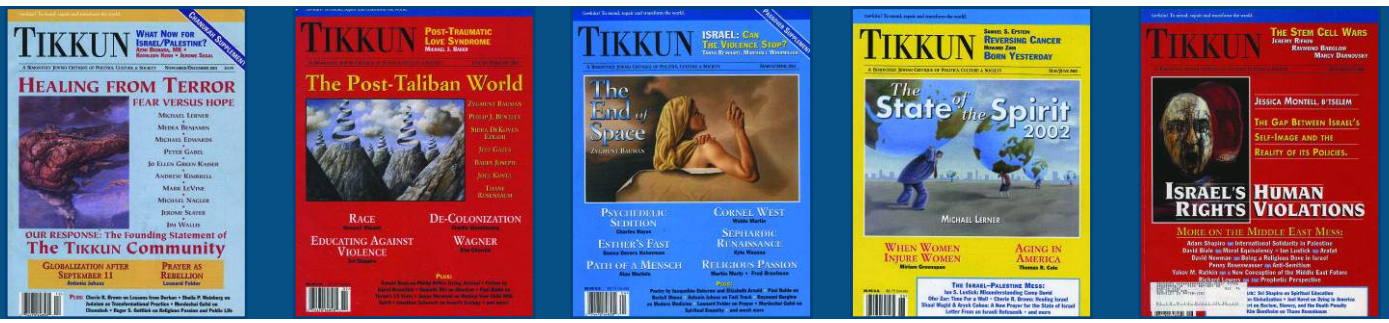
Without developing an inner character based on love and compassion, the instability of the mind, the harshness of the world, and the challenge of facing our mortality will breed fear. Fear is responsible for closing down dialogue and denying our interconnectedness. Fear too often can trump reason. But fear cannot overcome authentic experience-based love.

A culture that overemphasizes competition reinforces a false sense of disconnectedness. Reliance on science and technology to solve human dilemmas does not lead to peace. And the threats of nuclear annihilation and war certainly give anyone adequate reasons for fear. The modern world does little to remind us of our humanity. General Omar Bradley, a man familiar with the horrors of battle said it clearly: "We live in an age of nuclear giants and ethical infants, in a world that has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. We've solved the mystery of the atom and forgotten the lessons of the Sermon on the Mount."

When fear is central to the public discourse we can be sure the least insightful among us will use it to profit from cycles of armaments and war, which reinforce the causes of fear. In fact, since the end of the Cold War, the world has spent more than $10 trillion on armaments. The United States alone spends more than $100 million every day to keep its nuclear arsenal at ready.

But those of us who have opened our hearts and felt the unity of humanity know that love is the manifest dynamic that weaves the mysterious infinite web of life of which we are but a part.

Jonathan Granoff is an attorney, author, and international advocate focused on human development, nuclear disarmament, peace, and security. He serves as president of the Global Security Institute and is on the Advisory Board of Tikkun.



With such understanding, we must commit to creating cycles where cooperation and trust reinforce disarmament, which in turn reinforces our good qualities. We are the place where the cycles begin. From the glorious place of inner courage and freedom, we can change the cycle: no more fear inside and no more squandering of assets based on illusory quests for power. When individuals act from the place of the open heart, everyday life is enriched with the sacred; when groups act with resonance from this treasure, social change for peace and justice emerges. This is not a new insight. It is just a reminder that love is the healing force for each person and the strongest force for social change, even today. ■

How the Light Gets In

by Pamela Greenberg

Looking around the world these days it is easy to feel anxiety rising in one's chest and throat. The forms of pollution and suffering are endless. As in the story of Noah, the earth is full of violence. Change does not seem to be arriving in any great rush, and often it feels as though we are small creatures standing on a precipice with wind raging all about. The threats are terrifying, and the resemblance to medieval depictions of hell not small. Whether we are aware of it or not, our political and environmental landscape erodes our overall sense of well-being, gnawing away at our sense of holiness, sanctity, and peace.

We are accustomed to noting how personal problems affect our levels of stress. We are less aware, however, of the insidious presence of the political atmosphere in which we live and breathe. It is another dimension of our spiraling pollution: profanation of the sacred.

Looking around, it is easy to find oneself awash in fear, anger, and anxiety. But these emotions are paralyzing and rarely lead to real change in the world. Over and over, we must remind ourselves of the need to focus on the holy. Without it, we too easily fall into bitterness, a poison for the soul as well as for our work of healing and transformation.

But what is the holy? It is a concept hard to define. Its ingredients include wonder, joyful participation in community, beauty, and love. In its light, fear dissipates and what is left is forgiveness and strength, grace and hope.

The Torah tells Jews to "be a light to the nations." The only way that those of us committed to a life of self-reflection and political change can create lasting transformation is to begin by transforming ourselves. I truly believe that others will see that light and eventually follow it. In truth, we all have a deep longing for holiness, even those whose actions seem to belie this need—those for whom words like community and justice have become distorted and degraded. It is only bitter disappointment in the absence of the holy that makes human longing turn to movements like the Tea Party, a movement clearly fueled by anger and divisiveness.

"Finding Home #89 Vasti (Fereshteh)" *by Siona Benjamin.*

We must kindle our lights, and kindle the lights in one another. These are dark times, dangerous times, and at moments the global emergency room seems just around the corner.

Our light is kindled both by our longing and—importantly—our humility, our recognition that whatever we have to offer is both complete and flawed. In the song "Anthem," Leonard Cohen sings: "Ring the bells that still can ring. Forget your perfect offering. There is a crack, a crack in everything—That's how the light gets in."

I look forward to seeing the shining of that light, lighting whatever I can, and when my own light grows dim, being lit by others, friends or strangers, whoever among us who continues to hold a candle in the dark. ■

Pamela Greenberg is a writer and translator. Her translation of the psalms, The Complete Psalms: The Book of Prayer Songs in a New Translation *was published in April by Bloomsbury (see www.thecompletepsalms.com).*

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Nine Qualities of the Spiritual Activist

by Kabir Helminski

One of the most important challenges for *Tikkun* readers like me who have become involved in the Network of Spiritual Progressives is to work on the relationship between our inner lives and what we can effect in the outer world. The most effective activism is from the soul to the outer world, so each of us must also do the work of creating spiritual coherence within our own souls. For this we need to access the most reliable sources of wisdom that tradition offers as a step toward uncovering the wisdom within our own nature:

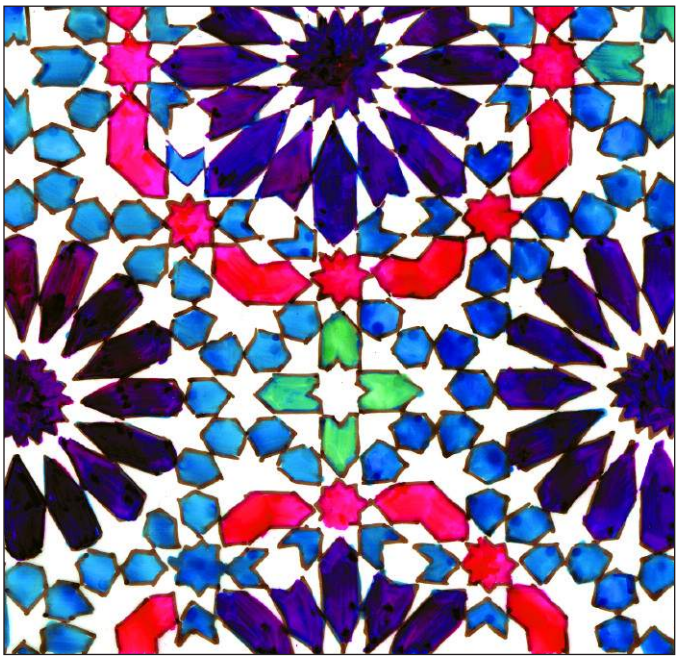
1. Clear and penetrating vision. This world is the theater of divine manifestation in which the spiritual activist calls upon the names of God that are needed in any particular circumstance. In one circumstance patience may be needed; in another, forgiveness; in another, harmony; in another, justice, discernment, mercy, compassion, or conviction.

2. Understanding the divine communication when it is offered to the hearts of the servants. Our life in the world is continually a call and response. Sometimes the response is veiled, sometimes it is a kind of divine speech, sometimes events are a waking dream calling for interpretation, and sometimes the heart receives a direct address from within.

3. Knowing how to translate from the world of possibility to the world of engendered existence. The translator must find the language that can be understood and the right "words" within that language. Spiritual activists are the inheritors of the prophets and embody the spirit of prophethood.

4. Delegating the appropriate powers among the holders of authority. The spiritual activist will eventually be called upon to assign responsibilities wisely so that there is the necessary equilibrium between the person and the role.

5. Assuming sovereignty selflessly—balancing stringency with mercy, and mercy with stringency.



6. Knowing the forms of sustenance needed to sustain the heart and soul of servanthood. Wherever we place our attention we receive impressions; we can use our conscious will to discern what supports our spiritual vitality and to transform what can be transformed.

7. Awareness of the interpenetration of spiritual and material realities in order to be both inspired in action and spiritually grounded.

8. Giving oneself totally in order to serve the true welfare of humanity.

9. Assuming responsibility for the transformation of what must be transformed to fulfill the needs of the time. The spiritual activist practices a social alchemy through the spiritual capacities of our own being, including the highest frequencies of love. ■

SABIHA BASRAI

Shaikh Kabir Helminski is the author of Living Presence, The Knowing Heart, *and many translations of Rumi and other Sufis. He founded and codirects the Threshold Society (Sufism.org) and in 2009 was named one of the "500 Most Influential Muslims in the World."*

Tikkun Olam Without Coercion: Living into the World We Want to Create

by Miki Kashtan

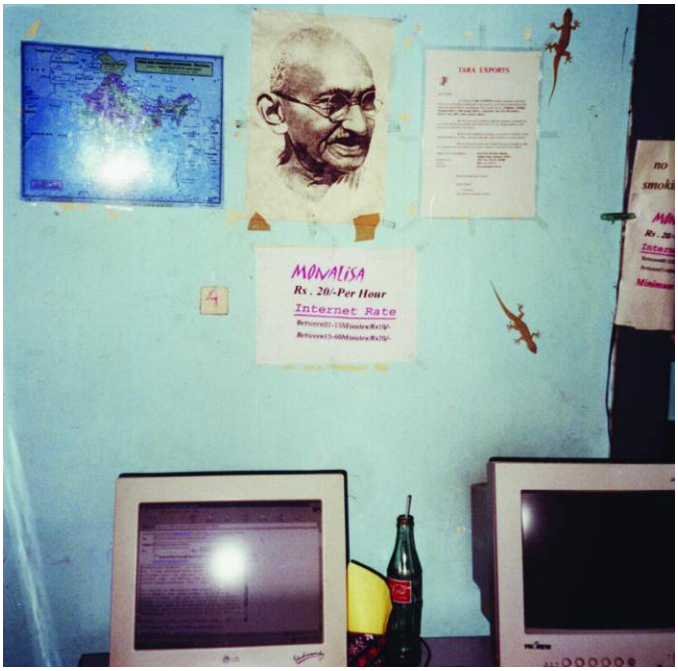
I'VE HAD THE LONGING FOR TIKKUN OLAM SINCE I WAS A child in Israel. It was only when I encountered principled nonviolence that I found vision, faith, and concrete practice that allowed me to make tikkun olam central to my life.

I envision a world that works for all people and the planet. My faith rests on the radical understanding that every action taken by anyone is an expression of human needs. My practice of nonviolence emerges from love embodied as compassion, fierceness, courage, and an uncompromising willingness to stand for truth. My vision, faith, and practice combine to ground my commitment to collaborative, noncoercive solutions that address everyone's needs.

Making the World Work for Everyone

HISTORY SHOWS THAT THOSE WHO GAIN POWER TEND TO recreate structures that work for some and not for others. If, by some miracle, those who resonate with the *Tikkun* worldview gain sufficient power to have influence on a large scale, I want us to be able to address the pressing issues we are decrying without forcing others, including those who are now in positions of power, to accept our solutions.

We can prepare for this hoped-for future by grappling *now* with what it takes to open our hearts and minds to those with whom we disagree. We can learn to identify the deepest human needs underlying anyone's opinions, actions, and preferred policies, so we can transcend affiliations and positions and come to a shared focus on solutions that address *everyone's* needs.



To bring Gandhi into the modern age (given homage here in an internet café in Varanasi, India), we need to learn a rigorous practice of empathic listening and nonviolence so we can navigate conflict and differences creatively.

CREATIVE COMMONS/HYNEK MORAVEC

Using Dialogue to Transform Conflict

EVEN WITHIN OUR OWN GROUPS WE SEE SPLINTERING, FIGHTING, withdrawing, overpowering, and resignation. To increase our credibility and effectiveness, we can overcome fear of conflict and engage with each other productively. We can create environments in which people find enough safety to talk about challenging issues while maintaining connection and respect with each other. We can create trust by embracing a rigorous practice of empathic listening, deep openness to everyone's humanity, and willingness to take responsibility for our own actions and experiences.

Using Power with Others Effectively

LIKE MOST ORGANIZATIONS, GROUPS WORKING TOWARD A vision of a transformed world often experience immense difficulties with leadership, power relations, and decision-making. Both in the future world and now, we can create structures of governance that are efficiently responsive to people's needs by transforming top-down hierarchical structures without losing sight of the role of leadership in offering vision, cohesion, and decisive action. As leaders we can learn to let go of outcome and listen to others so we can navigate conflict and differences creatively. We can also model our vision of tikkun olam by learning to use power to engage and empower others, to support mutual learning, and to reach decisions that everyone can willingly accept.

My own tikkun olam work includes embracing collaborative leadership, transforming all obstacles to working with others effectively, and modeling now the world I want to create in my thoughts, words, and actions. ■

Miki Kashtan, certified trainer and cofounder of Bay Area NVC, will be teaching "Taking On the World: Learning to Become a Change Agent" through the NVC Academy (nvctraining.com). For more information visit baynvc.org or email nvc@baynvc.org.

Prophetic Voices Should Be Bold

by Zalman Kastel

The best lack conviction, Given some time to think
And the worst are full of passion, Without mercy.

—Joni Mitchell based on a poem by W.B. Yeats

A SHARP MESSAGE IS MORE LIKELY TO BE HEARD in a noisy marketplace of ideas than a qualified and nuanced one. I think it is wrong for the voices of moderation to be constrained by an idealistic sense of duty to absolute accuracy, balance, and openness to opposing views. Hmm, ouch, that was hard to write; are we not the people who "eat brown rice and are always nice"?

Being too nice is irresponsible. In the Bible story, Reuben intends to save Joseph but does not challenge the groupthink of his brothers that Joseph must die. He works within the consensus and suggests a compromise, hoping to fix the situation later. But he returns to see that Joseph is gone: "And I, where will I come?" He will never feel at home again, haunted by his timid choice.

A Hasid asks his rebbe if he should continue feeding the poor despite his mixed motives, his "not doing it with truth." "*The poor truly enjoy the food*," was the retort. If we want to contribute to the shaping of opinion and political decisions, we need to "play the game": speaking without qualification is a minor matter.

It is 2 a.m. in early 1990, I am an idealistic twenty-year-old Yeshivah student in the Chabad movement having a very loud debate with M., a fellow student sitting around a table with friends, pickles, pretzels, and vodka. "Go tell the tall buildings in Manhattan I am a Lubavitcher and I have a message," he declared, as if such a thing were obviously impossible.

I am forty now and I still have a message, although now it lacks the religious certainty of Chabad's message. It is about how people who disagree about truth can cooperate. We have spoken our truth to people inside the "tall buildings," and we have heard them repeat it. One of them is the prime minister of Australia, who this summer praised our interfaith anti-prejudice work at the Together for Humanity Foundation (described in the May/June 2010 *Tikkun*) and backed her words with one million dollars of government funding over three years to create resources for teachers and students across Australia.

Our approach can be labeled as "And." We dared to dream of what can be, instead of working only with what already is. For this, I thank the Chabad movement for its theological opposition to the word "can't" and initial support. We have been flexible and have listened not just to the advice of Aboriginal elders and Muslim sheiks, but also to bureaucrats and "establishment types." We have developed strong principles, *and* these included keeping quiet about certain issues to preserve the fragile bridges we have built.

For me, it depends on the context. When the moral high ground is claimed by Sarah Palin, a strong counter-voice is needed: forget the glow of purity; instead let's get messy, go out on a limb one minute and scream, then compromise the next. Both are needed, in the real world. ■

Zalman Kastel is national director of the Together for Humanity Foundation (togetherforhumanity.org.au) and a rabbi based in Sydney, Australia. He is married and is the father of five children. He enjoys sketching and learning Arabic.

ISTOCKPHOTO/CDH_DESIGN

A New Future for Food

by Andrew Kimbrell

We can only repair or heal the world through relationship. Since food is the most intimate relationship we have with the natural world around us, reestablishing a sustainable and humane relationship with our daily sustenance is a critical issue for all of us devoted to working for tikkun.

The challenge is great. Today's corporations have taken the culture out of agriculture and turned it into agribusiness. This dominant industrial food model, with its massive chemical, mechanical, and now genetically altered biological inputs, is based in a profound alienation of the public from their food. Over the last decades our society has become ever more urbanized, moving ever farther from the rural sources of our daily bread. The great physical and psychological distance separating the public from food production obscures the tragic consequences of our industrial food model. Many happily munch on their hamburgers without a thought to the forest and prairie being destroyed for cattle grazing, or the immense cruelty in the raising and slaughter of the billions of animals we use for food each year. Mothers continue to prod their youngsters to eat their vegetables, unaware of the pesticides poisoning the farmworkers and wildlife involved in their production, not to mention the water and air. This distancing makes us all unintentionally complicit in the eco-crimes, animal abuse, and social devastation of farm communities caused by current agriculture. In this way industrial food creates a moral crisis, as well as an environmental and health crisis.

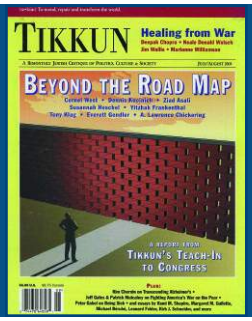
However, over the last two generations a food metanoia has taken place: the "organic and beyond" movement. It has been my privilege and joy to be part of this movement. Millions of Americans are buying organic, local, and humane. They are taking part in community supported agriculture (CSA) systems, joining groups, and fighting against the misuse of pesticides, the factory farming of animals, and the genetic engineering of food crops. They understand that we cannot heal the wounds caused by industrial agriculture if we remain mere "consumers." The word "consume" means to destroy (as in a consuming fire) or to waste. We can no longer be food "consumers," destroying and wasting our lands and farm communities. This grassroots movement urges each of us to be creators, not consumers. It lets us truly understand that each action we take in deciding which foods to buy, grow, or eat creates a very different future for ourselves, our farm communities, and the earth. It is now challenging the decades-long hegemony of the industrial model.

Perhaps even more profoundly the new organic consciousness is challenging the four-hundred-year idea that equated "progress" with the increasing technological manipulation, control, and exploitation of the natural world. This is one of the first mass movements in modern times to declare that it is the *rejection* of some of the major technologies or our time—chemical (pesticides and fertilizers), nuclear (irradiation of food), and biological (genetic engineering of plants and animals)—that equals progress. We hold that progress means seeking to learn from and participate with nature rather than working to dominate and control it.

As for the spiritual stakes involved in this historic food struggle, I can do no better than quote Wendell Berry: "To live we must daily break the body and blood of creation ... when we do this knowingly, lovingly, skillfully, reverently it is a sacrament; when we do it ignorantly, greedily, clumsily, destructively it is a desecration ... in such desecration we condemn ourselves to spiritual and moral loneliness and others to want." So let us all embrace and work toward the sacramental vision of a new food future. ■

Andrew Kimbrell is the executive director of the Center for Food Safety and the editor of Fatal Harvest: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture.

25 YEARS OF TIKKUN



Do Not Hold Back:

Notes from a Gay Congregation

by Sharon Kleinbaum

"Enlarge the site of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes."

—Isaiah 54:2

ISAIAH DEMANDS OF US THAT WE "NOT HOLD BACK" WHEN it comes to the welcoming capacity of our tents. For the past thirty-seven years, we have been working to do this at Congregation Beit Simchat Torah. Originally founded by a group of gay men, we have grown over the years, stretched our tent curtains wider, and are stretching wider still. The site of our tent is now a place of trans folks, lesbians, bisexuals, children, interfaith couples, and a sizable number of straight allies.

All work of tikkun olam, of mending the world, happens in community. It is in community that we find ourselves. It is in community that we find power. As members of groups who have not traditionally found space in the tent, community can be a terrifying concept. Communities have been the source of so much of our pain, so much of our brokenness. As Jews with varied and violent histories of persecution, we have a hard time trusting others, let alone each other. As queer and trans Jews, as Jews of color, as working-class Jews, we have often had experiences within Jewish communities that amplify that distrust, pushing us out of communities and into isolation. Too many Jewish communities across the country are moving further to the right in their politics, and those of us on the left are feeling the danger of this shift. We feel the tent curtains narrowing, squeezing us out of where we know we belong.

It is easy to turn our backs on our roots, on our communities, and our traditions. In doing that, we risk losing too much. It might be tempting to go rogue in our pursuit of justice. There's a certain glory-appeal in it, to be a lone activist fighting the good fight and transforming our world into a place of liberation. I think this is a common pitfall for many of us who are politically inclined. As activists with strong ideological commitments to justice—commitments forged within specific theological and political contexts—we feel injustice deeply and personally. When we come across communities who do not seem to share our vision for a just world, it is tempting to walk away. But those of us who can stay inside need to do so for our own benefit, and for the benefit of the world.

Without reproducing anti-Semitic myths of Jewish world domination, I think it is important to recognize the power that Jewish communities have access to across the country. It is our responsibility to remain accountable to those who have not been welcomed into the tent. We cannot hold back. We need to work within our communities, push them to enlarge the sites of our tents, to stretch the tent curtains wider. It is only by enlarging it that we will be able to lengthen our cords and strengthen our stakes. God knows, the stakes are high. ■

ROSALIE Z FANSHEL

Rabbi Kleinbaum serves as the spiritual leader of CBST and is regarded as one of the most important rabbis in America. The national Jewish weekly the Forward *named her as one of the country's fifty top Jewish leaders, and* The New York Jewish Week *identified her as one of the forty-five leading young American Jewish leaders in New York.*

25 YEARS OF TIKKUN

From Phantom Wealth to Real Wealth

by David Korten

The proponents of individual greed have created a global economy headed for terminal collapse. Our financial systems are gyrating out of control beyond human accountability, extreme inequality is tearing apart the social fabric, Earth's critical living systems are collapsing, and political corruption has rendered our political institutions incapable of effective corrective action.

