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Tikkun at 30

***TIKKUN* CO-FOUNDER AND EDITOR RABBI MICHAEL LERNER**

Ok, i'll admit it—I am proud of our role as a prophetic voice for peace, love, environmental sanity, social transformation, and unabashedly utopian aspirations for the world that can be.

Over these past thirty years *Tikkun* has been a platform for young writers to emerge as public intellectuals and for established thinkers and academics to posit groundbreaking philosophies and radical ideas. It has also been a stage for novelists and poets to flex their minds and for spiritual progressives and social change activists to urge self-reflection, inner psychological and spiritual healing, and direct action.

Our goal of *tikkun olam*—the healing and transformation of the world—is far from having been achieved (duh!). But the *Tikkun* community has made some important contributions along the way, including a perspective on the psychodynamics of American politics which, had it been adopted by liberals and progressives, might have spared us some of the most troubling features of American politics in 2016. Our writers and thinkers have much to contribute to the world, and for this 30th anniversary issue of the magazine, we want to celebrate some of those ideas.

When I say "*Tikkun* community," I mean it. *Tikkun* has been a product of the creativity and hard work of thousands of authors, artists, editors, interns, and volunteers—plus the support of tens of thousands of readers who have donated to make it possible for the unique voices in *Tikkun* to be heard in the public sphere. We don't have major outside funding these days, and without readers' generous tax-deductible donations, *Tikkun* would not be able to stay alive. I am also grateful to the publishers who have contributed so much to our enterprise; Nan Fink Gefen, the co-founder and original publisher of *Tikkun*; Danny and Victor Goldberg in the mid and late 1990s; Trish Lerner Vradenburg and George Vradenburg for the first decade of the 21st century; and Duke University Press (current).

In this, our 30th anniversary issue (loosely themed "*Tikkun*: The First Decade"), we highlight some of the ideas that we've helped pioneer and re-present some of the most compelling articles we've run. We selected some of our favorite pieces from the first ten years of *Tikkun*'s existence (1986 through 1996). Because there were so many we wanted to include, we mostly printed shorter excerpts of the articles. We urge you to read the full versions online at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30. Think of each excerpt as a small taste of the whole piece. Why from only the first ten years? Simple. There have been so many amazing articles throughout the last 30 years that we'd need at least ten full issues of the magazine just to present a sample of those we liked best (and even for the first ten years we had to leave so many great pieces out because of space). On our website we not only print the full versions of articles we've excerpted here, we also print full versions of many other articles that equally deserve your attention from that same period.

But before we get to those excerpts, let me recount how the *Tikkun* community and the magazine came into existence and share our mission for the next thirty years.

Roots

We trace our mission and worldview to the heritage of the Jewish people, who shared with previous religious traditions a sense of awe and wonder at the grandeur of the universe. Yet most of those spiritual traditions had been shaped by ruling elites who wanted ordinary people to embrace a world of unequal power and injustice, in part by claiming that the gods had shaped a fixed hierarchical social structure that could not be changed and was built into the structure of the universe.

In contrast, the Jewish people's message was that the social world was constructed by human beings who were fundamentally good or had the unlimited potential to be good, but had gone astray, and that we, the human race, have the potential to create a very different kind of reality. What makes that possible is that we are created in the image of the Force of Healing and Transformation (Yud Hey Vav Hey, sometimes read by non-Jews 'Yahveh' or 'Jehovah,' a.k.a. God). As I've argued more fully in my book *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation*, God is the spiritual energy of the universe, ingredient in every ounce of all that is, that makes possible the transformation from "that which is" to "that which ought to be."

Torah also taught us that one of our central obligations is to build a world based on love and justice. Importantly, the love is not only for our neighbors, but also for those who are "the other" or "the stranger." We are enjoined not only to do

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PUBLISHER Duke University Press

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justice to that stranger or other, but also to love her. The belief that it is actually possible to build a world based on these principles of love and justice was foundational for *Tikkun* magazine.

The urgency of Torah's message was dramatized in the Jewish prophetic tradition from Amos and Hosea, through Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Yeshu (a.k.a. Jesus of Nazareth), and down through the ages to its re-articulation in Abraham Joshua Heschel's book *The Prophets*. By the time Nan Fink Gefen and I started *Tikkun* in 1986, the reverberations of the prophetic tradition in the past few hundred years provided another part of our foundation. It took secular form in the works of Marx, Freud, and Wilhelm Reich, Herbert Marcuse, Sheldon Wolin and Richard Lichtman, Erich Fromm and Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Einstein and Noam Chomsky, Rosa Luxemburg and Simone de Beauvoir, Frederick Douglass and W.E.B. Du Bois, James Baldwin and Toni Morrison, Nelson Mandela and Che Guevara, Betty Friedan and Shulamith Firestone, among so many others. And it took religious form in liberation theology and in the writings and life experience of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Buber and Yeshayahu Leibowitz, Matthew Fox and Rachel Adler, Arthur Waskow, Mordecai Kaplan and Emmanuel Levinas, and through the years of interactions with my personal mentors Heschel and Zalman Schachter-Shalomi. We also drew inspiration from a wide variety of movements including the Civil Rights, anti-war, feminist, and LBGTQ movements, the Anti-Apartheid Movement, the Catholic Worker Movement, wisdom from all branches of Judaism, P'nai Or, which became Aleph: The Alliance for Jewish Renewal, the Jewish Peace Fellowship, Breira, the Israeli branch of Peace Now, Yesh Gvul, Greenpeace, and the American Friends Service Committee.

These were some of the thinkers, movements, and traditions we drew upon for inspiration and wisdom when we started *Tikkun*, always aware that we were inheritors of great richness of thought and experience. At every stage along the way we've been guided by the wisdom of Peter Gabel, my associate editor-at-large, who was my partner in shaping many of the ideas that filled *Tikkun* with creative energy.

The Path to *Tikkun*

Tikkun is a project of the Institute for Labor and Mental Health that I helped create in 1977. The original group of founders included psychiatrists, psychologists, and several labor union activists and leaders of local unions. My original intention in bringing these people together was to try to develop a way to understand the psychodynamics of American society and to understand the massive defections from the labor movement that had been an important source of support for progressive social welfare measures, and a central force in achieving some degree of wage increases and safety and health protections not only for its own members but for the working class as a whole. After receiving a Ph.D. in psychology from the Wright Institute, I wrote a research grant proposal to the National Institute of Mental Health to fund the Institute for Labor and Mental Health to help us understand what was happening in working class consciousness. In the ensuing ten years of research what my colleagues and I discovered was that there was a massive spiritual crisis in American society that was being addressed by the Right, albeit in distorted form, and that the Left didn't understand at all.

In our workshops, trainings, individual and group research sessions, and mass events we learned about two sources of stress at work that are brought home and together generate a great deal of suffering for many: the internalization of the values of the marketplace and the self-blaming inherent in the view that we live in a meritocracy.

First, the values of the marketplace. We discovered that most people in capitalist society spend the bulk of their waking hours in work environments where they quickly learn that their value is judged primarily by how well they contribute to the current bottom line of money and power for the owners and managers of these institutions. In an economy which rewards those who are seeking primarily to advance their own self-interests without regard to the consequences for other people or for the environment, people who expect to keep their jobs or advance their chances of being "successful" quickly learn to see others through a utilitarian lens ("What can you do for me?"). Living in this consciousness all day long, day after day, year after year, most working people inevitably bring it home to their personal lives and families where it is massively reinforced by television sitcoms, movies, and cynical news media. Overall, what they have learned is that to be rational means "looking out for number one" because everyone else is going to be maximizing their own advantage wherever they can.

The more this market-driven, capitalist worldview sinks in, the more people treat each other as objects to be managed or manipulated to advance one's own personal interests or perceived needs. The consequences are multifold in daily life. Friendships become weaker and the solidarity ethos dissipates. Seeking a partner, love, or relationship becomes like shopping at the supermarket—just think about speed dating to get a picture. And family life seems less secure because one's spouse might, as a rational maximizer of self-interest, leave you at any time if s/he believes that some other person might satisfy more of his/her needs or desires. Even one's own children, we learned, sometimes approach their parents with a "what have you done for me lately" kind of attitude. It became clear in our research that it is almost impossible to live in this society and not have internalized the logic of the marketplace. Yet doing so creates great instability in family life and makes people feel more lonely and less trusting of others.

Second, self-blaming. All day long people are told that the kind of jobs they can get, the degree to which their jobs allow them to use their intellectual and creative capacities, and the

incomes they receive are simply an objective measure of their actual value as human beings. This notion that the economy is a meritocracy and that where one ends up in it is a reflection of one's human worth undermines the ability of many workers to act on the anger they might feel at an oppressive work situation. Instead, they internalize that anger, directing it against themselves for not having been more successful. All this was intensified for many by the move of capital to shut down manufacturing jobs in the U.S. and move them abroad where they could pay workers less, avoid safety, health, and environmental regulations, and boost the super-profits of the owners. The uncertainty about their economic future, the viability of their pension funds, and the looming possibility of unemployment added yet another element to the insecurity many working people were experiencing, and those tensions were also brought home where they manifested in depression, anger, or emotional distancing that impacted family life. Ironically, the power of the meritocratic ideology, combined with the willingness of labor leaders and the Democratic Party national leadership to go along with these developments rather than use the instruments of government to fight the de-industrialization of America, led many of those facing this problem to blame themselves for having failed to secure for themselves a job or career that could (they imagined) avoid the looming unemployment, or partial employment, or employment in jobs with more marginal pay, than had been possible for the majority of the American working class from 1945-1971.

These factors became central to the surge of divorce rates. As families and relationships increasingly fall apart, in part as casualties of the triumph of materialism and selfishness discussed above, most people blamed themselves for not having the more idealized relationships that the media seemed to be suggesting was available to everyone who deserved it. Loneliness, even in a marriage and with friends, and a pervasive feeling of distrust of others, combine to generate a great deal of inner rage that is often momentarily drowned out through alcohol, drugs, sexual acting out, television or internet addiction, frenetic texting, exercising, eating, and . . . well you can probably name some more.

Most of the middle-income working people we studied actually hated the ethos of selfishness and materialism they encountered all around them, and felt dirtied by it. They hungered for more meaning in their lives—they wished their work could be serving some higher good, contributing in some way to the good of all. They yearned for a more spiritual world, even when another part of them seemed to be telling them that such a world was not to be had, and even when acknowledging such needs might make others see them as weird or crazy.

What people were telling us is they had a part of themselves that we subsequently began to call a spiritual consciousness. They yearned for a world in which people see others not through an instrumental or utilitarian framework, but rather as inherently deserving of our love and respect just by virtue of being a human being, or in religious language, as having been created in the image of God. To see every other human being as a subject, not an object, or as Martin Buber put it, as someone to relate to in an I-Thou rather than I-It way, is to recognize the Other as inherently valuable and as a manifestation of the sacred. Rather than see the obstacles to creating these kinds of friendships and marriages as reflecting the prevalence of the ethos of the capitalist marketplace, most people blamed themselves.

Amazingly, the new Right of the 1970s managed to position itself as champion of this need for spiritual coherence. The Right recognized that there was a spiritual crisis based on the triumph of selfishness and materialism in daily life, and that that spiritual crisis was at the core of the disintegration of the sense of security and safety that people used to feel in their families and daily lives. In this the Right was entirely correct. By pointing out that the fear and pain people were having was not irrational and not their own fault, but a product of a societal ethos of selfishness and materialism, the cultural Right helped alleviate people's inclination to blame themselves and won tremendous appreciation from many who were hurting.

Unfortunately, the Right then went on to explain where selfishness and materialism was coming from by blaming the already demeaned elements of the society, particularly those who were trying to rectify centuries or even millennia of persecution and discrimination by demanding, as they had in the 1960s, equality and rectification of past discrimination, oppression, or in the case of African Americans, slavery and then segregation. Societal selfishness, the Right claimed, came from these "special interests" that were seeking something for themselves (affirmative action, higher wages, "special treatment") and using government to advance their own interests. It was these groups, and their liberal backers who were expanding government and increasing taxes to pay for these new programs, who were really the source of the breakdown of traditional values of solidarity and instead were the proponents of "everybody for themselves."

Native Americans, African Americans, feminists, homosexuals, immigrants, the undocumented, liberals, and progressives were all targets of this blaming. The effort to rectify previous wrongs was dismissed as "political correctness," turning the resentment against the ethos of selfishness into anger at these various groups.

With this approach, the Right was—and remains to this day—at once both a sympathetic and empathic voice for those suffering from the selfishness and materialism of the capitalist market, as well as ironically a champion of the marketplace whose role in creating and celebrating the selfishness and materialism is hidden from consciousness. Thus the Right has been able to simultaneously speak to the pain,

Samuel Bak, *Equivalents*, 1999. Pencil on paper. 12.25" x 12.5".
Image courtesy of Pucker Gallery, Boston

suffering, and free-floating anger that people feel in their daily lives, help them reduce their self-blaming, and direct their anger against others who are often the most vulnerable and least able to protect themselves. For many on the Right, the loving and supportive atmosphere in their churches, synagogues, or mosques provide them with precisely the momentary sense of connection to others and to a higher meaning in life, yet does not lead them to challenge the institutions of capitalist society which generated their pain but instead to channel bitterness toward those outside their communities who are seen as the source of the bad values that are supposedly destroying families and making people feel lonely and disrespected.

How do they get away with this? It's easy, because the Left isn't even in the relevant ballpark. The Left is missing the point when it asks, "Why do so many people vote against their economic interests by supporting right-wing candidates in elections—thereby voting against their own real needs?" This question is based on the erroneous assumption that people only have material needs. The Left doesn't recognize nor understand the psycho-spiritual crisis so it can't provide an effective counter analysis of the crisis. As we are witnessing again today, tens of millions of Americans are in deep pain and they respond to leaders who seem to understand that pain and offer dramatic solutions to it.

During our research we often heard middle-income, working-class people tell us of how they found themselves belittled when they revealed these spiritual or religious interests to others in social change movements. The implicit message they got from the "lefties" or activists was: "we need you in our unions, our demonstrations, our electoral campaigns, we need your activism, votes or donations, but we see you as a little less evolved psychologically or intellectually than we are because of your religious/spiritual leanings. We hope that as time goes on and you are involved with us secular people who are running the social change movements for peace, social and economic justice, a better environment, human rights, and/or anti-racism, anti-sexism, anti-homophobia, that you'll become more like us."

This demeaning response, our research subjects told us, creates a deep sense of loneliness and "not really belonging." Some reported a need to hide their religious or spiritual sides while interacting with the activists, others told of eventually leaving these movements and seeking solace in right-wing places of worship where they felt a fuller sense of being respected and cared for, even though they didn't agree with some of the politics they were hearing in those places of worship. And the Right's claim that liberals and lefties are "elitists" resonated for this reason—so many people have felt put down and disrespected by people who identify as liberal or progressive.

After years of this type of research, we tried to bring our findings to various liberal and progressive movements. We argued that our research should lead progressive groups to incorporate into their discourse a "politics of meaning" that helped people see that the pain in their lives derived from the ethos of selfishness and materialism endemic to the capitalist marketplace, not the striving to rectify past unfairness that characterized the demands of African Americans, feminists, gays and lesbians, immigrants, refugees or religious or ethnic minorities. We tried to show these movements that they would be far more successful in their own goals if they could more explicitly articulate and integrate these "meaning" needs into their discourse and the experience of their activism.

We were disappointed at the hostile reactions we received in the Left. The overwhelming commitment to a materialist reductionist view of human beings continues to lead many in the Left to believe that people only want material benefits that can be easily quantified, and that talking about "meaning" or "spiritual needs" is a distraction. At the top of many national liberal organizations and the Democratic Party there are people who are themselves benefitting from the capitalist system or whose funding comes from the 1%, and so they immediately turn away from any analysis that would lead them to challenge capitalist values. But even on the more grassroots level of many social change and human rights organizations there is a widespread acceptance of a

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At our office in Berkeley in the beautiful San Francisco Bay Area you'll find interns and volunteers who are students or recent graduates, mid-career people needing a break to rethink their lives, and retirees who have decided to dedicate their lives to helping heal, repair, and transform our world through *Tikkun* and our Network of Spiritual Progressives. We have tasks that include editing, proofreading, recruiting authors, promoting the magazine and its writers on social media, organizing support for the Global Marshall Plan and our ESRA–Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (public funding and no other money in politics plus requiring corporations prove a satisfactory history of environmental and social responsibility once every five years to a jury of ordinary citizens). Or you can volunteer from your home computer. Interns have gone on to great jobs in media, politics, academia, government service, law, psychology, and non-profits. For details:

www.tikkun.org/nextgen/jobs-internships

narrow materialist view of human nature that feels uncomfortable with discussion of spiritual needs, and quickly dismisses talk about the need for more love and generosity as either psychobabble or New Age nonsense.

We were up against powerful resistance. We knew we needed a vehicle to challenge these dynamics in the liberal and progressive world. As social healers we knew that the results of our research, if fully understood and integrated into the way society was organized, would be the best possible way to improve mental health and decrease the stress people experienced, and overall improve their lives spiritually and materially. And as people interested in building a healthy society, we knew that our message was critical for the possibility of future success for social change movements.

We didn't have the money to do most of the things the ruling elites on the Right could do, but when Nan Fink became involved in the work of the Institute, we decided together to create a magazine in the liberal and progressive world that could disseminate what we had learned and simultaneously allow for an approach to the world of ideas that integrated psychological and spiritual sophistication and create safety both for spiritual progressives and for progressives who yearned for a magazine that was not about "exposing" the evils of contemporary America (the Left had plenty of that), but about developing a deeper understanding and long-term strategies to heal and transform our world. So Nan and I began to fantasize about, and then to actually build the infrastructure for, a magazine. We realized that while we sought an interfaith and secular humanist readership, we should also make our magazine one which reflected the particular issues that emerge for Jewish progressives.

Creating *Tikkun*

By spirituality we were referring to all aspects of human experience which did not fit the narrow scientism that predominates in Western societies. This scientism asserts that whatever is "real" or whatever can be known must be verifiable or falsifiable by some empirical experience, or be measurable. For us, the word "spiritual" would include ethics, aesthetics, philosophy, love, and experiences generated by awe and wonder at the universe, and much more than merely religious or consciousness-expanding elements of life. And part of our message was that the liberal and progressive world should be welcoming to the spiritual dimension. Our magazine would be rooted in Jewish identity and yet address and speak to a much broader universalist constituency including atheists, secular humanists, and people in all other religions.

Nan and I decided to call our magazine *Tikkun*, a powerful word and concept that is used in Jewish liturgy as "tikkun olam," the healing, repair, and transformation of the world. Part of that repair is reclaiming what Heschel had taught me when I was at the Jewish Theological Seminary—the centrality of awe, wonder, and radical amazement at the grandeur and mystery of the universe, combined with the passionate struggle for a world of social and economic justice, kindness, love, and generosity.

While neither I nor *Tikkun* ever identified ourselves as Zionists, we have for the past thirty years been champions of much that is good in Israel even while being one of the most vocal voices fighting for Palestinian rights and an end to the Occupation of the West Bank and the blockade of Gaza. We knew this was a dangerous path, and indeed it has proved such, as *Tikkun* was boycotted in many of the synagogues and institutions of the Jewish world and I was repeatedly described as one of the leading "self-hating Jews" by right-wingers and many Zionist extremists.

While it was not our original intention to make the issue of the Occupation and the denial of human rights to the Palestinian people a major focus of *Tikkun*, once the first uprising of the Palestinians in 1988 began (the First Intifada), we had

SAY NO to the fascists, racists, and reactionary nationalists who threaten our society!

We know that the most effective way to challenge these destructive forces is to provide an alternative vision and policies for people who have turned to the Right for reasons described in Rabbi Lerner's introductory editorial to this issue of *Tikkun*. That is why our consciousness-raising task starts by providing an alternative politics to the failed strategies of the neoliberals and the racist and militarist consequences of neo-conservative policies. Whatever the outcome of the 2016 election, we need to build a psychologically sophisticated and spiritually sensitive social movement. We need your help–please join the Network of Spiritual Progressives. Go to **www.spiritualprogressives.org/join**

Create a local *Tikkun* study group to read and discuss our articles with friends and neighbors, seek endorsement of the Global Marshall Plan and the ESRA–Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, and/or create a local chapter of the NSP. Contact Cat@spiritualprogressives.org for help getting started. Don't become passive–fundamental change is still possible, but not without your involvement!

to make a choice—either follow the path of Jews who could be liberal on matters of civil and human rights, peace, nonviolence, and social and economic justice in the U.S. but who eschewed applying these principles when it came to Israel's treatment of West Bank Palestinians, or identify with the prophetic tradition in Judaism and the unequivocal demand of the Torah to "love the stranger." The route of avoidance was the safest one to take if we wanted our main purpose to be most effectively served, namely to help the liberal and progressive world change its focus from a crude reductionist materialism to a more nuanced and spiritually-friendly politics of meaning. But we could not ignore the suffering of and cries for help from Palestinians. Out of loyalty to the teachings of the prophetic tradition in Judaism and loyalty to the plain meaning of the Torah's frequent calls to honor, treat justly and even love the stranger, there really was no way we could let opportunism triumph over what ethical consciousness demanded.

So, at the expense of losing huge amounts of our financial support and significant sections of the Jews who had originally welcomed a liberal voice like ours in the Jewish world, we became the truth tellers that many American Jews didn't want to hear. We published articles from "the new Israeli historians" whose access to the newly opened archives of the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) revealed that though some of the 800,000 Palestinian refugees who fled in 1948 were doing so with the encouragement of their leaders, close to 100,000 of them had been forcibly marched from their homes into exile by the Israeli army, and hundreds of thousands more fled because of fear generated by Israeli terrorists led by future Israeli Prime Ministers Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir (whose nefarious strategy to clear Israel of Arabs involved attacking Arab villages that explicitly had sought to live in peace with the Zionists). Recognizing that the Zionist story of Palestinians voluntarily leaving their homes in 1948 was a huge distortion put a different light on the plight of Palestinian refugees, who by now with families grown up in refugee camps may number close to four million people. So Israel's absolute refusal to consider even allowing token numbers of refugees to return to their homes or to provide them with compensation made every supposedly "generous" peace deal sponsored by Israel seem rather empty to the representatives of the Palestinian people, and telling that story to American Jews made them furious at *Tikkun*. Unfortunately, because of our love of and support for other aspects of Israeli society, some in the ultra-left Jewish world and Palestinian world did not support us either.

Our willingness to champion Palestinian human rights while refusing to categorically demean all of Israeli society, our insistence that we need a nuanced approach to Israel in order to empower the peace forces there, our recognition that Palestinians had also massively contributed to the conflict and that their support for violence against Israeli citizens was morally unacceptable, and our insistence that the Occupation of the West Bank and the blockade of Gaza must stop, has distinguished *Tikkun* from so many other Jewish progressive voices, who either focus on social justice everywhere else except Israel, or come up with bland statements of support for justice in Israel on every other issue except the oppressive policies of the Israeli government's West Bank Occupation and blockade of Gaza. Our nuanced account of how both sides have been unreasonable and yet both sides have a legitimate set of claims is told in my book *Embracing Israel/Palestine* (order it at www.tikkun.org/eip).

So, we became the prophetic voice on Israel for those who were both outraged at what Israel was doing to Palestinians, but unable to ignore all that was and remains good in Israeli society. We could be outspoken about the ways Israel was defaming the Jewish people and turning Judaism into an idolatrous worship of a nation-state but we did not join

those who wished to see the elimination of the Jewish state. We could not forget that Israel had been set up in part as an affirmative action refuge for a people whose tragic history of oppression had left so many Jews so badly wounded. If Israel and its Jewish supporters around the world are acting self-destructively, arrogantly, and in the process generating a global resurgence of hatred of Jews—this time based not on theological distortions in Christianity and Islam but on the actual current behavior of the Jewish people in giving Israel a blank check to continue to oppress Palestinians—we saw this as a tragic consequence of the post-traumatic stress disorder that was blurring their vision and weakening the capacity for empathy that had for so long been one of the great assets of the Jewish people. As a psychotherapist and as a follower of Torah, I could not suppress my own love for the Jewish people, empathy for their suffering, and compassion for their tragic mistakes, no matter how badly wounded, how distorted their actions in support of horrific Israeli policies. And as an inheritor of the Jewish prophetic tradition I could not silence my outrage at how it was treating the Palestinian people and how it was distorting Judaism. Thankfully, in the last decade we've been joined by J Street and Jewish Voice for Peace which now play important roles in amplifying some of this message and providing important strategies to help bring a lasting peace with justice, and we will continue to work with them and with those many Palestinians who share our approach.

We held conferences and public gatherings in every part of the U.S., Canada, the U.K. and Israel—some of which drew thousands of people—to put forth a vision for how to transform Israeli policy and practices. In 1991 we created a conference in Jerusalem to bring together the secular and religious branches of the peace movement, and the Ashkenazic-dominated parts of that movement along with many Sephardim/Mizrachim who had felt excluded. We brought U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone, a columnist for *Tikkun*, and added to the rough and tumble debates some wisdom from Yeshayahu Leibowitz, poets Yehuda Amichai and Dalia Ravikovitch, and presentations from A.B. Yehoshua and Amos Oz.