The time has come to rediscover our humanity, reclaim the power that Wall Street corporations and their global counterparts have usurped, rebuild community, and bring ourselves back into balance with one another and Earth—our living home. It requires deep system transformation grounded in recognition that true prosperity and security are products of sharing and community.

The values and institutions of the twentieth century are both a product and a source of false stories that have induced a cultural trance, a kind of cultural psychosis that leads us to reduce all values to financial values and all human exchanges to financial transactions for individual private financial gain.

We have been conditioned by language and education to the illusion that money is wealth and that people who make money are creating wealth.

Modern money is perhaps the most mysterious of human inventions. It is nothing but a number of no substance or intrinsic worth—a number created by a simple accounting entry when a bank makes a loan. Yet in contemporary societies, money determines our access to virtually every essential of life.

The decisions of those who control the creation and allocation of money determine the fate of nations and shape the boom and bust of economic life. They determine who will have food, shelter, education, and health care, and who will not, yet it is all just creative accounting. It is the most effective and undemocratic of tyrannies, because its inner workings are largely invisible and therefore difficult to understand and challenge.

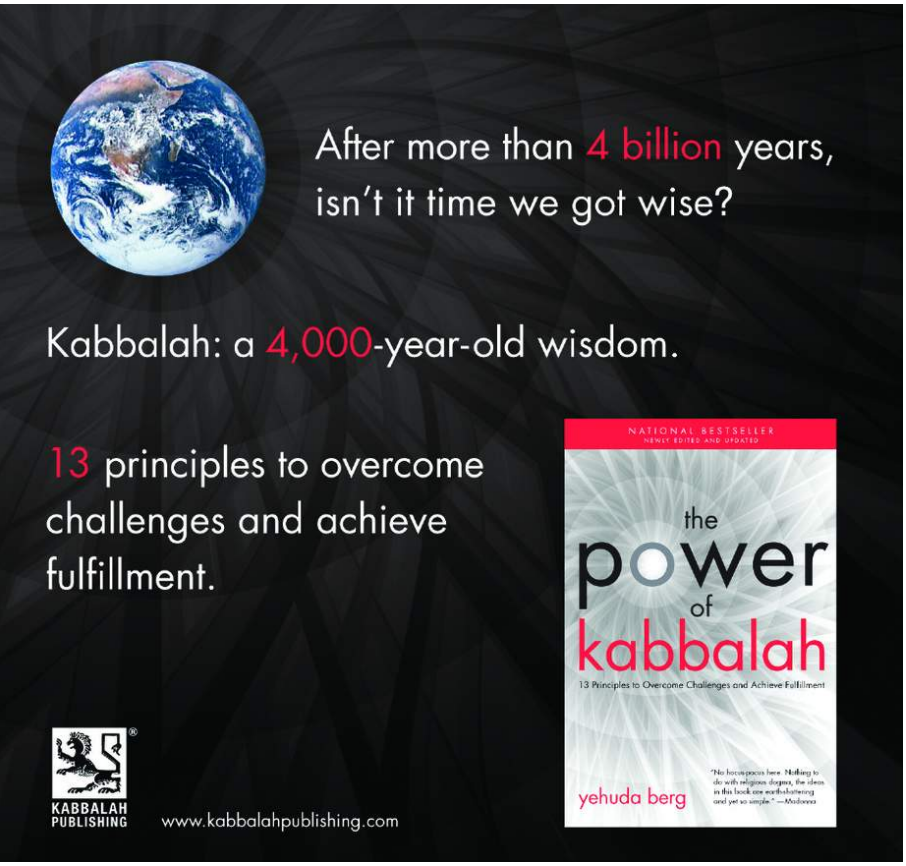
Money created out of nothing—unrelated to the creation of anything of corresponding value—is phantom wealth. Wall Street has built a whole industry devoted to its creation. It is a form of theft and should be treated as such.

Real wealth is anything that has real intrinsic value, for example land, labor, food, and knowledge. The most valuable of all forms of wealth, however, are those that are beyond price: love; a healthy, happy child; a job that provides a sense of self-worth and contribution; membership in a strong caring community; a healthy, vibrant natural environment; and peace. None of these most precious forms of real wealth find any place on corporate balance sheets or in our calculations of Gross Domestic Product.

We can create a real wealth economy in which life is valued more than money and in which power resides with ordinary people who care about one another, their community, and their natural environment. It is possible. Millions of people are engaged in living it into being. ■

David Korten is the author of Agenda for a New Economy, The Great Turning, *and* When Corporations Rule the World. *He is board chair of* YES! *Magazine. His new website is livingeconomiesforum.org.*

Visit www.tikkun.org for an expanded discussion of real wealth by David Korten.



The Decalogue as an ABC of Human Behavior

by Hans Küng

The twenty-fifth anniversary of Tikkun coincides with another anniversary, a very sad one: fifteen years ago Israeli Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin was murdered. I would therefore like to offer as my contribution to this twenty-fifth anniversary issue the text of a statement I made in Tel Aviv, right on the place where Rabin was murdered. My statement is part of a TV film on Judaism within my TV series on the World's Religions (1999).

How far modern Judaism still is from the middle way between a religionless secularism and a fanatical fundamentalism became evident in the middle of Tel Aviv, where the Israeli Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin was murdered. Here Judaism should have contributed its whole tremendous religious and ethical legacy to this new world era. For there is hardly any other people which has something as substantial and striking to offer as Judaism with its Ten Commandments. As the German writer Thomas Mann explained after the terrors of National Socialism, these are the "basic instruction and rock of respectable humanity," indeed the "ABC of human behavior."

And this "ABC of human behavior" must also be applied to global politics and global economics in a time of globalization.

Of course, global politics must recognize national interests—the real divisions of power. But that does not mean that the political end hallows all means, that the political end also hallows political murder, treachery, even war.

And of course the global economy, too, has to recognize particular economic laws and consider the practicability of implementing all that it has to offer. But again that does not mean that profit, however justified it may be, hallows all means, including breaches of trust, including boundless avarice and social exploitation.

Without a global ethic, global politics and global economics threaten to end in global chaos. At all events, without a global ethic there can be no better world order, an order that brings more justice.

Thousands of Israelis arrive at Tel Aviv's Rabin Square on October 30, 2010, for the annual memorial service for slain prime minister Itzhak Rabin.

RONI SCHUTZER/FLASH90

What will the future be?

At present no one knows how the cultural battle between the secular and the religious will turn out. It is certain that the people in Israel also yearn for peace, for friendship, for love and for a successful life. Judaism, this religion of admirable continuity, vitality, and dynamics, will certainly find a way here and elsewhere to a future in which it becomes possible to experience what one of its primal words says every day: shalom, God's peace for the people and the peoples. ■

Hans Küng is president of the Global Ethic Foundation in Tübingen, Germany, and professor emeritus of ecumenical theology. Among his many books are Global Responsibility; A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*; and, with Rabbi Homolka,* How to Do Good & Avoid Evil.

Six Rabbis Pray in Jail

by Lawrence Kushner

I remember my arrest. It was May of 1972 and Nixon had just mined Haiphong Harbor. The year before, I had accepted a pulpit in Sudbury, Massachusetts, a bucolic, Yankee exurb west of Boston and had helped form a small, rabbinic study *hevra* (group). Each weekly session, however, it seemed, began with a new and more infuriating news item about the escalation of the war. The government claimed possession of secret information it could not reveal. We felt powerless, ineffectual. All our sermons were preaching to the choir.

My own moment of decision was hardly the result of some evolved moral calculus. Whenever I would meet a German, I found myself wanting to ask what he had done while the Nazis had murdered my people. It dawned on me that, if I could ask this of a German, then, I should be prepared to answer the same question from a Vietnamese person. What would I say?

My answer came at a Massachusetts Board of Rabbis meeting. A group of Jewish student activists were going to stage an anti-war protest in front of the JFK Federal Building in Boston and wanted rabbis to join them for protection. In 1972 even nonviolent demonstrations could turn ugly and dangerous, very fast. The Kent State massacre was two years before. About twenty rabbis decided to join the protest.

A week later, we found ourselves sitting on the plaza singing Hebrew peace songs. But nothing happened. After an hour or so, it dawned on us: the last thing the feds wanted was another group of religious crazies being led off to the slammer on the six o'clock news. Rabbi Dan Polish turned to me and said, "Kushner, if we want to get arrested, we're going to have to go inside the building." And so, a group of us stood up and walked through the revolving door. Suddenly the bright lights of TV cameras and police were everywhere. Behind us, we could hear screaming and saw some students being dragged along the pavement. Rabbi Herman Blumberg and I were the first to be arrested. (One policeman got both Herman and me with one hand!) "We'll go peacefully," we squeaked. The officer led us around the back of the lobby to a large freight elevator. In it was a short, muscular man with a badly pockmarked face and wearing a black leather jacket. It was just the three of us. He opened his coat and slowly moved his right hand around his belt, revealing a holster. He removed its gun, released the safety latch and pointed it at Herman and me: "You are under arrest," he said. "If you try to leave this elevator, I will shoot you." I can still hear his voice. Within minutes, policemen brought more students. As soon as the elevator was full, they took us all down the basement to a waiting line of police vans. We were driven to the federal lockup and put into the bull pen with other street criminals. The cell stank of urine.

There were six of us rabbonim: myself, Herman Blumberg, Dan Polish, Herman Pollack, z"l, Ben Rudavsky, and Cary Yales, z"l. I am told that we were the first organized (organized, ha!) group of rabbis to be arrested protesting the war. We did, at least, have the foresight to bring our prayerbooks. Soon it was time to *daven mincha* (recite afternoon prayers). Dan Levinson, z"l, from the ACLU, came running down the hall with good news. "I've got you an arraignment with Judge Willy Davis—c'mon," he called. We were then up to the *Aleinu*. Herman Blumberg turned to Dan and calmly said, "We're already seeing The Judge; tell Davis he can wait!"

I was quoted in the *Boston Globe* as saying, "We don't expect our action to bring the troops home but we want to remind people that there is still conscience in our land."

In retrospect, I learned that it usually comes down to someone else asking you a simple question. "Shall we do something to put ourselves against the war?" "Will you join our demonstration to protect us?" "Shall we go inside the building?" "Should we *daven* mincha?" Small decisions, all. Of themselves, of little consequence. But, taken together, they begin to describe a simple life path: one foot in front of the other. ■

Lawrence Kushner is the Emanu-El Scholar at Congregation Emanu-El of San Francisco. He is the author of several books including, I'm God; You're Not: Observations on Organized Religion and Other Disguises of the Ego *(Jewish Lights).*

25 YEARS OF TIKKUN

Prophets and Sages in *Tikkun*

by Tzvi Marx

Tikkun has in its twenty-five years availed itself of many different sorts of voices, some more prophetic and others more rabbinic (sage-like) in their tone. It is helpful to keep in mind the essential difference between these two modes of communication in our current discourse.

Since prophets and sages are the two sources of inspiration in the Jewish tradition, one might expect these two types of teachers of Torah to reinforce each other. In a sense they do, since the sages try to interpret the words of the prophets. Nevertheless in a very important way they are not compatible. The prophet is duly instructed to speak only and all of the words that God "puts into his mouth" (Deut. 18:18). Basing itself on the biblical teaching of Leviticus 27:34, the Talmud infers that "no prophet is at liberty to introduce anything new henceforward" (Megilla 2b). The prophet is the mouthpiece of God, expressing himself in divine absolutes such as can tolerate no opposition. A false prophet earns capital punishment.

By contrast see how the Mishna discloses the rabbinic mind of the *chachamim* (sages) when it asks, "Why do they record the opinion of a single person among the many, when the Halachah [law] must be according to the opinion of the many?"

According to R. Yannai, the prophets' utterances must be refined, just as silver from a mine needs to be refined: "The words of Torah were not given as clear cut decisions (*chatuchot*). For with every word which the Holy One, blessed be He, spoke to Moses, He offered him forty-nine [seven times seven] arguments by which a thing may be proved pure and forty nine-arguments by which a thing may be proved impure." The dilemma of course is then about what God or the prophet means. So "Moses asked: Master of the universe, in what way shall we know the true sense of a law?" To this reasonable question, "God replied: The majority is to be followed. When the majority says it is impure, it is impure; when a majority says it is pure, it is pure."

Comparing divine words to raw silver implies for R. Yannai that, like silver, these divine words are not fit for the "consumer" of prophetic words, i.e., the believer, until they undergo a process of purification, and a lengthy one at that, "seven times seven." What is most significant is that the end result of this process is not an absolute unambiguous prophetic instruction, but an interpretation (one of multiple plausible alternatives) of such an instruction. The choice of that interpretive option which is to be followed in practice is that of the majority. This is no guarantee, though, that the majority has a greater claim to the truth of the divine instruction than the minority.

Fifteenth-century Spanish theologian R. Joseph Albo, in his *Sefer Ha'Ikkarim* (Book of Principles, III:3) wrote, "Moses was given [Torah] only in general, as things only briefly sketched in the Torah, so that the Sages of every generation should *through their own efforts fill in the newly emerging details*" (italics mine).

Is this rabbinic mode not a far cry from prophetic consciousness? A rabbi with another opinion is not a "false" rabbi. Would it enter the biblical mind to record the opinions of the "false" prophets in order to provide a later basis for following their views? When false prophets are recalled in the Bible, it is only to denounce them.

It strikes me that the spirit of the sages' approach is more in keeping with the spirit of *Tikkun*, than the prophetic. While the mystical tradition succeeded in bringing back the prophetic modality to its teachings, the rabbinic style of discourse is, nevertheless, more suited to our critical way of thinking and that of *Tikkun*'s. Let's not forget that unlike the prophetic texts, *Tikkun* publishes even views that take issue with its editorial position. If its editorials sometimes, in their enthusiasm, take on a tone emanating something of prophetic certainty, in general, its varied menu of views reveals its true propensity for the rabbinic mode of respect. On the occasion of its silver jubilee, *Tikkun* and its staff should be complimented for advancing its agenda in the rabbinic spirit of "*Eilu va'eilu divrei Elohim chayim*—these and those are the words of the living God" (Talmud Eruvin 13a). ■

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Marx, author of Disability in Jewish Law *(Routledge, 2002), is a publicist on Judaism in Holland, participates in interreligious activities internationally, and recently founded the local branch of the Dutch-Israel Friendship League.*

25 YEARS OF TIKKUN

As the global climate changes, we will see many more unnatural disasters such as Russia's fires and drought, and Pakistan's floods of 2010. Here, flood survivors negotiate a road in central Pakistan on August 19. The floods affected twenty million people and about one-fifth of Pakistan's territory, straining its civilian government as it struggles against al-Qaida and Taliban violence.

AP PHOTO/KHALID TANVEER

Climate Stability First

by Bill McKibben

In a certain sense, my lifework is frustratingly abstract: trying to reach national and international accords that would slow the flow of carbon into the atmosphere. It's not nearly as satisfying, even for me, as building strong local economies and farming networks, or aiding real people in dire need of real and immediate help.

But it is, I fear, crucial work that undergirds those other efforts. What we're trying somehow to do is keep the basic operation of the planet on course *so that we actually have some hope of getting around to those other tasks*. That background stability has marked the 10,000 years of human civilization, the period that scientists call the Holocene. But we've emerged from the Holocene now—our great fossil fuel binge of the last two centuries has added enough carbon dioxide to the air that temperatures have begun an abrupt and rapid rise. And we can feel the consequences already: the summer of 2010, for instance, was the most brutal in history across the northern hemisphere, with nineteen nations setting new temperature records. (It got hotter in Asia than it had ever

Bill McKibben is a scholar in residence at Middlebury College and founder of 350.org.

been before—129 degrees in Pakistan in early June.) The results weren't pretty: fires and drought spread across Russia, and immense floods wracked Pakistan.

But the consequences of those events are what I want to focus on. In Russia, the Kremlin announced that it would not export any grain this year and perhaps next—this from the world's third largest grain exporter. The price of corn jumped 70 percent in less than two months, and around the world people were unable to afford dinner; food riots began to break out, as they had two years earlier. Meanwhile, in Pakistan, by early October the *New York Times* was reporting that the number of homeless from the floods may have topped 7 million. What I'm trying to say is that these kinds of events—precisely the kind climatologists warn about and that every model says will become more prevalent in the years ahead—make development impossible. Nothing that anyone has done this summer to aid the poor can compensate for the damage we've done simply by raising the temperature.

There is no way to repair and heal while we're still inflicting damage. And we will inflict damage as long as we burn fossil fuel, and we will burn fossil fuel as long as we keep allowing the oil and coal companies to pour their waste into the atmosphere for free. And we'll keep doing that as long as we don't stand up politically to the power of that industry. Therefore, my conclusion: whatever else you're doing, you need to save a little bit of energy for joining the fight for climatic stability. At 350.org we work with folks in the hunger movement, in the justice movement, people enmeshed in the fight for women's rights, and the struggle for peace—people who understand that every other cause on the planet ultimately rests on the background staying in the background, instead of overwhelming every other concern. ■

A Memo on the Arc of the Universe

by Brian McLaren

To: The next generation of tikkunistas
From: A middle-aged fellow tikkunista
Subject: Unsolicited advice
Date: January 2011

If we're committed to tikkun olam—the healing and greening of God's beautiful world—we must think short-term and long-term. And we must engage in short-term activity with the long-range mission in mind. Long-range, our work will never end (this side of whatever eschaton there may be), because when we solve one problem today, new ones will arise tomorrow, sometimes involving the unintended consequences of our best solutions to yesterday's problems!

That means that long-range, we need to do three things. First, we have to have the big story in mind—the big "arc of the universe" as Dr. King called it: not a harsh and dominating metanarrative, but a liberating story of God's Spirit active in our world. That big story constitutes a sense of calling; we know what we're called to do because we have a sense of the big story. For Abraham, that meant being called out of the comfort of empire into a journey of faith, and it meant being blessed so as to become a blessing to everyone else.

Second, we need to see how means can't be separated from ends. We can't use violent means to achieve peaceful ends; we can't use discordant means to achieve harmonious ends; we can't use dishonest means to achieve honest ends. As Father Richard Rohr says, "How we go determines where we arrive." In our haste to achieve short-term gains, we can pump toxins into the social system that will poison our successes so they aren't successes at all.

Third, we need to take care of our own souls—individually and communally. In the push and rush of opportunities and crises, we can work too hard and overcommit. If we're not careful, we'll damage ourselves, thus limiting our long-term impact. I'm struggling with this right now, and I've struggled with it for thirty years ... self-care and soul care and close-circle-of-friends care are not distractions from our work for tikkun olam or the kingdom of God, but rather are integral to it. It's the people who are most committed to the big calling who are most in danger of burning out in its pursuit, which is why sabbath and recreation and feasts and fun are so important. If we have faith that everything doesn't in the end depend on us alone, we'll be around longer—with a better spirit—so as to do more good in the long run. ■

Brian McLaren (brianmclaren.net) is one of America's most significant progressive Evangelical voices. His many books include Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crises, and a Revolution of Hope*;* A New Kind of Christianity*; and* Naked Spirituality *(March 2011).*

Apologies and Advice: A Letter to Younger Activists

by Michael N. Nagler

Let's get the apology over with first. Like everyone in my generation (those who lived through the upheavals of the sixties), I feel dreadful about the world we're leaving you. I myself don't plan on leaving it soon, but we had the chance to leave you a much better springboard, and we failed.

In July, 2005 Michael Lerner and I (with the help of many others) mounted the first Spiritual Activism Conference on the Berkeley campus. I went up on the roof of the Student Union Building to hang out with the lively youth contingent. As I watched and listened, I was able to identify six things that my peers and I had gotten wrong when, forty-one years earlier, we had agitated for free speech on the plaza below:

- We felt alienated, if not betrayed by the older generation. Our defiant motto was "Don't trust anyone over thirty," which was fine with me until January 20, 1967, when I crossed into exile. This motto deprived us of much wisdom.

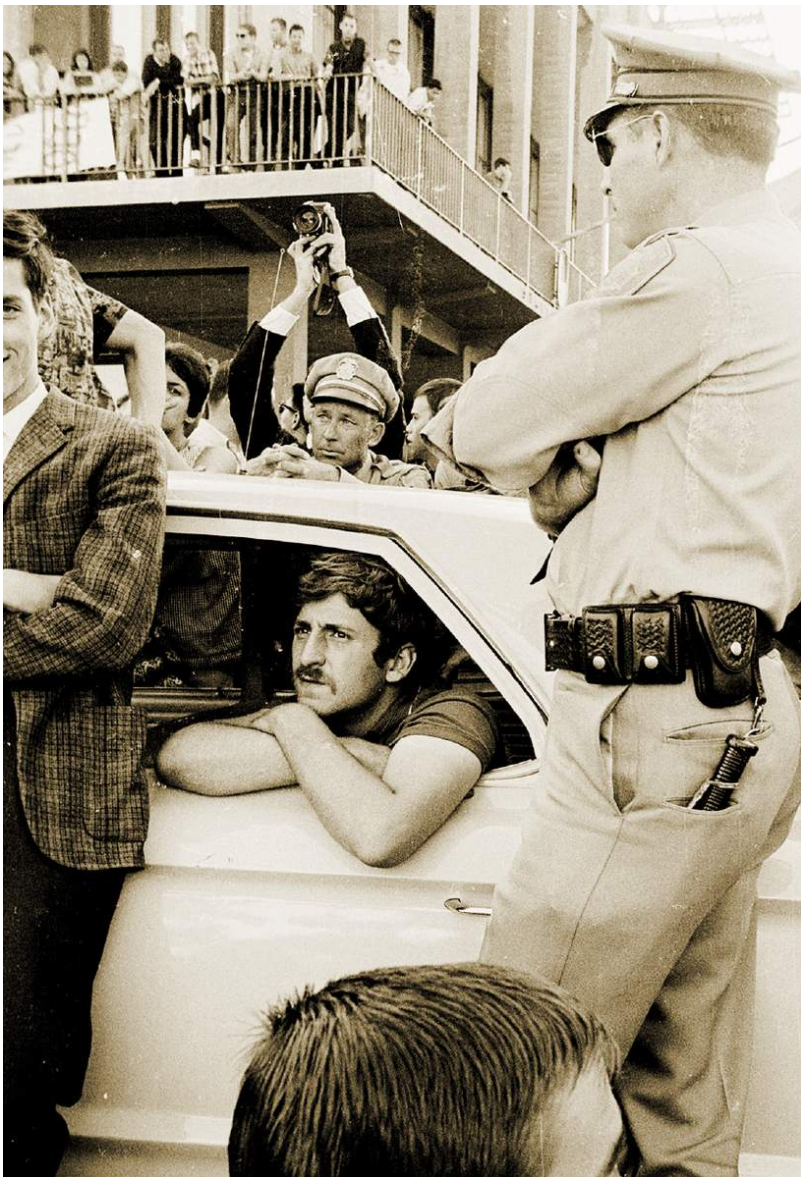
- We had no relationship with the earth and, in some cases, with anything material.