In addition to our efforts on Israel/Palestine, we continued to put forth a broader vision for a world based on love and justice and highlighted people we believed were worthy of honoring with a "*Tikkun* Award" for those who had made literary or political contributions to the healing and transformation of our world. Among those who accepted the *Tikkun* Award: Shulamit Aloni, U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone, Grace Paley, Marge Piercy, Francine Prose, Yossi Sarid, Howard Fast, Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, Marshall Meyer, Allen Ginsberg, Art Spiegelman, Tony Kushner, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, South African Justice Richard Goldstone, Sheikh Hamza Yusuf, Congressman Raul Grijalva, Cornel West, Naomi Newman, C.K. Williams, Yehuda Amichai, Susannah

PREMIERE ISSUE

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

TIKKUN

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"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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Yehuda Amichai
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Jacob Neusner
Emotions in the Talmud

REVIEWS
John Felstiner, Stephen Mitchell, Alan Wolfe and Eli Zaretsky

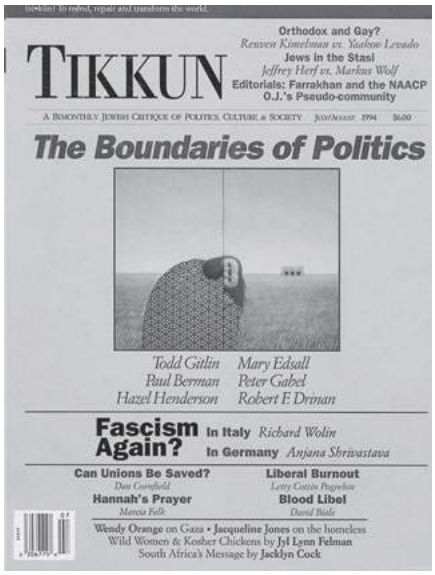
WHY TIKKUN?
Michael Lerner, editor

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. . .

Tikkun's first issue

Heschel, Marian Wright Edelman, David Grossman, Sister Joan Chittister, Pete Seeger, James Hillman, Howard Zinn, and Rabbi Marcia Prager.

For a brief moment in the 1990s it looked like we might be getting some powerful supporters. Bill Clinton wrote me in 1988 to commend *Tikkun*, and when I heard him speak during the 1992 election he seemed to be quoting one of my *Tikkun* editorials almost word for word. In 1993 Hillary Clinton publicly endorsed the Politics of Meaning (some of her speech can be found in this retrospective issue of *Tikkun*) and invited me to the White House where the two of us met in her office and discussed strategies for taking *Tikkun*'s ideas into the public sphere. She told me that she and Bill had read every copy of *Tikkun* for five years and fully agreed with our approach to American politics and our stance on Israel and Palestine. Sadly, some media outlets declared me "Hillary's guru" and then a full-scale sexist assault on Hillary ensued in which she was said to be having a teenage identity crisis and her mind taken over by her guru (me). This weakened her position inside internal White House politics. Moreover, the Jewish establishment, fearing Hillary would become an advocate for *Tikkun*'s Middle East pro-peace perspective, joined in ridiculing her and me. To add insult to injury, Rush Limbaugh and many others on the Right, fearful that the Left might suddenly start appealing to their constituency



through an embrace of religion and spirituality, ferociously insisted that our Politics of Meaning was nothing more than sheep's clothing over the old fashioned New Deal liberalism that the Clintons had sought to replace with their positioning themselves as centrists. Within no time, Hillary was distancing herself from me and *Tikkun*, especially around Israel but also about our opposition to U.S.-initiated military interventions around the world, and opposition to the neoliberal politics that her husband was introducing.

Eventually we decided to augment our role as a magazine with an activist organization for those who wanted to bring our ideas into social change movements and politics. In the early years, we called it the Tikkun Community, then in 2005 switched to call it the NSP—Network of Spiritual Progressives so that the name would make clear that we were not just for Jews, but welcoming to people from all faiths and none. The NSP has as its major focus advancing our core idea of a New Bottom Line so that productivity, efficiency, and rationality are no longer judged according to how much money or power gets generated (the Old Bottom Line) but by how much any institution, corporation, government policy, or even our own personal behavior tends to generate love and kindness, generosity and compassion, social and economic justice, and caring for each other and caring for the earth. After years of consultations with our members around the U.S., we developed a Spiritual Covenant with America, which presents some of our suggestions about what that New Bottom Line would look like in practice (please read it at www.spiritualprogressives.org/covenant). The NSP today is directed by Cat Zavis, whom I had the honor of marrying in May 2015. Together with our new managing editor Ari Bloomekatz and our outreach director Leila Shooshani, the four of us are the staff that give the daily structure and reality to *Tikkun* and the NSP, supervises interns (who come to our office in beautiful Berkeley, California, from around the U.S., some as students, some as people in mid-career changes, some as retired seniors), produce a quarterly magazine, a lively *Tikkun* Daily blog (www.tikkun.org/tikkundaily), and a powerfully exciting online magazine at www.tikkun.org. Poetry editor Josh Weiner supplies us with first-rate poetry, and our contributing editors meet once every three months on a conference call to give us valuable ideas and help us recruit new writers, as do some on our editorial board.

For me, the enterprise of being editor of *Tikkun* has been a tremendous gift. I've loved being able to work with so many gifted people, and I hope to continue to do so for many years into the future. I've loved giving young people internships that opened many doors for them to employment in media, government, politics, and more. And I've loved being able to publish ideas and perspectives that were too controversial or "out there" for much of the rest of the intellectual world.

As I look back over these past thirty years it seems clear that *Tikkun* has had a significant impact on public discourse. Our view of the Israel/Palestine conflict has now been accepted by a very large section of newer generations of Jews, even if many of the older generation and Orthodox still vigorously oppose it. Our pioneering ideas on how to think about God opened the door for some of the most creative theological thinking in recent years. Our spiritual progressive vision for Western politics has gained important support among some social change activists. Many of the ideas that are now baseline assumptions in progressive circles were first articulated in *Tikkun*.

And much remains to be done. In our Global Marshall Plan (www.tikkun.org/gmp) we've put forward an approach to foreign policy based on replacing the current Strategy of Domination approach to achieving "homeland security" with a Strategy of Generosity that could eventually undermine the appeal of fundamentalist terrorists around the world. Our Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment

(ESRA) to the U.S. Constitution (www.tikkun.org/esra) provides a detailed path to regain democratic control over our political and economic system.

The environmental crisis facing our planet is currently our most pressing concern and can only be fully addressed as we move to replace the capitalist system with a system that gives priority to caring for each other and caring for the earth. We also need to overcome the nation state with its inherent militarism and economic competitiveness, replacing it with environmental districts whose primary focus is on how to organize the production of goods and services for the well-being of everyone on the planet and in accord with our commitment to respond to the universe not as a "resource" for our needs but as a source of awe, wonder and radical amazement.

To be "realistic" in this historical moment requires overcoming all the advice of "the realists" and instead embracing utopian thinking. All my experience has led me to believe that one never knows what is possible until one puts one's life energies, monies, and intellectual and emotional commitments behind the struggle for what is desirable. As the huge advances made by the second wave of feminism, the ending of apartheid in South Africa, the advances against racism in the U.S., and the winning of marriage rights for gays and lesbians has shown, the realists are usually wrong about what is possible, and the utopians turn out to be the wise ones who have changed reality rather than bowed to it. So respond to the hate-mongers by becoming love-and-generosity-mongers—and do it with us, create a local study group to read articles in *Tikkun* once a month, bring people together into a chapter of our NSP, get people to endorse The New Bottom Line, our proposed Global Marshall Plan, and ESRA (read about them at spiritualprogressivess.org /covenant), then help us get endorsements of these programs from your local political party—whatever it is—your local social change organizations, nonprofits of every sort, religious communities, professional organizations, unions, and anyone who is asking for your vote in the 2016 elections and thereafter. We'll help you if you contact us after joining the NSP. And if you can't afford to join but really want to work with us, just tell us what you can afford—because money is NOT our bottom line, though we badly need a lot more of it to keep functioning (we really have to depend on each other, because most people with lots of money haven't stepped up to support us—go figure!). And donations are tax-deductible!

So that's where we have to go in *Tikkun*'s next thirty years. The problems we face will not be solved through economic or scientific strategies or approaches, though they will be a part of the solution. We at *Tikkun* will continue to help people understand the spiritual and cultural crises unfolding as the values of a narrow scientism and economism organized through a global system of selfishness and materialism lead people to embrace solutions and ways of life that are both psychologically and environmentally destructive (witness the 2016 rise of quasi-fascist movements in the U.S. and around the world). It is time for us to address the psycho-spiritual crisis facing our human community and eroding our environment with the same energy and activism that currently is given to narrowly framed single issue struggles or local activism. We value all those struggles, but we know that the people of this planet will continue to suffer economically, politically, culturally, and that our health and environment will be at great risk until we come together as a human race to transform the fundamentals of our global system toward a world of love, justice, generosity, empathy, environmental sanity, and with great awe and wonder at the marvels of this universe and the sanctity and beauty of human life. We will not fully achieve the world we want nor protect the earth without this sea change in our public consciousness.

We at *Tikkun* and through our Network of Spiritual Progressives will be a vehicle for thinking about the ways to make the impossible become actual. We will overcome fear with love and overcome the pain so many people experience with a generosity of spirit and action. We know that consciousness change is the central first step, and we also know that those changes cannot be sustained without changes in the economic and political system in which we live our daily lives. We will be the vehicle for trying out new and out-of-the-box solutions to the environmental crisis, ways to overcome the persistence of racism, sexism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, religiophobia, and the distorting impact of global capitalism. And we will be a place where you can also transcend all that is evil or distorted and also encounter the beauty and magnificence of human life, the awesome nature of the universe, and the joyful spontaneity of people bursting with creativity, humor, erotic energy, joy, and God-filled blessings for each other and for you. We will lead with empathy, compassion, psychological sophistication, and commitment to remain connected to awe, radical amazement, and celebration of the grandeur of the universe and life itself! Thank you for the financial support that will make it possible for us to be this particular voice that can transcend all the empty chatter that goes for public discourse in the contemporary world.

What an amazing time to be alive. What a joy to be part of a movement of people who wish to celebrate the grandeur and mystery of all being, recognize our fundamental interconnectedness with all other beings and with all other life forms, and are willing to dedicate time, money, and energy toward the next steps in healing and transforming our world! ■

Rabbi Michael Lerner, Editor *Tikkun*
RabbiLerner.tikkun@gmail.com
2342 Shattuck Ave. Box 1200, Berkeley, CA 94704

Join us at www.spiritualprogressives.org/join
or call 510-644-1200

JFK's Assassination and Contemporary Alienation

PETER GABEL

This is the first of the many articles from *Tikkun*'s first ten years excerpted in this 30th anniversary issue. You can read the full version of each plus many others not printed in this issue at

www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

We wish we could have printed dozens more articles from the entire 30 years, we just do not have enough space!

Vol. 7, No. 2. 1992.

(EDITOR'S NOTE IN 2016: *Prompted by Oliver Stone's reexamination, in his film "JFK" that was released in 1991, of the assassination of U.S. President John F. Kennedy in 1963, Gabel's discussion of the deeper meaning of the film presents a unique way of thinking about political life for then – and for now.)*

THE SPIRITUAL PROBLEM that the movie speaks to is an underlying truth about life in American society—the truth that we all live in a social world characterized by feelings of alienation, isolation, and a chronic inability to connect with one another in a life-giving and powerful way. In our political and economic institutions, this alienation is lived out as a feeling of being "underneath" and at an infinite distance from an alien external world that seems to determine our lives from the outside. True democracy would require that we be actively engaged in ongoing processes of social interaction that strengthen our bonds of connectedness to one another, while at the same time allowing us to realize our need for a sense of social meaning and ethical purpose through the active remaking of the no-longer "external" world around us. But we do not yet live in such a world, and the isolation and distance from reality that envelops us is a cause of immense psychological and emotional pain, a social starvation that is in fact analogous to physical hunger and other forms of physical suffering.

One of the main psychosocial mechanisms by which this pain, this collective starvation, is denied is through the creation of an imaginary sense of community. Today this imaginary world is generated through a seemingly endless ritualized deference to the Flag, the Nation, the Family—pseudocommunal icons of public discourse projecting mere images of social connection that actually deny our real experience of isolation and distance, of living in sealed cubicles, passing each other blankly on the streets, while managing to relieve our alienation to some extent by making us feel a part of something. Political and cultural elites—presidents and ad agencies—typically generate these images of pseudo-community, but we also play a part in creating them because, from the vantage point of our isolated positions—if we have not found some alternative community of meaning—we need them to provide what sense of social connection they can. We have discussed this phenomenon in *Tikkun* many times before, emphasizing recently, for example, the way David Duke is able to recognize and confirm the pain of white working-class people and thereby help them overcome, in an imaginary way, their sense of isolation in a public world that leaves them feeling invisible.

In the 1950s, the alienated environment that I have been describing took the form of an authoritarian, rigidly anti-communist mentality that coexisted with the fantasized image of a "perfect" America—a puffed-up and patriotic America that had won World War II and was now producing a kitchen-culture of time-saving appliances, allegedly happy families, and technically proficient organizations and "organization men" who dressed the same and looked the same as they marched in step toward the "great big beautiful tomorrow" hailed in General Electric's advertising jingle of that period. It was a decade of artificial and rigid patriotic unity, sustained in large part by an equally rigid and pathological anti-communism; for communism was the "Other" whose evil we needed to exterminate or at least contain to preserve our illusory sense of connection, meaning, and social purpose. As the sixties were later to make clear, the cultural climate of the fifties was actually a massive denial of the desire for true connection and meaning. But at the time the cultural image-world of the fifties was sternly held in place by a punitive and threatening system of authoritarian male hierarchies, symbolized most graphically by the McCarthy hearings, the House Un-American Activities Committee, and the person of J. Edgar Hoover.

PETER GABEL is editor-at-large of *Tikkun* and the author of *The Bank Teller and Other Essays on the Politics of Meaning* and *Another Way of Seeing: Essays on Transforming Law, Politics, and Culture.*

Aug. 28, 1963. President Kennedy with leaders of the March on Washington including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., John Lewis, and Rabbi Joachim Prinz.

In this context, the election of John F. Kennedy and his three years in office represented what I would call an opening-up of desire. I say this irrespective of his official policies, which are repeatedly criticized by the Left for their initial hawkish character, and irrespective also of the posthumous creation of the Camelot myth, which does exaggerate the magic of that period. The opening-up that I am referring to is a feeling that Kennedy was able to evoke—a feeling of humor, romance, idealism, and youthful energy, and a sense of hope that touched virtually every American alive during that time. It was this feeling—"the rise of a new generation of Americans"—that more than any ideology threatened the system of cultural and erotic control that dominated the fifties and that still dominated the governmental elites of the early sixties—the FBI, the CIA, even elements of Kennedy's own cabinet and staff. Kennedy's evocative power spoke to people's longing for some transcendent community and in so doing, it allowed people to make themselves vulnerable enough to experience both hope and, indirectly, the legacy of pain and isolation that had been essentially sealed from public awareness since the end of the New Deal.

Everyone alive at the time of the assassination knows exactly where they were when Kennedy was shot because, as it is often said, his assassination "traumatized the nation." But the real trauma, if we move beyond the abstraction of "the nation," was the sudden, violent loss for millions of people of the part of themselves that had been opened up, or had begun to open up during Kennedy's presidency. As a sixteen-year-old in boarding school with no interest in politics, I wrote a long note in my diary asking God to help us through the days ahead, even though I didn't believe in God at the time. And I imagine that you, if you were alive then, no matter how cynical you may have sometimes felt since then about politics or presidents or the "real" Kennedy himself, have a similar memory preciously stored in the region of your being where your longings for a better world still reside. . . .

Here we come to the mass-psychological importance of Lee Harvey Oswald and the lone gunman theory of the assassination. As Stone's movie reminds us in a congeries of rapid-fire, post-assassination images, Oswald was instantly convicted in the media and in mass consciousness even before he was shot by Jack Ruby two days after the assassination. After an elaborate ritualized process producing twenty-six volumes of testimony, the Warren Commission sanctified Oswald's instant conviction in spite of the extreme implausibility of the magic bullet theory, the apparently contrary evidence of the Zapruder film, and other factual information such as the near impossibility of Oswald's firing even three bullets (assuming the magic bullet theory to be true) with such accuracy so quickly with a manually cocked rifle. You don't have to be a conspiracy theorist, nor do you have to believe any of the evidence marshaled together by conspiracy theorists, to find it odd that Oswald's guilt was immediately taken for granted within two days of the killing, with no witnesses and no legal proceeding of any kind—and that his guilt was later confidently affirmed by a high-level Commission whose members had to defy their own common sense in order to do so. The whole process might even seem extraordinary considering that we are talking about the assassination of an American president.

But it is not so surprising if you accept the mass-psychological perspective I am outlining here—the perspective that Kennedy and the Kennedy years had elicited a lyricism and a desire for transcendent social connection that contradicted the long-institutionalized forces of emotional repression that preceded them. The great advantage of the lone gunman theory is that it gives a *nonsocial* account of the assassination. It takes the experience of trauma and loss and momentary social disintegration, isolates the evil source of the experience in one antisocial individual, and leaves the image of society as a whole—the "imaginary community" that I referred to earlier—untarnished and still "good." From the point of view of those in power, in other words, the lone gunman theory reinstitutes the legitimacy of existing social and political authority as a whole because it silently conveys the idea that our elected officials and the organs of government, among them the CIA and the FBI, share our innocence and continue to express our democratic will. But from a larger psychosocial point of view, the effect was to begin to close up the link between desire and politics that Kennedy had partially elicited, and at the same time to impose a new repression of our painful feelings of isolation and disconnection beneath the facade of our reconstituted but imaginary political unity. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

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Back to Basics

A Politics of Meaning for Education

BY SVI SHAPIRO

Vol. 8, No. 1. 1993.

If the Clinton administration wants to succeed in changing America's education system, it must start by recognizing that the Right's campaign to "return to basics" contains, at its heart, critical insights into the psychological, moral, and social context in which parents face their own future and that of their children. Although progressives have dismissed the conservative education agenda, citing its dehumanizing prescriptions and its distractions from the real issues, the Right has been able to harness deep-seated human concerns and anxieties to the practices and goals of schooling. As we build our own politics of educational meaning, it becomes imperative for us to take these concerns seriously and to address them in ways that will genuinely enhance the dignity, responsibility, freedom, and opportunities of the young.

Snow White | Juanjo Oller

Basic Skills: Toward a Curriculum for Survival

One of the rallying cries of those who believe America's schools are cheating youngsters out of their educational "rights" has been the need to emphasize—or re-emphasize—the "basics." On the surface, at least, what the basics are seems straightforward: teaching kids how to read, write, and do arithmetic. At one level there is an unassailable sensibleness to this demand: It is debilitating, disempowering, and deeply injurious for any American to lack these skills.

There is in the expectation that schools will instruct children so that they are functionally literate and numerate an obvious logic that is reinforced daily by the experiences of working-class and middle-class parents. To the extent that radical or progressive educators have taken issue with the Right's version of the argument for the primacy of basics in the schools, they have seemed out of touch with Americans' everyday concerns, needs, and demands. No agenda for education can possibly succeed if it does not take seriously the importance of teaching reading, writing, and numeracy. . . .

Former Education Secretary William J. Bennett and his minions pilloried liberal educators' policies and practices, blaming them for the decline in kids' ability to read or write. Liberal education practitioners were depicted as hostile to the salience of the basics in school curricula.

There is considerable evidence that the conservative attack on liberal education policy was a misrepresentation or obfuscation of reality. Nevertheless, framing

SVI SHAPIRO is professor of education and cultural studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

the educational debate in these terms has been disastrous for progressives, since it has cast the long-term struggle for social justice in America in opposition to the more immediate concerns of parents. . . .

Those observers who ascribe a reactionary aspect to the mentality of some proponents of a return to basics are correct. Encoded in the conservatives' call for a new traditionalism in education is a wish for schools to prepare youngsters for jobs and roles of a bygone era, thereby to recapture that time and its cultural norms. There is, too, in the notion of the basics (as well as in the related concepts of "minimal competencies" and "performance standards") the implicit expectation of self-sufficiency and self-reliance—compelling ideas in a time of economic and social insecurity. Thus, the power of the conservatives' basic skills rhetoric stems from the equation we make between schooling and the acquisition of those skills or knowledge that might, in some way, protect individuals from the insecurity and predatory nature of our social and economic environment. Defined in this way, education becomes an expression of the concern for survival in a hazardous, fragile, and precarious world.

Parents' desire for their children to master the basics is both understandable and rational, as is their desire for their children to possess the skills and knowledge they need to survive in the world. . . . Yet, if alarm over survival, for ourselves and our children, drives the wish that kids master the basics and become minimally competent, it is a sadly restricted and unimaginative notion of what it takes to survive. While the emotion-laden discourse of basics is deeply rooted in the experience of individuals struggling daily with the crises of survival—material, moral, spiritual, and psychological—in its present, limited form it offers very little to help us cope with existing realities.

As with other aspects of a survivalist worldview (which stress the importance of narrow, clearly defined objectives), basic-skills-oriented schooling offers a curriculum that virtually ignores questions of personal meaning. There is scant emphasis on the transmission of a cultural literacy that might provide the kind of narrative threads that allow young people to grasp their place in the totality of our social life. The Right's model of a basic skills curriculum is a discontinuous inventory of skills, information, and behaviors, remote from an education that could foster the intellectual capacity to connect history with the present, or to link individual experience with that of the collectivity. Avoiding any real attempt to confront our shared human predicament and needs critically, it attempts only to facilitate an individual's adaptation to the shoals and currents of our turbulent and threatening reality. In this sense it is profoundly individualistic—an approach in which society's common problems and difficulties must be faced by the solitary individual who, with the help of schooling, has learned to "cope" with the world alone. . . .

"Missing from contemporary education: thinking about meaning in life, the transmission of cultural literacy, decoding mass media, nurturing of intellectual curiosity, and how to resist the influence and seductions of corporate capitalism."

A progressive agenda for schools must include the technical skills necessary for economic survival . . . . Schools should indeed instruct students in the skills, knowledge, and abilities that will enable them to cope with the demands of the everyday world. This means that schools must help students learn to think critically about what they read as well as what they receive through the media. Literacy is a necessary but insufficient expectation of schools; it must become a critical literacy, the capacity to penetrate the surface descriptions that commonly represent (or misrepresent) our world. . . .

Because there is great interest and support across the political spectrum for helping youngsters learn to decipher and discriminate among the complex, often confusing or deceptive messages of TV advertising, and other mass-mediated images, we have the potential for broad-based popular sympathy for a radical expansion of what it means to be literate in America. Widespread awareness of corporate and governmental abuses of the process of public communication has heightened the demand for "communicative competence." Indeed there is a growing sense that our young people are endangered by the abuses of public communications and that children and adolescents are enormously vulnerable to powerful interests and the images they generate. As a result, the idea of "decoding" television, movies, and advertising has increasing resonance among parents. "Basic skills" so defined becomes a front line for protecting children from the relentless influence and seductions of corporate capitalism.

Insisting that basic skills today means communicative competence gives a transformative twist to the existing public discourse on education, rooting the basic instructional work of schools in the work of empowering young people to cope with the complexity and confusions of the contemporary social world. Such a redefinition places us fully on the side of the need for achieving literacy, more comprehensively and relevantly construed. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

Victimology

JESSICA BENJAMIN

Vol. 4, No. 2. 1989.

(EDITOR'S NOTE IN 2016: *Psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin gave this talk at the Tikkun conference in New York City in 1988 at a time when many leftist groups were contending that their particular oppression was greater than others, and that those others must acknowledge how terribly they had sinned to participate in the oppression of whichever group was claiming at the moment to be "most oppressed." Though she does not mention it explicitly, her words ring particularly true for those in the Jewish world who have been told they have no right to criticize the State of Israel because Jewish oppression has been worse than that of any other group.*)

IN THE SIXTIES we evolved a new kind of "scientific" radicalism, the pursuit of what we might call "victimology," the highest stage of what Lenin never called "left-wing moralism—a gerontological disorder." Victimology is the search in your group's present and past for sufficient amounts of suffering in order to absolutely legitimate and sanctify its righteous aspirations and demands. There has been a considerable contest during the past twenty years among groups engaged in this pursuit.

What we have learned is that there is a tremendous moral capital in suffering, even if you aren't suffering anymore. It is like the old Jewish story of the man who was sleeping in a berth on a Russian train when he began to hear sounds from the man in the berth above him: "Oy, oy, oy." When this persisted so long that he despaired of ever getting any sleep, he asked the man what was wrong. The man responded, "Oy, oy, am I thirsty." Convinced that he would get no sleep until the man's thirst was quenched, he procured for him a glass of water. He had almost returned to sleep when he was again disturbed by the man moaning "Oy, oy, oy." "What's wrong now?" he demanded. "Oy," said the sufferer, "oy, was I thirsty!"

Philip Roth, commenting on the misuse of the past, wrote a section in *The Counterlife* in which he ironically proposed that we "remember to forget" the suffering of the Holocaust. The point, of course, is not that we should really forget it, but rather that we need to remember that remembering can be abused—that it is possible to lose all sense of other groups and to create a universal claim for your own particular group.

Women have a good case for focusing on their suffering, for much abuse has been and continues to be inflicted on women directly by men. The question is: how to have a politics that recognizes injustice and recognizes abuse and suffering without degenerating into the victimological stance, without engendering the righteousness and sacrifice that has so long accompanied this position. For example, the more righteous a position feminists take about heterosexuality, the more self-scrutinizing they have to be about their own sexuality, regardless of what kind it is. In sexuality there is only a short step from censorship to proscription and inhibition. For most people it's not possible to continually mobilize resentment against women's sexual objectification and violation in pornography and then feel free to have a good time with their own sexuality. Of course, we might suspect that those who are inspired by this righteous position have taken the stance they do because they have suffered under the current organization of sexuality, not because they have enjoyed it. But, whatever the case, the liberation of sexuality in the interest of pleasure has lately been replaced as the goal of the movement; the goal now is to expose heterosexuality as fundamentally organized by the principle of domination.

Of course, this exposure of heterosexual dominance and submission is filled with its own passion. You can mobilize human passion in reaction formation just as much as you can mobilize it directly. The fantasy of transgressing norms and boundaries that is the turn-on in pornography is also mobilized in the campaign against pornography. In this sense, the anti-pornography movement inherits the side of zealous radicalism that is idealist and absolutist. The problem with the liberal, rational, Enlightenment position of universal liberties is that it tends not to mobilize any sort of passion. When people listen to the argument that censorship of pornography in any form will erode civil liberties, although

JESSICA BENJAMIN is an author, professor, and relational psychoanalyst practicing in New York City. Among her published books is *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination.* Her original contributions to a psychoanalytic theory of recognition have been published in many languages and will appear next year in the volume *Beyond Doer and Done-to.* She has also written in *Tikkun* of her experiences in Israel and Palestine with efforts to acknowledge collective trauma.

many of them are persuaded, they often go to sleep listening. Most people are highly charged only by the evocation of an enemy (the Other), or by the possibility of transgression, or by the idea of putting an end to all transgression. So people are turned on by the issue of pornography, with its revulsion against transgression and violence and its offer of a position of righteousness, more than they are turned on by practical struggles for concrete things of direct interest to many women.

There is no easy solution to this dilemma. Everything that we can mobilize in the way of human passion has a dangerous or a repressive side. But without some form of vision and passion, we can go nowhere. We therefore recognize that there needs to be a constant tension between passion and self-awareness, between being "into" things and standing critically outside them. My personal solution to this dilemma is to add to these opposites a combination of irony, humor, and self-criticism. . . . It is my hope that the next phase of our movement may embody a very different kind of spirit, one which allows us to be committed while seeing the drawbacks of that commitment, to respect the reality of suffering without making it a brand of righteousness, to articulate a vision that does not demand human sacrifice, to play even with what is serious, and above all to accept—not resign ourselves to—living with contradiction. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

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Working the System

Memo to the Tikkun Community

TOM HAYDEN

Vol. 7, No. 6. 1992.

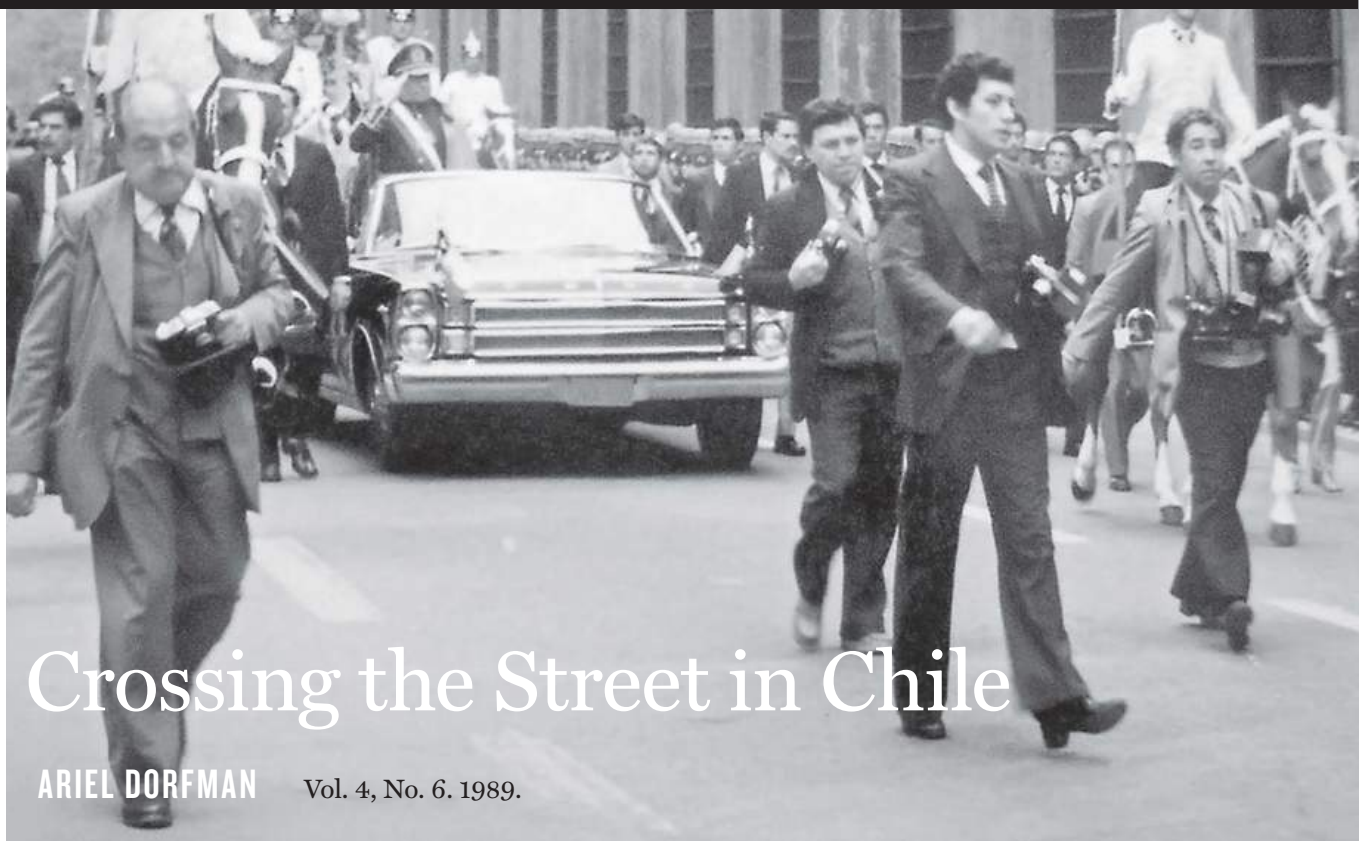
The crisis of institutional paralysis is graver than the partisan gridlock that could be solved by having a Democrat in the White House. The real crisis is the emergence of the Special Interest State, a permanent, insulated state within the democratic state. It is informal, a political protoplasm of interests who exercise virtual veto power over issues such as health care reform that garner overwhelming support among the electorate. This is not an enlightened establishment. Its defining obsession is with immediate interests at the expense of future welfare, making it the chief impediment to deficit reductions or any policies of sustainability. . . .

Societies, like individuals, are not moved to be "competitive" or "productive" or "winners" unless they are fueled and sustained by a meaningful vision or goal. Any economic recovery plan has to be more than the expansion of McJobs; it must rethink the market so that values such as environmental preservation and community begin to be internalized. Clinton intuits that economics and environmentalism and community values need to be melded in his "new paradigms" and "covenants." He needs to reread Gore's *Earth in the Balance* and Herman Daly and John Cobb's *For the Common Good*, since the writings of his chief economic advisers offer scant evidence that they have gone beyond seeing the ecosystem as a disposable resource to be developed for high-technology export products. Despite conventional economic reasoning, the ecosystem is not infinite. The environmental issue is not secondary to the economic issue except in the old paradigm. The crisis of America's economic stagnation arises from over-dependency on Persian Gulf oil, over-investment in the nuclear arms race, addiction to gas-guzzling automobiles, skyrocketing cancer and health costs due to toxic pollution, and the catastrophic depletion of resources that are no longer cheap and abundant.

Like the environment, the idea of community is often reduced by government programs to that of a laboratory where individuals are fit into programs administered from the outside. Bill Clinton's "New Covenant" contains an implicit image of an obligatory contract between the individual below and an omnipotent order above, not one of humbler government and more powerful citizens. Recent history is littered with the debris of these failed notions. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

TOM HAYDEN, a founder of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), was an author of the Port Huron Statement and was later elected to the California State Assembly and the California State Senate. He is director of the Peace and Justice Resource Center in Los Angeles and is the author of twenty books. His forthcoming book is *Vietnam and the Power of Protest* which will be published next year by Yale University Press.



Crossing the Street in Chile

ARIEL DORFMAN

Vol. 4, No. 6. 1989.

In Santiago, Chile. 1982. Augusto Pinochet in celebration.

Ben2 | Wikimedia Commons

All but one of my encounters with the Chilean military have been violent. There were the blackened faces of the soldiers I saw patrolling Santiago's streets on so many of my visits—anonymous faces that struck fear into the population. There was the young recruit who shouted at me that I should not come near as I limped toward him one night after having been beaten up, along with a group of protesters, by troops. He had his finger on the trigger of his submachine gun, but I knew that he was the frightened one, that some superior had drummed into him that I was the enemy. "Keep two meters away from me," he screamed again, his hand trembling, his eyes feverish, as if the mere possibility of my talking to him or touching him threatened his psychic stability. Then there were the troops that guarded the airport the day I was arrested and then deported from Chile: they would not even acknowledge a question I put to them.

Over and over it has been impossible to get near enough even to hope for a normal exchange of views.

Except once.

And that occasion, of course, entailed streets, cars, and a pedestrian.

On that hot February day a few years ago, it was I who was driving my car down an avenue in a well-to-do Santiago neighborhood. The pedestrian was a destitute old woman who happened to be crossing my path with a small boy in tow. Suddenly she collapsed—almost in front of my advancing car. As I am not Pinochet, I swerved the vehicle, brought it to a stop a few yards down the street, and rushed back. Another automobile was idling, its motor on, right next to the woman's body. A wiry, wispy-haired lady with glasses and a pointed nose was sitting behind the wheel, showing not even the slightest inclination to get out of her car. The boy had just answered a question she had asked. She turned her glasses in my direction.

"It's nothing," she informed me. "Look. She's breathing. This child says it's just fatigue."

I suggested that we should call an ambulance, and then I began looking around for a phone. The lady shook her head. "Let the military take care of it," she said.

At first I thought it was some sort of sick joke, until I noticed a camouflaged army pickup truck descending the avenue in our direction. It braked next to the still-unconscious woman and an officer in battle dress jumped out. I couldn't

ARIEL DORFMAN, a Chilean-American writer, is the author of *Death and the Maiden* and, more recently, of the memoir *Feeding on Dreams*. He lives with his wife Angélica in Durham, North Carolina, where he teaches at Duke University.

guess his rank, but he was rather young, with an extremely pleasant, open face, a trimmed but soft mustache, and sparkling dark eyes. Two soldiers were in back crouching behind a machine gun as if expecting an ambush, but the officer seemed quite at ease and spoke softly to them. Then he stooped down next to the woman and took her pulse. Her eyes fluttered open. "It's just fatigue, *mi teniente,"* she said, addressing him with the familiarity of the possessive *mi*—my lieutenant. He would take care of her; he was hers. It turned out she had been walking since six that morning: her shantytown was some eight miles away, in the poorest suburb of the city. Her energy had simply given out. Now she needed some money to get home.

I helped the officer carry her to the sidewalk. She had stagnated in that indefinite agelessness of poverty, where what we perceive and measure is the suffering rather than the years. She had just one tooth in her mouth and it was ugly and gray. But like so many Chileans who have survived Pinochet's economic miracle, she possessed a dignity that was poignant, a sense of shame at seeing herself so helpless and exposed. This was not the way life was supposed to have been. Streets were not for fainting or begging, but for crossing with fearless pride.

"I'm asking because I'm in need, sir," she said to me, quickly assessing that I might be the one who could help her out. "I don't like to ask, but there's no work. We're ten at home."

I offered her some coins and pointed at a small bag she was still clutching. Some old crusts of bread had spilled out. "Just be sure," I admonished her, "to eat something or you'll faint again." As soon as the words came out I felt the bite of paternalism in them. She was older than I was and yet I could act as a father, a protective figure, and tell her what to do, merely because I happened to be lucky enough not to have collapsed from hunger in the middle of a street.

Her answer taught me that she, like most poor people, was in no need of advice from the well-to-do.

"I've already eaten bread. We eat so much bread that we get hiccups, sir. And then people won't give us a thing because they think we're drunk."

Meanwhile, the lady in the car had not moved, drinking in the scene with faint curiosity. Only when we packed the woman and the child aboard a bus, when the excitement was over, did the lady driver depart. If I mention her distant presence at all, it is because it elucidates, I believe, what followed. Chile is full of people like her—people unwilling to register the horror right before their eyes because to do so would force them to act. In a Pinochet-style dictatorship, such action can be perilous. Fear corrupts the morality of a nation because it makes everyone an accomplice. This collective apathy is the exact opposite, perhaps the secret Siamese twin, of the enthusiastic dissidents who have put their lives on the line all these years for freedom. In Chile, you either stand back or you care. And then you pay the consequences.

That lady's indifference, her accepting that nothing could be done to help the less fortunate, nurtured in me the dangerous illusion that the officer and I were part of a magic circle, set apart from the degradation of everyday Chile. Both of us tried to alleviate the suffering of another human being—while someone in a car comfortably looked on. This feeling that somehow we were not like that lady, that we were partners for a few minutes, may explain the absolutely irrational, stupid way in which I acted, for there was nothing heroic in my stepping up to the officer—who was already at the wheel of his vehicle, getting ready to leave—and asking:

"*Hasta cuándo?* Until when do you think we can tolerate this sort of situation?" He could have had me arrested on the spot, but there was no hostility in his look. A gleam of insecurity glazed his eyes, then vanished. Perhaps he still shared with me that island outside time we had inhabited together for a short while, as if we did not live in a country which allowed us only mistrust and hatred. "Do you think our people deserve to suffer in this way? To suffer like this woman? Do you think we can go on and on like this forever? Without you people doing anything about it?"

He did not react immediately. Then he said: "That's why I stopped." We looked at each other for a few seconds. He didn't avoid my eyes. "That's all I can do," he added, and gently pressed his foot to the accelerator. The truck disappeared around a corner.

What will that man and his colleagues do as Chile moves toward democracy and the inevitable disorder that democratic adjustments and real participation will mean? I could not imagine him then, and I cannot imagine him now, painting his face with the dark colors of the warrior and going out to suppress the dissidents because they publicly object to the fact that so many Chileans cannot cross the street without fainting from hunger; and yet I do not doubt that he had followed orders then and will follow orders tomorrow. What else had that officer been ordered to do in the past, in spite of his sparkling eyes and engaging smile? Did he raid shantytowns, shoot at priests, burn the drawings of children in cultural centers? Did he torture? Will I see his photograph someday in a newspaper and learn that he had murdered one of my friends?

And yet, I cannot help asking myself—now that history is making it possible for the civilians and the military to meet—if there is a chance that the brief interlude during which he and I managed to establish a different sort of link may be a pale anticipation of how things will soon be in Chile. Can we get the military to look us in the eyes and accept that the country itself is in danger of dying of hunger and immorality—that the enemy is not the woman who has hiccups from eating nothing but bread, and certainly not those who want to end the injustice? ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

Malcolm X and the Revival of Black Nationalism

MICHAEL ERIC DYSON

Vol. 8, No. 2. 1993.

The cultural rebirth of Malcolm X is the remarkable result of complex forces converging to lift him from his violent death in 1965. Malcolm's championing of the common Black person, and his crusade against the vicious stereotypes that have for centuries crippled Black communities, have won him a new generation of admirers. Indeed, a large part of the cultural crisis that has precipitated Malcolm's mythic return is rooted in an ongoing quest in Black America: the search for a secure and empowering racial identity.

That quest is perennially frustrated by the demands of our culture to cleanse ethnic and racial particularity at the altar of a superior American identity, substituting the terms of one strain of nationalism for the priorities of another. . . . But the transformation of Black cultural identity is often poorly served by this process, impeded as much by the external pressures of racism and class prejudice, as by internal racial resistance to an "inclusion" that would rob Blacks of whatever power and privilege they enjoy in their own domains.

Malcolm's reborn appeal is also linked to the resurgence of Black nationalism over the last two decades. Gusts of racial pride sweep across Black America as scholars retrieve the lost treasures of an unjustly degraded African past, continuing a project of racial reclamation begun in earnest in the 1960s but recast to fit the needs of end-of-the-century utopian nationalists, ranging from followers of Leonard Jeffries to what Huey Newton termed "pork-chop nationalists." . . . Malcolm's unabashed love for Black history, his relentless pedagogy of racial redemption through cultural consciousness and racial self-awareness, mesh effortlessly with Black Americans' recovery of their African roots. Malcolm's take-no-prisoners approach to racial crisis appeals to young Blacks disaffected from white society and alienated from older Black generations whose contained style of revolt owes more to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s nonviolent philosophy than to X's advocacy of self-defense. . . .

If the reemergence of Black nationalism and Malcolm's explosive popularity go hand in hand—are parallel responses to the continuing plague of an equally rejuvenated racism—then not only their strengths, but their limitations as well are mutually revealing. For example, Malcolm's brand of Black nationalism was not only a fierce attack on white Americans, but a sharp rebuke as well to Black women. . . . Although he later amended his beliefs, confessing his regret at "spit[ting] acid at the sisters" and contending that they should be treated equally, Malcolm's Black nationalist heirs have failed to take his reformed position on gender seriously. Like the early Malcolm and other sixties nationalists, contemporary Black nationalists have cast the pursuit of racial liberation in terms of a quest for masculine self-realization. Such a strategy not only borrows ideological capital from the white patriarchy that has historically demeaned Black America, but it blunts awareness of how the practice of patriarchy by Black men has created another class of victims within Black communities.

Further, the strategy of viewing racial oppression exclusively through a male lens distorts the suffering of Black women at the hands of white society and loses focus on the especially difficult choices that befall Black women caught in a sometimes bewildering nexus of relationships based on race, class, and gender. . . .

The cultural renaissance of Malcolm X also embodies the paradoxical nature of Black nationalist politics over the past two decades: Those most aided by its successes have rarely stuck around to witness the misery of those most hurt by its failures. . . . By refusing to take class seriously . . . many nationalists discard a crucial analytical tool for exploring the causes of Black racial and economic suffering. This is not to say that nationalism's vaunted alternative, bourgeois liberal integrationism, has enjoyed wide success, either, in bringing the Black masses within striking distance of prosperity, or at least to parity with white middle and working classes. . . .

King discerned as early as 1965 that the fundamental problems of Black America were economic in nature, and that a shift in strategies was necessary for the civil rights movement to become a movement for economic equality. . . . King became convinced that the only solution to Black suffering was to understand it in relation to a capitalist economy that hurt all poor people. He determined that nothing short of a wholesale criticism and overhaul of existing economic arrangements could effectively remedy the predicament of the Black poor and working class.

This is a far cry from contemporary Black capitalist and business strategies that attempt to address the economic

MICHAEL ERIC DYSON is the author of seventeen books, including *The Black Presidency: Barack Obama and the Politics of Race in America*. He is currently University Professor of Sociology at Georgetown University.

Malcolm X addresses a rally in Harlem, New York in 1963.

File | AP Photo

plight of Black Americans by creating more Black millionaires. Highly paid entertainers and athletes participate in the lucrative culture of consumption by selling their talents to the highest bidder in the marketplace—a legacy, we are often reminded, of King's, and the civil rights movement's, vision of a just society where social goods are distributed according to merit, not color. King's willingness, toward the end of his life, to question the legitimacy of the present economic order and to challenge the logic of capital has been obscured by appeals to his early beliefs about the virtues of integration. . . .

Black progressives must . . . deepen Malcolm's and Martin's criticisms of capitalism and their leanings toward democratic socialism. The prevailing economic policies have contributed to the persistent poverty of the poorest Americans (including great numbers of Blacks), and the relative inability of most Americans to reap the real rewards of political democracy and economic empowerment. A democratic socialist perspective raises questions about the accountability of the disproportionately wealthy, providing a critical platform for criticizing Black capitalist and business strategies that merely replicate unjust economic practices. . . .

Black progressives must make sensible but forceful criticisms of narrow visions of Black racial identity, especially after the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill debacle. That wrenching drama provided a glimpse of the underdeveloped state of gender analysis in most Black communities and provoked a serious reconsideration of the politics of racial unity and loyalty. In reflecting on Clarence Thomas's nomination to the Supreme Court, Black Americans were torn between fidelity to principles of fairness and justice, on the one hand, whether Thomas was qualified for the nomination and devotion to race on the other, whether Blacks should support one of their own, despite his opposition to many of the legal principles cherished by Black communities. . . . In a public and painful manner, the hearings forced many Black Americans to a new awareness of the need to place principles of justice above automatic appeals to race loyalty premised exclusively on skin color. Many Americans, including many Blacks, came to a clearer understanding of the social construction of racial identity, recognizing that Black folk are by no means a homogeneous group. . . .

For Black leaders, the political and social significance of this fact should be the building of bridges across the chasm of color in the common embrace of ideals that transcend racial rooting. Progressive Blacks must join with progressive Latinas and Latinos, gays and lesbians, feminists, environmental activists, and all others who profess and practice personal and social equality and democracy.

The absence of sustained progressive Black political opposition, or even a radical political organization that expresses the views of the working class and working poor, signals a loss of political courage and nerve in the United States that characterized Malcolm and Martin at their best. . . . In the end, Malcolm and Martin are in varying degrees captives of their true believers, trapped by literal interpreters who refuse to let them, in Malcolm's words, "turn the corner." The bulk of each man's achievements lay in his willingness to place truth over habit in the quest for the best route to social reconstruction and racial redemption. Their legacy to us is the imagination and energy to pursue the goals of liberation upon as wide a scale as the complex nature of our contemporary crises demand and our talents allow. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

Why the Poor Stay Poor

CLAYBORNE CARSON

Vol. 3, No. 4. 1988.

The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy by William Julius Wilson.

William julius wilson's book is the most thoughtful study of urban poor blacks to appear in many years. But it is cause for dismay as well as optimism. On the one hand, the book represents a significant departure from most writings on poverty published during the Reagan years. Wilson effectively challenges prevailing conservative arguments that discount the need for major new government initiatives. . . . A self-described "social democrat," Wilson nevertheless adopts some of the assumptions and vocabulary of his conservative opponents, thereby remaining within the narrow ideological boundaries that constrict contemporary debate on domestic social issues. . . .

[Wilson's] use of the term "underclass" marks a considerable departure from the notion once common among liberals that the poor were best understood as unemployed members of the working class rather than part of an enduring subculture characterized by the absence of the skills or attitudes required for success in the labor market. Wilson suggests that liberals cannot expect to have a serious impact on national policy until they admit the existence of this ghetto underclass, a heterogeneous catch-all which, according to him, includes those who "experience long-term unemployment or are not members of the labor force, individuals who are engaged in street crime and other forms of aberrant behavior, and families that experience long-term spells of poverty and/or welfare dependency."

In explaining why conditions in the inner city have worsened, he accepts the thesis, often put forward by conservatives, that the ghetto underclass is *not* the result of present-day racism. . . .

While he acknowledges the existence of an underclass, he sees it primarily as a product of bad social policy rather than of the attitudes of the poor. While he discounts the importance of civil rights and anti-discrimination legislation as a means of addressing ghetto problems, he nevertheless acknowledges that forceful federal action is needed to address those problems. Wilson demolishes the arguments of Charles Murray, author of *Losing Ground,* who concluded that Great Society programs not only failed to reduce poverty but actually exacerbated the plight of the poor. Rejecting the notion that the underclass is characterized by an economically dysfunctional *culture of poverty,* he prefers instead to emphasize the concept of *social isolation,* which he believes better expresses the source of distinctive attitudes that persist among the urban black poor. For example, rather than attributing the rise in the number of single mothers and female-headed households to a self-destructive rejection of white middle-class values or to "permissive" liberal welfare policies, Wilson argues that economic trends have reduced job opportunities for black urban residents, which in turn reduces the number of employable and thus marriageable black males.

Yet, while impressed by Wilson's desire to provide a sound intellectual basis for a renewed assault on poverty, I remain troubled by what Wilson leaves out of his discussion of the causes of and strategies for combating the problem. Wilson tends to examine the black ghetto from the outside, as a problem to be solved through liberal social engineering, rather than as a complex community capable of being transformed from within as well as from without. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

CLAYBORNE CARSON is the Martin Luther King, Jr., Centennial Professor of History at Stanford University and the Ronnie Lott Founding Director of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute.