- We saw life and our situation as a simple political struggle, quoting Marx, though few ever read him. People with a spiritual view (like myself) were severely mistrusted. Somewhere in the mid-seventies this changed, though tensions remain.

- We thought things had to be big and hierarchical to have influence. Though numbers still seduce us, we now recognize that hierarchy itself is part of the problem.

- We knew next to nothing about nonviolence. There is still far to go here, but nonviolent groups are starting to pass their best practices on to other revolutionaries—a qualitative and welcome change.

- We thought (conveniently enough) that having sex was a revolutionary act. I think we still have a good bit to learn about the uses of sexual energy, but at least young people no longer confuse the act itself with political change.



Jack Weinberg, a UC Berkeley student leader of the Free Speech Movement in 1964, sits in a police car after having been arrested for recruiting students to participate in civil rights demonstrations. "Never trust anyone over thirty" is said to have been coined by him after university officials promised to compromise, but instead called the police.

COURTESY OF UC BERKELEY BANCROFT LIBRARY (2000.002—NEG STRIP 2:10)

Michael Nagler is professor emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley, founder and president of the Metta Center for Nonviolence Education (www.mettacenter.org), and author of The Search for a Nonviolent Future.

Building on these observations, I would urge today's activists to make global warming the number one priority for the entire movement. Resolve to rebalance the planet in the next few years. But resolve to do so with nonviolence and in a way that permanently gets to the problem's root.

Concentrating on global warming does not mean dropping everything else, but it means only doing things that have at least an indirect tie-in to climate disruption, and *understanding the connection* so that we can make strategic decisions about when to do what. Going to the root means building on the discovery of spirituality, for as Vandana Shiva said, "If you get rid of the pollution in the human mind they will get rid of the pollution in the environment." If enough people come to suspect that happiness is not something outside us, something to buy, but something lurking in our own consciousness, we will have made a profound change that can be built on to develop into our desired world.

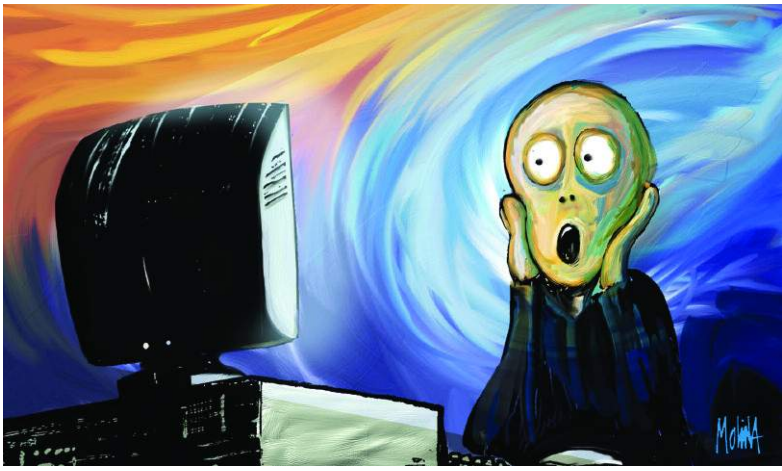
G_d bless all of you. ■

Today's student protestors at Berkeley have impressed Michael Nagler with their cross-generational solidarity: here students protest cutbacks on pensions for nonacademic university staff, as well as student fee increases, at a UC Regents meeting on November 17, 2010.

Getting with the Program

by Elliot Neaman

Social activism is alive and well in the age of Twitter and Facebook. The ability to communicate on a global scale means that social movements can arise quickly and gain legions of followers. Authoritarian regimes can no longer control the commanding heights by turning out the lights. But as Malcolm Gladwell, Douglas Rushkoff, and others have observed, social activism on the Web is also based on weak connections. It takes a minute to sign a petition against genocide in Darfur, and then one moves on to the next website. The old social movements were based on deep connections between activists who knew each other for a long time and thought long and hard about the issues before jumping into the fray. It took guts to confront authority and one's opponents. We need to recapture some element of that discipline. Just as we have a slow food movement, how about slow thought? It may sound paradoxical, but in order to change and heal the world, I'd like to make a plea for the old-fashioned art of reading—in particular reading difficult books that cannot be reduced to blog length. The ancient Greeks understood that philosophy was about the art of living, changing oneself before one changed the world. I love my computer as much as the next modern person, but if Socrates were here I think he would go out into the town square and have some hard questions for the "programmers," a term that would surely make him shudder. ■



Elliot Neaman is professor of European history at the University of San Francisco. He is not on Facebook, and does not tweet, but you will sometimes catch him reading the Pre-Socratics on his iPad.

TOP: LABOR VIDEO PROJECT, BOTTOM: PEDRO MOLINA

Hard-Won Tips for Twenty-First Century Activists

by Letty Cottin Pogrebin

In more than forty years of writing, activism, and fundraising for the issues I care about, I've learned a thing or two—or five—about what works and what doesn't:

1. "There is no end to how much you can accomplish if you don't care who gets the credit." I don't know who coined that maxim, but I've quoted it for decades because it's true. Many people have a dual motivation for their activism—the upfront goal of advancing a cause and making the world a better place, and the hidden goal of aggrandizing or promoting themselves. Maimonides said the highest form of *tzedakah* (charity) is anonymous giving. I think the best test of a pure commitment to social justice is one's willingness to do the work with zero expectation of honor or recognition. Sign your writing, by all means. Own your ideas (and failures). Accept kudos and plaques when earned. But don't slap your brand on everything. When there's a photo op, don't stick yourself in front. Let your colleagues push you forward. Let your works sing your praise.

2. It's important to sign online petitions and lend your name to ads sponsored by progressive groups. But those are *acts*, not *activism*. How do you tell the difference? Acts are easy. (You can't just click "send" and imagine you've changed the world.) Activism is hard. Activism takes hours, days, nights of dogged effort. Activists don't just sign a petition; they organize hundreds of thousands of other people to sign it. Better yet, they organize dozens of folks to show up, sheaves of signatures in hand, at the office of the person with the power to effect change. And if that person doesn't respond appropriately, they make his or her life uncomfortable until the desired result is achieved.

3. Maybe I'm too cynical (or tired or old), but I no longer believe in the efficacy of street demonstrations. I say this as someone who marched against the Vietnam War, for civil rights, women's rights, and reproductive freedom. In 2003, my husband and I traipsed down Broadway with two grandchildren and about a million other people to protest the invasion of Iraq. In 2004, another million of us congregated on the mall in Washington, D.C., to protest the curtailment of abortion rights. Neither effort had the slightest effect on Bush administration policy or the Supreme Court. And neither event registered on the public consciousness beyond one news cycle. Yes, street demos bring us together and make us feel good. And yes, the Tea Party started with disruptive loudmouths and staged media events. But if the debacle of November 2 taught us anything, it's that systemic change ultimately happens through electoral politics. To pile up votes for our side, you have to craft a clear message, recruit winnable candidates (or run yourself), and get down in the trenches to influence local and national campaigns.

4. The political is personal. To change minds, raise money, or goad someone into action—whether your issue is racial or ethnic harmony, Israeli-Palestinian peace, immigration, or tax policy—it's not enough to send out a group email. You need to individualize the message, get on the phone, host a parlor

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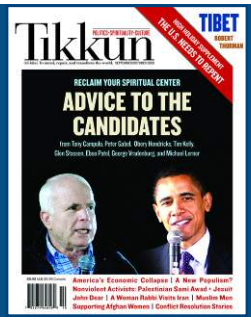
Letty Cottin Pogrebin is a founding editor of Ms. *magazine and author of nine books, including the novel* Three Daughters. *She's also a founder of the National Women's Political Caucus, former chair of Americans for Peace Now, and a past president of the Authors Guild.*

25 YEARS OF TIKKUN



party, send authoritative information to buttress your position, link interested people to relevant resources. The first rule of organizing is "out of sight, out of mind," so whatever you do, remember to follow up. And don't assume someone's a lost cause until they say the word "no."

5. Fundraising basics: Focus on an aspect of your issue that directly connects with someone's passions. Ask for a slightly larger donation than you think the person is capable of giving. (They can always say no, but they may be flattered that you think they're successful enough to afford that amount.) Don't do the "pitch" until after the main event (luncheon speaker, film screening, or plenary session). People need to feel spiritually invested in your issue or group before they'll invest financially. Don't oversell. Be concise. If possible, be funny. Humor softens the transaction. Don't disappear after you've got the money. Stay in touch. ■

Fighting to Prevent Global Hunger

by Robert Pollin

The Tikkun Community should take justified pride in twenty-five years of fighting effectively for social justice and building from Jewish traditions and teachings in waging these fights. In that spirit I wish to pose what may seem like an out-of-nowhere question: are you following the current activities of the Commodities Futures Trading Commission?

My guess is that almost everyone is answering "no." This is a serious problem. Despite its obscurity as a federal government regulatory body, the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) is making decisions now that could determine whether hundreds of millions of people experience malnutrition, hunger, and perhaps even starvation in the coming years.

Futures markets for food, oil and other commodities have long been used by farmers and others to maintain stability in their business operations and plan for the future. For example, under a "plain vanilla" wheat futures contract, a farmer could spend $50,000 planting her crop now, and agree now with a commodities futures trader to sell the crop at a fixed price when the crop is harvested.

But such simple agreements became increasingly overwhelmed by big-time market speculators in 2000 when the markets were deregulated, along with the rest of the U.S. financial system. Deregulation produced severe swings in the global prices of food and oil.

The most severely impacted victims of commodity price volatility are people in developing countries, where it is common for families to spend 50 percent or more of their total income on food. The United Nations found that sharp price increases in 2008—a 40 percent average increase across a range of different food items—led to malnourishment for 130 million additional people. Low-income people in developing countries have been further hammered because, even though global food prices did fall sharply from their mid-2008 peak, they are still today, on average, about 20 percent higher than they were in 2006. Moreover, just between June and September of this year, the price of wheat rose

Robert Pollin is a professor of economics and codirector of the Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

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by 72 percent, demonstrating that the extreme food price spike in 2008 was not a one-time aberration.

The Dodd-Frank financial reform bill that passed Congress in July does create a framework for effectively regulating commodities futures markets. However this new law is weak on details, leaving these decisions to the day-to-day regulators at the CFTC.

The Dodd-Frank law includes a prohibition on any sort of agricultural swap trading—the single most active area for speculative gambling on food products. But Dodd-Frank also allows the CFTC to consider exemptions from this prohibition. Not surprisingly, large numbers of Wall Street lawyers have drafted letters explaining why these exemptions should be granted generously. Dodd-Frank will be rendered toothless if Wall Street prevails on this and related issues. Speculators will again be permitted to gamble on hunger.

So let's keep up the fight for social justice on all terrains, including the Commodities Futures Trading Commission. ■

On Narratives, Power, and Peace

A Note from a Palestinian Activist

by Mazin Qumsiyeh

As a social species, humans build narratives to sustain and strengthen group bondage and identity. Like all human constructs, narratives can bring positive or negative results. We should generally respect different philosophies and narratives, but there are some narratives we simply cannot accept—for example, a narrative like that of a white European who believes Aryan white culture is superior to others and acts on this idea like fascists and Nazis did in the twentieth century.

Why should we accept notions of Christian superiority held by some Catholics who supported massacres committed during the crusades, or similar notions among some Orthodox Christians who supported massacres committed during the crusades and during the civil war in Lebanon? Why should we accept the notions of an Islamic "Umma" as articulated by Osama Bin Laden that all Muslims should stand as one and justify mass killing of "the others"? And why should we accept the political Zionist narrative of "the Jewish nation" that results in displacement of native people who happen to be Christians and Muslims?

Narratives based on mythologies can of course be harmless when believed by people living their ordinary lives in a multicultural and multireligious society. But they can be highly destructive when practiced via state power. That is why the founding fathers of the United States were adamant about the separation of religion from state power. Thomas Jefferson wrote to Rabbi Mordecai Noah on May 28, 1818:

> I thank you for the Discourse on the consecration of the Synagogue in your city, with which you have been pleased to favor me. I have read it with pleasure and instruction, having learnt from it some valuable facts in Jewish history which I did not know before. Your sect by its sufferings has furnished a remarkable proof of the universal spirit of religious intolerance inherent in every sect, disclaimed by all while feeble, and practiced by all when in power. Our laws have applied the only antidote to this vice, protecting

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Professor Mazin Qumsiyeh, Ph.D., teaches and does research at Bethlehem and Birzeit Universities in occupied Palestine. His latest book is Popular Resistance in Palestine: A History of Hope and Empowerment *(Pluto Press, 2010).*

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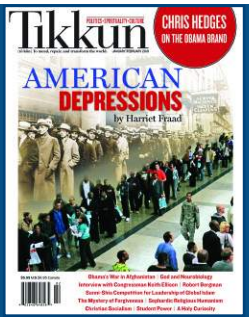

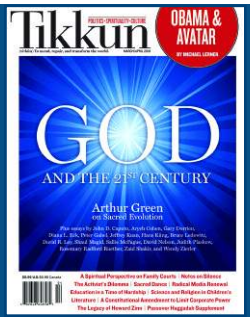

our religious, as they do our civil rights, by putting all on an equal footing. But more remains to be done, for although we are free by the law, we are not so in practice.

Here in Palestine, we unfortunately face a unique narrative that acquired tremendous power and resulted in a large population of refugees after World War II. The question many Jews are struggling with is how to separate this Zionist narrative from the rich and wonderful history of Jewish contributions to humanity. The way forward is certainly not to replace the Zionist narrative with another theocratic narrative (based instead on misrepresentation of another great religion) but to apply the remedy that Jefferson spoke of to Noah. Transforming Palestine/Israel into a state for all its people with a constitution that separates religion from state power is described in detail in my book *Sharing the Land of Canaan*. This is the path that will ensure survival and prosperity to all people regardless of their particular narrative. That is the real road to peace and the path that will make us a "light unto the nations." ■

The 9 million olive trees in the West Bank are a mainstay of the Palestinian economy, though subject to theft, destruction, and violence against harvesters by Israeli settlers. The author writes of the narratives that are making it impossible to share the land of Canaan.

CREATIVE COMMONS/MICHAELRAMALLAH

Making Polarization a Last Resort

by Lauren Reichelt

True healing rarely conforms to ideological preconceptions.

It is important to listen. My most frequent mistake is trying to impose my point of view or other personal expectation on a multifaceted world. When we set out to improve life for others without a fundamental understanding of their point of view and quality of experience, we do more harm than good. Often, little more is required than to listen.

The best change is one that enables those with plugged ears to hear what the so-called "voiceless" have been voicing all along.

When we do set out to actively change systems, it is important that we implement the changes people request of us, or that we at least try to approximate those changes. Sometimes our efforts are imperfect. It is better to implement an imperfect change that

Lauren Reichelt is the Director of Health and Human Services for Rio Arriba County in Northern New Mexico. She strives to improve quality and access to health care for minorities by improving and implementing sound public health policy.

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improves lives than to insist on an ideologically perfect change that never gets off the ground. We never want to hold others hostage for our own purposes. Negotiation is better than war. Dialogue is better than noise.

Sometimes we are faced with implacable opposition to all change. In those circumstances we are forced to abandon negotiation and to fight for justice. Polarization should always be a last resort. ■

Descending from Mount Moriah: A Reflection on Interfaith Study

by Or N. Rose

It was the final meeting of our course on "The Binding of Isaac in Jewish and Christian Traditions." It was time to descend from the mountaintop after an intensive exploration of this dramatic biblical text and a variety of post-biblical commentaries on it. Class by class we moved from Genesis 22 to the works of the early rabbis and Church Fathers, to medieval philosophical and mystical interpretations, to modern literary adaptations of this ancient and timeless narrative.

On this last day of discussion, something special happened as the level of trust in the room peaked. After nine weeks of studying together, the twenty or so rabbinical and ministerial students from Hebrew College and Andover Newton Theological School shared of themselves with unprecedented honesty and vulnerability. The catalyst for the conversation was a poem entitled "Heritage" (and especially its final lines) by the modern Israeli poet, Hayim Gouri:

> ... Isaac, as the story goes, was not
> sacrificed. He lived for many years, saw
> what pleasure had to offer, until his
> eyesight dimmed.
>
> But he bequeathed that hour to his
> offspring. They are born with a knife in
> their hearts.

After discussing at length various literary and historical dimensions of this heartrending poem—including the place of the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel in Gouri's work—my co-teacher from Andover Newton, Dr. Gregory Mobley, and I invited the students to reflect on the poem personally.

Within a few moments several hands went up throughout the room. A rabbinical student who had just become a father spoke of the great sense of trepidation he felt when thinking about the pain he might cause his son in the name of God and other lofty ideals. An African American student from Andover Newton spoke of the difficulty of carrying the sacrificial theodicy she had learned in her childhood congregation: that her ancestors bore the burdens of discrimination and oppression so that she and her classmates could live better lives. Students from both schools shared their sense of gratitude for the opportunity to explore together this rich and challenging material, including those sources that initially made them feel uncomfortable in the presence of the religious "other."

We offer interfaith courses to our rabbinical and ministerial students because we believe that contemporary clergy working in an increasingly interconnected world should possess knowledge of other religious traditions and the skills to interact constructively across religious lines. It has been our experience that these courses have helped many students clarify their values and beliefs, address their fears and prejudices, and learn to work together on issues of common concern. We strive in these classes to create a safe space in which our students can engage in a multidimensional educational experience that includes both rigorous historical and textual study and meaningful personal and interpersonal exploration. Of course, we do not always succeed in reaching all of these goals. But we have been blessed to witness moments of deep encounter—moments in which our students honestly and thoughtfully share with one another their religious commitments and questions, their similarities and differences, and the pain and joy they carry in their hearts. ■

Rabbi Or N. Rose, a contributing editor to Tikkun, *is an associate dean at the Rabbinical School of Hebrew College. He is the coeditor of* Jewish Mysticism and the Spiritual Life: Classical Texts, Contemporary Reflections *(Jewish Lights).*

An Age In Need of Prophets

by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

There was a time when prophets circulated among the population. They served as a social rebalancing force, and the people who had an open heart would begin to recalibrate their way of being in the world. More than ever do we need prophetic voices in our midst. *Tikkun* magazine is such a voice.

I still remember the time when *Commentary* magazine served the purpose of bringing together the voices of global concern, clarifying Jewish values, and being open to some gems from the tradition. When its orientation shifted and it became a cheerleader for neocon politics, it really became necessary for a prophetic organ to be created in the Jewish world.

When *Tikkun* was founded, its name made clear its intent to repair and establish a means by which the values of tikkun olam would have their moral and ethical effect on not only the Jewish community but also the larger American and global ones. Even choosing a Hebrew name for a mass circulation magazine was an attempt to say clearly: we are no longer the generation of Jews that is willing to hide our deep commitment to Judaism in order to gain intellectual or political respectability in America. During these twenty-five years, *Tikkun* magazine and the social/political organism it created under the devoted and persistent leadership of Rabbi Michael Lerner have become a voice that is taken seriously in American public discourse, as well as by those in the Jewish community who are not too terrified to listen to the prophetic voices that Rabbi Lerner assembles in the magazine and in his public conferences.

I wish Rabbi Lerner many more years of health and spiritual feistiness, and at the same time I pray that others in the Jewish world and in the larger spiritual world (including many gifted non-Jewish spiritual thinkers) will respond to Rabbi Lerner's appeal to join him in shaping the future directions of the magazine so that he can reduce his role in *Tikkun* (which may in a few years be primarily an online magazine for environmental, generational, and financial reasons) and dedicate more of his time to producing the spiritual Torah commentary to which he is committed and to writing more of the inspiring and significant books of his that have already played a major role in American public discourse.

Whatever those new directions, I hope that *Tikkun* in the next quarter-century will continue to do some of what I find most exciting in the past twenty-five years of the magazine:

- To make people aware of the value and impact of tradition and spirituality in the service of healing the planet.
- To propose visions that lead to more peace and global cooperation between individuals and governments.
- To be a strong voice challenging all traditions, and to take their valuable and precious magisterium and bring it up to date in an ecumenically friendly way.
- To promote the ways in which shared worship will be able to inspire and motivate people to take what was experienced in the synagogue, temple, church, or mosque and the world as a witness of God's presence in the lives of people.
- To give a forum to the next generation of emerging teachers and critics of society.
- To support women's intervention in male-dominated spaces so that they may share from their naturally nurturing perspective and counter the raucous clamor of conflicting masculine ideologies.
- To use the linear means of word and print in the service of enchantment for souls, aesthetics for hearts, and enlightenment for spirit.
- To mine the Jewish tradition and others for gems of inspiration and to show current applications of what used to be normative values and treat them as illustrative, exploring how they could be used today.
- To promote forms of enterprise for transnational and national corporations based on sharing and cooperation in which management, shareholders, and workers—as well as the end-users—will receive equitable value.
- And lastly, to encourage people to become aware of how fortunate we after all are to live on this amazing planet, in this important historical moment, and to share blessing with one another.

Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi is the Zeyde of Aleph Alliance for Jewish Renewal, and coauthor of Jewish With Feeling.

That *Tikkun* has already paved this direction for the past twenty-five years is plenty of reason to celebrate it, and to seek the support of visionaries to help *Tikkun* both financially and creatively with prose writing, poetry, art, music, and dance. I urge everyone connected to Jewish Renewal or other forms of religious and spiritual renewal to both subscribe and read it carefully! ■

Kavanah

Intention is wispy, made of wind.
It's giving an I O U that you hope
will never come due. It's like saying
you're sorry when you don't mean
to change one iota of habit.

Intention is a Potemkin Village
never intended to house anyone
or solidify into real work behind
those jazzy facades. It masks
prettily what will never exist.

Action sweats and gets messy.
Doing can pull a muscle, can
knock you down into the dirt,
can force your days into new
shapes and bleed your nights dry.

Intention spoken, even promised
quiets and perfumes the air
ennobling the speaker with garlands.
It feels half done already. Praise
rains. Then it all dissipates.