Hillary Clinton's Politics of Meaning Speech

University of Texas, Austin April 6, 1993

Vol. 8, No. 3. 1993.

(ORIGINAL EDITOR'S NOTE: *A month after Michael Lerner's March/April editorial argued that the United States needed a politics of meaning that would address the psychological, ethical, and spiritual crisis of American society, a few weeks after Washington Post columnist William Raspberry dedicated his March 25 columns to praising Tikkun's politics of meaning as articulated in Lerner's editorial, and the same day that the Los Angeles Times ran an op-ed piece by Lerner based on these same themes, Hillary Rodham Clinton made the following speech in Austin, Texas. Because no transcript was available, we have made selections from notes transcribed from a tape of her speech, and we have shortened the speech by skipping paragraphs or by adding transitional phrases.*)

WE ARE AT A STAGE in history in which remolding society is one of the great challenges facing all of us in the West. If one looks around the Western world one can see the rumblings of discontent, almost regardless of political systems, as we come face to face with the problems that the modern age has dealt us.

And if we ask, why is it in a country as wealthy as we are, that there is this undercurrent of discontent, we realize that somehow economic growth and prosperity, political democracy and freedom are not enough—that we lack meaning in our individual lives and meaning collectively, we lack a sense that our lives are part of some greater effort, that we are connected to one another. This isn't very far below the surface, because we can see it popping through the surface—the signs of alienation and despair and hopelessness that are all too common and cannot be ignored. The signs are in our living rooms at night on the news. They are on the front pages; they are in all of our neighborhoods. . . .

All of us face a crisis of meaning. Coming off the last years when the ethos of selfishness and greed were given places of honor never before accorded, it is certainly timely to ask about this problem.

This problem requires all of us to play a role in redefining what our lives are and what they should be. We are caught between two great political forces. On the one hand, we have our economy—the market economy—which knows the price of everything, but the value of nothing. That is not its job. And then the state or government which attempts to use its means of acquiring tax money, of making decisions to assist us in becoming a better, more equitable society. We have political and ideological struggles between those who think market economics are the answer to everything and those who think government programs are the answer to everything—but neither is adequate to address the challenge confronting us.

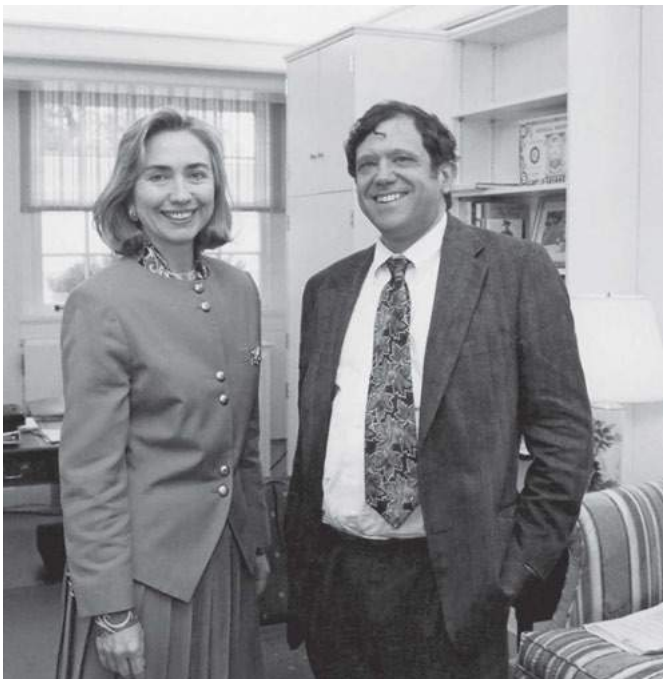
What we must do is break through the old thinking that has too long captured us politically and institutionally, so that we can begin to devise new ways of thinking about not only what it means to have government that works again, not only what it means to have economies that don't discard people like they were excess baggage that we no longer need, but to define our institutional and personal responsibilities in ways that answer this lack of meaning.

We need a new politics of meaning. We need a new ethos of individual responsibility and caring. We need a new definition of civil society which answers the unanswerable questions posed by both the market forces and the governmental ones, as to how we can have a society that fills us up again and makes us feel that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. . . .

Part of the great challenge of living is defining yourself in your moment, of seizing the opportunities that you are given, and of making the very best choices you can make. That is what this administration, this President, and those of us who are hoping for these changes are attempting to do.

Here are a few applications of this way of thinking: . . .

HILLARY CLINTON is running for President of the United States in the 2016 election.



Hillary Clinton discussing the Politics of Meaning with Michael Lerner at her office in the White House in 1993.

Original photo was provided by the White House to Michael Lerner

- We are in the midst of an intensive effort of trying to determine how we can provide decent, affordable health care to every American. We need to recognize how each of us, whether we are a care giver or a care receiver, will have to think differently about health care. We have to come up with a system that promotes wellness, promotes health and provides care for us when we are sick that we can afford.

Our ancestors did not have to think about many of the issues we are now confronted with. When does life start; when does life end? Who makes these decisions? How do we dare to impinge upon these areas of such delicate, difficult questions? And yet, every day in hospitals and homes and hospices all over this country, people are struggling with these very profound issues.

These are not issues that we have guidebooks about. They are issues that we have to summon up what we believe is morally and ethically and spiritually correct and do the best we can with God's guidance. How do we create a system that gets rid of micromanagement, the regulation and the bureaucracy, and substitutes instead human caring, concern, and love? And that is our real challenge in redesigning a health care system.

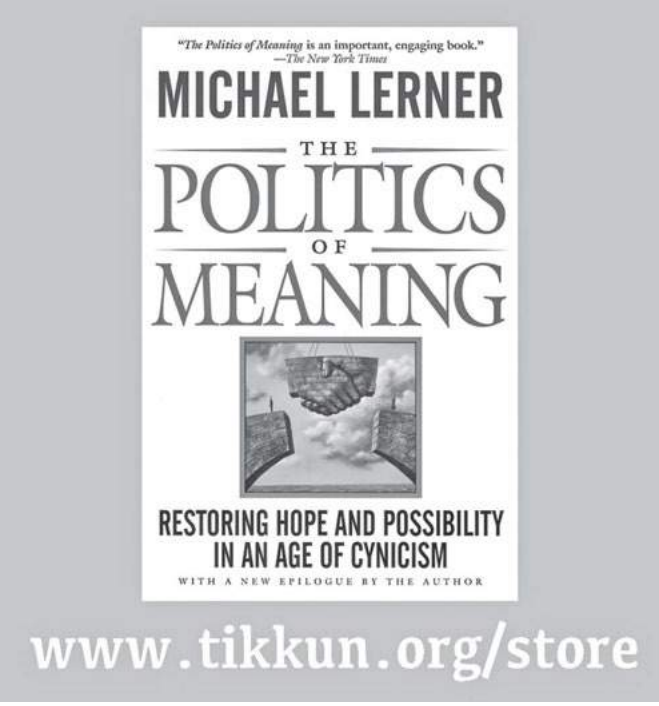
- How do we make values enter the arena of the media? How do we rid ourselves of the lowest common denominator that is the easiest way of conveying information? How do we have a media that understands how difficult these issues are and looks at itself honestly because the role it must play is so critical to our success in making decisions how we will proceed as a society?

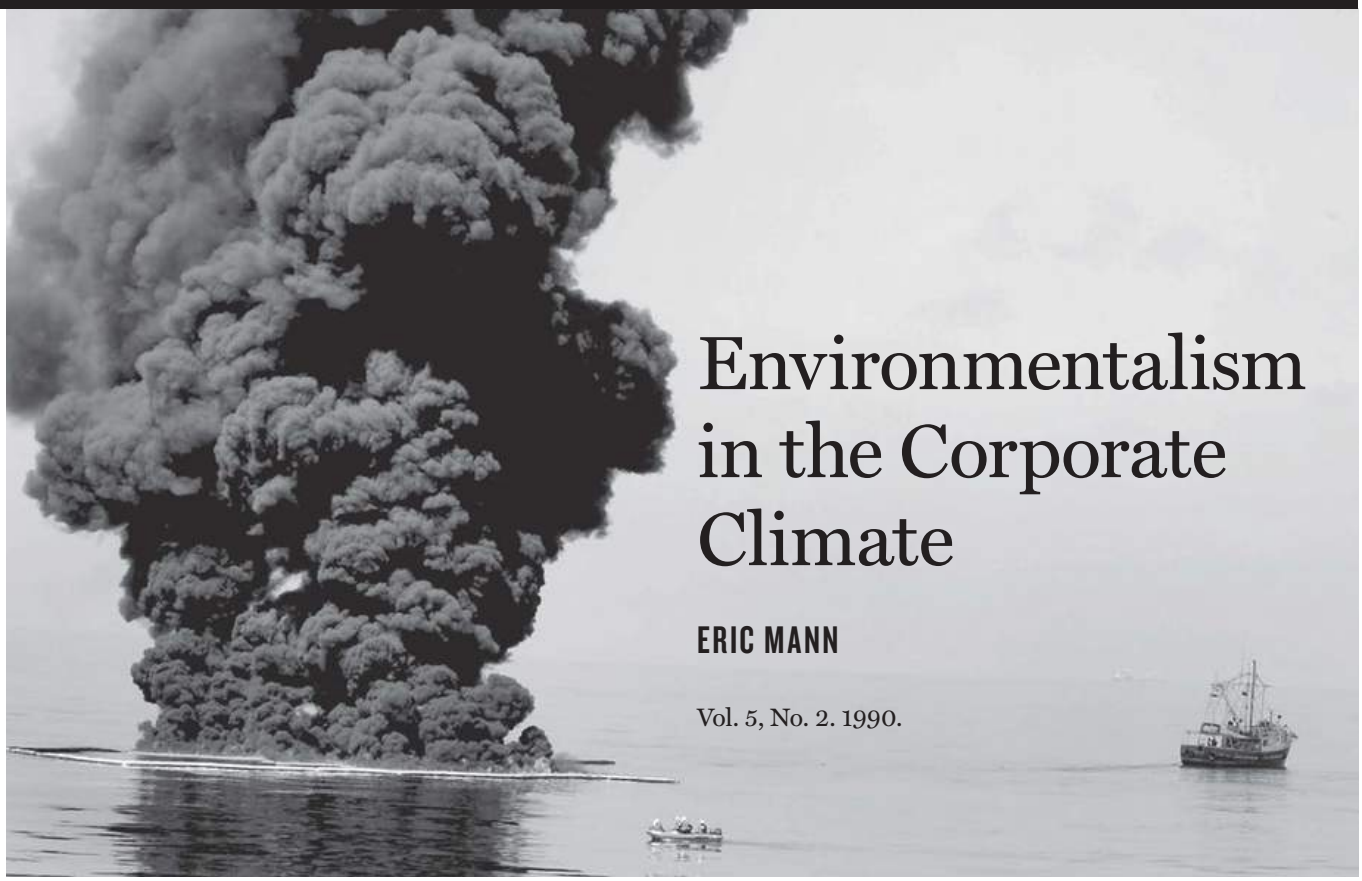
Every one of our institutions is under the same kind of mandate. Change will come whether we want it or not, and what we will have to do is to try to make change our friend, not our enemy. But probably most profoundly and importantly, the changes that will count are the millions of changes that take place on the individual level as people reject cynicism, as they are willing to be hopeful again, as they are willing to take risks to meet the challenges they see around them, as they truly begin to see other people as they wish to be seen and to treat them as they wish to be treated, to overcome all of the obstacles we have erected around ourselves that keep us apart from one another, fearful and afraid, not willing to build the bridges necessary to fill our spiritual vacuum.

One of my favorite quotes is from Albert Schweitzer, and he talks about how you know the disease in Central Africa called sleeping sickness; there also exists a sleeping sickness of the soul. The most dangerous aspect is that one is unaware of its coming. That is why we have to be careful. As soon as you notice the slightest sign of indifference, the moment you become aware of a loss of character or a serious lessening of enthusiasm, take it as a warning.

Our greatest opportunities lie ahead, because so many of the struggles of the Depression and the World War and the other challenges posed by the Cold War and communism are behind us. The new ones are equally threatening. But we should have learned a lot in the past few years that will prepare us to play our part in remolding a society that we are proud to be part of. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30





Environmentalism in the Corporate Climate

ERIC MANN

Vol. 5, No. 2. 1990.

A controlled burn following an explosion on Deepwater Horizon, an offshore drilling unit in the Gulf of Mexico.

At one point early in the environmental debate, there was a belief that corporate executives and their children, having to breathe the air, eat the food, and drink (or swim in) the water, might possibly feel a certain self-interested urgency about saving the planet on which they were the wealthiest inhabitants. Several decades later, the cultural and ethical degeneracy of unmitigated free-enterprise capitalism—ideologically justified in concepts of "deregulation," "corporate competitiveness," "cost-effectiveness," and "personal freedom"—has produced a corporate elite that has shown itself thoroughly unable to grasp, let alone solve, the disastrous and at times irreversible effects of their production policies.

Equally frightening is the manner in which corporate values have contaminated the politics of the environmental establishment. . . .

While the environmental establishment may be very pleased with itself, the toxins are not impressed. As Dr. Barry Commoner has pointed out, "For the first time in the 3.5-billion-year history of life on this planet, living things are burdened with a host of man-made poisonous substances, the vast majority of which are now even more prevalent in animal tissue and the elements than they were twenty years ago when Earth Day first imposed itself on the popular consciousness." . . .

While some naive environmentalists have fantasies of a new breed of yuppie capitalists grooving on the socially responsible job of cleaning up toxic wastes, the reality is that capital will go anywhere it smells high profit margins. Thus, we now have a new growth industry of toxic cleanup firms which rake in enormous profits from government superfund contracts. These do slipshod work and use the EPA to impose cleanup mechanisms on communities. The mechanisms include, for example, trash- and hazardous-waste-burning incinerators that exist because of the *production* of waste and toxics. Needless to say, the industry opposes all solutions that demand the elimination of such efforts. . . .

The new "environmental" corporate establishment has managed to reduce both the production and cleanup of toxins to opportunities for profit and career, thus creating another layer of institutional control in which the problem will prove even harder to solve. As more radical demands for the elimination of the *production* of toxins become widespread, both corporations that profit from producing

ERIC MANN is director of The Labor/Community Strategy Center in Los Angeles and host of KPFK Pacifica's Voices from the Frontlines www.voicesfromthefrontlines.com.

Justin Stumberg | U.S. Navy

them and corporations that profit from cleaning them up will have a strong material interest in their continued existence. . . .

The trouble with the "greening of the boardroom" is that since boards of directors are specifically charged with maximizing the profits of their corporations, the corporate environmentalists will comprise nothing more than a new layer of corporate apologists to attack grass-roots environmental movements. . . .

So the institutional matrix is frightening: corporate polluters derail environmental regulations in Congress; corporate pollution managers make lucrative deals that neither restrict polluters nor effectively clean up the toxins; government agencies set up ostensibly to protect the environment become captive to the polluters and pollution managers; and corporate boards of directors co-opt the most malleable and greedy environmentalists to clean up their image—but not their products. In this context, talk about grass-roots organizing must extend beyond a romantic populism to an analytical and strategic long-term perspective that challenges institutional power and asserts democratic policy. . . .

Fundamentally, the environmental crisis is a crisis of institutional and corporate production. Acid rain, global warming, pollutants in the air, pesticides, internal combustion engines are products of the chemical, atomic, automobile, electrical, and petroleum *industries*. As Barry Commoner explains, toxic cleanup is a non sequitur; we learn from physics that "everything has to go somewhere." Thus the incineration of toxins drives them into the atmosphere, toxins dumped in landfills seep into the water supply, and toxins "filtered" and then dumped into the water supply evaporate into the air and come back to earth as acid rain. Commoner argues that the only successful environmental solutions have been those that have directly banned harmful products—such as DDT or mercury or lead in gasoline.

But any efforts to limit or shape production in these kinds of environmentally sound ways will involve direct confrontations between the "management right" to determine what a corporation will produce and the rights of workers and communities to work and live in safety. Strategies to build effective and democratic trade unions that could break with the current union pattern of slavish obedience to corporate priorities in return for short-term economic benefits for workers, as well as strategies to build citywide and regional coalitions across the boundaries of color, gender, and race, become central to the creation of an effective environmental strategy that might hold corporate executives and elected officials accountable for the ecological impact of their policies. We will need new models for political and economic life—models that combine representative government "at the top" with significant power for direct input into decisions at the grass-roots level, both from workplaces and from communities impacted by any given decision. . . .

The logic of these struggles, of course, leads beyond individual attacks on specific corporate offenders to a need for larger regional strategies that necessarily raise more fundamental redistributive questions. Though many workers have substituted the shopping mall for the union hall as the center of their recreational and cultural life, my own conversations with workers lead me to believe that there is a growing awareness that rampant materialism can offer little real satisfaction or sense of meaning and purpose. A movement that sought to reduce the quantity of goods produced in order to conserve the environment, while simultaneously advocating more egalitarian distribution of what was being produced, could gain the allegiance of many working people in the years ahead. The Right's vision of unchecked corporate behavior and a state sector designed primarily to serve corporate interests may be increasingly vulnerable to ecological challenges, particularly if an ecologically based campaign for a smaller but safer GNP were linked to plans for a strong safety net for the unemployed and the poor, guaranteed medical and health care, low-cost and high-quality public education and transportation systems, and the use of tax revenues for recreation and the support of new cultural endeavors.

The deepening ecological crisis requires that we move beyond narrow and allegedly more realistic approaches to strategies that can actually address the full depth of the crisis. This necessarily will involve a more rational planning of production and uses of resources. Yet only a powerful grass-roots movement could plausibly develop the strength to counter those corporate interests which will continue to oppose rational planning. After almost two decades of bipartisan eulogizing of the civilizing role of "market forces," our political, material, and ethical environment is deteriorating rapidly. So despite the fact that many on the Left have abandoned a transformative vision and have placed much of their energy into more narrow self-interest struggles, the reality of the ecological crisis requires the reemergence of a more visionary and radical movement. Environmentalism—in the sense of a comprehensive politics that addresses the nature and quality of work, the products we produce and the processes of production, and the political institutions that determine social policy—is in urgent need of a Left perspective. Conversely, a democratic, militant, and grass-roots environmentalism that brings working people and people of color into the mainstream of the political debate can contribute to the reemergence of a vital American Left.

The environmental crisis is not solvable locally. Thus, while grass-roots movements are essential building blocks and catalysts they cannot be substituted for a broader political strategy to transform policy and power at the national level. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

Black-Jewish Dialogue

Beyond Rootless Universalism and Ethnic Chauvinism

CORNEL WEST

Vol. 4, No. 4. 1989.

What is most striking to me both about *Tikkun* and about this conference is that they focus on the failure of empty internationalism and rootless universalism, that is, on the refusal to think seriously and critically about one's tradition and identity. In the period in which there was a stronger alliance between Blacks and Jews, some of that alliance depended on both sides' identifying with a form of universalism that did not highlight questions of identity. There is no going back to such a period. If there is going to be a renewed connection between these two communities, or even a sensible dialogue, it depends on our ability to remain sensitive to the positive quests for identity among Jewish Americans and African-Americans. . . .

We live in a society that is characterized by increasing racial polarization and rising anti-Semitism. Blacks and Jews still remain the two peoples that are most loyal to progressive politics in this country. . . . For us today the central question is, "What is going to be the *moral content* of our identity and the *political consequences* of it?"

When we look back, we have to acknowledge that there has always been anti-Semitism in the Black community and anti-Black racism in the Jewish community. But there was also, particularly in the period from 1945 to 1965, some serious attempts to build bridges and forge alliances that would run counter to these destructive tendencies. The turning point away from this alliance was in the period from 1965 to 1968, with the emergence of the Black Power movement, which perceived Jews simply as whites and began to push white activists out of the Civil Rights movement. Supporters of Black Power increasingly began to see the world in terms of the American empire pitted against Third World liberation movements—a profoundly Manichean perspective, a simplistic dualistic perspective. . . .

In 1967 Harold Cruse published *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, which remains highly influential to this very day. The book contained a scathing attack on the role of Jewish particularism, with special focus on the Jews' role in the Communist Party, U.S.A. This was another sign of the growth of particularistic consciousness in the Black left. The loss in April 1968 of Martin Luther King, Jr., was significant in this respect because King promoted the legitimacy of Zionism to the Black community. King spoke explicitly about the importance of Blacks' learning from and promoting the progressive version of Zionism. With that loss we saw a crescendo of Black critiques of Zionism—most vulgar, though some sophisticated. . . .

After 1968 we saw three major arenas of Black-Jewish tension. First, there was the issue of community control. In the sphere of education, this struggle was perceived as an attack on Jewish educators, but the community control issue extended also to an attack on Jewish entrepreneurs in the Black ghetto (particularly since a developing Black business class had an interest in freeing up space so that it could progress).

The second issue was affirmative action, which pitted many conservative Jews against Blacks *and* liberal Jews. It is too often ignored that many liberal Jews support affirmative action. For example, Thomas Nagel, a professor of philosophy, has put forward some of the most powerful critiques of the opponents of affirmative action, in the name of Kantian morality. This doesn't mean that we should forget about the neoconservative Jewish figures who argue against affirmative action. But we also need to understand their opposition as reflective of the boomtown character of Jewish ascendancy to the middle classes in a short thirty-year period. Many Jews expressed a deep anxiety about the reintroduction of quotas when those same quotas had been previously

CORNEL WEST is a professor of philosophy and Christian practice at Union Theological Seminary and Professor Emeritus at Princeton University. He has written over 20 books and edited 13. He is best known for his classics *Race Matters* and *Democracy Matters*, but his recent publication *Black Prophetic Fire* also received critical acclaim. In 1993, West won The American Book Award and he has also made three spoken word albums.

used against Jews in the anti-Semitic structures of higher learning. Yet when the previous anti-Semitic structures began to fall, Blacks perceived Jews as securing middle-class status in an astonishing manner. Blacks who were entering the mainstream found a disproportionate Jewish presence in the upper middle class of American society—in law, in medicine—in part because Jews worked hard to take advantage of the opportunities that had recently been opened to them.

Many first-generation Black middle-class persons began to wonder, "When are Black folks going to move into these institutions, given that there are a finite number of places?" Since they knew they could not count on the "rationality" of white employers or administrators to overcome the history of past discrimination, they had to rely on affirmative action—and the attack on affirmative action, no matter how principled, *was* an attack on Black progress.

The third issue was the Black critique of American foreign policy. This critique coincided with the emergence of conservative forces in Israel after the 1967 and 1973 wars . . . and the increasing identification of Israel with an American foreign policy that was dominated by Cold War preoccupations and a refusal to see anything good in Third World liberation struggles. This connection to American foreign policy made it easier for many Blacks to identify Israel as a tool of American imperial interests.

These were issues that tended to weaken the Black-Jewish alliance, but we should also note that there has persisted in America a very real alliance in the political arena. In fact, many Black elected officials would not be in office today if it were not for the Jewish voters who, in alliance with Black voters, helped put them in office. The grand example of the late Harold Washington looms large here.

Black anti-Semitism and Jewish anti-Black racism are real, and both are as profoundly American as cherry pie. All of us who are Americans must struggle against the devaluation of the Jewish people, which persists in the myths and symbols of what it is to be a citizen of this country. Blacks have a deep moral obligation to fight against anti-Semitism. And Jews have the same duty to combat Jewish anti-Black racism. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

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Nazi Feminists?

LINDA GORDON

Vol. 2, No. 3. 1987.

Mothers in the Fatherland:
Women, the Family, and Nazi Politics
by Claudia Koonz.

I FIRST TURNED TO this book, by a professor of German history, out of my interest in Nazism, the Holocaust, and right-wing movements in general; a study of Nazi women, I knew, would also illuminate a great deal about Nazi men. As I expected, *Mothers in the Fatherland* demonstrates the significant contribution of feminist analysis to our understanding of conservatism and authoritarianism. As I did not expect, however, it also raises troubling and stimulating questions about feminism.

Koonz discusses many aspects of women's participation in Nazi life but focuses particular attention on Nazi women's organizations. Over four million women participated in the *Frauenwerk,* Nazi government-sponsored women's activities; five million belonged to the women's division of the Nazi Labor Front. The Nazi purpose in encouraging such organizations was to mobilize women for all aspects of the Reich's programs: production, social control, "purification of the race," war. Nevertheless, many of these women joined in the belief that they were thereby working for the advancement of women. . . . Women leaders often protested the slighting of women's interests by the Nazi party and government. Indeed, one of Koonz's central arguments is that women joined these organizations for many of the same reasons they have joined progressive and feminist movements: They were rebelling against the low status and confinement of women's conventional role and were seeking recognition, an arena for political activism, and power. She does not dismiss these conservative women as dupes of men, inauthentic to a true female character, but emphasizes the degree of genuine conviction among them. . . .

If femaleness does not protect us from Nazism, what about feminism? Germany had a relatively strong feminist movement—not, perhaps, as strong as in the U.S. but stronger than elsewhere in Europe. Why, then, was there no evidence of feminist or woman-centered resistance to the Nazi takeover? Koonz tells many ugly stories of women's organizations agreeing without protest to the expulsion of their Jewish members, for example. Part of the answer lies in the fact that the German women's movement was deeply split between its bourgeois-liberal and its socialist varieties. The former organizations were so driven by their class interests that they could not experience the world through the eyes of their poorer sisters. Putting it another way, their feminism, like all feminisms, had class as well as gender content. . . .

Feminism is not only complex and varied but also contains contradictory perspectives: There are, for example, feminisms that assert women's difference from men, and those that assert their essential human similarity. . . . At its edges feminism shades imperceptibly into non-feminist women's movements. One may disagree with many, but I would be loath to label any of them inauthentic without a serious attempt to understand their motivation. In some of the most conservative, intolerant rantings, we may nevertheless recognize the same thwarted but unstilled aspirations that drive our own movements. The goal is not reconciliation, but a better explanation of conservative women's activism. . . .

The Nazi promise to restore women to their place in the family, and thereby to restore stability to the family and authority to men, was a vital part of its appeal, as it has been in many conservative social movements. As Koonz suggests, the apparent traditionalism of Nazi family policy helped mask the radicalism of its other policies. Moreover, as in the U.S. today, the accommodation of liberal, socialist, and even feminist movements to these mythically nostalgic yearnings weakens their ability to resist conservative and authoritarian "solutions."

This gender analysis of Nazism—seeing it, in part, as a movement for the restoration of patriarchy— offers insights about anti-Semitism, particularly connections between anti-feminism and anti-Semitism. The rhetoric of conservatism is rich with such connections: Jewishness = modernism, individualism, cosmopolitanism, internationalism—all of them the breeding ground of women's rights. As Gottfried Feder, a Nazi ideologue, put it, "The insane dogma of equality led as surely to the emancipation of the Jews as to the emancipation of women. The Jew stole the woman from us. . . ." But these connections must not be oversimplified. German gentile feminists did not see

LINDA GORDON is the Florence Kelley Professor of History and University Professor of the Humanities at New York University. Her latest book is *Feminism Unfinished*.

anti-Semitism as hostile to their own interests. Judaism has been as patriarchal as the other religions. Some Jews, particularly those of the business class, were attracted to Nazism themselves, and for the same reasons as gentiles of their class: an approval of authority, order, German nationalism, and family stability. . . .

Two generalizations arising from this book can safely be ventured. First, anxieties about the erosion of traditional gender arrangements can contribute to mass susceptibility to authoritarian solutions. Indeed, among all the anxieties created by the destruction of peasant society and its patriarchal order, and its replacement by big cities, industrial labor, and individualist values, those associated with women's new roles and claims to individual rights are often most vivid. In the U.S. the most consistently controversial domestic issues for the last one hundred and fifty years have been women's rights and reproductive rights. Second, women, too, have anxieties about these changes, and the process of modernization has by no means meant reliable and steady improvements for women. While women's movements have in the main been more progressive . . . than men's, there is no guarantee that this is always the case, and many women have been attracted by authoritarian promises to restore traditional (albeit usually mythical) stability.

If there are lessons here, they include reminders that the enemy is within us as well as outside us. The vulnerability and manipulability of the citizenry is a function of anxieties already present in us, created in large part by instability in "personal" life—family and community. Conservatives are not entirely wrong in viewing women's individual aspirations as hostile to family stability *on the old terms* (e.g. coercive marriage and childbearing, male authority often enforced by male violence). But a return to the "traditional" family is no more possible now than it was during the Nazi regime. We must expect repeated bouts of intense reactionary responses to these instabilities until there is some new modicum of stability—which can only be achieved on the basis of recognizing women's aspirations.

Koonz's book reveals the limitations of the work of liberal and socialist feminists in Weimar Germany. Both groups focused on individual reforms—absolutely necessary reforms, such as political rights, legalized contraception and abortion, equal pay, homosexual rights—but neither offered a coherent vision of a new society based on sexual equality and freedom. They could not conceive of new bases of stability. That task remains ours today: to articulate a society that meets people's needs for stability as well as adventure, community as well as individual freedom, difference without domination. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

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The Genocidal Mentality

ROBERT JAY LIFTON

Vol. 5, No. 3. 1990.

(ORIGINAL EDITOR'S NOTE: *Robert Lifton's important work exploring the psychological mechanisms that allowed us to accommodate ourselves to the possibility of nuclear war led him to a similar investigation of the role that experts played in the Nazi machine. His book* The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing & the Psychology of Genocide *explores some of these issues. The following piece, based on a talk, . . . raises an important perspective on how to think about the transformations in consciousness necessary to build a post-Cold-War world.*)

IN THIS KIND OF work one must struggle to combine mind and heart. Somewhere in the intellectual history of the West there developed the wrongheaded idea that mind and heart are antagonists, that scholarship must be divested of emotion, that spiritual journeys must avoid intellectual concerns. In my view, quite the opposite is true. Who has ever heard of an outstanding piece of scholarship that was not infused with moral passion? Or of a powerful spiritual quest that did not include intellectual clarity? . . .

One friend, an Auschwitz survivor deeply concerned about the work, asked, in reference to the Nazi doctors doing what they did, "Were they beasts or human beings?" And when I answered that they were human beings and that was the problem, his reply was an interesting one: "But it is *demonic* that they were *not* demonic." What he meant was that it would be easier for us, psychologically and morally, if Nazi doctors had the mark of Cain on their foreheads, or if they were clearly insane, or belonged to some category that

ROBERT JAY LIFTON is author of *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima*, which received a National Book Award, and *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*. He is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the City University of New York, and Lecturer in Psychiatry at Columbia University."

Dark Continent | © Judith Margolis | www.judithmargolis.com

separated them absolutely from the rest of us. But actually they were very ordinary men who were corruptible and could be socialized to evil. . . .

What can we learn from Nazi doctors? Let me mention three principles that have enormous importance for our present world.

The first has to do with the power of a genocidal ideology. In the Nazi case, that genocidal ideology included killing in the name of healing and a pseudo-biological or "biomedical" worldview. . . .

A second major lesson from Nazi doctors has to do with the direct involvement of professionals, most of them ordinary professionals. . . . One must not speak of de-professionalization in Nazi Germany, but rather of the professions becoming reconstituted so that medicine could become killing in the name of healing, law could become legitimation of that killing, and theology its spiritual justification. . . .

A third lesson to be learned from Nazi doctors has to do with states that make possible genocidal projects. Here I would emphasize what can be called a dissociative field, which can include patterns I have described as psychic numbing and as doubling. . . . The people involved in this dissociative field are in no way abnormal in a clinical psychiatric sense. Indeed, the mentally ill do relatively little harm to a society. It is the normal people who are dangerous, as they take on patterns of numbing and doubling that enable them to sever connections between knowledge and feeling in pursuing potentially genocidal projects. . . .

We must clearly recognize the historical uniqueness of the attempt to round up every Jew from anywhere in the world for mass murder, and of the further impulse toward the mass murder of other peoples and the creation of what has been called a "genocidal universe." I would insist that we stress the special features of Nazi genocide while at the same time viewing it as part of history and seeking from it a grasp of those principles and patterns of behavior that can apply to other situations. From that perspective, what we learn from the Nazis can contribute greatly to combating potential genocide from any direction.

A genocidal mentality is not our only recourse. As human beings, as meaning-hungry creatures and inveterate symbolizers, we ourselves have created the meanings and symbolizations that take us along a genocidal path. We ourselves are equally capable of altering these meanings and symbolizations—of replacing a genocidal mentality with what I call a species mentality. . . .

And here there is a source of hope, however unlikely it may seem. These very genocidal possibilities—including our assaults on the earth's ecology—can prod the contemporary self toward a sense of shared fate. Each of us increasingly perceives that what is at issue is not Americans and Soviets, or West or East Germans, or Thais, Iranians, or Nigerians. What is at issue is the survival or demise of humankind. Each of us comes to feel, in significant degree, that his or her sense of self is bound up with every individual sense of self on the planet. . . .

Here a simple image comes to mind: . . . a visit by a group of American doctors to their counterparts in the Soviet Union. . . . The scene took place in a Moscow hospital room in which an extremely sick man lay on his bed and two physicians examined him in turn. The first was the head of the American physicians' group, the second of the Soviet group. . . . As each doctor applied his stethoscope, it became quite clear that the two men had forgotten about being Americans or Russians, even about the nuclear weapons problem which brought them together. They were simply focused on applying their knowledge and experience, their commitment as healers, to maintaining the life of an extremely fragile fellow human being.

There is a species principle at the heart of every profession, even if covered over by struggles for power, money, and recognition within that profession. . . .

I put forward the species self as not only a goal but an existing construct. In that sense, without minimizing the forces in the world antagonistic to it, we can say that there are many levels of actual and potential support for the species self. . . .

As we observe events taking place right now in Europe and elsewhere, we have the sense that we are in what could be called a species moment. It is what the Greeks refer to as a *kairos* moment, one so crucial that it has a decisive effect on all that follows. It is a time when, as the American poet Louis Simpson puts it, "Strange dreams occur / For dreams are licensed as they never were." ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

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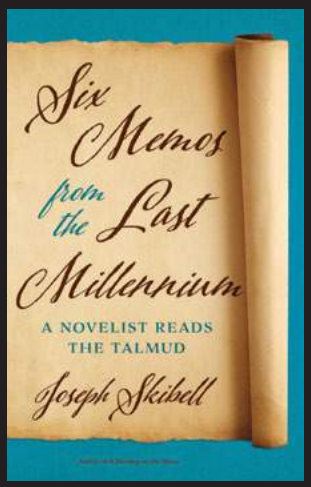

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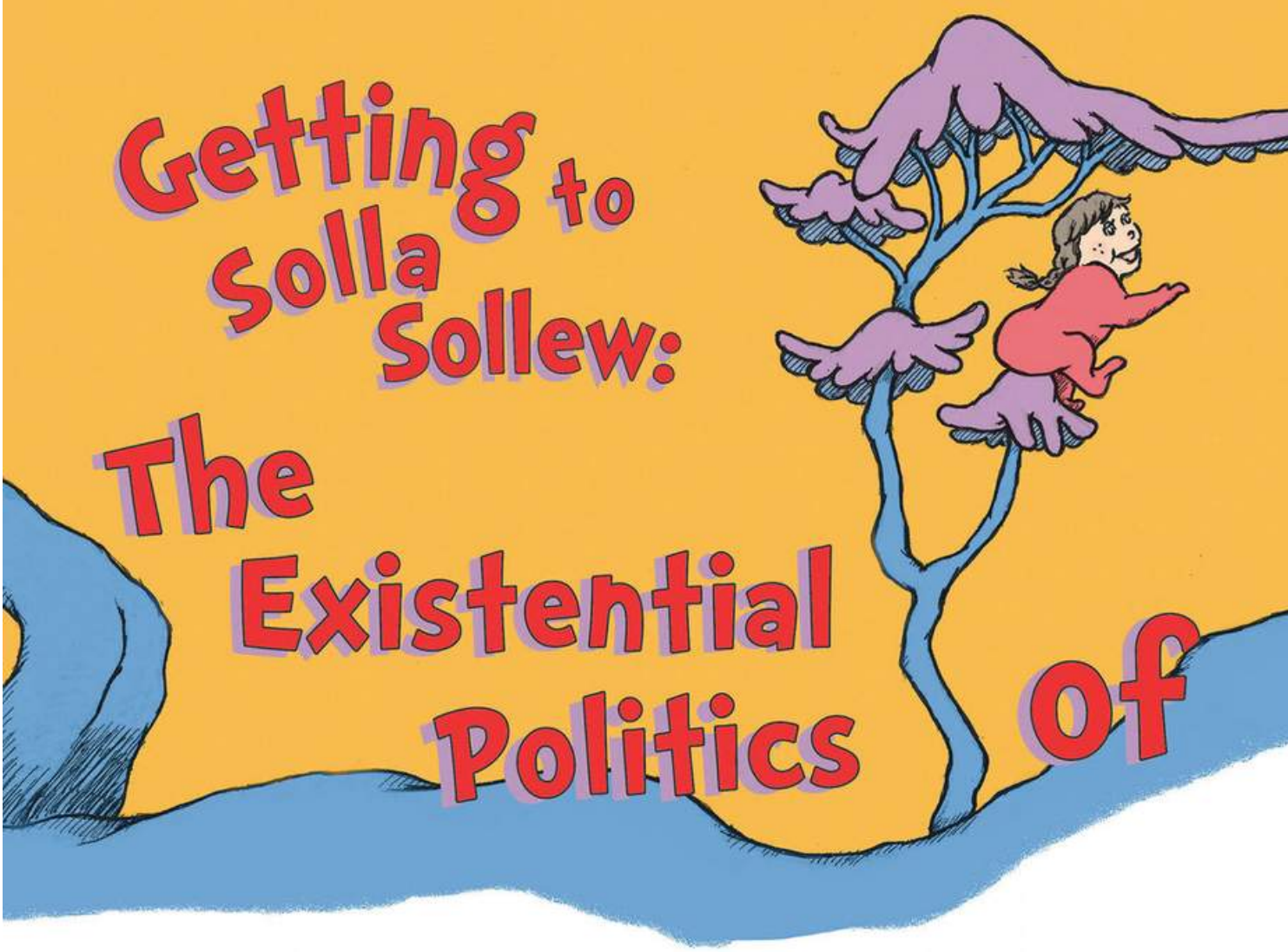


Vol. 2, No. 2. 1987.

Dr. Seuss . . . employed the form that has over the past fifty years made him one of the most successful writers of children's literature in the history of the English language, ranking him with such as Lewis Carroll or Beatrix Potter. He has sold more than one hundred million books. . . .

Seuss is a smasher of conventional boundaries. He invents his own words, defying the language/nonsense boundary; he invents his own creatures, defying the human/animal boundary; he is unceasingly sarcastic and satirical yet profoundly serious, ultimately defying the boundary between what is serious and what is absurd.

This form reaches the powerless, such as small children and old people, who are expected to be passive and are objectified through their nonconsensual submission to authority. For such readers (or, listeners, in the case of the children), the books offer a discourse of resistance; they are accessible, easily consumed, and utterly irreverent. Their suggestion that categories need not be taken for granted is empowering to those who are told they have no choice, that that's the way things are, that "life is like that." . . .

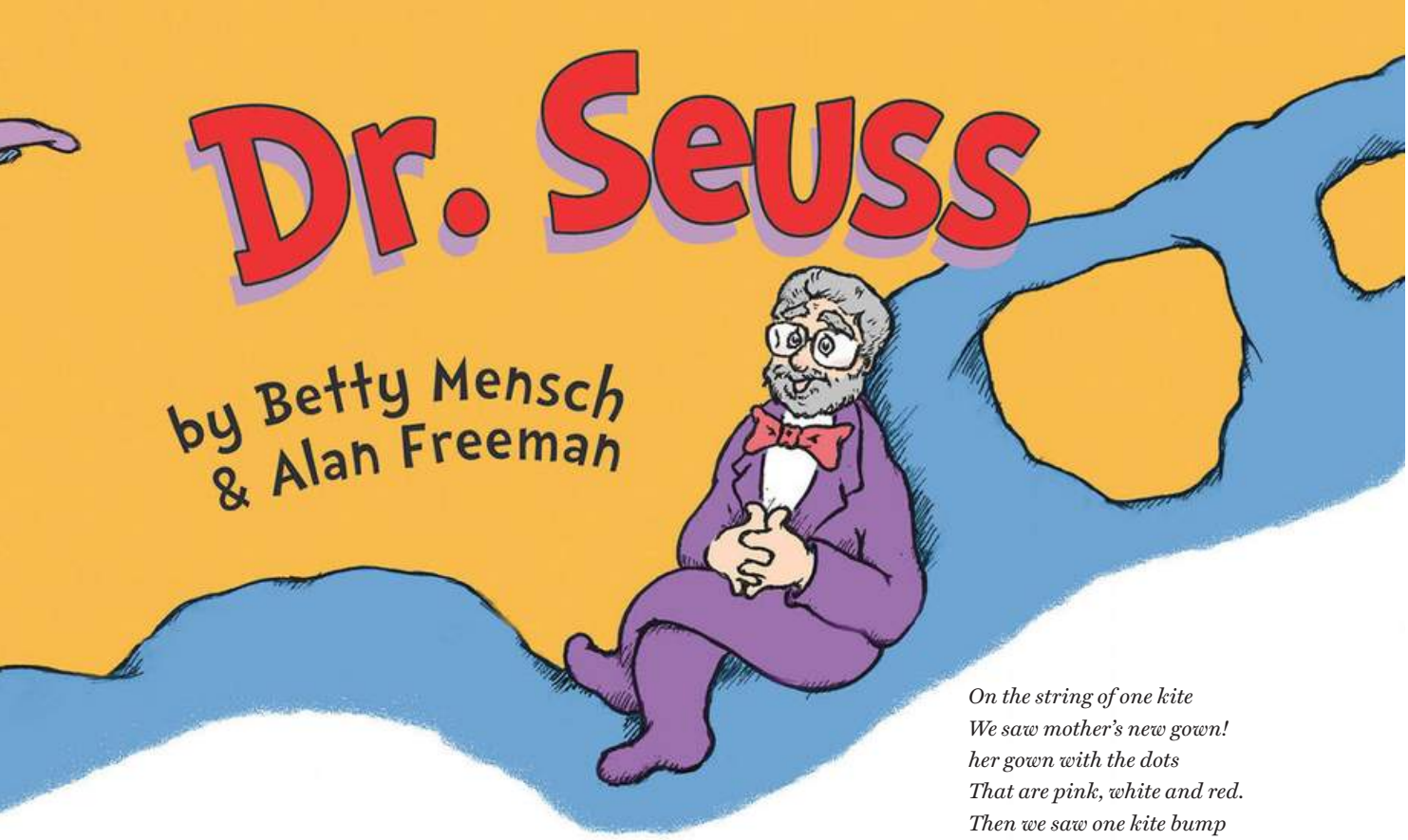
Empowerment is the core theme in Dr. Seuss, for with all of his irreverent nonsense he offers readers a space within which they can search for both identity and virtue, free from the oppressive force of authority and orthodoxy. Seuss develops this theme with surprising richness and complexity. Described thematically (rather than chronologically), he starts by exploring the child's struggle to achieve identity in the family, with its conventional norms of behavior and its demand for passive compliance with authority. Seuss moves from there to a description of the need for authentic, existential struggle in the world generally. He then explores quite specific forms of oppression in the modern world—hierarchy, racism, environmental devastation, and militarism—and all the suffocating ideological forms which are used to justify them. Finally, Seuss suggests the possibility of moral and political transformation. This transformation requires the creation of new selves, liberated from orthodox assumptions about scientific truth, gender, and the limited range of moral choice in the world. So transformed, we might even become open to the experience of forming an authentic community, in which virtue and authority arc no longer at odds with each other, but reunited in new conditions of freedom. . . .

Betty Mensch and Alan Freeman were professors of law at the State University of New York, Buffalo. Freeman passed away in 1995.

Claire Macaraeg | www.clairemacaraeg.com

Dr. Seuss

by Betty Mensch & Alan Freeman



In *The Cat in the Hat*, with the simple elegance of a 220-word vocabulary, Seuss depicts in powerful symbolic form the core childhood dilemma of identity and authority within the family. The (nameless) narrator is a boy—the archetypal male child seeking to define himself in relation to his mother and also in relation to both conventional morality and his own chaotic, anarchic impulses. . . .

At the start of the book the narrator and his sister, Sally, are alone and bored at home on a cold, rainy day, accompanied only by their fish in a bowl, when a loud bump suddenly announces the unexpected arrival of the slyly grinning Cat in the Hat. This cat promises *"lots of good fun that is funny,"* and quickly dismisses the fish's strident objection that the children must not let the cat in when their mother is away:

But our fish said, "No! No! Make that cat go away!
Tell that Cat in the Hat you do NOT want to play.
He should not be here. He should not be about.
He should not be here when your mother is out!"

The cat insists that the children should *"Have no fear!"* and repeats his promise that *"we can have lots of good fun . . ."* This he then demonstrates with his first game, a complex juggling trick that begins with the fish being tossed high in the air. After this balancing act collapses, the fish once again scolds the cat and orders him out. The cat refuses to leave, instead summoning two nameless things from a red box, thing one and thing two, who are strange, soulless, golem-like creatures resplendent in their perfect amorality. Once released, the things enter into a chaotic frenzy of unrestrained play. Like demon spirits from an animalistic id, the things run wild, wreaking havoc and even violating the absent mother's most intimate realm:

On the string of one kite
We saw mother's new gown!
her gown with the dots
That are pink, white and red.
Then we saw one kite bump
On the head of her bed!

Just as the children are becoming nervous at the extent of the destruction, the fish, quaking with fear, announces that mother is home. Finally frightened, the narrator seizes the things and orders the cat to take them away. As the fish laments the awesome mess left in the house, the cat returns with a magic machine and restores order. When mother does return, and asks what the children did, they are uncertain what to tell her. Then, in the last two lines of the book, another voice asks us all a dreadful question: *"What would you do if your mother asked you?"*

The children are thus confronted with powerful cultural images. The fish, with his incessant scolding, articulates all the socially constructed norms defining what good little children should do, norms which parents systematically and unreflectively instill in their children. Drawing on old Christian symbolism (the fish was an ancient sign of Christianity), Dr. Seuss portrays the fish as a kind of ever-nagging superego, the embodiment of utterly conventionalized morality. Thus, as if under siege by Nietzsche himself, the fish scolds, frets, chastises, and tries to induce anxious fear of authority, but unlike the cat, he can attract the children with no independent power of his own, and his demands are designed to make the children utterly passive. The fish would have them just, *"sit, sit, sit, sit."* Therefore, Dr. Seuss is merciless in his mockery of the fish and the conventionality the fish represents. In the hands of the cat (his natural predator) the fish is subjected to madcap, slapstick violence—he is balanced on the cat's umbrella, dropped into a teapot, and dangled from the lines of a kite. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

Traveling with Children

Mothering and Ethics of the Ordinary World

LAURIE ZOLOTH

Vol. 10, No. 4. 1995.

Making Reservations: The Journey as Leavetaking

HERE IS THE PICTURE of the seeker on the spiritual path. A person walks alone, the way is difficult, the terrain dramatic. Without knowing the gender of the person depicted by the text, do we have any doubt that the seeker is male? . . .

Such texts always leave me muttering about who is watching the four-year-olds near the water, who is bouncing the babies to sleep at the edges of the gathering, who is washing the plates after dinner, who is dying the cloth for the sacred raiment. The work that must support the quest is invisible. And the oldest construct in theology and philosophy is this very invisibility. Yet for women it is this work that frames the world and the critical struggle to find moral meaning, especially in light of the starkness of the absence of this feminist perspective in traditional text.

The spiritual quest is written as a quest away—a journey away from the ordinary to the sacred, away from the demands of the daily to the purity of the holy. Yet in the struggle to encounter what God wants of us, I must find meaning, holiness in this life. It cannot mean that God wants flight from what I can know as most holy—the birth and breath of my children.

Judaism has been criticized with extraordinary vigor for the lack of attention to the female voice in the text, and this critique is justified. The challenge, then, is to construct an ethics of ordinariness without sentimentality about the daily moral choices that are made by women and to reflect on the theology that is partner to such an ethics. In this construct the notions of ethics and spirituality are inseparable, neither possible without the light of the other.

We are drawn into the process of public discourse by the sensational acts at the outskirts of human community: the pregnancies by radical technology, the rescue of the particular child. Yet the daily acts of choice that thousands of women make, and see as choices of faith, are far more difficult. What would the shape of ethics or spirituality be if we focused on the ethics and theology of the moral gesture of raising children who are in our lives and through whom we carry the obligation to the past and the next generation?

This article began as a conversation with colleagues, feminist scholars of religion and ethics, about why we couldn't seem to get our articles in on time. It was all the interruption! The chicken pox! The field trip! And here we were, trying to write important things about The Good, each of us balancing the teaching and creation of theological reflection with the teaching and the creation of the babies and children who we mother. Usually, this second work is seen as that distraction that takes us from the rigor of the first. The parallel universe of the mundane is the messy, tangible, and embodied that surrounds all of our theory. . . .

What is at stake in this argument is not the simple recognition that the work of the female role needs to be honored or seen, although this has been a key feminist insight. What is at stake, rather, is the claim that the paradigm of the faith journey as usually envisioned . . . is just not the one that describes an accurate story of women's lives. The very notion of spirituality as otherworldliness, as taking place outside the home, understood as a leavetaking from family, as rooted in autonomous journey, is a different vision than the one we carry in our daily lives. But there is a countervailing notion: that it is the bonds of obligation, found within the family, and within the ordinary, that generate the renewal of daily meaning. . . .

I do not mean to heroicize mothering uncritically: The family is complex, both liberatory and conservative. Chicken pox happens, and much, much worse. The ordinary difficult obligations, dependency, tragic loss, and tragic angers are often precisely what people want sacred refuge from. But I want to turn us back into the place of secular, mundane time, into regular and familiar moral choices. It is precisely in these smaller heroic acts that we need to construct an ethics of the larger public sphere. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

LAURIE ZOLOTH is a professor of religious studies at Northwestern University as well as a professor of bioethics and medical humanities at the Feinberg School of Medicine. She wrote this piece a long time ago.