We make resolutions we don't actually
mean to keep, like a garment
hanging in the back of the closet
that never will fit our hefty bodies—
oh, when I lose twenty pounds.

One spring we notice it's gone
quite out of style so with relief
we donate it to Good Will. So many
of our best intentions age, not like
wine or cheese but like sour milk.

— Marge Piercy

Neti Neti: A Manifesto to End Religious Violence

by Rami Shapiro

Humans are intrinsically religious. Religions are intrinsically human; we make them in our own image, after our own likeness, often to conjure divine sanction for what we know is evil. Religion isn't evil, but it is dangerous. When lived as *mythos* rather than *logos*, religion offers paths to self-transcendence rooted in compassion. When lived as logos rather than mythos, self-transcendence is blocked, and religion breeds fanaticism, self—obsession, xenophobia, arrogance, and violence. We live in an age of fanatics and fantasies where religions rooted in jealous gods are hijacked by even more jealous demagogues, and the pious are imprisoned in a fog of self-serving lies. My passion is to lift the fog and free others and myself for self-transcendence. My method involves the *Neti Neti* (Sanskrit for "Not this, Not that") Manifesto.

For the past few years I have used the Neti Neti Manifesto to foster conversations across the United States about the nature of religious violence. I invite you to do the same. Share the following manifesto and ask people if they are among the "we" for whom it speaks. If the answer is yes, ask them to explore the implications of their affirmation. If no, ask them to explore the implications of their rejection.

Neti Neti Manifesto

We believe God transcends theology; that no idea about God can adequately encompass the reality *of* God. We believe that revelation is not given *to* people, but *through* people to the

Rabbi Rami Shapiro directs Wisdom House, an interfaith center in Nashville, Tenn., and writes a regular column for Spirituality and Health *magazine. His most recent book is* Ecclesiastes Annotated and Explained.

world. We believe that the truth in each scripture is common to all scriptures, calling humanity toward justice, compassion, humility, dignity, respect, love for both person and planet, and the transcending of self through service to others.

We recognize that filtering divine revelation through human hands allows fear, greed, anger, ignorance, and violence to masquerade as truth. We recognize that much if not most of the evil plaguing our world is rooted in this masquerade, and the violent image of God that comes from it.

We commit ourselves to ending this evil by rejecting religious violence and the false god who sanctions it. We commit ourselves to separating timeless truth from time-bound bias in our respective scriptures: affirming the former and moving beyond the latter. We commit ourselves to teaching the God of justice, compassion, love, and respect Who speaks to us through all scriptures, and Who calls us to free ourselves from fear, greed, anger, ignorance, and violence.

We call upon peoples of every faith to liberate the wisdom of God from the xenophobia of tribe and ego, and to free religion from fear and violence by distinguishing the holy from the merely sacred. We call upon peoples of every faith to share their wisdom with the world, to fearlessly speak out when their faith is kidnapped by evil, and to remind us all that there is no god but God, and that justice and compassion are the way of God for all time and for all people. ■

How We Treat Each Other Makes a Difference

by Barbara Smith

What I would most like to share with future generations of people committed to working for justice is that how you treat people in the course of doing your work makes a difference. It is true that movement organizers often work under very challenging conditions, and we sometimes lay our anger and frustration at the feet of friends and allies who are much more accessible than the powerful who perpetuate the cruel systems of oppression we oppose. Conflicts and failed communications are to be expected and can usually be resolved with honest dialogue and by sincerely owning one's mistakes.

What concerns me is the type of oblivious and self-involved behavior that becomes so pervasive that it saps energy and even breaks the spirits of those who encounter it. I think that there is a contradiction in claiming to work for a better world in the future while at the very same time causing people a lot of pain because of how one acts in the here and now.

Although I have always believed that how we relate to others is important, my awareness of this has been heightened by the arena in which I am currently engaged. In 2005 I ran for Common Council in the city of Albany, New York, and I am now serving my second term. After decades of working in movements

It was civil rights organizer Ella Baker's depth of caring, as well as her political brilliance, that most struck the author. Above, Baker speaks to the press on January 3, 1968.

AP PHOTO/JACK HARRIS

Barbara Smith has worked for justice since the 1960s. In 2005 she was one of 1,000 women around the world nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. She is serving her second term on the Albany, New York Common Council.

where people shared certain basic values and operating principles, I now work in a political context that is much more diverse and where the emphasis is usually on getting the job done, no matter the personal damage along the way.

My Black feminist principles have been sorely tested, but I also find that these movement values are extremely useful in the very different world of electoral politics and government bureaucracy. Something as simple as making sure that everyone at a community meeting gets a chance to speak once, before an individual speaks repeatedly and monopolizes the discussion, can change the dynamics and make people feel respected and heard.

The women in my family continue to be my role models for how to be in the world. Their kindness, diligence, and integrity gave me a foundation upon which to build. I have found these qualities in many other Black women, including those who have led the way. I never met Ella Baker, but when I saw the documentary film "Fundi," I was struck not only by her political brilliance but by the depth of caring that radiated from her. When I met Fannie Lou Hamer when I was still a teenager in Cleveland after a Civil Rights rally, I sensed the same thing.

Successful organizing depends a lot upon the quality of the relationships we build. We can show how much we value others' humanity by how we treat each other every day. ■

Fear and Consequences: Healing from Jewish Historical Trauma

by Wendy Elisheva Somerson

As a Jew, the most important healing work I can do for both myself and the world is to work with other Jews to move through our historical trauma, thus finding the strength to combat the Israeli occupation of Palestine. In doing this work, we are often literally creating a space to both love ourselves as Jews and protest what is being done in our names by the Israeli and U.S. governments. Centuries of persecution and genocide have left many Jews so fearful that we see ourselves always and forever as victims, which blinds us to our role in the current oppression of Palestinians. Our families have often passed on Jewish trauma to us through the notion that any criticism of the Israeli government is an attack that will lead to our imminent destruction and through the related feeling that we are always in danger.

Even as I overtly contest this thinking through my politics, the fearful feelings lie inside me, ready to seep out when I am least prepared to feel them. Trying to remain rooted in a positive Jewish identity while so many Jews are visibly supporting Israel's immoral actions sometimes awakens my fear and makes my head spin. I feel dizzy when I participate in a protest against the siege of Gaza and see a sign with a circle of swastikas and Jewish stars with recycling arrows going around and around. It both evokes and oversimplifies the cycle of trauma. Yes, the Nazis enacted violence

"Dressed in our kippot *and* tallitot, *we recited the Mourner's Kaddish for all the victims of the attacks on Gaza."*

against Jews, and Israel is now enacting violence against Palestinians. Yet not all Jews are Israeli; Israelis are not Nazis; and not all Israelis support their government. The sign catapults me into fearfulness about being visible as a Jew, shame about Israel, and even more shame that I am focused on my own historical trauma when I am there to speak out against Israel's current aggressions. A few days later, when we protest a

Wendy Elisheva Somerson helped found the Seattle chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace. In addition to writing, she makes art and trouble in the Pacific Northwest. Her work has appeared in Bitch *and other publications.*

HUZEFA MOGRI

pro-Occupation event at a local synagogue, my dizziness is reactivated when I see a Jewish person holding a sign that equates Palestinians with Nazis.

When the forces of politics, history, and identity pull me in so many directions that I fear losing my balance, I try to remember the handful of moments when living inside these contradictions has felt like home. Right after the horrific 2008-2009 Israeli attacks on Gaza, a group of anti-Occupation Jews joined in downtown Seattle to protest against the attacks. Dressed in our *kippot* and *tallitot*, we recited the Mourner's Kaddish for all the victims of the attacks on Gaza—the more than 1,400 Palestinians and eleven Israelis who died. Saying the Mourner's Kaddish in prayer shawls at a protest was powerful; our visibility as Jews undermined the notion that Jews mourn only for the loss of other Jewish lives. At a time when so many synagogues were lining up to support Israel, we reclaimed the power of our spiritual heritage by demonstrating how the Israeli government's actions distort our Jewish values. Standing on our makeshift *bimah* on that cold winter's day, I felt rooted in my community, grateful, and unafraid.

As anti-Occupation Jews, we honor the legacy of Jewish resistance when we consciously choose solidarity over fear. By focusing on a present that is informed but not dictated by the past, we are creating a Jewish culture that can help heal a small part of the world. I look forward to the day when Palestinians gain self-determination, Israel is forced to change its ways, and we are all released from the cycle of reenacting historical trauma. ■

The Relational Worldview

by Charlene Spretnak

A few years ago, I started noticing small articles in newspapers about surprising discoveries in physiology and health care, in education and child-rearing, in community design and architecture, and in various quarters of the economy. They were all examples of the relational nature of reality poking through the mechanistic assumptions that have caused so many of the crises we face. For instance, people working in "daylighted" buildings experience less illness and absenteeism than those working in artificial lighting (a body-sun relationship). People with many friends catch fewer colds; later on, elderly people with at least a few close relationships are less prone to develop dementia (our bodymind falters when deprived of social relationships). Towns with thriving community-based economics, including local food security, exhibit a more resilient social fabric and less depression (cultivating interconnections pays off in many ways). Granted, I've been tracking such developments for decades, but even I was astonished by many of the recent findings, especially in the fields of physiology and education. Apparently, the world is far more relational than even we relational thinkers supposed. I've gathered scores of such examples in a report titled *Relational Reality*, which will be posted on the website of Green Horizon magazine in mid-April (green-horizon.org). I hope that document will help to convince activists of the virtues of identifying and cultivating the interrelationships involved when they try to analyze ecosocial problems or to design solutions.

The difficulty is that our education and conditioning in modern societies work against our being able to grasp the profoundly relational nature of reality. We tend to perceive only aggregates of seemingly separate, discrete entities and to miss the inherent interrelatedness animating all living systems, both human and more-than-human, both social and individual. Consequently, most of our institutions, laws, public policy, and reform movements address problems through a mechanistic lens that makes analysts feel terribly rational but badly distorts their perception of what is actually going on. In fact, nothing exists apart from its internal and external relationships: the world, and every problem within it, is constituted entirely of relationships. How effective is activist work that misses, or ignores, that core truth?

As more and more discoveries are made about the relational nature of reality, young activists will find it easier to employ a relational analysis and vision. Our hypermodern selves are pretty much at a kindergarten level now regarding the understanding of how dynamically interrelated the world is (not to be confused with the sort of connectedness the Internet affords, useful though that may be). Humans will never nail down a complete grasp of the vast and miniscule complexity involved, yet young activists will be bringing society closer in sync with (relational) reality if they craft solutions to society's problems that include attention to the interconnections involved. Simple solutions to seemingly simple problems will fail, once again. Organic thinking that perceives, repairs, and creates interrelationships through new approaches, however, might just save the day. ■

Charlene Spretnak is a cofounder of the Green Party and the author of The Resurgence of the Real, States of Grace, The Spiritual Dimension of Green Politics, *and other books.*

In Celebration of the Mustard Seeds

by Glen Stassen

My one piece of wisdom that regularly lifts me out of depression is: "Thank God for the little breakthroughs."

I get in despair over the domination of huge and growing concentrations of money in the hands of a few, many of whom are using their economic power to squash the unions and dominate the media, the politicians, the trade policies, the military spending, the selection of Supreme Court nominees, and even the churches and synagogues. And I get depressed over how little I can produce that offers the right help.

Melanie Klein says the more resentment grows, the less room is left for gratitude, and the more gratitude grows, the less impetus toward resentment. I believe it. I believe it! I've experienced it.

One day at the summer conference of the Baptist Peace Fellowship, Joyce Hollyday's Bible study hit me in the heart—disclosing my wrongness. I spent the afternoon meditating, wrote down a change-decision, and prayed that my heart would be turned from resentment. That evening, during open mic time, my students gave me a crazy, bodacious, exaggerated, hilarious present. My heart turned from resentment to gratitude. And it has lasted.

Maybe this sounds schmaltzy. I engage in many struggles for peace, justice, and the preservation of creation. And now and then a gift, a small breakthrough, a bit of healing of the injustice, does happen. Life is thanking God for the little breakthroughs.

I say: "Maybe I don't bring a lot, but I'm doing the best I can with what I've got."

We don't have the reign of God in its glory, for sure. But I say with the realistic Jewish prophet, Jesus, "Thank God for the mustard seeds." ■

Glen Harold Stassen is the Lewis B. Smedes Professor of Christian Ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary, and author of Living the Sermon on the Mount: Practical Hope for Grace and Deliverance *(Jossey-Bass, 2006).*

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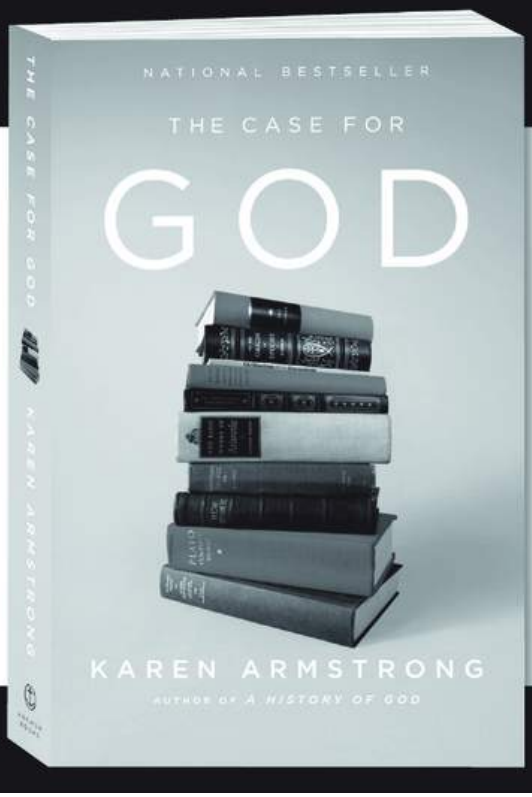

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Outrage at Suffering, Awe at the Universe

by Paul Wapner

The most important thing to know about social change work is that it changes. Not only do our advocacy strategies shift in the face of distinct circumstances, but our reasons for engaging in activism in the first place also evolve as we grow and understand ourselves in new ways. Acknowledging and celebrating this is essential for effective and meaningful activism.

Being open to internal and external change is more than a simple tactical choice—it's a sign of respect for the world. Life is ultimately mysterious and becomes more so the further we seek to understand ourselves and engage in tikkun olam. How our world came to be, where it is headed, what the ultimate good is, and how our acts of kindness fit into the cosmos are unanswerable questions with which we must constantly wrestle. Our responses to them will alter as we engage in increasingly deeper internal reflection and political work. Locking ourselves too tightly into a viewpoint may help us maintain a moral compass, but it can also blind us to life's mysteries. Indeed, riding out our lives under such ideological subscription closes us off to what Rabbi Abraham Heschel saw as a vital source of understanding and political inspiration: awe.

Awe awakens us to the world. It heightens our sensitivity to meanings greater than ourselves. It gracefully destabilizes us, healing us from what could be called "hardening of the categories." To stay alive as activists, we need to guard against constricting our lives in the face of immense political challenges and acting out of mere ideological habit. We must remain open to possibility.

Staying open doesn't mean being indecisive or subject to any changing wind. Rather, it is about remaining true to greater justice, peace, ecological sanity, and humane governance, but in a way that looks directly into the nature of things (including ourselves) and constantly adjusts our understandings and strategies to what is being called to surface within us. We listen carefully to our inner voice—however imperfect its song—and to the political demands of the moment, and try to make the world a better place as best we can. Our efforts often falter and the world frequently proves stubborn. But, bringing mindfulness to the interface between our personal and political lives enables us authentically to surf the edge of political engagement.

At the heart of this practice is being outraged at and working to alleviate avoidable worldly suffering, *and* being astonished at the sheer complexity and beauty of existence itself. In other words, we need to know what *is*, and what *should be*, and *love* both. We must enjoy and cherish our world while compassionately working for a better one. Such moral, political, and spiritual stretching is, in my view, the sustaining force of meaningful activism. ■

CREATIVE COMMONS/TAMARA MANNING

Paul Wapner is associate professor and director of the Global Environmental Politics program at American University. His most recent book is Living Through the End of Nature: The Future of American Environmentalism *(MIT Press 2010).*

Opening Our Inner Selves to Tikkun Olam

by Sheila Peltz Weinberg

There is a reciprocal relationship between remaking the world and remaking ourselves, between the courage to be with our own pain and the ability to open to the suffering of others. There is no real separation between our inner spiritual landscape and the systems of power and privilege that operate in the world. When we become more aware of the inner obstacles to freedom and peace, we are more able to work for our ideals without recreating the systems we are trying to change.

This is not new. What is potent for me is actually experiencing this in my own mind and body. When I sit in meditation, I experience the negativity of my own mind up close and personal. I see what my choices are. Just by sitting still or relaxing into a yoga pose. There is another possibility. That possibility is always the same. You can call it love, connection, intimacy. You can call it generosity, kindness, acceptance of this moment for what it is right now. When I know that this is what is happening right now and the next moment will be different, as long as I do not resist it, a space opens. This is the space of freedom which activates my intelligence, my free will. Neuroscientists explain the physiology of this process of liberation. We can change our brains through taking the time to pay attention to our minds under certain conditions. Amazing.

It is only within the last twenty years that my life has turned me toward these contemplative practices of mindfulness meditation and yoga. I have worked in the Jewish community my entire life—teaching Hebrew school and serving in community relations, Hillel, and the congregational rabbinate. I have always tried to reconcile work on my character and consciousness (the inside healing) with the pursuit of justice and peace (the outside healing). I did not learn contemplative meditation practices in the Jewish world, but I have been teaching them to Jews in a multitude of settings, primarily at the Institute for Jewish Spirituality (ijs-online.org). The institute creates intensive learning experiences for professionals and lay leaders who are committed to deepening their own Jewish spiritual lives and making the connection between the "inner" work of spiritual growth and the "outer" work of creating more justice and compassion in the world.

How does teaching meditation and yoga contribute to tikkun olam? Let's consider what occurs when one's activism is motivated by petty motives or unexamined wounds; or when our effort to make change is fueled with hostility and aggression toward those who disagree with us; or when we do not cultivate the qualities of patience, trust and generosity; or when we cannot tolerate things not going our way. We create environments that mirror our inner landscape. When we clench around the difficult and the painful, it becomes more difficult and more painful. When we act from a place of violence, violence is returned.

In contrast, when we cultivate contemplative tools through yoga and meditation, the boundaries of our selves become more porous. We start to suffer less as we become less self-centered. With clarity and calm we take the suffering of others into our awareness and care. This motivates us to work for justice, especially when we teach in the language and context of an ancient tradition that calls us to protect the widow and the orphan, the marginalized, and the forgotten. I believe that contemplative practices have the potential to help us actualize our deepest desire to be of service to each other. ■

"Fereshtini #8" *by Siona Benjamin.*

ARTSIONA.COM AND FLOMENHAFTGALLERY.COM

Sheila Weinberg is a senior teacher at the Institute for Jewish Spirituality and has been a Reconstructionist-trained rabbi for almost 25 years. She writes "I do believe I have been a Tikkun *subscriber since the beginning."*

Poem for Myself for My Birthday

It's coming at me again, damn, like that elephant with its schoonering ears charging in Uganda.
We were okay, we thought, in our Rover, so it was a nice mix of scary and thrilling, plus a story to tell—
that behemoth, *Wow!* snorting a few yards off in the bush, waving his huge crushing tusks.

Then rushing out at us. *At* us. Like my birthday. Like thinking of birthdays, this one, the next,
the next to last and—ouch—the last, all stampeding towards me like that most likely ill outlaw,
ponderous looking but so fast on his feet you can't even dream of dancing out of the way.

Out of the way! Step on the gas! Whew! Out of there! Safe!... Wait, though, I'm not safe—
this time my birthday's a tractor-trailer skidding sideways on ice and I'm noodling by on my bike,
my darling old Raleigh, and the whole frame's pretzled around me. Happy birthday? Oh, please.

My last *happy* was that first one with a party—gooey brown cake and four beautiful candles.
And they're singing to me! Even now it seems worth having lost one of my not enough years.
I love being sung to. And how not love that song? Especially "...to you!" To be "you" in a song!

Now I'm too often "you" to myself. *You selfish bastard, you indolent slug*. When did that happen?
I see the Dalai Lama's birthday's here, too. In his photo, he pumps a treadmill like a prayer-wheel,
and proclaims, (boasts? admits?) "I visualize my death every day." I wonder if he's ever "you" to himself?

Speaking of visualization: Jacob Glatshteyn has a poem, "For my Two Hundredth Birthday,"
where he sees himself "talking of words" with friends, then making love to his shining, soft maid.
Very sweet—nostalgia for the future—ingenious device when your present's all but used up.

But forget the meshugeneh future—I can't even get the past straight: everything keeps popping up changed.
It's like not being *in*, but *being*, one of those movies that starts with a flash-forward, then before you know it
the plot's moved ahead and you're both back where you began and way out here near the end.

Did Glatshteyn's wife ever forgive him that succulent poem-maid? Catherine would go crazy.
No problem for the Dalai Lama, celibate as he is, though I'd bet there've been enough "maids" he could have...
Well, slept with, the way Gandhi slept with young girls when he was old—to keep warm, he avowed.

As did King David. All those thank you notes to be written, those apology phone calls. *You liar. You cheat.*
Happy Birthday to me. The Dalai Lama and Me. By now that poor stricken elephant's probably dead.
To him, too, Happy Returns. And me, spinning by on my bike, singing, "To you; oh, to you."

— C.K. Williams

A European Revival of Liberation Theology

by Ulrich Duchrow

What should Christianity be saying about global capitalism? The World Council of Churches, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and the Lutheran World Federation have begun a significant exploration of that question.

It's a discussion I hope you will bring into the churches of North America. The conversation doesn't have to be limited to Christianity, either. What should Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism be saying about global capitalism? It's a debate to bring into your synagogues, mosques, ashrams, and schools of theology and divinity, and into local secular communities as well, since the issues bear on the entire human race and the survival of the planet. After you develop a perspective on capitalism within your own religious group, you can then—as a community—share your views in the international debate now taking place. The global religious community could play an important role in challenging the growing materialism and selfishness that have characterized the growth of a global capitalist worldview.

Not surprisingly, the process of creating a joint statement has sparked a rather striking debate among Christians about how explicitly we ought to challenge global capitalism. A group of us European theologians have put forward what we believe to be a rather strong statement of a Christian perspective—one that goes much further than many of our fellow Christians in the Northern hemisphere would choose. The perspective we articulate in "Life in Just Peace," the joint statement reprinted below, better reflects the views of many Christians in the Southern hemisphere. To speak to some of the concerns that our visionary statement commonly raises among skeptics from the global North, I have constructed a response to an imagined criticism from a North American pastor (see page 78) that channels the type of energy and analysis more common among Christians from the global South.