The Pro-flag and Anti-abortion Pathology

Vol. 4, No. 5. 1989.

In recent months, the right wing has managed to galvanize large numbers of people around pro-flag and anti-abortion campaigns. What accounts for the popular attraction of these causes? Israeli philosopher Yeshayahu Leibowitz says that from the standpoint of Jewish law (*halakha*), a flag is simply a *shmate* (a rag) on a pole. So why all the passion? And why the seeming deeper commitment to the fate of the unborn than to the fate of the millions of children living in severe poverty and conditions of oppression?

Of course, some of the people involved in these movements are motivated by the surface arguments and have reasonable things to say. The abortion issue, for example, is complex, and many of those who have been most committed, as we are, to the pro-choice position, nevertheless insist that abortion is often troubling, and that it is reasonable to make complex moral judgments about when abortion is appropriate. Still, it appears to us that pro-choicers have a more consistent pro-life attitude than many of those in the anti-abortion movement, who care little about the fate of the fetus once it becomes a baby. While many individuals have legitimate moral concerns about abortion (and we all need to struggle with these concerns), the anti-abortion movement exhibits distinctly pathological features.

We also understand the legitimate desires of Americans to build cultural symbols of their shared values, but when they are whipped into such a frenzy that they would amend the Constitution to defend the flag from a mere handful of people who wish to burn that flag in order to signify their anger at various aspects of American society, we are dealing with a phenomenon that goes far beyond rational concerns.

To understand the pathology fully, we need to look at the pervasive pain and frustration, the feelings of worthlessness and lack of connection to others, and the alienation and desperate search for communities of meaning and purpose that underlie so much of contemporary American politics. In a society that offers people few opportunities to achieve the mutual recognition and affirmation that are fundamental human needs, the longing for connection with others is frequently coupled with a melancholy resignation that such longing is utopian and cannot be fulfilled in this world. Yet the desire for this connection—a desire normally denied by human being so alienated by the dynamics of contemporary capitalist society that most people have given up all conscious hope for its realization—remains a driving force in the unconscious lives of most Americans.

Part of the energy of the anti-abortion movement comes from its ability to symbolically address this desire. The fetus is a symbol of an idealized, innocent being—actually the little child within us, who is not being adequately loved and accepted in our daily experience. The desire to be loved and accepted as human beings—a completely rational desire—is split off and projected onto the fetus. This object of fantasy is idealized and made pure—an innocent and perfect unborn creature (and because unborn, not yet sullied by the world).

But because this projection and process of idealization in fact involves an evasion and denial of actual pain, it is accompanied by another split-off part of their consciousness: the rage and hatred that people feel when they are not confirmed in their fundamental humanity. That anger is directed at a demonized "other" whose humanity is ignored or denied, transformed by imagination into the "murderers" killing little babies; the communists who are to be nuked out of existence; the criminals who must be executed; the drug addicts upon whom we must wage war; the Jews, Blacks, or Arabs who are routinely deemed responsible for the world's or a given society's problems. This is why it makes sense for so many supposed "pro-lifers" to fanatically oppose abortion and yet support the death penalty and American militarism. At the rational level, these views may seem inconsistent, but at the deeper psychological level they are expressive of the same distorted dynamic. Both the unborn fetus and the evil "other" are imaginary constructs that carry an unconscious meaning reflecting repression of people's most fundamental social need.

A similar loss of connectedness to others underlies the frantic attempts to amend the Constitution to "protect the flag." The commotion isn't really about a *shmate* on a pole, but rather is about the loss of the idealized community that the flag symbolizes. In the past, part of what gave coherence to individual and family life was its embeddedness in larger

communities of meaning and shared purpose. Religious, ethnic, and political communities, even unions and social change organizations such as the socialist and communist parties, provided a context within which people could feel connected to a larger purpose and historical meaning that transcended their individual lives.

With the erosion of genuine community within which people can feel recognized and confirmed for who they are, people in their isolation feel driven to seek out the imaginary communities provided them through an identification with "the nation." Yet the very lack of substance in these fantasies makes people's connection to these pseudo-communities feel unstable, and hence generates a frenzy and hysteria that is used to sustain a sense of a reality that might otherwise fade. In this context, the flag the symbol of a perfect community that exists only in the imagination, becomes the vulnerable embodiment of all that people fear they are losing.

Ironically, though, there is one element in the fantasies people have about America that actually is real—and it is precisely that one real element that is threatened by the controversies over the flag and abortion. That element is the real way that America *has* preserved individual freedom. While preserving individual freedoms is not a sufficient basis for the creation of a community of meaning that can replace those that have eroded, the absence of this value is one reason why some of the previous communities lost their popular support. Individual freedom would certainly be a central value in any new community of meaning we would try to create.

From a tactical standpoint, civil libertarians might wish that the Supreme Court had not agreed to hear the case and involve itself in the flag issue at this historical moment. Yet it is precisely in the willingness to say that even the symbol of the society, the American flag, can be attacked, that the Supreme Court embodies what is very best in American society. We do not advocate that people burn the flag, but we applaud the Supreme Court for confirming that flag burning is constitutional. That the Supreme Court in effect allows us to look at America's most holy symbol as though it were a *shmate* on a pole gives us immense reason to be proud of the United States of America. It was this fierce commitment to individual liberties and to the right of people to make up their own minds about what to call holy that made it possible for our foremothers and forefathers to find haven on these shores. Shame on those pathetic political misleaders in the Congress, administration, and media who now seek a way to overturn that decision.

Ironically, the best way to defend these important freedoms of choice is *not* to insist on the sanctity of choice. Freedom of choice is just another candidate for what should be holy—and it has to contend on the same level as the various right-wing candidates for holiness. Rather, the task is to understand the unmet needs that lead people to an irrational and pathological politics.

Then we must charge the liberal and progressive forces with finding more healthy and rational ways to address those needs by showing a better way for people to secure the recognition and connectedness they rightfully desire. Only then will we reconstitute communities of meaning that have been undermined by the individualist ethos.

If all this sounds a bit too psychological for you, just look at how unsuccessful the liberal and progressive forces have been in waging a defensive war against a right wing that is willing to talk about these issues. It's time to deepen the level of analysis and insist that political strategies address this fundamental dimension of human reality. ■

Songless Era

A fine ash obscured the sun.

Leaves grew large as rooms.

Stamped recreants strolled near the pond of wands.

There was a great and terrible brightness
that was pretty much like a fire
but it had *lots of eyes* in it.

Four syntaxes correspond to four styles of going on.

Can you hear? (how 'bout now.) Non-chanson:

lie down in the tent of a servant-queen;
lie down in the dust; go on.

One kind of sentence remembers the accident;

one kind of sentence is a scar.

—Brenda Hillman

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Standing Again at Sinai

Jewish Memory from a Feminist Perspective

JUDITH PLASKOW

Vol. 1, No. 2. 1986.

Rebekka Dunlap | rebekkadunlap.com

There is perhaps no verse in the Torah more disturbing to the feminist than Moses' warning to his people in Exodus 19:15, "Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman." For here, at the very moment that the Jewish people stand at Mount Sinai ready to enter into the covenant—not now the covenant with the individual patriarchs but presumably with the people as a whole—Moses addresses the community only as men. The specific issue is ritual impurity: an emission of semen renders both a man and his female partner temporarily unfit to approach the sacred (Leviticus 15:16-18). But Moses does not say, "Men and women do not go near each other." At the central moment of Jewish history, women are invisible. It was not their experience that interested the chronicler or that informed and shaped the text.

This verse sets forth a pattern recapitulated again and again in Jewish sources. Women's invisibility at the moment of entry into the covenant is reflected in the content of the covenant which, in both grammar and substance, addresses the community as male heads of household. It is perpetuated by the later tradition which in its comments and codifications takes women as objects of concern or legislation but rarely sees them as shapers of tradition and actors in their own lives.

It is not just a historical injustice that is at stake in this verse, however. There is another dimension to the problem of the Sinai passage essential for understanding the task of Jewish feminism today. Were this passage simply the record of a historical event long in the past, the exclusion of women at this critical juncture would be troubling, but also comprehensible for its time. The Torah is not just history, however, but also living memory. The Torah reading, as a central part of the Sabbath and holiday liturgy, calls to mind and recreates the past for succeeding generations. When the story of Sinai is recited as part of the annual cycle of Torah readings or as a special reading for Shavuot, women each time hear ourselves thrust aside anew, eavesdropping on a conversation among men and between man and God.

Significant and disturbing as this passage is, however, equally significant is the tension between it and the reality of the Jewish woman who hears or reads it. The passage affronts because of a contradiction between the holes in the text and many women's felt experience. If Moses' words shock and anger, it is because women have always known or assumed our presence at Sinai; the passage is painful because it seems to deny what we have always taken for granted. On the one hand, of course we were there; on the other, how is it then that the text could imply we were not there?

This contradiction seems to me crucial, for construed a certain way, it is a potential bridge to a new relationship with the tradition. On the one hand, women can choose to

JUDITH PLASKOW is Professor Emerita of Religious Studies at Manhattan College and a Jewish feminist theologian.

accept our absence from Sinai, in which case we allow the male text to define us and our relationship to the tradition. On the other hand, we can stand on the ground of our experience, on the certainty of our membership in our own people. To do this, however, is to be forced to remember and recreate its history. It is to move from anger at the tradition, through anger to empowerment. It is to begin the journey toward the creation of a feminist Judaism. . . .

According to many ancient Jewish sources, the Torah preexisted the creation of the world. It was the first of God's works, identified with the divine wisdom in Proverbs 8. It was written with black fire on white fire and rested on the knee of God. It was the architectural plan God consulted in creating the universe. For the Kabbalists, this pre-existent or primordial Torah is God's wisdom and essence; it expresses the immensity of his being and power. The written Torah of ink and parchment is only the "outer garments," a limited interpretation of what lies hidden, a document that the initiate must penetrate more and more deeply to gain momentary glimpses of what lies behind. A later development of the idea of a secret Torah asserted that each of the 600,000 souls that stood at Sinai had its own special portion of Torah that only that soul could understand. Obviously, no account of revelatory experience by men or women can describe or exhaust the depths of divine reality. But this image of the relation between hidden and manifest Torah reminds us that half the souls of Israel have not left for us the Torah they have seen. Insofar as we can begin to recover the God-wrestling of women, insofar as we can restore a part of their vision and experience, we have more of the primordial Torah, the divine fullness, of which the present Torah of Israel is only a fragment and a sign. . . .

Assuming the infinite meaningfulness of biblical texts, the rabbis took passages that were sketchy or troubling and wrote them forward. They brought to the Bible their own questions and found answers that showed the eternal relevance of biblical truth. Why was Abraham chosen to be the father of a people? What was the status of the law before the Torah was given? Who was Adam's first wife? Why was Dinah raped? These were not questions for historical investigation but imaginative exegesis and literary amplification.

The open-ended process of writing midrash, simultaneously serious and playful, imaginative, metaphoric, has easily lent itself to feminist use. While feminist midrash—like all midrash—is a reflection of contemporary beliefs and experiences, its root conviction is utterly traditional. It stands on the rabbinic insistence that the Bible can be made to speak to the present day. If the Torah is our text, it can and must answer our questions and share our values; if we wrestle with it, it will yield meaning. . . .

In the realm of Jewish religious expression, imagination is permitted and even encouraged. Midrash is not a violation of historical canons but an enactment of commitment to the fruitfulness and relevance of biblical texts. It is partly through midrash that the figurine or document, potentially integrable into memory but still on the periphery, is transformed into narrative the religious ear can hear. The discovery of women in our history can feed the impulse to create midrash; midrash can seize on history and make it religiously meaningful. Remembering and inventing together help recover the hidden half of Torah, reshaping Jewish memory to let women speak. . . .

Women's history challenges us to confront the incompleteness of what has been called "Jewish history," to attend to the hidden and hitherto marginal, to attempt a true Jewish history which is a history of women and men. It restores to us some of the women's voices in and out of the "normative" tradition, sometimes in accommodation and sometimes in struggle, but the voices of Jews defining their own Jewishness as they participate in the communal life. Midrash expands and burrows, invents the forgotten and prods the memory, takes from history and asks for more. It gives us the inner life history cannot follow, building links between the stories of our foremothers and our own joy and pain. Ritual asserts women's presence in the present. Borrowing from history and midrash, it transforms them into living memory. Creating new forms, it offers them to be remembered.

Thus, through diverse paths, we remember ourselves. Moses' injunction at Sinai—"Do not go near a woman"—though no less painful, is only part of a story expanded and reinvigorated as women enter into the shaping of Torah. If in Jewish terms history provides a basis for identity, then out of our new sense of identity we are also claiming our past. Beginning with the conviction of our presence both at Sinai and now, we rediscover and invent ourselves in the Jewish communal past and present, continuing the age-old process of reshaping Jewish memory. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

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Samuel Bak. *Departure*, 1989–1996. Oil on linen. 80 x 100 cm.
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Gayness and God

Wrestlings of an Orthodox Rabbi

STEVEN GREENBERG

Vol. 8, No. 5. 1993.

I AM AN ORTHODOX RABBI and I am gay. For a long while I denied, rejected, railed against this truth. The life story that I had wanted—wife, kids, and a family that modeled Torah and *hesed*—turned out to be an impossible fantasy. I have begun to shape a new life story. This essay is part of that life story, and thus remains unfinished, part of a stream of consciousness rather than a systematic treatise.

It is hard to say how or when I came to know myself as a gay man. In the beginning, it was just an array of bodily sensations; sweaty palms and that excited sort of nervousness you feel around certain people occurred without awareness. The arrival of the hormonal hurricane left me completely dumbfounded. Just when my body should have fulfilled social expectations, it began to transgress them. I had no physical

RABBI STEVEN GREENBERG originally published this article in *Tikkun* under the pseudonym "Rabbi Yaakov Levado" (literally Jacob Alone), fearing that he would lose his employment. After *Tikkun* published this article, a growing number of liberal and progressive Jews pushed for change in the Jewish world, including successfully getting most denominations of Judaism to ordain openly gay and lesbian students. Rabbi Greenberg is now a faculty member of the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America and Senior Teaching Fellow at CLAL-The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership and Director of Eshel, a support, education, and advocacy organization for LGBT Orthodox Jews.

response to girls. But I was physically pulled, eyes and body, toward guys. I remember my head turning sharply once in the locker room for an athletic boy whom I admired. At the time, I must have noticed my body's involuntary movement, but it meant nothing to me. I understood nothing. How could I? I had no idea what it meant to be homosexual. "Faggot" or "homo" were words reserved for the boys hounded for being passive, or unathletic. None of this said anything about sexual attraction. There were no categories for this experience, no way to explain the strange muscle spasms, the warm sensation on my face, or the flutter in my chest. Not until years later, after countless repetitions of such events, did it slowly, terrifyingly, break through to my consciousness.

When other boys were becoming enraptured by girls, I found my rapture in learning Torah. I was thrilled by the sprawling rabbinic arguments, the imaginative plays on words, and the demand for meaning everywhere. *Negiah*, the prohibition to embrace, kiss, or even touch girls until marriage was my saving grace. The premarital sexual restraint of the Halacha was a perfect mask, not only to the world, but to myself.

My years in yeshiva were spectacular, in some measure because they were so intensely fueled by a totally denied sexuality. There were so many *bachurim* (students) in the yeshiva whose intense and passionate learning was energized with repressed sexual energy. For me, the environment deflected sexual energy and generated it as well. The male spirit and energy I felt in yeshiva was both nourishing and frustrating. I do not know if I was alone among my companions or not. From those early years, I remember no signs by which I could have clearly read my gayness or anyone else's. I only know that I was plagued with stomach aches almost every morning.

Later, on one desperate occasion, beset with an increased awareness of my attraction to a fellow yeshiva student, I visited a sage, Rav Eliashuv, who lives in one of the most secluded right-wing Orthodox communities in Jerusalem. He was old and in failing health, but still taking visitors who daily waited in an anteroom for hours for the privilege of speaking with him for a few minutes.

Speaking in Hebrew, I told him what, at the time, I felt was the truth. "Master, I am attracted to both men and women. What shall I do?" He responded, "My dear one, then you have twice the power of love. Use it carefully." I was stunned. I sat in silence for a moment, waiting for more. "Is that all?" I asked. He smiled and said, "That is all. There is nothing more to say."

Rav Eliashuv's words calmed me, permitting me to forget temporarily the awful tensions that would eventually overtake me. His trust and support buoyed me above my fears. I thought that as a bisexual I could have a wider and richer emotional life and perhaps even a deeper spiritual life than is common—and still marry and have a family. For a long while I felt a self-acceptance that carried me confidently into rabbinical school. I began rabbinical training with great excitement and a sense of promise. At the center of my motivations were those powerful rabbinic traditions that had bowled me over in my early adolescence. I wanted more than anything else to learn and to teach Torah in its full depth and breadth. I finished rabbinical school, still dating and carefully avoiding any physical expression and took my first jobs as a rabbi. There were many failed relationships with wonderful women who could not understand why things just didn't work out. Only after knocking my shins countless times into the hard wood of this truth was I able fully to acknowledge that I am gay.

"The inner and outer struggles faced by an orthodox rabbi who gradually recognizes that he is gay. "Given that I am gay, what is it that the God of Israel wants of me?"

It has taken a number of years to sift through the wrecking of "my life as I wanted it" to discover "my life as it is." It has taken more time to exorcise the self-hatred that feeds on shattered hopes and ugly stereotypes. I am still engaged in that struggle. I have yet to receive the new tablets, the whole ones, that will take their place in the Ark beside the broken ones. Rav Nachman of Bratzlav teaches that there is nothing so whole as a broken heart. It is in his spirit that I continue to try to make sense of my life.

Although much has changed in the past few years as I have accepted my gayness, much remains the same. I am still a rabbi, and I am still deeply committed to God, Torah, and Israel. My religious life had always been directed by the desire to be a servant of the Lord. None of that has changed. The question is an old one, merely posed anew as I strive to integrate being gay into my life. Given that I am gay, what is it that the God of Israel wants of me? ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

Not by Might and Not by Power

Kahanism and Orthodoxy

CHAIM SEIDLER-FELLER

Vol. 6, No. 1. 1991.

Meir Kahane's assassination was abhorrent. But so were the reactions of some highly visible Jews. . . . It is incomprehensible that responsible individuals, including Seymour Reich of the Conference of Presidents, Abraham Foxman of the ADL, as well as a representative of the Israeli consulate (all three of whom attended Kahane's funeral) and Alan Dershowitz of Harvard, found it necessary to pay their respects to a man they claimed to loathe. Once again, American Jewish leaders and Israeli officials appeared unable to maintain a moral stance when confronted with populist chauvinism and an outcry for ethnic solidarity. They not only reduced Jewish moral capital, but also showed themselves to be not very different from the leaders of other ethnic communities and political bodies whom the Jewish establishment routinely condemns as weak-kneed and unprincipled. . . .

Kahane has been embraced as a Jewish hero by a large segment of the Orthodox community. The Orthodox rabbi of the Young Israel of Ocean Parkway, where Kahane's funeral was held, referred to him as a *tzaddik*, or saint. . . . What predisposes Orthodoxy to Kahanism? Why were so few prominent Orthodox rabbis willing to publicly condemn and ostracize him? Why, after all, is Orthodoxy amenable to a theology of vengeance and violence? Herein, we can only sketch tentative responses to such questions.

First, consider the demographic distinctiveness of the Orthodox community. Orthodox Jews tend to live in urban areas and, due to the rampant crime and threat of assault in inner-city neighborhoods, readily view themselves as victims in need of a champion. The Orthodox community was also devastated by the Holocaust. And many survivors, in the wake of the Holocaust, have identified themselves as Orthodox. This makes for a community with little or no trust in the "other." These survivors took to heart Kahane's message that "all goyim are out to get you" and "you can only rely on yourselves."

Second, one needs to take into account the psychological characteristics of Orthodox belief. Decades of public disparagement of Orthodoxy and predictions of its imminent demise have left Orthodox believers with a reservoir of smoldering anger toward other Jews and the world at large. And due to their particular experience, Orthodox Jews have internalized the negative stereotype of Jews as totally powerless. Kahane exploited these feelings of shame and anger, and, since he spoke the language of Orthodoxy, was accepted as a savior who restored Jewish pride to the downtrodden Orthodox.

Finally, in matters of theological doctrine, Orthodoxy proved to be a congenial setting in which Kahane could lend religious credibility to his racism. Since Kahane consistently quoted biblical and rabbinic sources to bolster his arguments, Orthodox rabbis were reluctant to criticize him. For to do so would have meant admitting that some Jewish teachings are indeed racist, hateful, and immoral, and therefore must be reinterpreted—either changed or rejected. For some, this basic failure of theological nerve merged with a deeper feeling that Kahane had accurately pinpointed the primitive underbelly of Judaism; that his reading, based as it was on tradition, was actually correct.

And Orthodoxy has seized upon those elements of our tradition that lend themselves to such interpretations. The Book of Joshua and the commandment to conquer the land have invested traditional Judaism with a rationalized violent impulse. In fact the only manifestations of organized Jewish violence since the establishment of the state of Israel have come from within the ranks of Orthodoxy: I refer to the Shabbat stone-throwing practiced by ultra-Orthodox Jews; and to the Jewish underground (*mach teret*) that plotted to blow up the mosques atop the Temple Mount and murdered several Arab students in cold blood. . . .

The challenge for all Jews is to reclaim their tradition and decisively uproot, once and for all, the Jewish teachings of contempt that have attracted so many followers to Kahane's message. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller is Director Emeritus of the Yitzhak Rabin Hillel Center for Jewish Life at UCLA and Director of the Hartman Fellowship for Campus Professionals.

Down-to-Earth Judaism

Food, Sex, and Money

ARTHUR WASKOW

Vol. 3, No. 1. 1988.

(EDITOR'S NOTE IN 2016 : *This is a short selection from much fuller articles that deal with a Jewish perspective on food, sex, and money published in Vol. 3, No. 1 and No. 2.*)

According to "biblical Israel's" understanding of itself, as expressed in the Bible, and according to some (not all) of those who have studied the ancient cultures of the land of Canaan, the very divergence between "Canaanites" and "Israelites" may have emerged in part from the divergence between two ways of addressing the Life-Force of the Universe. One path was through sexuality, which obviously transmitted and celebrated life through the generations. In this view, sacred sexual intercourse with sacred sexual priests and priestesses (what the Bible called *kadesha* and *kadesh*—from the root for "holy") was, in ancient Canaan, a way of invoking and celebrating that ultimate Intercourse that gave rise to all life.

The other path was through the celebration of food. In this view, biblical Israel created a form of prayer and celebration that rejected the path of temple sexuality and focused entirely on bringing the food that sprang from the land—goats and sheep, barley and wheat, olive oil and wine, even water—to the central place of worship. Some was set aside for God the Lifegiver, who was the real owner of all land; some for the landless priests; and some for the poor who had little to eat.

In this culture, even the first independent act of human history was described as an act of eating—not as an act of sexuality or parenting or murder. That act of eating from the Tree of Knowledge sprouted into the burden of endless toil that all human beings faced to wring food from the earth. And when the same culture joyfully welcomed Shabbat into the world—the first step of releasing that burden of endless toil—it was also in the context of food, the manna in the wilderness, that Shabbat came.

So it is hardly surprising that this culture generated an elaborate system of kashrut. When the destruction of the Temple and the dispersion of the Jewish community necessitated some new approach to hallowing food that did not depend upon the Temple sacrifices, the Talmud described each family's dinner table as a holy Altar, and kashrut was elaborated far beyond its biblical simplicity. Without a separate food-producing land to make them distinctive, the Jews made their Diaspora dinner tables so distinctive that at every meal their separate peoplehood was reaffirmed. . . .

For many Jews in our generation . . . the question of kashrut is especially problematic. Most of us want to assert our Jewishness without letting it separate us from others with whom we share basic political, cultural, and spiritual values. Many of us act as if "we are what we eat" when it comes to decisions about vegetarianism, macrobiotic diets, boycotts of food grown by oppressed workers in Chile, South Africa, or the United States. Yet many of us also resist the imposition of absolute, black-and-white distinctions in our lives: this you must and this you must not.

Is there any way to reshape this ungainly bundle of our partly contradictory values so that it makes a coherent whole, affirming and strengthening our lives as Jews?

Most of our strongest social values have their roots (or at least their analogues) in values expressed by Jewish tradition.

Oshek. The prohibition of oppressing workers—and a similar prohibition of exploiting customers. Its principles could be extended to prohibit eating the fruit of such oppression or exploitation.

Tza'ar ba'alei hayyim. Respect for animals. It could be extended to prohibit eating any meat, or to prohibit eating meat from animals that have been grown under super-productive "factory farm" conditions. It could also be extended to respect for the identity of plants—for example, by prohibiting the misuse of pesticides and of genetic recombination, or the eating of foods that were grown by such misuses.

Leshev ba'aretz. Living with, and not ruining, the earth. It could be extended to require the use of "natural" or "organic" foods—foods not grown with chemical pesticides.

RABBI ARTHUR WASKOW founded (1983) and directs The Shalom Center (www.theshalomcenter.org). Rabbi Waskow expanded this article into a full-length book published by Morrow entitled *Down-to-Earth Judaism: Food, Money, Sex, and the Rest of Life*. It reviews the history and spiritual meaning of Jewish practices in these four areas (Rest = Restfulness) from early biblical times into the present and possible life-enhancing futures, in much the same way his book *Seasons of Our Joy* does with the festivals. It can be ordered from The Shalom Center (by visiting www.theshalomcenter.org/civicrm/contribute/transact?reset=1&id=10).

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Aleph Bet Creation | watercolor collage, 15" x 22"

Shemirat haguf. The protection of one's own body. It could be understood to prohibit eating food that contains carcinogens and/or hormones, and quasi-food items like tobacco and overdoses of alcohol. This principle would also mandate attention to the problems of anorexia or overeating that cause us deep physical and psychological pain and make food into a weapon that we use against ourselves.

Tzedakah. The sharing of food with the poor. It could be extended to prohibit the eating of any meal, or any communal festive meal, unless a proportion of its cost goes to buying food for the hungry. An extended version of this approach suggests that, in a world where protein is already distributed inequitably, it is unjust to channel large amounts of cheap grain into feeding animals to grow expensive meat protein—and that it is therefore unjust to eat meat at all.

(In line with the recent establishment of Mazon, a Jewish anti-hunger organization that collects a voluntary self-tax on communal celebration meals.)

Rodef tzedek and **Rodef shalom.** The obligation to pursue peace and justice. It might be understood to require the avoidance of food produced by companies that egregiously violate these values—for example, by investing in South Africa or by manufacturing first-strike nuclear weapons.

Berakhah and **Kedushah.** The traditional sense that eating consciously must affirm a sense of holiness and blessing. This might be understood to require that at the table we use old or new forms for heightening the attention we give to the unity from which all food comes—whether we call it God or not. This would help us maintain an awareness of the sad fact that we must kill plants and/or animals to live.

It is important to note here that we have given only the barest sketch of these ethical principles that are embedded in Jewish tradition—no more, in fact, than a list. To draw on them in any serious way would mean to look more deeply at how the tradition shapes their content—not only at the specific rulings, but at how one arrives at them. Not necessarily to follow the same paths of thought or decision, but to wrestle with a Judaism that draws on the wisdom of all the Jewish generations—not our own alone. Once we have done this, then indeed our generation must decide for itself. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

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Jewish Studies and Jewish Faith

ARTHUR GREEN

Vol. 1, No. 1. 1986.

It is about a hundred and fifty years since the passionate and ongoing concern of Jewry with its own past combined with an emerging sense of critical history in the West to create an intense, almost religious pursuit of the history of Judaism among a highly dedicated cadre of Jewish scholars. First in Germany, later in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, the so-called Wissenschaft des Judentums or *hokhmat yisra'el*, the scientific study of Judaism, itself became a major factor in the ideology and self-image of a new breed of *talmidey hakhamim*, Jewish scholars who were not sages in the traditional sense but rather savants specializing in the sources of Judaism, viewing them through a critical-historical lens. While this Wissenschaft sought to proclaim itself a non-ideological, "purely objective" form of scholarship, the wisdom of hindsight allows us to realize that such untainted objectivity in fact eluded all of nineteenth century historiography, the "Science of Judaism" included. Wissenschaft sought to present to the West an image of Judaism as an enlightened, liberal, tolerant faith, the legacy of an unjustly maligned people who even in the darkest hours of persecution had composed dirges and laments in elevated Hebrew style, who had never forsaken their sacred mission, here mostly interpreted as one of human ennoblement through cultural creativity. The emerging self-image of German Jews as the embodiment of *Bildung* or enlightened edification, of which George Mosse and others have written, was buttressed by the image of what the true Judaism had been all along, as selected and presented by Wissenschaft scholars.

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

The emergence of Wissenschaft also brought forth in the Jewish domain a new concept of the scholar himself, one quite alien to the spirit of Judaism throughout its history. I speak here of the bifurcation between sage and scholar, between the pursuit of wisdom and that of learning, and ultimately between the study of Torah as a religious obligation and the forging of scholarly research into a surrogate religion of its own. . . . The scholar was now to be responsible only to his own *ecclesia*, the temple of learning with its high alter of objectivity, approachable only through the very sort of critical self-distancing from the materials studied that ultimately was to render the personal search for wisdom an illegitimate one in the university. Thus were some thousands of the finest and most searching young minds to enter a state of voluntary exile from the West in the late twentieth century, turning to the ashram, the zendo, and, yes, even to the yeshivah to seek that which the university could not permit itself to provide. . . .

It was only the forced migration of Judaica scholars in the Hitler era, as a part of the general wandering of the German Jewish intelligentsia to America, that laid the groundwork for the emergence of Jewish Studies as an academic area that has seen such tremendous growth in this country since the 1960s. That same emigration also took a major portion of European Judaica scholarship to Erez Israel, making the Hebrew University in Jerusalem the world's greatest single center for research in this field.

The emigré scholars found in America a situation of rare openness to the growth and acceptance of their interests. A breed of young American Jews, mostly third generation, were anxious to absorb their rather more profound, and certainly more theologically sophisticated, versions of Jewish learning than those otherwise available on the American scene. The same universities which had worked to exclude Jews only a few decades earlier were and are still vying with one another to offer programs in Jewish Studies. I am not entirely sanguine about the reasons for this sudden love affair with Judaica research. I believe that smart development officers, at about the time financial crisis due to rising costs hit the universities, made the judgment that Jews were a population of high income and great willingness to spend large sums for education, both for their own children and toward the maintenance of those institutions where they were welcomed. Judaic Studies courses had at least the partial effect of an advertising campaign addressed to Jewish parents and donors, saying with the proper veneer of academic elegance: "Your dollars welcome here!" This calculation was encouraged both by the growing respectability of ethnic identity in general in the late 60s, and by the wave of philo-Semitism that characterized most thinking American Christians, including those who ran departments of religion in the universities, as they began to come to terms with the question of Christian responsibility for the Holocaust. Hence, beginning in the 1960s, the chief locus of Judaic research in the United States shifted from the theological seminaries to departments of religion, near east studies, history, and so forth in the secular universities.

Scholars themselves viewed this new acceptance of Judaica in the general academy with joy. Not only did it make for tremendous growth, jobs for their students, increased research, grants, and so forth; it was also the final realization of the Wissenschaft dream. Judaica had come into its own, celebrating in the American academy a degree of legitimacy it had never been able to achieve in Europe. The cost of this acceptance was only dimly perceived at first, and has become truly apparent only after some decades of living with the new situation. To say it succinctly, Jewish scholarship can no longer serve as the handmaiden of Jewish apologetics. . . .

The truth of religion inhabits a universe of discourse quite entirely different than that of history, and a separation of their claims from entanglement with one another will ultimately be helpful. The great happenings recorded in our Scriptures should in the proper sense be seen as mythical, that is as paradigms to help us encounter, explain, and enrich by archaic association the deepest experiences of which we as humans are capable. We do or do not feel ourselves commanded to live the life of the *mitsvot* not because God did or did not dictate them to Moses on the mountaintop long ago, but because we as Jews, a living faith community in the present, feel ourselves touched by a transcendent presence that is made real in our lives through the fulfillment of these forms. Or do not. It is in faith, the struggle to realize the divine presence in our lives as individuals and as a Jewish people, not in history, where the core of our Judaism must reside. . . .

Recent developments within the academy itself are beginning to point the way toward a resolution of this dilemma. Scholars of religion are beginning to speak of the need to study religion *in its own terms*, and are viewing its interpretation in the language of the social sciences as inappropriately reductionistic. This is not to say that they support the truth claims of any particular tradition, but that they recognize the religious as representing a unique domain of human experience that cannot be explained away by reference to social or psychological needs. To misappropriate a Talmudic rubric, *hapeh she-asar hu ha-peh she-hittir*, the same academy that denies the legitimacy of religion on one level may support it on another. In its retreat from functionalist modes of explaining all human behavior, including religion, part of the academy is admitting, with much caution, that the great religious and mythical systems represent insightful mappings of the human psyche, and that their teachings, while not reflecting accurate history, geology, astronomy, or physics, do offer the one who knows to read them a profound view of the collective inner experience of humanity. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

A Question of Boundaries

Toward a Jewish Feminist Theology of Self and Others

RACHEL ADLER

Vol. 6, No. 3. 1991.

As boundary-crossers, *ivrim* (Hebrews) are bridgers of worlds, makers of transition. The name *ivri* is not resonant of self-perception. It reflects the perspective of those native to this side of the river, those who are at home. Those who do not cross the boundaries may view the relocations of the *ivri* as transgressions against a fixed cosmic order, trespasses into the anomalous and the chaotic.

In our narratives, however, it is God who demands that Abraham and Sarah become *ivrim*. A people rooted in one place experience a God rooted in a particular place. A people that has known transience can experience the translocal nature of God. It is the revelation of a God who is present in every place that makes possible the moral universe of the covenant, where relatedness rather than location becomes the ground of ethics.

If our story about our beginnings as God's *ivrim* were not enough to give value to the project of boundary-crossing, our master-narrative about crossing the boundary from slavery into freedom, and about bridging the boundary between creature and creature in the transaction of covenant has done so. We have valorized these boundary-crossings in our tradition; they shape not only our memories of the past but also our actions in the present and our visions for the future. We are obligated to regard our liberation and our covenant not simply as legacies from our unique history as crossers-over, strangers and slaves, but as events that radically transform the meaning of boundaries in the world; they demonstrate the potential for all objectified others to be reconstituted as subjects similar to ourselves. There is nothing inevitable about this moral understanding of our communal identity. Our special liberation and covenant make equally powerful justifications for subjugation of the other. The admonition in Exodus 23: 9 warns us not to adopt this second interpretation. "You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt." By itself, this commandment could be read as a directive to merge with strangers and to idolize in them

RABBI RACHEL ADLER, PH.D. is the David Ellenson Professor of Jewish Thought at Hebrew Union College-Los Angeles.

the image of our own history as stranger. Instead, Torah demands that we extrapolate from our bond with the stranger to include familiar deviants within our own communities, with whom we may be more reluctant to identify:

> You shall not subvert the rights of the stranger or the fatherless; you shall not take a widow's garment in pawn. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and that the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore do I enjoin you to observe this commandment. (Deut. 24: 17-18)

I mean to argue that the central narrative of Judaism thus embodies an implicit challenge to the polarized thought structures of patriarchies—even though patriarchal thinking is embedded in Judaism as it is in the rest of Western culture. This is not to claim that either ancient Israelites or rabbinic Jews had modern sensibilities for dealing with those defined as other. Such a contention would be both anachronistic and demonstrably false. I do claim, however, that the unfolding of the *ivri* identity and its experience of covenant locates at the core of Judaism an implicit challenge to an ethics of alienation and dualism that perceives the world outside its borders as threatening and chaotic. The Torah of self and other that we first encountered as *ivrim*, and later internalized through liberation, covenant, and prophetic admonition erodes and must eventually obliterate the fixed, impermeable boundaries that define the world of patriarchal dualism. By recognizing a self in all others with a potential like our own for transformation, this Torah transforms the boundaries between self and other and deconstructs the justification for patriarchal boundaries. Contrast, for example, Aristotle's notion that slaves and barbarians had fixed natures suitable to their condition, and that these natures made them qualitatively different from Athenian gentlemen. The subjugation of these inferior beings is justified by their nature as objects—a moral dissimilarity from human beings with value that could not be changed or mitigated by more fortunate circumstances. . . .

The flexible boundary that enables us to sense our commonality with the other is the *ground* of justice in Judaism, but it is not justice. Justice is the reshaping of our actions and institutions to express this sense of commonality in our everyday life.

I have been saying that the obligation to do justice is derived relationally, and rests upon a prerequisite obligation to perceive a likeness to self in the other. Taken together, these obligations comprise a fundamental normative principle in Judaism. If this is so, however, why has Judaism consistently estranged and excluded its most intimate others—Jewish women? How shall we understand sacred texts that polarize and subordinate? How shall we determine what authority any text may claim to form our attitudes and to inform our actions?

What perpetuates this intimate injustice in Judaism is that in its deconstruction of dualistic, other-rejecting, patriarchal thought-structures, Judaism stops short and leaves in place the foundational construction—the otherness of woman. This constructed rift is embedded so deeply in our language, in our psyches, and in some of our texts that we reinforce the objectification and estrangement of women without even being conscious of it. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

Anti-Semites Against Anti-Semitism

SUSANNAH HESCHEL

Vol. 8, No. 6. 1993.

Anti-Semitism is illegal in Germany. Tell an Auschwitz joke in a bar and you may find yourself in court. But the laws aren't really necessary—everyone in Germany is absolutely opposed to anti-Semitism (except a few crazy skinheads). They'll tell you so quite forthrightly. Indeed, hundreds of thousands of earnest Germans took to the streets last winter in candlelight processions to condemn racism and defend democracy. Their pictures were flashed across the world, a counter-image to the thousands in the city of Rostock who clapped and cheered when firebombs were thrown at an apartment building housing Vietnamese workers. That scene lasted a long time—the police failed to intervene for several days, while the terrorized Vietnamese families in the building were desperate: afraid of being burned to death if they stayed inside, afraid of being beaten to death if they fled outside. . . .

Shouldn't we be glad that Germans are finally in the streets, protesting racist violence? Isn't that what they should have been doing during the 1920s and '30s? Isn't it a sign of a new Germany, a land of democratic values, that people protest racially motivated violence? If the actions of the neo-Nazi skinheads lend credence to the impression that nothing's changed, the demonstrators should give a countervailing signal—that there are also "new" Germans. Or maybe, nearly fifty years since the end of Nazism and the establishment of democracy, we should stop interpreting altogether. Why should we constantly scrutinize contemporary Germany through the lens of the Third Reich? Why saddle Germans of the 1990s with the sins of previous generations?

What we see in present-day Germany when we wrest our focus from the mesmerizing images of neo-Nazis is that even those condemning anti-Semitism often repeat anti-Semitic stereotypes that they have inherited from German intellectual and political culture. Anti-Semitism has been ubiquitous in German culture for so many centuries, reaching a peak during the Third Reich, that it cannot be overcome simply by being rejected as abhorrent. But making anti-Semitism illegal also makes it a taboo. As often happens with taboos, anti-Semitism becomes appealing to skinheads rebelling against social conventions, and leaves everyone else nervous about discussing it.

Sadly, in contemporary Germany, even those who condemn anti-Semitism often repeat anti-Semitic stereotypes that they have inherited from German intellectual and political culture.

Condemnation is the easy part, both emotionally and morally satisfying. Start talking about anti-Semitism with Germans, however, and their cultural conundrum emerges. For example, the most flagrantly anti-Semitic texts—*Mein Kampf* or *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*—are available only with great difficulty at some libraries. Libraries keep those books under lock and key in what's called a "poison closet." But the task of rooting out the distortions and canards about Jews and Judaism from German culture is far more systemic: The work of nearly every great German Christian thinker contains anti-Semitic views and characterizations. Should Fichte's treatise on the French Revolution be relegated to the poison closet because he remarks that the only way to get rid of Jewish ideas is to cut off Jews' heads? What about noted Christian scholars of Judaism, such as Gerhard Kittel or Adolf Schlatter, who conclude from their technical studies of rabbinic literature that Judaism is a degenerate, violent religion? Are their conclusions anti-Jewish, or the learned interpretations of thoughtful scholars? If every German book containing anti-Jewish remarks were banished, the libraries would shrink dramatically. . . .

SUSANNAH HESCHEL is chair of the Jewish Studies Program at Dartmouth. Her publications include *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*, which won the National Jewish Book Award.

During the 1992-93 academic year I held the Martin Buber visiting professorship in Jewish religious philosophy at the University of Frankfurt. . . . At the university, I taught a seminar on the history of German anti-Semitism, and a lecture course on women in rabbinic and medieval Jewish texts. What I discovered while teaching at the University is that although all eighty of my students were strongly opposed to anti-Semitism and had dedicated a large portion of their university years to studying Judaism, they were often oblivious to their own espousal of blatantly anti-Semitic ideas.

"The God of the Jews is a murderous God who commands Jews to murder everyone who isn't Jewish." So began the text that I distributed one day to my students. It was written by a contemporary German Christian who, like everyone else, condemns anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. I assumed that my students, with their strong backgrounds in Jewish history, would share my reactions of horror and outrage. . . . But despite their erudition, many of them were confused. What, they wanted to know, was anti-Semitic about that text? Wasn't it simply an accurate depiction of Judaism? Is not the God of the Jews a gruesome, murderous God? Don't Jews strive for the annihilation of non-Jews? Isn't that the message of the Old Testament?

The text I distributed continued by arguing that the God of the Old Testament threatened rape as a punishment of Israelite women. Such a gruesome theology, the author contended, legitimated rape and should be seen as the root cause of contemporary rape and sexual abuse of children in Germany. Quite a few of my students found this line of argumentation plausible. They are used to viewing the Old Testament as the fulminating source of contemporary injustice. . . .

Of all the disturbing manifestations of contemporary Germans' insensitivity to their perpetuation of anti-Semitic views I encountered during my year in Frankfurt, the most horrifying is the frequent comparison I encountered in German writings between Judaism and the Holocaust, a comparison that follows logically from the notion that Judaism is violent and dangerous. If the Old Testament condones genocide, in the Books of Joshua, Judges, and Esther, the Nazi genocide might have its roots in the Old Testament. And if appeal to the Old Testament is insufficient, a best-seller published a few years ago by the prominent German journalist Franz Alt claims that Nazism and Judaism are actually analogous: The Nazis automatically obeyed the commands of Hitler, just as Jews automatically obey the commandments of God; both Nazism and Judaism are authoritarian moralities of obedience to orders.

Obviously, not everyone in Germany finds such ideas plausible; many reject them instantly. But what is extraordinary to me is the large number who simply don't see the problem. I can understand someone writing an anti-Semitic book, but I can't understand how so many people opposed to anti-Semitism are incapable of recognizing an anti-Semitic idea when they encounter one. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

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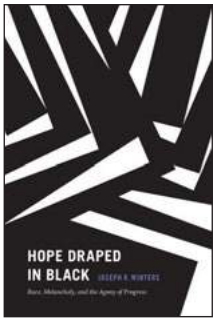

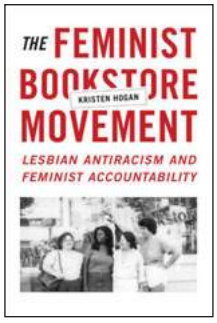

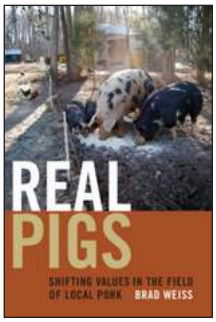

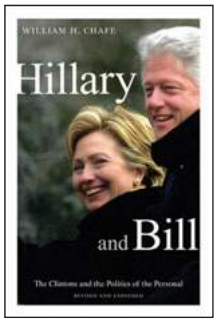

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On Sanctifying the Holocaust

An Anti-Theological Treatise

ADI OPHIR

Vol. 2, No. 1. 1987.

(ORIGINAL EDITOR'S NOTE: *Almost every political dispute in Israel eventually leads to each side trying to prove its point with reference to "the lessons of the Holocaust." Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz of the Hebrew University thinks that the conquest of the West Bank may turn Israel into a Jewish-Nazi state; while Menachem Begin claimed that the alternative to fighting the PLO in Lebanon would be to face Auschwitz again—the 15,000 PLO fighters suddenly appearing to have the power and threat of the entire Nazi apparatus of destruction. The attempt to remember the Holocaust has already generated its share of distortions in the political discourse of the State of Israel. . . .*)

A RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS built around the Holocaust may become the central aspect of a new religion, one which has at its core a story of revelation that goes something like this: "In the year five thousand seven hundred since the creation of the world according to the Jewish calendar, in central Europe, Absolute Evil was revealed. The Absolute—that is, the Divine—is Evil.". . .

The God described in this religion, revealed in the furnaces, will be seen as a vengeful God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generations. . . . The new religion is already taking form today, and already there are few who would reject the popular interpretation of its revelation: the commandments which echo from within that thick cloud which arose from the earth of iron to the empty iron heaven of Europe (Deut. 28:23).

The four commandments of the new religion: . . .

"Thou shalt have no other holocaust." There is no holocaust like the Holocaust of the Jews of Europe. To what lengths Jewish historians, educators, and politicians go to remind us over and over of the difference between the destruction of the Jews of Europe and all other types of disasters, misfortunes, and mass murders! Biafra was only hunger; Cambodia was only a civil war; the destruction of the Kurds was not systematic; death in the Gulag lacked national identification marks. . . .

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or likeness." . . . Whoever tries to peek through the furnace of revelation and describe what he saw with his own eyes, or in his mind's eye, is destined to fail. The best of literature, drama, or cinema can only touch upon the margins of the atrocity, document it through fragments of memories of those still living . . . toward which they are directed.

"Thou shalt not take the name in vain." How many outbursts of rage did Menachem Begin earn when he dared to profane the name. How many warnings have been uttered since then by researchers of the Holocaust, politicians and educators, against that disreputable phenomenon, a transgression, no doubt, derogating the Holocaust by borrowing its name for calamities and disasters of a lesser order of atrocity, the earthly order.

"Remember the day of the Holocaust to keep it holy, in memory of the destruction of the Jews of Europe." This is the most important commandment. This is the burden whose shirking is the archetype of sin. . . .

Absolute Evil must be remembered in exquisite detail. And already scattered throughout the land are institutions of immortalization and documentation, like God's altars in Canaan one generation after the settlement. Already a central altar has arisen which will gradually turn into our Temple, forms of pilgrimage are taking hold, and already a thin layer of Holocaust-priests, keepers of the flame, is growing and institutionalizing; only, instead of rituals of sacrifices, there are rituals of memorial, remembering and repetition, since the sacrifice is completed and now all that is left is to remember. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

ADI OPHIR is Professor Emeritus, Tel Aviv University and Mellon Visiting Professor, the Cogut Center for Humanities and the program for Middle East Studies at Brown University.

A Vision of Finitude

David Hartman's "A Living Covenant"

DANIEL LANDES

Vol.1, No. 2. 1986.

THE ONLY HALFHEARTED claim made in David Hartman's passionately argued *A Living Covenant* is that it is not a political manifesto, but rather a theological treatise. It is both—and on both counts Hartman's work is indeed an important contribution.

Hartman's attempt to develop a seriously modern and authentically Jewish theology is a significant step in establishing a common discourse between Jews. He desires to move Torah into the center of Jewish and especially Israeli life. To do so, he projects an understanding of Torah that will be a challenge to the ultra-Orthodox as well as the religious Zionists, the messianists as well as those secular Jews interested in thinking about the ground of their beliefs.

Hartman's central focus is on Jewish Law, or Halachah. By exploring the underlying meaning of Halachah, Hartman seeks to create a philosophy of Judaism that expresses some important aspects of modernity—an emphasis on human adequacy and the autonomous moral spirit, a commitment to the ethical, a universalistic worldview that expresses itself in pluralism, and a strong emphasis on a this-worldly focus as consistent with religious commitment.

Halachah has had a difficult time of it in modern Jewish thought: Reform theologians dismissed it as evolutionarily primitive; Martin Buber rejected it as rigidly formalistic and hence not capable of being a true response; and Zionistic thinkers such as Gershom Scholem saw it as a deferred living, and, therefore, as an obstacle to be overcome in order to achieve national liberation. . . .

Even those who lived carefully by its dictates did not refrain from missing or abusing its integrity. Many, especially defenders of the law, *pilpulized* it into a scholastic argument for the received wisdom or practice of their respective community; the Satman Rav demonized it into a sharp weapon of hate against any supporters, fellow travelers, or beneficiaries of the Zionists; Rav Kook spiritualized it into a mystic rite of personal, societal, and national transformation; and Yeshayahu Leibowitz objectified it into a servant's blind service to his master.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Hartman's teacher, has taken it seriously. His major lifework has been the in-depth study of Halachah on its own terms, to sketch major contours of its thought processes, and to reveal the mind-set of the Halachic master and the man of faith. His thought confronted an American Jewish community in danger of being overwhelmed by modernity. The problem, according to the Rav (as he is known in the Orthodox community), was not the claims of conflicting truths, but, rather, that a thoroughly secular modernism seemed to render religion irrelevant. At best, Judaism was reduced to a pleasant retreat where one fled from the conflicts of "real life" to achieve peace of mind. The Rav rejected this emasculation of Judaism. To be properly understood, observed, and experienced, Torah demanded man's full intellectual creativity, effort of will, and emotional sensitivity. The Rav's unstated proposition, derived from the mystical formulation of his ancestor, Hayim of Volozhin (1749-1821), is that the Torah is intimately connected to divinity and constitutes the foundation of the universe, for which the latter was created and is currently maintained. For the Rav, Torah has ultimate ontological significance—that is, it is the very basis of existence.