"Justice, peace, preservation of creation" reads the logo of the Ecumenical Network in Germany, top. Kairos Europa and Pax Christi Germany are among the twenty-five European groups to sign on to this radical liberation theology statement.

Life in Just Peace

A joint statement by a group of twenty-six European initiatives and networks, including Kairos Europe, Pax Christi (German section), INKOTA, Christians for a Just Economic System, Pleading for an Ecumenical Future, Winds from the South, and several regional ecumenical grassroots networks, working together in the "German Ecumenical Network" in preparation for the May 2011 International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in Kingston, Jamaica.

Humanity and the earth are undergoing a unique crisis. Above all, this is manifested in the form of the financial and economic crisis, the food crisis, the social crisis (the growing

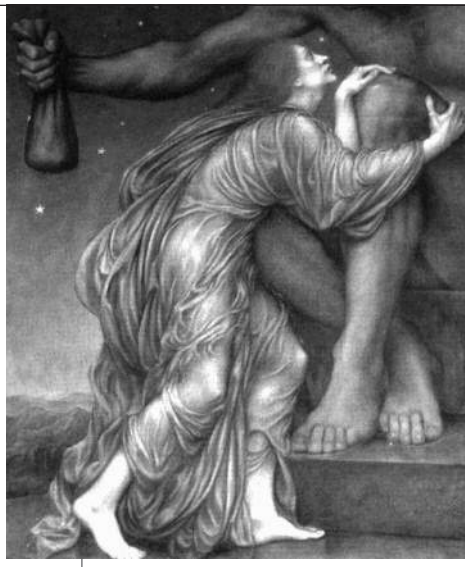
Ulrich Duchrow is a professor of systematic theology at the University of Heidelberg, Germany, specialized in ecumenical theology and theology-economy issues. He is also cofounder and moderator of Kairos Europa, an ecumenical network striving for economic justice.

gap between those who are becoming poorer and those becoming richer), the energy crisis, the climate crisis, the crisis of the extinction of species and the crisis of increasing violence at all levels—from the family and schools to imperialist wars. The causes of these crises are clearly related to the dominant civilization, which from the "West" has conquered the entire globe in the areas of economics, politics, ideology, and the understanding of what it means to be human. This crisis is threatening life itself. As we see it, just peace must therefore be understood as leading toward a new culture of life at all levels—from institutional to spiritual life.

The necessary turnaround toward a life in just peace includes at least three dimensions:

- A spiritual vision of a new, emerging culture of life based on faith or a humanist motivation.
- The fundamental rejection of the dominant economic, political, violence-producing culture and world order for the sake of the integrity of faith and the very being of the church.
- Short-, medium-, and long-term steps toward realizing this vision.

We therefore present the following declaration, which is based on the biblical message and affirms decisions by the assemblies of ecumenical organizations, inviting all churches, congregations, and Christians to embrace it and to publicly advocate for the implementation of its demands.



"Which God Shall Rule?" Mammon (top) or the God spoken of by Oscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador (below) when he said "placing ourselves on the side of the poor and attempting to give them life, we will know what the eternal truth of the Gospel consists of."

1. Which god shall rule?

We believe that God created the whole universe in love, inviting all people to cooperate with God's ongoing creative work in mutual solidarity and respect for God's gifts. "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it" (Ps. 24:1). With faith in God's Trinitarian dynamic we confess with all Christians the sociality of God as the source of the unity of all creatures.

Therefore, we reject the current world economic order imposed by global neoliberal capitalism—using both structural and direct violence. We reject every claim to an economic, political, and military empire that attempts to subvert God's order of life and whose actions stand in contrast to God's love and justice. We reject an economic system and way of life that exploits nature and propagates unlimited growth so that the conditions of life for future generations are forcibly destroyed and the survival chances of the entire earth are threatened.

The power of God's Spirit frees us as individuals and churches to resist the ruling political-economic-cultural system and to work for crucially necessary alternatives.

2. God's good gifts for all should not be privatized by force.

We believe that God is a God of life and desires the fullness of life for all creatures. "I came that they might have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

Therefore we reject a policy that through the privatization of collective and common goods produces wealth for the capital owners but scarcity and poverty for the vast majority of the world's population—the worst kind of violence (Gandhi)—and which exploits and even destroys nature. With particular emphasis we reject the patenting of seeds and of medicines that are necessary to meet people's basic needs. We say no to the privatization of genes as well as acts of biopiracy; no to the privatization of water and other gifts of nature; no to the privatization of services of general interest such as energy, transportation, health, education; also no to the destruction of solidarity-based social insurance systems through privatization; no to their submission to profit-oriented insurance companies and at the same time to speculative finance markets. All of this is structural violence at the service of the rich. But especially we reject the direct violence of a policy that wages wars to realize these private interests and wastes immeasurable resources on armaments.

The power of God's Spirit frees us as individuals and churches to work for the democratizing of the economy and the solidarity-based social systems toward serving life, among ourselves

CREATIVE COMMONS/ (TOP) "THE WORSHIP OF MAMMON" BY EVELYN DE MORGAN (1850-1919)
(BOTTOM) MIGUELEÑO/ GRUPO FMLN CALIFORNIA

The beautiful and abundant Amazon rainforest (top) is now fouled by toxic oil company pollution. In 2009, indigenous groups in Peru protested the government's support of oil and gas companies in the Amazon. In the ensuing violence many were injured (below) and killed.

CREATIVE COMMONS/ (TOP) WORLD BANK PHOTO COLLECTION (BOTTOM) BEN POWLESS

and in society, so that all might have enough, so that neither hardship nor excessive consumption prevails and that the earth can remain intact for future generations. Economic systems should be for the common use and not for the expansion of capital. For this reason goods and services for basic needs as well as global common goods must be publically run for mutual benefit, so that in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights all governments recognize their responsibility for the welfare of their citizens. We pledge to struggle for an order at all levels, in which economics and politics are put at the service of life for all and thereby overcome the fundamental causes of violence.

3. God's good earth should not be destroyed by greed.

We believe that God entrusted human beings with a rich and beautiful earth. "The Lord took the human beings and put them in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it" (Gen. 2:15).

Therefore, we reject an economic and social order that converts God's gifts into commodities and in so doing increasingly destroys them. We especially call on Christians, congregations, and churches in the industrialized countries to recognize their enormous ecological debts, particularly their destructive climate debts, toward people who have been living in impoverished regions for the past five hundred years, and at least to offer symbolic compensation, to radically reduce their harmful greenhouse emissions, and to oblige their governments to pass national and international laws to keep global warming under two degrees and to stop the extermination of species.

The power of God's Spirit frees us as individuals and churches to set an example and reduce our consumption of energy and the environment as well as to force our governments to establish binding rules for reduction under international law (allowing for transitional arrangements for newly industrialized and developing countries). All in all, we will work for a cyclical economy that makes the gifts of nature available for just and sustainable use.

4. God liberates working people from violent exploitation.

We believe that God intends human labor to become participation in God's creative power and as a means for self-sufficiency in human societies, without exploiting working men and women. "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other Gods before me" (Gen. 20:2).

Therefore, we reject an economic order in which working people, especially women, are (structurally or directly) violently exploited and driven into unemployment. We reject governments that tax workers more and more but levy less and less taxes on capital gains from profits and fortunes and refuse to abolish tax havens.

The power of God's Spirit frees us as individuals and churches to struggle in cooperation with labor unions for legal systems and economic decisions in which those able to work can find useful employment and socially meaningful jobs and— owing to increased productivity—comprehensive reduced working hours. In reaching these decisions, all of those involved in the productive process must have a voice.

5. God does not want any accumulation of wealth beyond that which is necessary for life.

We believe that God despises the accumulation of wealth for the few at the cost of the majority. "No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth" (Matt. 6:24). "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, nor ox nor donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor" (Exod. 20:17).

Therefore we reject an economic order that stimulates and rewards greed, which is dependent on nature-destroying and socially antagonistic growth, because it makes money and capital a commodity and its increase an end in itself.

The Spirit of God frees us as individuals and churches to overcome the violent power of money and especially its speculative misuse as a "financial weapon of mass destruction." We ourselves will only use money at the service of genuine economic activity. In concert

with social movements we will struggle to induce political institutions to make money a national and international public good that only serves useful economic activity, and to ensure that all use of property becomes socially and ecologically beneficial to all.

6. God wants to create human security through justice rather than through military means.

"This is the word of the Lord to Zerubabbel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6). "Until a spirit from on high is poured out upon us, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest. Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness, and trust forever" (Isa. 32:15-17).

Therefore we say no to the institution of war, which—under the conditions of present-day weapons technology—cannot be justified under any circumstances; no to the more than 1 billion U.S. dollars wasted annually for armaments while more than 30 million people die from the causes of hunger. Arms do not murder only when they are used, but already while they are being produced. In particular we reject the imperialist wars, which stand in violation of international law, such as those against Iraq and Afghanistan as well as the unlimited "war on terror." Therefore we reject the presence of more than 800 U.S. military bases, under whose protection authoritarian and pseudo-democratic regimes such as those in the Philippines and Colombia commit notorious violations of human rights, and also the arming of the European Community with international rapid intervention forces. When the international community needs to intervene in individual countries and regions because of notorious violations of human rights, this must be done only by police forces under the umbrella of a democratized United Nations.

The power of God's Spirit frees us as individuals and churches to refuse to cooperate in any way with waging war. Instead, in the spirit of Jesus and Gandhi we wish to confront all injustice with readiness to accept conflicts and suffering, to cooperate in reconciliation processes therapeutically and in terms of prevention, and to contribute to a political stance that seeks to outlaw war.

7. Weapons of mass destruction are blasphemy against God.

We believe that weapons of mass destruction are blasphemy, since human beings are created in the image of God. "Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person's blood be shed; for in God's own image God made humankind" (Gen. 9:6).

Therefore, we reject unequivocally the production, deployment, and use of means of mass destruction, which always shed innocent human blood and can even eliminate all life on earth. We reject the strategies of the United States and NATO, which claim the right to a nuclear first strike and already are making use of enhanced munitions with disastrous effects for the people targeted.

The power of the Spirit of God frees us to refuse to collaborate under any circumstances in the production, deployment, or use of weapons of mass destruction or to vote for any political party that has not declared its support for the complete abolition of any means of mass destruction. We call on all members of Christian churches to do likewise. Especially we call on the government of the United States as well as on other governments to make deeds follow their words and to create a nuclear-free world. Only then can governments now working to achieve a nuclear capacity be prevented from realizing their plans.

8. God has created a people, which has invited all peoples to a life with a just peace.

We believe that God has called us to be a people that lives a life of justice and peace and can so become the light of the world, the city on the hill and salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13-16). "Many peoples shall come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that God may teach us God's ways and that we may walk in God's paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:3-5, NRSV).

Therefore, we reject all misuse of the name of God and Christ for achieving power, be it by governments, political parties, groups, theologies, or churches. We especially reject prosperity theologies, fundamentalist crusade theologies, and ideologies that in the name of freedom increase the wealth of capital owners and even support the use of imperialist violence to this end.

The power of God's Spirit frees us as individuals and churches to follow Jesus and to participate in building God's domination-free kingdom, God's life-affirming order with a human face. This includes collaboration in developing

(1) new economic approach based on solidarity and serving life;
(2) the practice of nonviolent behavior for conflict resolution and therapy, avoiding and reducing violence at all levels, from the family to a world peace order; and
(3) a style of life that promotes ecological and social justice.

We seek the company and cooperation of people of other faiths or of none, who respect and promote the lives of the most humble human beings and of the endangered earth. In the name of Jesus we ask God for the spiritual power to rejoice at the wonderful gifts of creation, to lead a life of justice and peace, and to work toward the day when this will be enjoyed by all people.

Visit tikkun.org/justpeace
for a background discussion by the authors of this statement. We highly recommend it for anyone who doubts the revolutionary potential of Christianity.

Why Liberation Theology Is Necessary for Us All

A Response to an Imagined Critic from North America

Peace be with you! I have received your letter from Minnesota raising important questions about our church endorsing and following up the decisions taken by the Assemblies of the Lutheran World Federation in Winnipeg in 2003 and of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Accra in 2004. I'm happy to be in dialogue with a pastor from North America. The passages you particularly challenge are:

- The Lutheran World Federation's Statement on Globalization in its 10th Assembly saying, "As a communion, we must engage the false ideology of neoliberal economic globalization by confronting, converting, and changing this reality and its effects. This false ideology is grounded on the assumption that the market, built on private property, unrestrained competition, and the centrality of contracts, is the absolute law governing human life, society, and the natural environment. This is idolatry and leads to the systematic exclusion of those who own no property, the destruction of cultural diversity, the dismantling of fragile democracies, and the destruction of the earth."

- The Accra Confession of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in 2004 stating, among other thing, "*We believe* that God is sovereign over all creation. 'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof' (Psalm 24.1). *Therefore, we reject* the current world economic order imposed by global neoliberal capitalism.... We reject any claim of economic, political, and military empire which subverts God's sovereignty over life and acts contrary to God's just rule."

Your first argument against the intent of these passages is:

> We have to be "realistic" and achieve something real, rather than utopian transformation. We weaken our ability and our "credibility" if we in the Christian progressive world use language that is anti-capitalist or that envisions global transformations, because the people with power in the political system, including people we believe really have goodness in their hearts and want to make whatever changes they think

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are possible, stop listening to us or taking us seriously when we talk in these broader terms or with what seems like the jargon of communist Russia—socialism, anti-imperialism, or even anti-capitalism. So, though we know that you too have a good heart, we cannot publicly identify with you because you'll weaken our ability to accomplish what really can be accomplished, which is less than what we would want, but more than what the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Council of Churches, and your church can accomplish with your ideologically based language and political orientation.

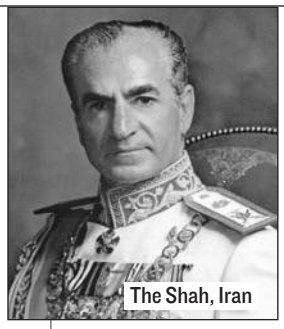
Your argument would be correct if we were still in a situation like that after World War II. After the disaster of classical liberalism in the great recession in 1929 and the two world wars, it was possible to tame capitalism to a certain extent. The labor movement had some power because the Fordist economy needed the buying power of the people to buy the products of mass production, capitalism had to make compromises in order to cope with the competition of socialism dragging more and more countries into its camp, there were no limits to growth because the ecological problems were not yet seen, and it was still possible for the Western world to extract raw materials and other wealth from many colonies. The result was a kind of social contract between labor and capital in the form of what was called the New Deal in the United States and the Social Market Economy in Europe.

However, this situation gradually changed. What were the reasons?

At the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944, John Maynard Keynes, the famous British economist, proposed institutions and policies that took the European social market economy as the model for the *postwar global economy*. The United States, however, having become the hegemonic power after the self-destruction of the Europeans, refused. It wanted both the dollar as the world currency and trade liberalization for its big companies. This opened up space for neoliberalism to rise in various ways. In order to regain ideological hegemony in the 1930s, liberal economists had already started a transnational network leading to the foundation of the Mont Pelerin Society under the leadership of Friedrich von Hayek. Through think tanks, university institutes, journals, etc., they started a long-term campaign for privatization, liberalization, and deregulation.

At the same time, the United States put dictators in power, mainly through intelligence instruments (the CIA) and local collaborators. (Remember that the first case was Iran, where the democratically elected Prime Minister Mossadegh was toppled because he wanted to nationalize oil. The Shah was installed by grace of the United States—starting the tragedies of Iran that have lasted up to the present day.) The first task of the dictators was to open up their national markets to transnational capital in order to give it access to markets and resources for its own interest; the second was to crush all political and social resistance against this interference (resistance was crushed not only in Iran in 1953, but also in Congo in 1960, Brazil in 1964, Indonesia in 1965/1966, Chile in 1973, and Argentina in 1975). These dictators were also to contract national debts by buying Western products, thereby instigating the over-indebtedness of their countries. These foreign debts were used by Western-dominated, undemocratic institutions, such as the IMF and World Bank, with the help of structural adjustment policies, to liberalize, privatize, and deregulate the economies and societies of these countries. In this way, the structural force of finance replaced direct military force. The result was massive impoverishment, expropriation of national resources, and increased violence among the people of these countries, now struggling bitterly for survival. Anyone who does not want to believe these facts should read the confessions of one of the "economic hit men," John Perkins, whose conscience did not allow him to continue working in this system and who, therefore, left his highly paid job in the hands of what he calls the economic Mafia (*Confessions of an Economic Hit Man: The Shocking Story of How America Really Took Over the World*).

This development intensified after 1990, after the collapse of the competing system, state socialism (which in the same modern context as capitalism had in its own way concentrated political and economic power at the top and violated human rights): the neoliberal-capitalist model has now become globalized. Globally, *(continued on page 92)*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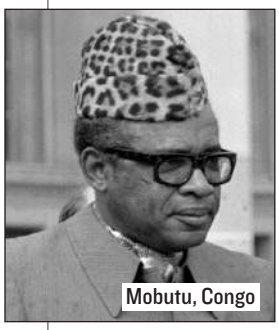
Mobutu, Congo

Castelo Branco, Brazil

Suharto, Indonesia

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U.S.-sponsored dictators like these led their countries to the IMF's regime of deregulation and privatization.

CREATIVE COMMONS

The Nature of Evil

by Terry Eagleton

"Young people in the West these days have become very interested in zombies and vampires," the author writes. No wonder evil is attractive, if virtue is equated with the severity of a bureaucratic father God.

CREATIVE COMMONS/CHRISTOPHER S. PENN

THE DEVIL, SO THEY SAY, HAS ALL THE BEST TUNES, AND THIS SEEMS TO BE THE case when it comes to literature as well. Nobody would take a guided tour of Dante's *Paradiso* if they could have one of the *Inferno* instead. Milton's God sounds like a bureaucratic bore or constipated civil servant, while his Satan shimmers with mutinous life. Nobody would have an orange juice with Oliver Twist if they could have a beer with Fagin instead. So why is evil so sexy, and so profoundly glamorous? And why does virtue seem so boring? Why is it that when I told my thirteen-year-old son I was writing a book on evil, he replied "Wicked!"?

One answer, I think, is that it is not virtue that is boring but a particular, very familiar conception of it. Think of Aristotle's man of virtue, who lives more fully and richly than the vicious. For Aristotle, virtue is something you have to get good at, like playing the trombone or tolerating bores at sherry parties. Being a virtuous human being is a practice, like being a skilled diver or an accomplished tennis player; and those who are really brilliant at being human—what Christians call the saints—are the virtuosi of the moral sphere, the Pavarottis and Maradonas of virtue. Goodness in this Aristotelian view is a kind of prospering in the precarious affair of being human—a prospering which, if Sigmund Freud is to be believed, none of us manages particularly well. The wicked are those who haven't developed the knack of fine living—those who botch the business, as you might make a mess of cooking an omelet or conducting a symphony orchestra. The wicked, then, are inept, crippled, deficient people who never really get the hang of human existence. They are like poor artists who can't knock themselves into shape. Whereas the good, the virtuous, are those who, like good artists, realize their powers, energies, and capacities to the full, in as diverse a way as possible. And because of this, they are brimming with life and high spirits. With this model, to ask "Why be good?" as people began to later, would be as ridiculous as asking "Why enjoy a dark, foaming, full-bodied pint of Guinness?" or "Why should a clock keep good time?" Virtue is a kind of energy or exuberance, which is why it is sometimes thought to have something to do with God. To say that God is good is not to say that he is remarkably well-behaved—most Christian theologians would not see God as a "moral" being at all—but rather that he is an infinite abyss of self-delighting energy, which no doubt means that he must have a boundless sense of humor as well (he needs one). For Christian theology, God is that abundant, overflowing, ecstatic *jouissance* at the heart of us, which is closer to us than we are to ourselves (as the unconscious is closer to us than the ego), and which allows us to be free and to flourish. To be entirely without such abundant, self-delighting life is to be evil; and this means that evil is not something positive but a kind of lack or defectiveness, a sort of nothingness or negativity, an inability to be truly alive. Evil may look lively, seductive, and flamboyant, but this is just the flashy show it puts on to cover up the hollowness at its heart. It is the paper-thinness of evil, its brittle unreality, which is most striking about it.

Considered by many to be the most influential British literary critic, Terry Eagleton has written more than forty books, including Reason, Faith and Revolution *(2009) and most recently* On Evil *(2010). He is currently a visiting professor at the National University of Ireland, Galway.*

Whatever happened, then, to this ancient notion of goodness as exciting, energetic, and exhilarating, and evil as empty, boring, and banal? Why do people now see things the other way around? One answer, at least in the West, is the gradual rise of the middle classes. As the middle classes came to exert their clammy grip on Western civilization, there was a gradual redefinition of virtue. Virtue now came to mean not energy and exuberance but prudence, thrift, meekness, chastity, temperance, long-headedness, industriousness, and so on. No wonder people prefer vampires. These may be admirable virtues, but they are not *exactly* exciting ones; and one effect of them is to make evil seem, by contrast, a lot more attractive, which is exactly what happened. Virtue had now become essentially negative. It was closely bound up with middle-class respectability. It had lost its sexiness and become restrictive rather than enabling. As Auden remarked of the Ten Commandments, there's no particular point in observing human nature and simply inserting a "not." We were now moving toward that perversion of moral thought (identified above all with the greatest of all modern philosophers, Immanuel Kant) for which virtue was all about duty, obligation, and responsibility, rather than in the first place a matter of finding out how to live fully, how to enjoy ourselves. Of course, duties, obligations, and responsibilities have their place in human life. What is disastrous is to place them at the center of one's moral vision. Duties and obligations make sense not in themselves, but in relation to the idea of living most fully and most richly. If they make that possible for the greatest number of people, well and good. But they are not to be seen as *definitive* of virtue. I say that virtue is really all about enjoying yourself, living fully; but of course it is far from obvious to us what living fully actually means. This is because, as we know from Freud and others, we are not transparent to ourselves as human beings. On the contrary, there is a sense in which we are desperately opaque to ourselves. So we can't just look inside ourselves and find the answers to these questions ready and waiting. Instead, we need special kinds of language, like moral philosophy and political theory, to help us in these matters. And the human conversation about what it is to live well—which is the answer to the question "what is morality?"—has never arrived at an agreed conclusion and probably never will. Astonishingly, we men and women of the modern age disagree on quite fundamental issues, which someone living in the Middle Ages might have found incomprehensible. We all agree that it is a bad idea to roast babies over fires, but we cannot agree on why we agree on this. And we probably never will. As long as we don't roast babies over fires, however, this may not matter too much.

Young people in the West these days have become very interested in zombies and vampires and other forms of the so-called Undead, and I think this has a bearing on what I am saying about good and evil. Zombies and vampires exist in some twilight, indeterminate zone between life and death, and the same is true of those who are evil. They can only manage a kind of sham, inauthentic life, a ghastly parody of genuine life; and they derive this life from their own sufferings and from the sufferings they inflict on others. This dreadful state of being is what it means to be in hell—though there cannot literally, actually be anyone in a place called hell, any more than you can be in a place called love or disgrace or despair. This is because for Christian theology there can be no life outside God, so nobody could reject God and still live. Hell means not perpetual punishment but absolute extinction. The fire of hell is God himself, with his relentless, terrifying, uncompromising love. God is a terrorist of love. And though this fire is the life and love of God, there are those who can't take this love (the wicked), who detest and despise it, and who are burnt to a cinder by it.

Only in being in atrocious pain can the evil persuade themselves that they are still alive. This is why they cling perversely to their sufferings, since without them they would be dead. They would rather cling to this obscene enjoyment of forcing others and themselves to suffer, which is a kind of nothingness, an inability to live truly, rather than risk the much more terrifying nothingness of abandoning themselves, in the faith that out of this kind of nothingness something positive, some new life, may finally emerge. The wicked are terrified of giving themselves away and cling to themselves for dear life as if to a lover.

This is why the damned or undead are said to be both despairing and exultant, miserable

What is virtue? Is it accurately evoked by the primness and severity of the couple in Grant Wood's famous painting "American Gothic," recreated in this statue in Chicago?

CREATIVE COMMONS/CHIBART

and mocking. They relish their agony because it is their only way of existing, and spit in God's eye because his ruthless, intolerable love risks removing their torment and along with it their identity. "I shit on your love!" William Golding's Pincher Martin snarls to his Creator. The damned are like an alcoholic who is so ravaged by drink that he can gain a spot of illusory relief only by stepping up his intake, thus shattering himself even more atrociously. Like the damned, the alcoholic is in the grip of what Freud called the death drive—and the true perversity of this drive is not that we are hell-bent on destroying ourselves, but that we do so because we are persuaded to take pleasure in the act of tearing ourselves apart. And that really is diabolical. The demonic is a kind of cosmic sulking, since comfort and forgiveness would be its undoing. The philosopher Kierkegaard sees the damned as those who refuse to relinquish their despair, since this would relieve them of their rebellious delight in rejecting Creation altogether. There is something adolescent about evil, and (as Saint Paul teaches) something grown-up about good. This is one reason why the image of children as good is so misleading (though the Victorians could never decide whether they were angels or demons, and needed them to be both). Children may be innocent, but that's not the same thing; and goodness is something they have to learn, to practice, to grow into. The Satanic, declares a character in Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, "demand that there be no God of life, that God destroy himself and all his Creation. And they shall burn everlastingly in the flames of their own hatred, and long for death and non-being. But death shall not be granted them."

The demonic are those who can't die because to do so would be to give up their terrifying drive to annihilate everything, including themselves. They are frightened of giving themselves away and cling to their anguish for dear life, as to a lover. They need to stay alive in a spectral kind of way in order to undo themselves and others. Only by spreading chaos and nothingnesss around themselves can they fill the frightful vacuum at the center of their being. Yet since this lack or absence at the center of our being is known as subjectivity, this is bound to be a doomed project. Only because there is something missing, repressed or lacking from us can we operate effectively. Only by negating non-being can the evil feel alive, yet non-being is both infinite and indestructible.

Those who cannot accept that there is a lack at the core of our being, or that this *manque d'être* is what makes us what we are, try to stuff this gaping wound with fetishes of all kinds—with doctrines, possessions, loved ones, sponge-rubber trousers, and so on. Fetishism for Freud is really a matter of trying to plug some fearful gap that is intolerable to you. The evil are those who cannot bear the fact that they are incomplete—which is to say, cannot bear the fact that they are human. They are pathological purists for whom matter itself is intolerably messy and indeterminate, and who are thus ascetic and virulently anti-materialist. The evil are precisely those who don't enjoy an orgy.

There is, then, something deeply paradoxical about evil. The evil are those who can't stand nothingness, the nothingness that they are, and so try to cram this hole by creating even more nothingness around them, in the form of destruction. Only by trying to negate non-being can they feel alive, but non-being is infinite and indestructible. Nothing is more invulnerable than nothingness. And how do you know when you have destroyed it? The evil are those who quite often find this terrible nothingness (one that really lies at the heart of themselves) embodied in some alien, frightful figure outside themselves: the Jew, the Arab, the woman, the homosexual, the foreigner. But laying violent hands on those who embody negativity will not bring you any closer to murdering the non-being at the heart of yourself, since that lack is what makes us human in the first place.

The damned, then, are monstrous, Dracula-like travesties of the living. And the death drive that dominates them is equally a kind of travesty or parody of that terrifying force known as the will, with its indomitable, never-say-die passion to subjugate and possess, which even as I speak is wreaking havoc with millions of lives in the Middle East and Afghanistan in the name of Western ideals of progress and democracy. Freud himself had no doubt that within this drive or energy, which builds and destroys civilizations, lurked the

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death drive itself. This is profoundly ironic, since it means that concealed within our desire to create, to subdue to order, to reduce to harmony—in short, to overcome chaos (all very necessary, by the way)—lies a kind of chaos itself. The will to order and dominate that yields us civilized existence is secretly in love with nothingness. There's something anarchic, out of hand, about our very lust for order and civility, vital though these things are.

This idea that death and dismemberment lie within the very impulse to exuberant life and the drive to build civilization was known to the ancient Greeks as the Dionysian, because Dionysus is life and death, Eros and Thanatos together, builder of cities and wrecker of them, both joy and destruction, affirmation and negativity. He is also for the ancient Greeks the patron of the greatest art form they bequeathed to the world: tragedy. Tragedy is the form that finds in our very capacity to confront chaos, to stare the Medusa's head of frailty and negativity squarely in the eyes, our capacity to go beyond it. Only by opening ourselves in this way to our own frailty and finitude might we have a chance for authentic life. Only by being hauled through hell might we have a chance of rising again. It is this that the evil cannot accept. They want to deny our frailty and negativity, not embrace it.

Tragedy is the form that recognizes that if a genuine human community is to be constituted, it can be only on the basis of our shared failure, frailty, and mortality. This is a community of repentance and forgiveness, and it represents everything that is the opposite of the American Dream. This means, in the terms of Jacques Lacan, that the symbolic can be founded only on the Real. Only by acknowledging the monstrous as lying at the very heart of ourselves, rather than projecting it outward onto others, can we establish anything more than a temporary, imaginary relationship with one another, one which is not likely to endure. This means relationships based on the recognition that at the very core of the self lies something profoundly strange to it, which is utterly impersonal and anonymous but closer to us than breathing, at once intimate and alien. This has had many names in Western civilization: God, Language, Desire, the Will, Language, the Unconscious, the Real, and so on.

In the finest of all modern novels about life and death, Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, the hero Hans Castorp finally comes to see that the tenderness and comradeship he witnesses in his great utopian vision in the Alpine snow is what it is only because there is a horror at its heart—the ritual sacrifice of a young child. All civilization is built on sacrifice, even if this is only the necessary repression of our more disruptive instincts. It is love, Hans comes to realize, not reason, which is stronger than death, and from that recognition alone can civilization flourish—but, the novel adds, "always in silent recognition of the blood sacrifice." Or as the poet Yeats puts it, "Nothing can be sole or whole that has not been rent." Sacrifice is the act by which the reviled, polluted thing, the pharmakos or scapegoat, undergoes the turbulent passage from weakness to power. It is only by identifying with this polluted, cast-out thing (which in early sacrifice usually involves eating it) that the city can be saved, that which is torn and bleeding can be made whole, justice can be accomplished, and life can be snatched from the jaws of death. This is why one of the modern names for ancient sacrifice is political revolution.

And so the death-dealing myths of Western modernity—the bad infinity of Faustian desire, which would annihilate the whole of Creation in its compulsive-obsessive hunt for the transcendental signifier, and which in doing so hubristically rejects all limits on the human enterprise and thus rejects death itself—must be countered by that other founding Western myth, the fable of Oedipus, who, blind and broken before Thebes, is finally forced to confront his own finitude and humanity, and who in doing so releases a great power for good. It is, if you like, a choice between two kinds of nothingness. On the one hand, the nothingness of the insatiable will, which overreaches itself and brings itself to nothing, and for which no actual object can be worth anything compared to the infinity that is itself. This (bad) infinity, one of whose modern names is desire, devalues everything sensuous and specific in its frantic search for all or nothing. Desire is absolutely nothing personal and will pass all the way through its (purely contingent) object in order finally to reunite with the only thing it really desires, namely itself. On *(continued on page 94)*

Far from being stuffy and bureaucratic, "Virtue is a kind of energy or exuberance," while "God is that abundant, overflowing, ecstatic jouissance *at the heart of us," writes the author. Here singer Regina Spektor is caught in a moment of joy at the Austin City Limits Music Festival, 2007.*

CREATIVE COMMONS/JMTIMAGES

Culture

BOOKS | FILM | MUSIC

[BOOKS]

Where God Is Hiding

SURPRISINGLY HAPPY: AN ATYPICAL RELIGIOUS MEMOIR by Sheila Peltz Weinberg
White River Press, 2010

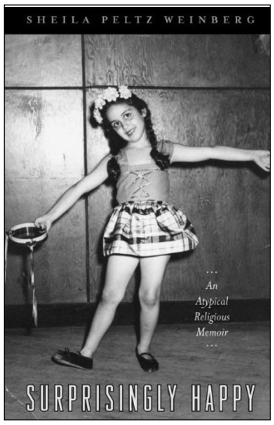
Review by Margie Jacobs

For the past ten years, rabbis and other Jewish leaders have come from all over the world to the Institute for Jewish Spirituality, a retreat-based program in which they learn something new about Judaism, spirituality, and themselves. A key feature of these retreats is mindfulness meditation with Rabbi Sheila Weinberg, formerly a pulpit rabbi herself and a lifelong social justice activist. Weinberg has taught mindfulness meditation and yoga to over four hundred rabbis, cantors, educators, social activists, and lay leaders. She is a rabbi for rabbis. Many of her students, myself included, report that learning with her has transformed not only their work and teaching but also their own spiritual lives. In creating more authentic, creative, courageous leaders, Weinberg has been instrumental in bringing spiritual vitality and meaning to contemporary American Judaism.

What is it about Weinberg's teachings that so deeply touch, inspire, and renew overworked, burned-out leaders?

Weinberg is a funny, fast-talking New York Jew. She writes beautiful liturgical poetry, some of which is included in the pages of her new book, and brings to her teaching the wisdom of Jewish and other spiritual traditions. But the transformative power of Weinberg's teaching, in my opinion, comes from her encouragement not to rely on the words of the ancients as they speak about the sacred, but rather to investigate the truth of their assertions in our own experience. As it was for the early Hasidic masters, the everyday details of life become the place where we can search for God.

Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan discussed God as "the power that makes for salvation." It is this salvation, redemption, and healing that are present as Weinberg explores the stuff of her own life in the pages of *Surprisingly Happy*. In each page lies the question, "Where is God hiding in these stories, in daily life, in resistance, struggles, relationships, twists and turns of choice and chance?"



In the juxtaposition of moments from generations past and future, we find children redeeming the "sins" of the parents. Weinberg tells the story of her paternal grandmother, a bitter woman from whom the author was estranged, who bequeaths her diamond engagement ring to Weinberg. After leaving the ring untouched in a safe for years, Weinberg gives it to her son as he prepares to propose to his girlfriend. In doing so, she is "finally able to accept this gift, which I immediately pass along to another as an act of welcoming, trust, and love."

After giving birth to two girls, Weinberg's maternal grandmother considered terminating her third pregnancy because she was afraid that this one, too, would be a girl. Weinberg's own utter delight in her young granddaughter is a bit of tikkun to the patriarchy in which only boys are valued.

Weinberg is not afraid to step off the pulpit, to shatter the illusion of perfection that may be projected onto rabbis, as she reveals her own challenges. As with figures in the tales of the Torah, it is the very particularity and fallibility of this "Jewish baby boomer, spiritual seeker, recovering alcoholic … [and] feminist grandma who loves yoga and is a rabbi" that draws us into its pages. Her compassion and honesty about her own struggles evokes in the reader a sense that change is possible, if not easy.

"My life is a struggle between *avodah zarah* (idol worship) and *avodat hashem* (worship of God)," Weinberg writes. "It is my constant choice to embrace my humanness. It is my regular practice to open to something greater than my own tale of woe." Throughout the book, Weinberg ×offers resources that have helped her, and can help readers, with this struggle: her poetry, Jewish ritual, and a capacity to forgive moments of failure, cultivated through years of practicing and teaching mindfulness meditation. She adds:

> I have noticed that it is not helpful to scold my mind for forgetting. That is the way the mind is built

and trained. What is helpful is the possibility of *teshuvah*, returning to the intention. The good news is that I can return no matter how many times I forget, fall down, or wander off.

Weinberg's message of courageous honesty and optimism invites us to think about our own narrative as a source of wisdom and redemption. We ask ourselves, what gifts, and what wounds, have I received from generations past? How have these been celebrated and transformed through my own children? What are the stories that I tell about my own life? Is this the narrative that I want to write for myself, my family, this planet? Where is God hiding in my story?

In her work as a rabbi and teacher and in the pages of this book, Weinberg's very personal revelations powerfully serve to open the hearts of her audience. In doing so, she draws out the caring in each of us that mobilizes acts of creating a more just, peaceful, sustainable world. She writes, "I wish the world a global Sabbath practice, a rest from harming our beloved mother, this planet, taking her into our hearts as she cradles us in her arms."

Weinberg has powerfully shaped the Jewish story throughout her career because her case for why engagement in spiritual life matters is so compelling:

> I want to tell you what I know: It is more and more urgent to love ourselves, each other and the earth, through our differences, to make life, especially for the weak among us, safer and healthier in the air, water and earth. I know it is more and more urgent to help our children know the nearness of Divine love as they walk into the unknown. It is my experience that a renewed dedication to awakened spiritual practice will serve us well on this journey. ■

Rabbi Margie Jacobs is a consultant to the Institute for Jewish Spirituality, teacher of mindfulness meditation and Hasidut, life coach, and ritual facilitator. She lives in Berkeley with her husband and two daughters.

[FILM]

INTIMATE STRUGGLES, GLOBAL POLITICS

GRACE PALEY: COLLECTED SHORTS

Lilly Rivlin Productions, 2010

Review by Elizabeth Rosner

Viewers of Lilly Rivlin's inspiring film *Grace Paley: Collected Shorts* are in for much more than a portrait of the artist. Whether you are being introduced for the first time or being given the chance to become reacquainted with a much-beloved writer, this richly quilted narrative offers multiple views of a woman extraordinary and exemplary in her authenticity. Grace Paley is vastly more than a sum of her parts: poet, mother, teacher, and activist.

Rivlin's documentary effectively breaks down Paley's life and work into segments, with quotations from the author as well as from her many friends (including luminaries like Alice Walker), and her husband, daughter, and granddaughter. Yet the net effect is to see how the different areas of Paley's life joined in a vivid and unified whole. For her, clearly, there was no contradiction between feminism and marriage, between a life devoted to protest and one devoted to family. Even as Paley worked introspectively to write about her most intimate struggles, she also showed dedicated support of women's rights on a global scale. In the film, images of her participation in numerous demonstrations are seamlessly interwoven with clips of her reading aloud from her beautifully crafted and unforgettable stories.

Grace Paley's fearless conviction invites me as a writer to remember the power of words to make a difference in the world. For her, storytelling was truly a worthwhile endeavor; art and activism could be, without any doubt, mutually inclusive. She explains that through writing purely in the voice of her "Aunt Rose," she found her own voice; eventually the stories of women and their difficult lives "pressured" her to give them "the open destiny" of life on the page. "That's what I was doing during the women's movement," she says at one point in the film, "writing stories about women." The comment is offered as a kind of belated revelation, in recognition of this significant contribution to what she called "the most important movement in the world."

Standing tall at five feet one inch, Paley expressed determination and purpose through her bearing as well as her speech. Called a "Jewish prophet" by one of her fellow members of PEN, she insisted on incorporating the death-sound of "Chernobyl" into her poetry. Political from the start—she joined a socialist organization at the age of nine—it was no surprise that, years later, she traveled to Vietnam in 1969 as a representative of the anti-war movement, or that she spent a week at the Women's House of Detention. Paley dared to be political in this way not only because "everything was a story," but also because, as she once admonished a young woman in the process of getting arrested (and who would eventually become a rabbi), "You just can't get out of your responsibilities."

When asked for the core of her political wisdom, Paley replied, "You sit down and you stay down." This simple phrase seems to embody both Paley the writer and Paley the irrepressible political activist. Lucky for us, she also did much more than use her body as a weapon in the struggle for justice. She also used her pen and her voice "to keep an eye on this world and cry out, like Cassandra, but be listened to this time." As a novelist, essayist, and poet with a fervent belief in writing as a political and humanistic endeavor, I am taking her words to heart. ■

Novelist, poet, and essayist Elizabeth Rosner is the author of Blue Nude *and* The Speed of Light. *Her work has appeared in the* NY Times Magazine, Elle, *the* Forward, *and* Hadassah Magazine.

POETRY

Snowbound

The boxwood hedge that stood against the wall
Lies split beneath a cataract of snow,
With branches wrenched as wide as it was tall.
Maybe it's really broken, I don't know.
And snow has sealed the garden like a tomb,
Fusing, effacing whatever's still below
The wind-eroded peaks. And the living room
Is darkened with a drift against the door.
Finally I decide to use a broom
To try to clear the sides of the compressor,
And see, poking out, face frozen in the blowing,
That even where snow caps the electric meter
And a scaly beard of icicles is growing,
The numbers move; the power must be flowing.

— David Danoff

PSYCHEDELICS
(continued from page 12)

alive, as did everyday experience. After I came down from the LSD trip, I was deliberately determined to hold onto that freedom—a determination informed by a structural psychological awareness that had been obtained in the intensity of my earlier psychotherapy experience. My subsequent introduction to marijuana freed me of physical and sexual awkwardness, turned me onto intimate discourse, facilitated a heightened closeness in my friendships, and furthered my sense of being a creative person. This was not completely linear. There were ups and downs, and the process took place with absorption in the growing Movement, which came with a sense of being in a community of progressive people worldwide. Psychedelic use in that formative period increased my self-confidence and sensuality. It did not prevent me from making all manner of errors in personal and political life, but I was much better at discernment, moving on, kindness, and forgiveness.

Psychedelic use invariably affects the personal/psychological matrix. Starting a journey forces an encounter with fear—of the unknown, of the lurking dangers believed hidden in one's own mind, of coming back altered. In the encounter the first period is generally absorbed with the personal: relationships, guilt, love, longing, grief, attachments, and self-concepts. This encounter opens the way to examination, release, and change, to reframing and heightened awareness of self and the others. A bad trip—usually in an uncomfortable setting under stressful circumstances—can result in fear, paranoia, and a recoil from the opened space that is perceived as threatening. Some folks never use psychedelics again. Occasionally too young people and some others—I know personally of several twelve- and thirteen-year-olds—experience damaging mental effects that may last far too long. *Set* (the mind's orientation) and *setting* (the circumstances of use) always affect the quality of significant psychedelic experiences. Conscious preparation, good location, and the presence of supportive friends make for better experiences and outcomes.

The Empathic State: Generally any psychedelic experience may heighten empathy and empathic awareness. This awareness can manifest as love and affection; as the ability to see another's point of view and put oneself in the other person's shoes; as deep respect and regard; as elimination of barriers that separate; as communion with nature; or as a transcendent feeling of warmth for all things. In the eighties, the potency of ecstasy (MDMA) was recognized as a means—a tool—for heightening the quality of communication between people and for fairly reliably producing a state of warmth, affection, and nonsexual sensuality. Many therapists, including myself, introduced MDMA psychotherapy within couple, family, and group contexts. Because the experience was fairly replicable, generally positive, and without much in the way of distortion and hallucination, a new name was coined for a cluster of substances for which MDMA was the exemplar: "empathogens." Those of us who saw MDMA's potential for positive impact were able to demonstrate its medical utility before the Drug Enforcement Administration's own administrative law judge. The agency went against its own judge's finding, which would have placed MDMA in an accessible Schedule II classification, and placed it in the highly criminalized and inaccessible Schedule I group of substances that included other banned psychedelics and heroin. In the years that followed the 1986 ruling, MDMA use soared, and the "rave" phenomenon began to attract huge numbers of people—again a testimony to the power of the substance to facilitate loving, intimate, sensual experience. MDMA's appeal continues to be based on the facilitation of a state of communion and community larger than the personal self's usual strictures allow. MDMA consciousness can be learned and generated without the drug as part of an expansive, loving, daily life. Much of the concern about brain damage due to serotonin depletion was based on phony research that was retracted from the literature when it was exposed. Hundreds of millions of doses have been consumed in

the past few decades, notwithstanding the recent twenty-four years of prohibition, and yet my informal census of other therapists and friends who were there from the start fails to reveal names and numbers of any individuals with brains damaged by MDMA.

The Egolytic State: For the most part, the psychedelic experience exerts a damper on egotism and egocentrality. A sense of smallness and particulate being in the universe may be a fundamental part of the experience: I am truly an insignificance. A reduced sense of attachment to material goods, a sense of being awestruck with life and the psychic ground, a spaciousness of mind, a situating of the self as but a speck in the cosmos, and a sense of ease at being free of self-inflated importance may compose much of the trip. For some, this can be difficult and disorienting as a loss of the centrality of self and a confusion as to how to manifest and reintegrate. For most this state provides a welcome relief from the tension of being a particular totalization in the personal world and the competitive, demanding outer life.

The Transcendent Transpersonal State: Stripped of ego, personal psychology, and investments, the psychedelic traveler enters the ground state from which thought, feeling, form, and formlessness emanate. It is as if the source of mind becomes the mind experience itself. This is certainly not restricted to psychedelic states. In the unadorned meditative experience, this too is highlighted for periods of time. An apocryphal story from those who travel in both the spiritual and psychedelic realms is that the great guru drops a bazillion micrograms of LSD and stays beaming and untouched the entire trip; he is already so spiritually elevated in his nature that the drug is not altering or transformative—he is the ground state itself. Ram Dass, among others, is fond of this tale. I have my doubts. In the psychedelic state the flux, the movement, of stimulated consciousness is what is experienced at a heightened level of manifestation. Some psychedelic experiences are difficult to recall and are difficult ones in which to maintain an observational awareness. However, most experiences include intense observational awareness. Dose is a factor—generally, the more you take, the greater awareness tends to diminish. It is my view that psychedelics tend to make more available for experience and scrutiny—by amplifying the phenomena coming into being—what Tibetans refer to as *Dzogchen* or primordial awareness as it is commonly translated, the *sunyata* state in Sanskrit, and in the less developed Western explication, the state of awe. By learning to reside in a nondualistic state of mind, by choosing to enter that state, and by having experiences that create faith in the goodness of that state, spaciousness, creativity, and compassion arise from nonattachment, from living in the flow, from not grasping at every object that comes to mind and attracts our attention.

Within the Transcendent Transpersonal State, a multiplicity of experiences and views will arise. They are generally not pre-programmable, but they have some degree of specificity depending on the substance ingested (different substances tend to produce a quality of experience specific to those substances) and to the user's state of mind. I will mention a few by description that I class as "Vistas." This is certainly not meant to be exhaustive.

- **The Sensual Universe Vista:** Traveling through space as on a rocket ship, or being that rocket ship, I encounter extraordinary forms and shapes. Neon-colored blazing fractal worlds open. Forms emerge: animals, beings from other galaxies, lovers, and forgotten friends. I morph to meet them, and my morphing morphs. I am eaten and eat, am absorbed and absorb. Sexual encounters may occur. Love spills everywhere. Or fear brings on its own forms and monsters. Psychological themes come from my everyday life and are given forms, often allowing for a working through of trapped emotional energies. There is a sense of great exploration and great bliss, and at other times of the terror of being alive and vulnerable.

- **The Entheogenic Vista:** A personal experience of god(s), or a relationship to the personally held notion of god that deepens, may occur. A sense of traveling in the starry cosmos freed from all constraint may occur, of being part of a perceived universe. Buddhists are told that they have, as do all sentient beings, "Buddha Nature." In the psychedelic realm, I became the Buddha and felt that meaning and that responsibility. I moved about as the Buddha. I have tried to maintain that sense of awesome responsibility in my usual unenhanced state, to varying depth and effect—it is difficult. At other times, there can be the sense of the devil within, of the play of evil and the hunter/murderer, which we also contain and constrain. In mind traveling, there is no risk in exploring this aspect of us, knowing and accepting what we are capable of and explicitly reject.

- **The Connection Vista:** The experience of connection and interdependency gives rise to feelings of gratitude, love, humility, and desire to benefit others. Our personal lifeline extends backward through a near infinite unbroken number of progenitors to the unformed stuff of the great earthly soup from which the first life forms emerge and forward to the future, as well. I have felt myself to be, much as a mushroom sprouts from the great mycelial mass, its myriad threads stretching underground in all directions, sprouting beings who as their time ends return to the rich mulch while new sprouts—humans—emerge. There is a sense of vibrant biological immortality. Or in contrast, a sense of the human mass as itself a cancer, having all of those characteristics—unrestrained expansionism, proliferation in all directions, and lack of concern for others' needs and requirements—and eating everything in its path, out of control. There is also the sense of group mind, the experience of sensation outside the confines of the personal body/mind, in resonance with the others with whom one is traveling as a new assemblage in which the mind is intrapersonal.

- **The Cartesian Vista:** I am the source of all that I experience. I create it. The outside realm—all of it—is a manifestation of my mind. This passes before me as I scan all of my creations, from scientific

texts to great vistas to my friends and my partner. I am the author of life and death. Moving about within this perspective, I am able to revise what exists and what will be, for a time, until I am drawn back to the usual perspective of subject and object. This Cartesian experience, while one of false consciousness, increases the sensitivity to the difficulty of being by nature an interpreter removed from direct experience with only a mediated awareness of the external, and a personal awareness of the interior. While in this inflated state, I am god and master of the universe, prophet, seer, and enlightened being. And then there is the crash, and hopefully great humility.

Integration

In the post psychedelic condition, integration is the key to maintaining transformation. Integration is a function of intentionality—conscious and unconscious. Integration occurs both without effort—as a redesign of the central processor of our minds—and voluntarily as a deliberate effort to understand, find meaning, and as rectification—of our behavior towards others and towards ourselves. The psychedelic experience in and of itself may be transformative of our consciousness, but support for change by deliberate and disciplined absorption in the myriad spiritual/emotional/psychological/activist opportunities for increasing clarity and breadth most probably results in a more long-term and positive transformation of self. The human mind while extraordinarily plastic, adaptable, and mutable is also built with a great rubber band that returns us to our dominant character. This serves both as preserver of the integrity of the self and as a block to transformation—holding onto deluded Self.

Grounding in the world of the interior and the external world—finding balance—is a prerequisite for successful psychonautical voyaging and for a mind expansion that is in essence kind, creative, and that loosens the spell of the propaganda-filled social world we inhabit that tells us what to think and feel and especially what to desire and purchase. ■

MEHSERLE
(continued from page 14)

oppressor. In this context his name has become monstrous and unrecognizable. Here we see a colonizer gazing directly at a "mark of power," something that forces him into the nauseating realm of ambivalence. Though the name seems wrong, it is correct. It is certainly "spelled right." It just *seems* to break down. Like Heidegger's broken hammer, its essence is most clear, most real, but most disturbing when it falls out of the utilitarian structures it usually inhabits. Officer Mehserle is not used to seeing himself as a servant oppressor—as a cold, white title in hard black print. He is made to realize, however briefly and however subconsciously, that his original desires, as a "caring" public servant, will be twisted to serve the requirements of the system. What can he do about it?

For millennia, people in positions of power, including white people, have resisted participation in oppressive systems in powerful but constrained ways. Individuals make choices regarding how they will behave within the systems they occupy. Mehserle could absolutely have chosen differently on New Year's morning, but he couldn't have changed the BART police force on his own, much less what it means to be a police officer in general. Neither Mehserle nor any of us has the power to do this as an individual. Systems are embedded in history and bolstered by other mutually supportive systems. They resist change.

That is not to say that individual resistance is meaningless—quite the contrary. Individual acts of resistance are the sources of hope—the biblical yeast that has the potential to leaven the whole loaf over time. (The problem is that we can't wait for the loaf to rise while more black men are killed by police officers.)

And in any case, that is not what Mehserle did. He did not choose to move against the grain but, as most people will do, he remained embedded in it, so of course he is defensive and confused about the system he serves. He convinces himself that the "insanity" is limited, safely bordered on all sides by civilization. Even after the moment of confrontation with the horror of having served his true function, he will soon revert to an understanding of his role as the bringer of civilization, offering the rationality (or better, rationale) of "law" to the system and "order" to chaotic communities.

The language of "law and order" within law enforcement is used to mask both the *murderous* effect on the oppressed, and the *dehumanizing* effect on the oppressors. This is the "brutalization" and "decivilization" that Césaire describes in *Discourse on Colonialism*: "First we must study how colonization works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism…" This is the state of our current system—masking the murderous effects of empire systems on oppressed people and silencing the dehumanizing and brutalizing effects of empire systems on "servant" oppressors. (Furthermore, all of us occupy, at different times, the roles of both "oppressed" and "oppressor.")

Mehserle as Scapegoat

It will never be sufficient to talk about Oscar Grant and Johannes Mehserle as individuals. We must speak of them as parts of an empire system. Human communities are driven to demand that the "secret" sources of conflict result in the adoption of a single person who becomes, like Job, the scapegoat for absolutely everyone—Officer Mehserle, in this sense becomes the common adversary of *our* focus, the surrogate of *our* collective neurosis. Mehserle, in the words of the book of Job,

> becomes a byword among the people,
> and a creature on whose face to spit…
> At this honest men are shocked,
> and the guiltless man rails against the godless;
> just men grow more settled in their ways,
> those whose hands [appear to be] clean become stronger.

We cry for somebody to isolate the evildoer—in biblical terms, the "Jonah" whose presence is blamed for stormy sailing—and say, "Here we've got him, we've got him, and we're going to throw him out here in the ocean [or into the profoundly dysfunctional prison system], and then the race storms will subside."

Mehserle is transformed into a marvelous drug: dangerous, but in moderate doses palliative, capable of soothing all illnesses. For everyone to join in cursing Mehserle is divine work because it strengthens the group's harmony and applies a sovereign remedy to the community's wounds. Thanks to the scapegoat, even the most disinherited (young white anarchists for example) can participate in the protest. In fact, thanks to Mehserle, they are partially integrated into the society that excludes them. But it is not just a question of the rabble. At the other extreme of the moral and social ladder exactly the same thing happens: the "innocent" and the "righteous" (for example liberal whites and ministers of every hue)—those whose hands are "clean"—all take great comfort in the misfortune of the scapegoat.

There is a direct connection between the casting down of the scapegoat—"a creature on whose face to spit"—and the consolation of all "good citizens," the strengthening of the social order. This connection is so scandalous that most people refuse to even consider it. René Girard points out that according to Etienne Dhorme, a literal translation of the biblical line often translated as "I have become … a creature on whose face to spit" (Job 17:6) would read: "I will be a public Tophet," referring to a valley that was synonymous with public shame because it marked a place where the Judeans practiced human sacrifice. Mehserle conveniently becomes a public repository of our collective shame because he stands in for *all of us* who seek to mask not only our practices of human sacrifice, but also our shame at our shared complicity in the system's sacrifice of countless Oscar Grants.

The Weight of History on that BART Platform

All Americans, no matter their race, ethnicity, or class, cleave to sentimental conceptions of everything. In other words, we want the benefit of having an emotion—for example, righteous indignation—without paying for it. It is sentimental and unrealistic, given America's demonstrated history of racism, to suppose that Oscar Grant or any people who have been forced to live with and who consequently have internalized countless forms of oppression and exploitation will continue to step onto life's platform filled with love and forgiveness for white police officers and free of any race hatred or animosity. It is also sentimental and unrealistic, after the centuries-long build up of fear in white people of reprisals by oppressed peoples in America and around the world, and the centuries-long buildup of collective shame in white people about their never-ending complicity in the American empire's sacrifice of black people and other people of color, to believe that Mehserle—a foil, a man soon to become an object of unanimous execration, analogous to James Earl Ray—was anything but overwhelmed, confused, and terrified at the mere presence of a *group* of black youngsters gathered anywhere.

Not only that, but when Mehserle pulled out a gun and shot Oscar Grant in the back in the early morning hours of New Year's day, 2009, the weight of history was resting on a BART platform. Though not visible, countless murdered black men lay on the platform with Grant, witnesses all: Lamar Smith, Emmett Louis Till, Rev. George Wesley Lee, Medgar Evers, John Earl Reese, Willie Edwards Jr., Herbert Lee, Louis Allen, William Lewis Moore, Rev. Bruce Klunder, Henry Hezekiah Dee, Charles Eddie Moore, Jimmie Lee Jackson, Samuel Leamon Younge Jr., Ben Chester White, Wharlest Jackson, and Martin Luther King Jr. Mehserle was confused and overwhelmed by the invisible power of this silent cloud of witnesses, and he reacted by succumbing to the terror in his own head and heart.

Johannes Mehserle is trained by this history to be afraid of his own shadow. He was blinded by his shadow. Oscar Grant was rendered invisible (while under surveillance) as he became Mehserle's shadow. Mehserle unquestioningly acted out his assigned role in the civil war that exists in his own soul and in the soul of all American servant oppressors everywhere.

We Are All Fully Implicated

We servant oppressors have all been thought of and our consent has already been manufactured, whether we consent to use guns or schoolbooks or church bells or television sets or department store mannequins to prop up the system: *all* of us, rich and poor, gay and straight, progressive or liberal or conservative, are intended to serve an imperial agenda and do the killing in an imperial war.

But wait just a minute! We like to think of ourselves as free and independent agents, able to serve our own interests, not controlled by anybody or anything. But as modernists and postmodernists, well-versed in poststructuralism, are we not well aware that we have been recruited from before we were born into a system that pre-existed us and that we are shaped to serve? We are always being pulled this way and that by unconscious forms of racism and classism, by heterosexism (a spawn of sexism), and by ageism, ableism, corporatism, nationalism, globalism, militarism, and capitalism—overarching structures of domination working in tandem.

The plantation of this world is so *within* us! We are fully implicated in a world that does not work, and in a day like this, a time like this, of perpetual violence, horrific brutality, ever-present danger, and constant vulnerability to whichever warlord threatens us, we can hardly imagine, much less live out, anything else.

The problem is that most of us face powers that are subtly a deep and constitutive part of our own lives. We have been attending the imperial seduction party for so long that it takes an unbelievable amount of commitment and discipline not to start involuntarily patting our feet and snapping our fingers and gyrating our hips the minute we hear the *downbeat* of the imperial drum.

Yes. We must continue to make "whiteness" visible; we must continue to

critique disparities of power; we must continue to resist forms of denial of suffering and buy out of the death systems of our collective culture. But the essential primary issue is: where do *I* stand in relation to systems of domination, exploitation, and violence?

For example, if Johannes Mehserle had been able to mount a heroic counterattack—not against his fear of Oscar Grant and the power of the visible and invisible witnesses on the platform, but against the deeper terror in his own soul—and if he had been able to fully comprehend his own servant oppressor position, to fully understand that he cannot dismantle the master's house with the master's gun, are we to believe that anything but despair would have resulted?

Well, maybe. There is a kind of freedom that becomes possible when we understand the reality of the situation in which we are embedded, what it has cost us, and why we have consented to pay the price.

To stop dancing to the beat of the death systems of our culture(s) will be costly, it will be painful, it will be lonely, it may even be fatal. But this is not necessarily bad news. When we begin to face the fact that we are *all* tangled up, and we cannot even untangle, much less resist the interwoven systems of domination, oppression, repression, and alienation that those systems foster—a broadly shared malady that I call "empire affective disorder"—we have a new basis for engaging in principled coalitions and implementing collective projects of freedom.

Starting With Despair

Despair is a fine place to begin. I am reminded of the prophetic witness of Jeremiah, who cries out, "My joy is gone, grief is upon me; my heart is sick; I cannot even comfort myself against sorrow because my heart is barely beating within me." I also resonate with the collective depression, with the *post*—indeed *ongoing*—traumatic stress of the people of Judah when they proclaim, "The harvest is past and the summer is ended, and we are not saved—we are not delivered!"

Real despair is a powerful basis for our collective freedom projects because it has the potential to break down "us and them" divides and move us beyond blame and human sacrifice—sacrifice of *any* human. In fact, real despair necessitates reaching out to other people; if we don't, we are surely lost. Real despair moves us beyond ego-attachment and into humility. There is something very powerful about being able to confess publicly our desperation and our need and our failings. See, self-congratulation and self-reliance preclude confession and vulnerability. And when the people of Judah in the book of Jeremiah were able to own that what they had come up with and what they had done was not working, then they made an opening for the Spirit of Life. When we confess that we need God's life-giving Spirit, a vulnerable self-opening to the mysterious presence of God happens. Despair alchemized by the Spirit of Life produces the capacity for holding the dialectic tension between sorrow and joy. (The singer of the spiritual cries out: "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen / Nobody knows my sorrow / Nobody knows the trouble I've seen / Glory, hallelujah!")

See, like the book of Jeremiah, the aftermath of Oscar Grant's murder is not ultimately about political observation, power analysis, or cultural yearning. The aftermath is about what we do with wounds that appear to be incurable; what we do with seemingly hopeless situations; what we do when we cannot find anything that will soothe our wounds and heal our broken hearts; what we do when we have helped to manufacture our own suffering and the suffering of others. It's about what we are going to do when we run out of pat answers and know-it-all conclusions.

The time for pilot studies on racism and poverty is past. Analyses of cognitive dispositions and other data have no power to measure the misery or to heal the wound. We have written and read books, we have participated in focus groups, we have sat around at community potlucks and coffee houses. We have talked and analyzed. We have deconstructed, reconstructed, and organized rallies and created petitions, and now "the harvest is past, the summer has ended, and we are not saved" (Jeremiah 8:20). We have watched many seasons—many years of June, July, and August—come and go. We have picked and picked, and we have not been able to gain enough sustenance to sustain ourselves and our movements. And with all of our smarts, and with all of our books, and with all of our group discussions, we are still not delivered!

What the Spirit of Life Enables Us to Do

If we are going to be effective against the large-scale forces of deathliness, we need the Spirit's life, the Spirit's wisdom, the Spirit's humility, and the Spirit's wasteful lovingness. We need the Spirit's reckless generosity and the Spirit's ceaseless compassion—which means that we need the Spirit. We can't receive the gifts of the Spirit without letting go of our defenses against it. When we let go of the defenses, we are ready to do whatever God wants us to do. This is really the question, you know: "What does the Spirit of Life want to do here and now, through us, in the midst of the current crisis? How does the Spirit want to use *us* to bring life out of death?"

Luke says, "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," and that is true no matter what the police or the government or any powers try to do to thwart it. This means that there is, despite all of the scripting, something moving in and among us that is free, not colonized, and not domesticated, by the police or anybody else. And this free Spirit that cannot be co-opted is empowering us, just as the Spirit enabled Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott—white middle-class women—to work with Frederick Douglass to end slavery (however tenuous was their alliance), and just as the Spirit empowered African American activist Ida B. Wells-Barnett to work with white women like Jessie Daniel Ames and Lillian Smith to end lynching. It is the Spirit that longs for the flourishing of *all* life that enables people to work across lines of difference, to rise above our own self-interest and cross over into solidarity with all others, both laying down

weapons and sharing assets. This is what it means to be a "resurrected" human being. This is what enables us to implement God's mercy and justice and life-releasing power in this world. But, as Jesus says, it is a spring that comes up from the inmost being and spills over. We cannot minister the Spirit's life to others unless we are open to being made more and more fully alive ourselves.

Being connected to the power of the Spirit should always produce certain positive outcomes: more life, more love, more grace, more mercy, more compassion, more radical hospitality and welcome, and more peace and greater Spirit-activated determination for producing a just and free society.

It is ultimately only the Spirit of Life that can interrupt the repetition compulsion—the tendency to act out on others the suffering we ourselves have experienced—and radically break the seemingly unbreakable matrix of domination and control held in place by human sacrifice, a matrix that exists both outside and inside of us.

Like the people of Judah in the book of Jeremiah, faithful people everywhere are being called by the Spirit of Life to the work of revolution—to Spirit revolution—within God's own revolutionary conflict.

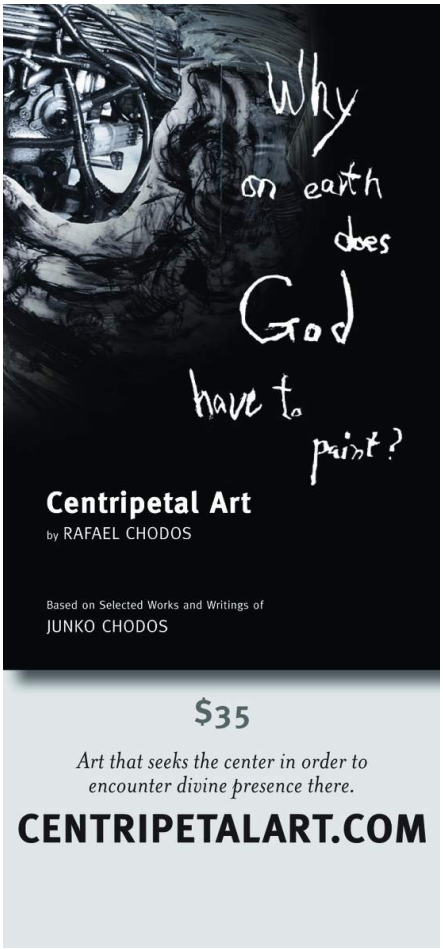
Do the Relational Work—the Resurrection Work

We must resist empire and work to dismantle the domination system as represented by the police force. But the Spirit's way is not just to attack deathliness on its own terms or through its own modes. Audre Lorde spoke the gospel truth when she said, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." We will never dismantle the law enforcement and "criminal injustice systems" by invoking or mimicking the mechanisms of those systems.

One of the primary characteristics that we see in empire and colonization is that they work from the top down and from the outside in. The Holy Spirit works from the bottom up and from the inside out. I see examples of this in my own neighborhood of West Oakland in California. People's Grocery is doing groundbreaking work on food security in this low income community—growing and sourcing nutritious organic local food, teaching cooking and nutrition classes, hiring and training youth to staff produce stands in the neighborhood and advocate for supportive policies and legislation, and bringing neighbors together through the Grub Box program in which people of some means subsidize their own and a neighbor's community supported agriculture shares. At the same time, they are also connecting with Seminary of the Street, an Oakland-based group with which I work, to find ways to do deep spiritual and emotional healing around issues of racism, classism, and gentrification with their mostly white interns and the largely African American community members. This work is bringing true resurrection life to this neighborhood.

Also, we at Seminary of the Street are just beginning to do the work of bringing genuine care and concern to the brokenness of the African American men who are dealing drugs in our neighborhood. We are bringing love and tenderness to the ungrieved losses, the relational estrangement, and the internalized oppression, and we are also challenging them to be accountable to the tradition of righteous struggle out of which they come. Then, as we build the relational capital and also bring in healing services like massage, yoga, and support groups, we begin to form coalitions to make structural changes such as the creation of meaningful work that pays a living wage, community safety patrols to replace police presence, and restorative justice processes. As someone who occupies a number of frequently conflicting subject positions—African American, lesbian, Christian pastor—I recognize that many progressive people would like to jump over the relational work—the resurrection work—and impose the new structures tomorrow, but that simply won't work, and what's more, it just replicates the domination that this community has already experienced far too often.

These examples illustrate the scriptural yeast principle. We need to witness the power of a little yeast here and a little yeast there, leavening and transforming the texture and the essence of this world system. We need to see the Gospel's principle of light in darkness: a little light in darkness here and a little light in darkness there will transform darkness to light—that's God's promise. That is the way of the Spirit. It's not grandiose. It's not self-aggrandizing. Sometimes it is dramatic; often it is not. It is how the Spirit of Life—the life-giving, life-engendering power of God—will rupture in, healing and repairing what is broken and damaged by the deathly behavior of created beings and countering the baffling, cunning, death-dealing forces of empire. Let us be raised from the dead by the Spirit of Life, and then we will harness, channel, and gush out the energies of love and know the true power of resurrection, rising above ourselves and our own petty interests and living in peace. ■



LIBERATION THEOLOGY
(continued from page 79)

mobile capital can play workers and governments of all countries against each other, leading to the dismantling of the welfare functions of the state and strengthening the security functions. The international aspect of this has been that the main military and political servants of capital empire—the United States, the EU, and their allies—are going back to methods of direct violence to steal and control resources in places like Iraq and Afghanistan. At the same time, there is increasing social downgrading of more and more people, direct violent aggression, and destruction of nature around the earth. Human rights, originally formulated by the bourgeoisie, are increasingly being destroyed by global capitalism in the form of empire.

In this situation it is utopian and unrealistic to assume that some leaders with good hearts can save humanity and the earth from destruction. Finance capital is asking for maximum profits, at the moment up to 25 percent on the invested capital and even more—a profit rate that no real economy can yield. That is why companies are forced to produce unemployment and to avoid all ecological care in order to save costs. Also all goods and services for the satisfaction of real needs are deteriorating in order to extract profit for capital. Politicians and media are being co-opted by both corruption and blackmailing, making democracy a farce. As capital by definition is the investment of money and other assets in order to create more capital, and as this is the driving force of the dominating economy, it is completely correct to call this system capitalism. And it is also correct to call the global political and military powers protecting this system imperialist.

As a pastor you know the Bible. Is it not the prophetic task of the people of God to name the powers, to unmask and engage them? But then the question arises: how to engage the powers and how to change the situation so that humanity and earth, God's creation, may live. If you look to the Bible for help, you can discover different strategies dependent on the context. If you look at the classical prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah, they indeed try to change the situation of injustice by directly addressing the kings and the aristocracy. However, already in the case of the struggle for power after the deaths of Kings Manasseh and Amon (643-640 BCE) the prophets join with the movement of the peasants who put the eight-year-old prince Josiah on the throne of David. Under his rule the faith in the liberating God of Israel and God's rules of solidarity for keeping freedom were restored, as you can read in the Torah's book of Deuteronomy. This situation can be regarded as an approximate analogy to the times of the New Deal and Social Market Economy. People had a common framework through which to address the elites.

However, by Hellenistic times the situation had changed completely. Particularly after the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV had taken power, he prohibited the worship of the God of Israel, YHWH, in the temple of Jerusalem, where he put a statue of Zeus. The economy was to be governed by the absolute rule of property, money, and slavery. No life according to the Torah was possible. In this situation there was no possibility of correcting the situation by speaking to the rulers. The Maccabeans took up arms for a liberation war and the Hasidim practiced passive resistance. A witness of this is the book of Daniel, the third chapter of which characterizes the situation by telling the parable of an emperor erecting a statue of gold and asking everybody to bow in front of it. All do so, except three Jewish men who are ready to suffer the consequences: martyrdom. So in this situation resistance against the absolutist system was the only way of following God and preparing for a future in dignity and faith for people.

The same can be seen in the Roman Empire. Many Judeans took up arms against the occupation forces, others tried to politically bargain; others engaged in passive resistance. One particular strategy was used by the Jesus movement. Building on the book of Daniel—where in chapter seven the seer had envisaged the kingdom of God with a human face, overcoming the empires, characterized as wild beasts—Jesus proclaimed and practiced God's coming kingdom as already happening among people. He liberated people from the demons of the oppressive powers of Rome and Mammon, the God of accumulating wealth, and built with them small cells living according to the life-giving Torah of solidarity. Thus he created leaven to penetrate the whole people, followed later by the apostle Paul building new communities of Jews and gentiles, living peacefully together in the whole *oikumene* of the Roman Empire. So in the midst of an absolutely exploitative and oppressive system, the realistic policy is to resist and develop concrete alternatives among the people.

But you have a *second argument*. You say:

> We have learned that large-scale changes have unintended consequences that can often be disastrous, and that they too often lead to the rise to power of people who care more about power than about healing the world. We've learned from Reinhold Niebuhr and other Christian theologians that it is really more in accord with the Gospel to frame our vision in ways that are not utopian.

Your point is well taken. You could see this tendency of perverting liberation into oppression already when the Maccabeans came to power. They quickly developed into normal Hellenistic potentates. Also when the Christians got to power with the help of the Roman emperor Constantine in the year 312, they applied violence against Jews, later also Muslims, witches, and whole peoples through colonialism, neocolonialism, and imperialism, from 1492 up to this day. Minority Christian groups who did not follow this path were accused of being heretics and persecuted, too. The only way to overcome this heritage is to learn from leaders like Gandhi. The key point here is that the means in the struggle for justice and peace have to mirror the end. If you want justice and peace, these have to be the guiding criteria on the way. This is why Gandhi claimed that the strategy to achieve these goals is *satyagraha* (holding fast to truth) and *ahimsa* (active nonviolent direct action).

With these you do not tolerate injustice but confront the perpetrator (in his case the British Empire), forcing it to react. By reacting with increasingly open violence, it discredited itself, losing legitimacy. As no power can survive without legitimacy, more and more people joined the struggle, encouraged by the pioneers who had been risking their lives.

But, finally, you have a third argument:

> We also have learned from the Gospel that human beings were conceived in sin and have a strong tendency toward sin. For that very reason, we want to avoid giving any person or group of people the power to shape our lives. We know that human beings are so tempted to fall for their own egos, their own shadow side, and their own evil instincts that we cannot allow them to get the power to do that. By fighting for small incremental steps, we can be sure that each step is carefully measured and doesn't push human beings beyond their current capacities, and that provides us with much more safety than we could possibly get from large-scale changes.

In this argument I see two strands. The first one puzzles me. Are you not contradicting yourself? Is not the present situation exactly characterized by "giving persons and groups of people the power to shape our lives"? Is it not the owners of capital and their agents—the bankers, the managers, the business consultants, etc.—who determine the lives of the people and even the whole earth? Do they not determine the decisions of the governments? What about the lobbyists in the capitals of the States and Washington, D.C.? In Brussels, the headquarters of the EU, there are 15,000 of them, highly paid, while the poor majorities have no money to make their voice heard. Have they not indebted our public budgets to an incredible extent in order to take our democratically elected governments hostage and blackmail them for their own purposes, i.e., making money at the cost of people and earth?

In order to really make governments accountable, you have to democratize the economy. Therefore, social movements and faithful parts of the faith communities around the world are developing alternative ways of doing economy: people form cooperatives; they take over companies that have gone bankrupt from the neoliberal policies like in Argentina after the crash in 2001; they develop networks of solidarity economy and participatory communal budgets like in Brazil; they produce their own decentralized alternative energy (sun, wind, water, biomass) at the communal level like in Germany; they stop the privatization of public goods and services like water, energy, public transport, health, and education. In Uruguay, after the social movements had achieved the change to a socially oriented government five years ago, the first action of the new government was to write into the constitution "Water must never be privatized."

All of this and many more things show that there is a great cultural paradigm shift in the making. More and more people realize that the present way of life and economic system has no future. The population of the United States already has a lifestyle that needs six planets; the Europeans use up three planets. How long can that last? The crisis we are in is not just a financial crisis, but a deep crisis of modernity that builds on a presupposition, formulated by the philosopher Descartes in the seventeenth century: "Man is lord and owner of nature."

This touches upon the last part of your argument: Who is the human being? You say you are following the Gospel. But in reality you are following Thomas Hobbes, the seventeenth-century philosopher who first projected what he saw in the capitalist market economy onto the nature of the human being: everyone, being an atomistic individual, strives for more wealth, power, and reputation. The Bible has a different view. Humans are created as relational beings, men and women, in the image of God, blessed by God and called to be stewards of the earth (Gen. 1:26-28). Indeed, sin is tempting them but they are called to control it (Gen. 4:7). God gives them rules about how to stay in the blessing and in freedom (Deuteronomy). And Jesus reinforces this reality by radiating the spirit of solidarity to make the beginnings of God's kingdom happen among people, to penetrate humanity like salt and light (Matt. 5). So pinning people down in the inescapability of sin is not in accordance with the Gospel.

Nor is it in line with the latest scientific findings. Brain research shows that human beings have so-called mirror neurons that enables them to feel empathy with other creatures and make them enjoy cooperation. Relational psychology tells us that from the original relationship between mother and baby onward we become (strong) selves only in relationships of mutual recognition. Even economic happiness research shows that, having reached a certain standard of living, people do not become happier by accumulating more and more money. Instead, people's happiness increases by living in good relations at all levels. The same is experienced in other faiths like Buddhism. Happiness is achieved by living with empathy.

Besides all this scientific and spiritual evidence, the overcoming of the Western modern ideology of possessive individualism and the war of all against all is a question of survival of humanity and the earth. If we continue to declare the Western model "realism," we will not only kill the earth but also commit suicide. Therefore, the Jewish-Christian central call, "Love your neighbor as yourself," must be translated differently (in the tradition of Buber and Levinas): "Love your neighbor—he/she is yourself." Bishop Desmond Tutu says the same idea is expressed in the African philosophy of ubuntu: "I live only when you live." This, of course, has to be organized within participatory institutions of power control, starting from the local level. But the basis is to overcome the illusionary suicidal Western utopia of the limitless growth of the individual and to become realistic with the spiritual and wisdom traditions and sciences of humanity.

So, dear brother, join us in AGAPE—the Greek word for love; it is taken up by a program of the World Council of Churches, but here AGAPE is translated as Alternative Globalization Addressing People and Earth. ■

Culture Klatch

BY JOSH KORNBLUTH

My son's middle school was having a "culture fair" recently, so he asked me for some guidance. His task was to create a display that described his Jewish heritage.

"When is it due?" I asked.

"Tomorrow."

"When did your teacher first assign it?"

"Oh, a couple of months ago."

This answer filled me with pride. Though I had failed to provide him with a grounding in his Jewish birthright, no one could argue that I had stinted in his training as a procrastinator—a skill that my own parents had painstakingly drilled into me from an early age.

"Ask your mother," I suggested.

"But she's Japanese."

"Yes, but she makes a delicious kugel."

But my wife, a non-procrastinator, had already completed her day's duties and was sound asleep. So instead, my son suggested that we go online to ellisisland.org and look for records of our ancestors' arrivals. This got me excited, as I've always longed to know more about previous generations of my family. Especially on my father's side, such information is scarce, since everyone has eternally been at war with everyone else: the only way bloodshed has been avoided in our American diaspora is through a negotiated fifty-state solution.

Our journey to ellisisland.org was a perilous one—crammed onto a tiny laptop, riding through cyberspace along with thousands of other travelers in search of a homepage. All we had for sustenance was what we could scrounge from the fridge. After what seemed like an eternity (our Wi-Fi has been pretty wonky lately), we arrived at our destination—haggard, yes, but also grateful that Fate had allowed us to reach the promised database without contracting some fatal virus.

Unfortunately, we could find no trace there of either my father's or mother's parents—no indication, from ship manifests or clerical logs, that any of my kin had ever debarked at Ellis Island. This raised the uncomfortable possibility that I was an android, in whom scientists had meticulously planted false "memories" of a secular Jewish childhood along with a totally fictitious ancestry in Eastern Europe. Perhaps that could finally explain the "otherness" I'd often felt among human beings, as well as my curious affinity for hardware stores.

Or maybe the names had just been spelled differently by the Ellis Island functionaries.

In any case, it was getting late—and my son needed answers. Fortunately for Jews like me, there are Mormons. Mormons keep genealogical records the way my family keeps grudges. It was through the Mormon-run Ancestry.com website that I finally tracked down historical records of my forebears. In 1920 in Brooklyn and in 1930 in Allentown, Pennsylvania, census workers had interviewed members of my mother's and father's families, respectively. Unfortunately, these interviews had apparently been quite boring and perfunctory, as the reproduced forms gave only such basic information as "number in household." Decades later, during the McCarthy Era, the government would take a much keener interest in my communist-leaning family. (Little did the FBI realize that, with our clan's tendency toward procrastination and internal bickering, we had zero chance of organizing a successful backyard barbecue, much less a revolution.) Sadly, though, there wasn't enough time before my son's culture fair for us to launch a Freedom of Information Act request for our family files.

So, as usual, in the absence of hard facts I was forced to fall back on my memories. And as we sat there in the dark kitchen, our faces illuminated only by the computer screen, I was suddenly overtaken by an affecting recollection from my own childhood: sitting with my dad in the old movie theater where he would often take me to see the numerous Japanese movies featuring Zatoichi, the blind masseur and swordsman. My schoolteacher father, though not a masseur or a swordsman and only very nearsighted, identified strongly with Zatoichi. Both of them were committed to empowering the downtrodden against their corrupt oppressors, whether in nineteenth-century Japan or twentieth-century America. And when—as he inevitably did, in every installment—Zatoichi suffered, Dad suffered as well. Watching him weep as, up on the big screen, Zatoichi was dragged along rough terrain by a rope attached to a galloping horse, I learned what it meant to empathize with others on the margins: I learned what it meant to be a Jew.

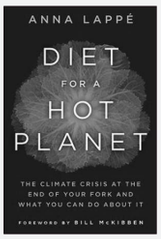
At the time of this writing, my son has not yet received a grade for his culture-fair display. It's possible that his teacher may have been confused by a Jewish cultural history depicted entirely through the stories and images of a blind Japanese masseur and swordsman. Then again, we live in Berkeley, so maybe she understood. And I bet she enjoyed the tasty kugel that my wife baked in the morning. ■

Josh Kornbluth is a monologuist who lives in Berkeley with his wife and son and their cornsnake, Snakey. His latest solo show is Andy Warhol: Good for the Jews? *You can follow his doings at joshkornbluth.com.*

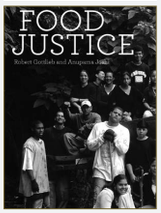
WILLIAM MERCER MCLEOD

Tikkun RECOMMENDS

DIET FOR A HOT PLANET
Anna Lappé
Bloomsbury, 2010



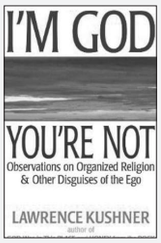
FOOD JUSTICE
Robert Gottlieb and Anupama Joshi
The MIT Press, 2010



What we eat (and how) has an important impact not only on our own health but also on the health of the planet. Anna Lappé demonstrates that our food choices have a very direct effect on climate warming—because they shape the world's agricultural production. With verve and clarity, Lappé presents us with the tools to understand and fight for a more rational approach to food production, government policies, and our own personal food consumption.

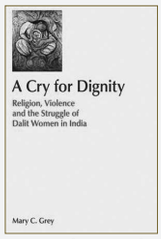
Gottlieb and Joshi's book gives us a fuller idea of how the food justice movement has grown in the past several decades. This book gives plenty of reason for hope, plus lots of useful information on how the struggle is being mounted for a sane food policy. The authors are aware of the way movements can fail, so they are careful to expose the structural changes that are necessary, in addition to showing what is being done well.

I'M GOD, YOU'RE NOT
Lawrence Kushner
Jewish Lights Publishing, 2010



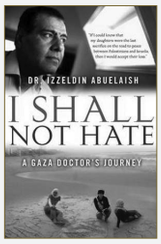
This collection of short articles by one of the great contemporary teachers of Jewish spirituality, subtitled "Observations on Organized Religion & Other Disguises of the Ego," is a quick way to get what Zalman Schachter-Shalomi calls "a window in the heart and soul of a man who models what it means to be a rabbi." Kushner teaches that "the goal of all spiritual life is to get your ego out of the way—outwit the sucker; dissolve it; shoot it; kill it. Silence the incessant planning, organizing, running, manipulating, possessing, and processing" because these activities "preclude awareness of the Divine." The Torah is the story of what happens to people when they forget God's message: "I'm God, you're not." A pleasurable read that is often profound.

A CRY FOR DIGNITY
Mary C. Grey
Equinox Publishing, 2010



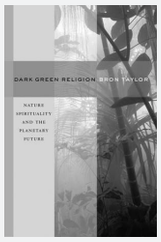
Subtitled "Religion, Violence, and the Struggle of Dalit Women in India," Mary Grey's new book reveals the incredible suffering of those who were once called "untouchables" in India. Grey has been a pioneer in the effort to publicize in the West the problems facing Indian women—particularly those who live in rural areas and have to struggle to obtain water. Now she turns her attention to the way that the persistence of caste prejudice and oppression of women has become a major obstacle to economic development. As a Roman Catholic theologian, Grey has concentrated her attention on issues of social justice, especially in the area of feminist and liberation theologies. Recognizing that religion can be both a source of oppression and also a resource for liberation, Grey presents a nuanced account of the movements that have arisen to challenge the oppression of the untouchables, as well as a powerful call for action.

I SHALL NOT HATE
Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish
Walker & Company, 2011



On January 16, 2009, Israeli shells hit Dr. Abuelaish's home in the Gaza Strip during Israel's invasion, killing three of his daughters and his niece. A Palestinian physician who grew up in the Jabalia refugee camp in Gaza and went on to study in Cairo and then at Harvard, Dr. Abuelaish writes that the personal catastrophe (accompanied, of course, by the deaths of some 1,400 Palestinians during the Israeli assault), deepened his belief that "violence is futile. It is a waste of time, life and resources, and has been proven only to beget more violence."

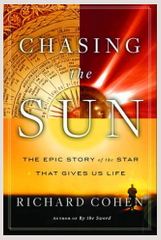
DARK GREEN RELIGION
Bron Taylor
University of California Press, 2009



In earlier environmental writings, some used biblical quotes to blame the environmental crisis on Western religions' alleged attitude that humans should dominate nature. Taylor skillfully presents a counter-argument, showing that many of those fighting to protect nature from the destructive effects of our economic and political systems have been deeply rooted in spiritual or religious traditions that have enhanced their sensitivity to nature, and many have also helped create what he calls "green religions" and what others call "earth-based" spiritualities. The good news, Taylor proclaims, is the existence of a "new global earth tribe" composed of people with wildly different backgrounds but sharing "dark green" perceptions and values. These people stand up for life, and we at *Tikkun* stand up for them!

CHASING THE SUN

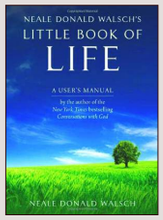
Richard Cohen
Random House, 2010



Every religious and spiritual tradition incorporates within it the experience of being overwhelmed by the mystery and wonder of nature. Richard Cohen dedicates his book to "the love that moves the sun and the other stars" and we at *Tikkun* might add that this love is what some people call God. Cohen takes us on a wild adventure of free associations to the Sun (capitalized by him) in global cultures: worshipping the sun, seeking to be tanned by the sun, getting "nearest to the Sun" in the color of our hair (Cohen sees the extraordinary history of privileging blonds as connected to the sun and fire worship of Proto-Indo-Europeans), and more. He notes along the way that by mid–twentieth century "the Sun could serve almost any literary purpose: symbol, metaphor, inspiration, dramatic force, intimate companion, intransigent adversary, comic butt, tragic endgame, source of redemption or of philosophical belief." Cohen ends his explorations with a provocative chapter on what human beings will do billions of years hence (or whatever being we've evolved into by then) as the sun eventually loses its energy. Yet for us, the living, the sun remains our central encounter with the miraculous, no matter how much our consciousness is tamed into narrow utilitarian grooves—and so every morning many of us still wake to bless the sun and to marvel in the mysteries of the universe as we contemplate this life-nourishing force, a mere 333,000 times the mass of the earth!

LITTLE BOOK OF LIFE: A USER'S MANUAL

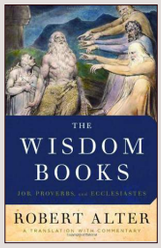
Neale Donald Walsch
Hampton Roads, 2010



Dismissed as New Age, Neale Donald Walsch's popular spiritual insights have not received the careful attention they deserve. The premise of his *Conversations with God* seemed so outlandish that few literary magazines or book reviewers gave it serious attention, though it remained a national best seller for three years as millions of Americans found within it a deep wisdom that they could not find in their own religious traditions. Reviewing the three volumes of that work led us to appreciate a depth of insight that could hold its own with many more lauded works that covered their backs with academic quotations and learned essays. *Little Book of Life* can similarly be mistaken as the product of a guru's ego out of control, yet it is chock full of wisdom we all know but do not take seriously enough. Walsch calls upon us to take the spiritual insight that "we are all one" and apply it to politics, economics, and caring for the earth. He calls for us to overcome the delusion of ownership: "We do not own the earth any more than we own our children.... We don't even own the land beneath us, just because we have a deed to it, much less the sky above us ... I envision an economy in the 21st century where the kind of ownership that allows us to destroy something at will, because we bought it, ignoring completely the effects that it has on the rest of us, will no longer be possible.... I see a place where finally we are clear that there's enough—that there is enough of what we think we need to be happy for us to finally share it." It's comforting to know that at least one pop-spiritual guru has the wisdom to apply spiritual principles to social reality and advocates equality and the redistribution of wealth and satisfactions in the details of daily life.

THE WISDOM BOOKS: JOB, PROVERBS, AND ECCLESIASTES

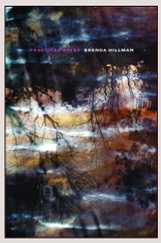
A translation with commentary by Robert Alter
W.W. Norton & Company, 2010



Contemporary doubts about God pale in comparison with the Bible's own inclusion of the books of Job and Ecclesiastes. Any conception of God intervening in our lives to make things all right is virtually destroyed, leaving us with conceptions of God that do not fit into any pious orthodoxy. These conceptions provide the groundwork for a different kind of theology than that held by the rabbis who made the decision to include them. Robert Alter is a well-respected scholar, and his translation reflects the wide expanse of his knowledge; his commentaries, however, are a bit of a distraction, focused far more on the literary and translation issues than on the underlying wisdom and spiritual challenges of these texts. If Norton is thinking of publishing more books of the Bible, it would be well advised to seek Alter-like translations, but to find spiritual rather than literary experts to take on the task of commentary.

PRACTICAL WATER

Brenda Hillman
Wesleyan University Press, 2009



If you are ever on the verge of despair about the way American culture is drenched in mass communication trivia and academic irrelevance, read Brenda Hillman's latest collection of poetry and rejoice. Here is a woman alive to the contradictions and obscenities of modern American power, who can notice the smallest details of life and rejoice in them, who sanctifies the waters of life even as she watches them being destroyed by the alleged progress of capital, and who thereby becomes a contemporary Allen Ginsberg and Denise Levertov, updated and refined through her own unique sensibility and sensitivity to rhythm and paradox.