Hartman's problem with the nature of traditional theology, especially as interpreted by the Rav, is that it does not sufficiently stress human adequacy, and that it often seems to promote withdrawal and self-defeat. . . . Indeed, Hartman seems to want to banish self-defeat as a major religious category. He understands the Rav's dialectic to be a guard against hubris. Hartman believes this protection to be unnecessary because the Halachic Jew's religious life is "permeated by creatureliness and the demand of the mitzvot," (p. 88) both of which combine to produce the virtue of humility. . . .

RABBI DANIEL LANDES is Director of the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, where he teaches the Senior Kollel Talmud class and Theology.

Hartman implies that man cannot stand with full dignity as long as he is dependent upon the transcendent potentiality of his life. Man is only dignified if conscious of his finitude. But the notion of eternity and resurrection are not meant to overcome life. . . . Eternity is set against death (not life) and proclaims that it will not be the final victor. Resurrection proclaims the sweetness of life—body and soul together—and its ultimate victory.

Hartman's discussion of God seems to contain an unusual tension. He labors mightily to demonstrate His presence within the human's performance of the mitzvot and within the ordered patterns of causality. Love of God is either covenantal or contemplative. But by restricting God from responding to an individual or to the nation, Hartman does to God what he would never do to another: define His personality, eliminate His adequacy and autonomy, and prevent Him from relating. In flip-flopping from hidden transcendence (God's) to immanence (man's), Hartman seems to ask that we oscillate between pantheism and humanism. As theology and as a religious stance, it is schizophrenic and not satisfying. But what of his claim that God's involvement in history would crush human autonomy? This is a red herring. Responsible Jews know that man must act fully. The *Chafetz Chayim* once stated that everything in the world has a purpose. His student asked what was the purpose of atheism. The Master replied: "that when one is in need, that you should not pass him by believing that God will take care of him." This "atheistic" quality of sole responsibility must accompany all moral acts. Nonetheless, we know that relationships are not possible if one prevents another from acting. God's selective and personal involvement in history and in our lives can neither be prevented nor denied by His covenantal partner. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

New Days for Old, Old Days for New

The old moon fades, the flies tune their voices
for the dawn song. Morning glories
trumpet from the fence, the shadows hide.

My brother Priscolnik wanders lost between
Nîmes and Dombrovitz. A dust cloud carries
the gospel of his final words, his curses,

his sighs, all the volumes of his loss –
my tiny brother, the peddler, the magician
whose hands transformed old shirts to new.

Don't tell me nothing about discipline.
I come from a people of the road, a line
of prophets who slept on sticks and stones,

who called the day down in the language
of Abraham and Isaac. At the well my father
had only sand to drink, his father drank

his own life down, breath by last breath.
So when I waken on a pillow of moonlight
I take it all, nightmares, daydreams,

the stories my children scatter down
the arteries of my care. The mind runs on,
even under a stone, the mind runs on and on.
A new day's here, with or without the moon.

—Philip Levine

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Tikkun Seeks Interns and Volunteers of All Ages

How does theology relate to healing the world and healing ourselves and each other? And what's the best strategy to accomplish that healing and global transformation, in the process preventing the destruction of the life-support system of the planet and effectively countering the growth of right-wing extremism, racism, and hatred? These are the questions interns face each day as they assess manuscripts, recruit writers, do activist work in building a Network of Spiritual Progressives, and promote the ideas of our interfaith and secular-humanist welcoming voice of Jewish liberals and progressives. It's an amazing experience.

Info at http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/jobs-internships

To Blacks and Jews

Hab Rachmones

JAMES A. McPHERSON

Vol. 4, No. 5. 1989.

Demonstrators in Crown Heights burn an Israeli flag in 1991.

Joe Major | AP Photo

WELL-PUBLICIZED events over the past two decades have made it obvious that Blacks and Jews have never been the fast friends we were alleged to be. The best that can be said is that, at least since the earliest decades of this century, certain spiritual elites in the Jewish community and certain spiritual elites in the Black community have found it mutually advantageous to join forces to fight specific obstacles that block the advancement of both groups: lynchings, restrictive housing covenants, segregation in schools, and corporate expressions of European racism that target both groups. . . .

The slave ancestors of today's thirty or so million Black Americans took their ideals from the sacred documents of American life, their secular values from whatever was current, and their deepest mythologies from the Jews of the Old Testament. They were a self-created people, having very little to look back on. The one thing they could not acquire was the institutional protection, or status, that comes in this country from being classified as "white." . . . Given this complex historical and cultural reality, most Black Americans, no matter how wealthy, refined, or "integrated," have never been able to achieve the mobility and security available to whites. Jewish Americans, by contrast, have this option, whether or not they choose to exercise it. . . . Given the radical imbalance of potential power that existed between the two groups . . . a coalition was fated to fail once American Jews had achieved their own goals.

For mutually self-interested reasons, I believe, the two groups began a parting of the ways just after the Six Day War of 1967. . . . In the rush to identify with small pieces of evidence of Black freedom *anywhere* in the world, many Black Americans began to embrace ideologies and traditions that were alien to the traditions that had been developed, through painful struggle, by their earliest ancestors on American soil. . . . The retrenchment that resulted, promoted by the media as Black Nationalism, provided convenient excuses for many groups to begin severing ties with Black Americans. . . .

For the Jewish community, victory in the Six Day War of 1967 caused the beginning of a much more complex reassessment of the Jewish situation, one based on some of the same spiritual motivations as were the defeats suffered by Black Americans toward the end of the 1960s. The Israeli victory in 1967 was a *reassertion* of the nationhood of the Jewish people. But, like the founding of Israel in 1948, this reassertion raised unresolved contradictions. . . .

The majority of Black Americans are unaware of the complexity of the meaning of Israel to American Jews. But, ironically, Afro-Zionists have as intense an emotional identification with Africa and with the Third World as American Jews have with Israel. Doubly ironic, this same intensity of identification with a "Motherland" seems rooted in the mythologies common to both groups. In this special sense—in the spiritual sense implied by "Zion" and "Diaspora" and "Promised Land"—Black Americans are America's Jews. But given the isolation of Black Americans from any meaningful association with Africa, extensions of the mythology would be futile. We have no distant homeland preparing an ingathering. For better or worse, Black Americans are *Americans*. Our special problems must be confronted and solved here, where they began. They cannot be solved in the international arena, in competition with Jews. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

JAMES A. MCPHERSON is a Pulitzer Prize-winning short story writer and essayist. He has been a recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and a MacArthur Fellowship. He is also a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Jewish Renewal

Our Current Situation

NAN FINK GEFEN

Vol. 9, No. 3. 1994.

Recently, I met a friend for dinner in a Manhattan restaurant. I quickly spotted something I wanted on the menu, but my friend was in a quandary: Should I have this? Or that? But maybe the pasta isn't so good here, and so forth.

Noticing that I had closed my menu, she said, "If you were Jewish, you would still be looking."

I was shocked by her comment. Although it's been a decade since I converted, I am still taken aback when people reveal that they don't *really* think of me as Jewish.

"But I am a Jew," I said angrily to my friend. "Remember?"

"Well, you know," she shrugged. And I did know what she meant: that there is something different about me—I was raised in another milieu. The air was different, the density, the colors, the sounds, and this is what shaped me. Yet I went on, way beyond my family, through years of questioning and considering, and studying and worrying, and finally became a Jew. Let me tell you, I've made a lot of changes in my life. But none has nearly the weight, nearly the dislocation, that this has had for me. . . . All the stereotypes are heaped on me as a convert, and the worst has been existing on the fine line of Jewish identity, where I am seen as Jewish by the outside world, but inside, among people who are born Jewish, it isn't so clear.

There was a time after my conversion when I did everything I could to "pass." If people began to talk about their childhood experiences, or their summers at Camp Ramah, or their memories of their grandmother's Jewish cooking, I immediately stopped talking. I didn't exactly hide my past, but I never told my stories. I was a cipher, and this was painful, a loss of self. Yet it is frightening to risk rejection, even if it is only a subtle moving away.

I speak about this for a reason: I want to sensitize you to my experience. The number of converts is growing—there are now more than 200,000 of us, and each of us has made an important commitment to be a Jew. We've done this not because we're stupid, or because we don't know about anti-Semitism, or because we want to hook somebody into marriage, or because we've suspended our critical judgment. We've converted because, despite its faults and its failures, Judaism has something of very great value that we want in our lives. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

NAN FINK GEFEN was the co-founding publisher of *Tikkun* magazine. She is the author of *Stranger in the Midst, Discovering Jewish Meditation* and *Clear Lake: A Novel*. She is now the publisher of *Persimmon Tree: An Online Magazine of the Arts by Women Over Sixty*.

Victrola

Dead forty years Bird brings his lips to the reed.
He rules the roost, and rues the rest,
Do wot-jadda bop.

Recovered from shell shock
The war veteran Hitler found the doctor
Who cured his hysterical deafness,

And had the man killed, hoping that I
Might never exist to tell the story here,
A little distorted.

But Illinois Jacquet playing *'Round Midnight*
On the bassoon, better even
Than the death speech of Falstaff.

And listen, Moshe Leib Halpern, I
Have a miracle cabinet
Made in Japan—listen.

—Robert Pinsky

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Silence

We grew up on silence. Because of the oath
sworn over the gun, an orphan candle flickering

in the dark. Because we were a new generation,
praised for holding back, clenched mouths, keeping

emotions under wraps. Reared on lofty sentiments
we created ourselves out of fury, severing

our umbilical cords with our own teeth. I was dry-eyed
when a city boy, my only friend, drowned in the irrigation

pool of the kibbutz; when she whose name is erased
from my memory mocked my burning, puppy love;

and not one whimper escaped my bitten lips when Yoel,
my high school classmate, the one who gave me his copy

of *The Prisoner of Zenda*, was killed in the naval
commando raid that gold-and-blood summer, the first

of our independence; and no tears when clever Yehiel
left our table on the second floor of the café for good;

and none at the tombstones marking the graves
of my dreams' casualties, overgrown with cacti, fenced

by rusty barbed wire in the cemetery of my life.
We grew up on silence, hard and dark as basalt

and if my eyes seem moist to you today—it's the north
wind scorching them with icy fingers. Indeed, let the wind

be blamed for that sound coming from my direction, that
howling like a wounded beast, tired unto death.

—Moshe Dor

Arif Qazi | cargocollective.com/arifqazi

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An Extra Pair of Eyes

Hebrew Poetry Under Occupation

HANNAN HEVER

Vol. 2, No. 2. 1987.

I CAME UPON THE following lines in a recent poem by the Israeli poet Uzi Bahar:

A land where you need an extra pair of eyes
To see beyond this everyday.

Writing about Hebrew poetry within the context of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza strip demands that one find an extra pair of eyes able to see beyond the concealing blur of daily routine to the deeper structures of an occupying culture. The experience of the occupation, its terminology and symbols, have become part of the Israeli landscape, not only for those who, like Meron Benvenisti, see it as an irreversible process, but even for those who still hope for the day when Israeli society will free itself from the burden of the occupation.

The closing of a college, the imposition of Draconian punishments on children for the crime of rock-throwing, . . . the banning of hundreds of books in the occupied territories, the arrest of an artist for using the forbidden colors of the Palestinian flag: such everyday news items, if they appear at all, are reported under the separate category of "news from the territories" and buried in the inside pages of the newspaper. If one steps out of the flow of events to look at daily life in Israel from a more distant perspective, one discovers that the ideology of occupation has almost completely penetrated Israeli society. . . .

There is a central dividing line in this poetry, demarcating the possibilities from the limitations inherent in Hebrew poetry written during the occupation. This line delineates a dual picture, where hope alternates with condemnation. To the extent that hope is forthcoming at all, it derives for the most part from a dispassionate awareness of the poet's own limitations in his capacity as conqueror. The striving for undistorted insight into reality, coupled with the willingness to pay the price for such insight, can itself constitute a seductive option for a literature caught in the kind of complex and oppressive situation typified by the occupation. There are Hebrew poets who come to terms with these limitations by making their poems into metapoetry, examining the hidden assumptions implicit in the discourse within which and for which they are being written. . . .

One of the most sophisticated expressions of the struggle between moral empathy and responsibility can be found in the poem "While Hovering at Low Altitudes," by Dalia Ravikovitch. She describes a small shepherd girl who dies cruelly in "*wild and terrible mountain ranges / To the East.*" The speaker's fixed, measured distance from the horror of the event evoked the following remarks from the critic Nissim Kalderon: "For she writes, over and over again, '*I am not here.*' All of her is *there*, beside the victims. But not together with them. Near them; but not treading the same ground as they, with no expectation of the evils which befell them." She is not there; but in fact she is also *here*, in her Israeli homeland. Dalia Ravikovitch has crafted a poetic voice which, suspended between heaven and earth, is both intimate and remote, thus mirroring the multifaceted ambiguity of daily life in Israel. . . .

Ravikovitch's poem includes closeness as much as distance. Through the insistent and troubled refrain, "*I am not here*," the speaker in the poem reveals her closeness to the "here" she denies so strongly. A similar effect is achieved in the poem through litotes, in the descriptions of the shepherd girl: She does *not* turn to God for help in Jewish formulaic language, she does *not* have the cosmetic beauty of the women of Jerusalem condemned by the Prophets. As a litotes, this formulation of the central opposition between *here* and *there* gives at least as much weight to the familiar Israeli homeland as to the distant danger zone "to the East":

And the little girl awakened thus, to go out to the pasture
Her neck is not outstretched
Her eyes are not painted with mascara, they do not flirt
She does not ask, Whence cometh my help.
I am not here.
I have already been many days in the mountains
Sunlight will not burn me. Frost shall not touch me.
Nor again have I reason to be smitten with dismay. . . .

There is an instructive lesson to be learned from all of these poets: Almost any literary-spiritual stance adopted by a Hebrew poet writing on the occupation can be evaluated in terms of its degree of distancing or estrangement from the occupiers. Both universalization and a solipsistic particularization are characterized by the salient loss of any feeling of national identity as something continuous and tangible. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

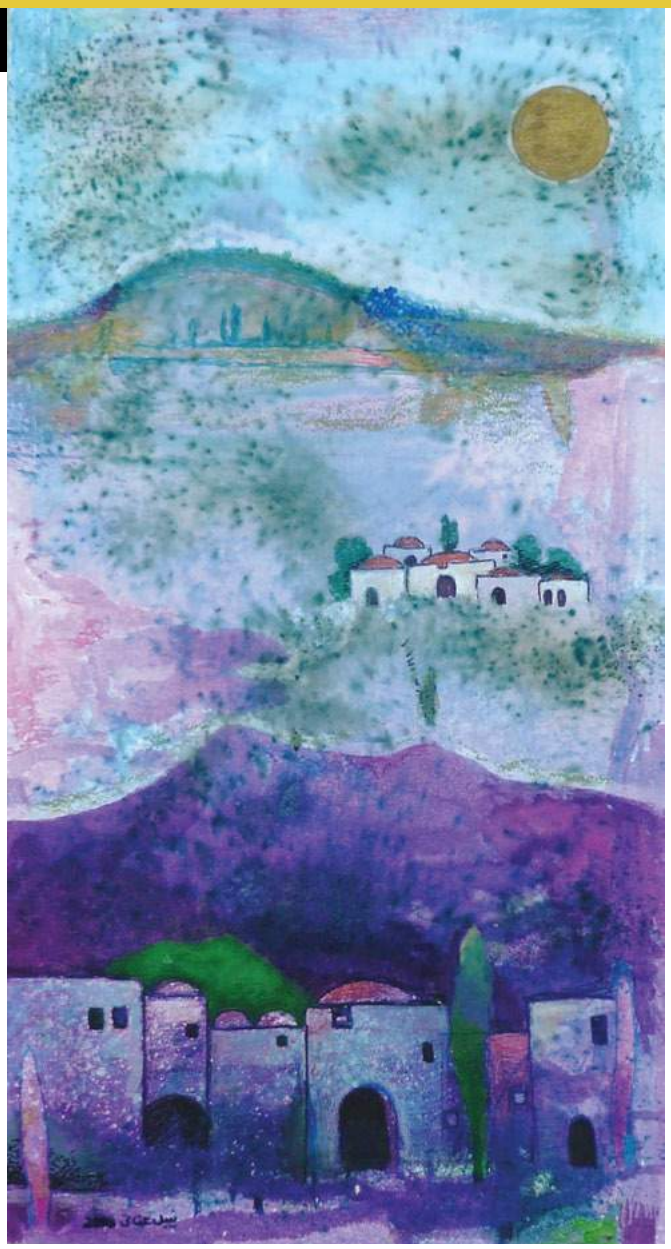
HANNAN HEVER is the Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Professor of Hebrew Language and Literature and Comparative Literature at Yale University.

Facing page: *Glasses* | Travis Jaworski | tjaworski.com

The Rhetoric of Occupation

DAVID BIALE

Vol. 5, No. 2. 1990.



A View From East Jericho | Nabil Anani . Courtesy of Zawyeh Gallery, Palestine

When I spoke this past November at the *Tikkun* conference in San Francisco, I began my remarks with an official disclaimer: I was speaking, I said, only for myself—my institutional affiliation was for identification purposes only. One might well ask why I began by stating the obvious. I did so because it is no longer possible to speak out freely on Israel without the risk of incurring venomous wrath and threats, both veiled and unveiled, to one's very livelihood. There is a witch-hunt abroad in the land and many of us in the Jewish community are the witches.

Let me cite a few cases, taken more or less at random.

- Arthur Waskow is forced to resign from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College for advocating the creation of a Palestinian state.
- The Zionist Organization of America maintains files (which it publishes for its members) on American Jews who have taken pro-peace positions such as endorsing the Jewish Peace Lobby and signing ads sponsored by *Tikkun*.
- A branch of the American Jewish Congress loses its funding from a major Jewish foundation because it allows another organization to use a room in order to hear a Palestinian speaker.
- Newspapers in the Bay Area report that the Israeli consul-general has spied on and harassed Jewish educational and communal organizations that have dared to engage in dialogue with the insidious P—people.
- Activists in Friends of Peace Now in Toronto report that they regularly receive death threats whenever they mount any kind of program or demonstration.

The list goes on and on. Who among us in public life has not been the target of similar vilification, threats, and pressure? I myself recently had the honor of being called a *Kapo* by a worthy member of the Jewish community for advocating dialogue with the Palestinians. Read the letters column of any Jewish community newspaper, if you can bring yourself to do so, and you will have the dismal experience of seeing Jews accuse other Jews of being "worse than Hitler" for suggesting that Israeli policy might be misguided. Or read the venomous character assassination of Michael Lerner written by Edward Alexander and now being reprinted in Jewish papers around the country. . . . Having demonized the Palestinians, the next step for these self-proclaimed defenders of the faith is to demonize those Jews who step out of line as Arab-lovers and traitors to the Jewish people.

DAVID BIALE is the Emanuel Ringelblum Distinguished Professor of Jewish History at the University of California, Davis. He has won the National Jewish Book Award three times.

Our situation in this country is not, of course, as desperate as it is for our allies and friends in the Israeli peace movement. For them, reaching out to the Palestinians means not only censure and threats, but even the possibility of jail sentences. Abie Nathan, one of the true *tzaddikim* of our time, served four months in jail for meeting with Arafat. Even the judge found it hard to fault his intentions. The deputy mayor of Jerusalem was arrested and charged for wearing a small lapel pin with Israeli and Palestinian flags at a ceremony honoring Yitzhak Shamir. And twenty-seven Israelis, including a number of contributors to *Tikkun,* were arrested and charged with sedition for traveling to the West Bank and meeting with Palestinians. The charges were dropped on a technicality, but the harassment continues. And now we read in the papers of a group called the Sicarii that has planted bombs and threatens to execute seven members of the Knesset for the crime of advocating dialogue with the Palestinians.

Need one add that these severe measures come at a time when a settler who kills a fourteen-year-old Arab girl gets a seven-month sentence and soldiers who beat an Arab to death have their sentences reduced to a few months? We all know that while Israel may be a democracy within the Green Line, it deprives the Arabs of the territories of most democratic and civil rights. For more than half of its existence, Israel has maintained this double standard. As inevitably had to happen, this impossible state of affairs has begun to erode democratic rights within Israel itself.

Jewish life today is mortally threatened by a disease that afflicts not only the State of Israel, but the Jewish community worldwide. The disease is the occupation and it is attacking the cohesiveness of the Jewish people, sowing gratuitous hatred between Jews, and poisoning our public life. I submit that the price of continuing the occupation will not only be the deterioration of democracy in Israel, but also the progressive disintegration of the American Jewish community. We can no longer speak about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as though we were innocent but concerned bystanders. The real moral and political question today, then, is not the price of peace, but the price of the occupation.

Now, more than ever, the occupation can be maintained not only by a process of deliberate obfuscation, by hiding behind linguistic masks. The official rhetoric, for example, speaks of peace when it means occupation, of negotiations when it means capitulation. . . . The real point of this dreary charade is to stall endlessly for time and to distract attention from the relentless entrenchment of the occupation. . . .

Our role is to help create a space within the politics of this country for the possibility of a political settlement. We must defy the threats and intimidations and continue to speak the truth as we see it. We will defend Zionism as the national liberation movement of the Jewish people. We must stand ready to criticize the rejectionists, whether Israeli or Palestinian, and to encourage anyone who is committed to a genuine and realistic peace process. . . . Above all, we must repeatedly expose the bankruptcy of the language of occupation and call to account those who are destroying democratic discourse both in the American Jewish community and in Israel. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

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The Occupation

Immoral and Stupid

Vol. 3, No. 2. 1988.

The widespread moral outrage at Israel's policies in Gaza and the West Bank—the sense that Israel is violating the basic ethical values of Judaism—is coupled with a growing realization that these policies are also bad for Israel and bad for the Jewish people. Granted, some of Israel's current critics have been unfair, both in their failure to acknowledge the role of Palestinian leaders and Arab states in creating the conflict, and in their tendency to judge Israel by standards that they rarely apply to the rest of the world. Nevertheless, from the standpoint of Jewish ethics and Jewish survival the occupation is unacceptable. There are plausible solutions to the Palestinian problem that must be tried. But they won't be tried unless American Jews unequivocally tell Israel that the occupation cannot continue. This message must be conveyed forcefully to Prime Minister Shamir and to the Israeli public.

The pain and sorrow many American Jews feel about Israel's policies on the West Bank and Gaza are rooted deep in our collective memory as a people. Israel's attempt to regain control of the refugee camps by denying food to hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children, by raiding

homes and dragging out their occupants in the middle of the night to stand for hours in the cold, by savagely beating a civilian population and breaking its bones—these activities are deplorable to any civilized human being. That they are done by a Jewish state is both tragic and inexcusable. We did not survive the gas chambers and crematoria so that we could become the oppressors of Gaza. The Israeli politicians who have led us into this morass are desecrating the legacy of Jewish history. If Jewish tradition has stood for anything, it has stood for the principle that justice must triumph over violence. For that reason, we typically have sided with the oppressed and have questioned the indiscriminate use of force. We, who love Israel, who remain proud Zionists, are outraged at the betrayal of this sacred legacy by small-minded Israeli politicians who feel more comfortable with the politics of repression than with the search for peace.

Any policy that requires the immoral tactics currently being used against an unarmed and militarily subjugated population must be rejected. If the activities of the Israeli army since December really are necessary, that in itself would be sufficient to discredit the occupation. We do not diminish our loyalty to our own people by acknowledging our profound sadness at the suffering of Palestinians. Those who have grown up in camps or in exile have experienced homelessness in much the same way that Jews have experienced it throughout history. Even if this suffering were the absolutely necessary consequence of our self-preservation, we would still be deeply upset by the pain that thereby was caused to another group of human beings. We have been too sensitized by our own history of oppression not to feel diminished when others are in pain. That is why we dip drops from our wine cups at the Passover seder in memory of the pain of our Egyptian slaveholders. But when that pain is largely unnecessary, we feel not only sadness but also anger and a deep determination to do what we can to stop the suffering.

Our outrage is shared by many Israelis. Over fifty thousand of them gathered in Tel Aviv on January 23 in one of the biggest antiwar demonstrations in Jewish history to protest Israel's policies. Joined by hundreds of thousands of others who could not attend the demonstration but who share their outrage, they are asking American Jews to speak out. To be silent, or keep our criticisms safely "in the family," would be to betray our Israeli brothers and sisters.

That is why we say in unequivocal terms to the Israeli government: Stop the beatings, stop the breaking of bones, stop the late night raids on people's homes, stop the use of food as a weapon of war, stop pretending that you can respond to an entire people's agony with guns and blows and power. Publicly acknowledge that the Palestinians have the same right to national self-determination that we Jews have, and negotiate a solution with representatives of the Palestinians!

But our anger at Israel's current policies comes not only from moral outrage but also from deep concern about Israel's survival and the survival of the Jewish people. From a strictly self-interested position, the occupation is stupid. . . .

The pain and sorrow most liberal and progressive American Jews feel about Israel's policies on the West Bank is rooted not only in moral outrage but also in a deep concern about Israel's survival and the damage it is doing to the Jewish people around the world by representing Israel's brutal treatment of Palestinians as somehow rooted in Judaism or what Judaism is about in the real world.

Americans, particularly American Jews, have an extraordinary historical responsibility at this moment. The path of least resistance—privately criticizing Israel but publicly supporting it or remaining silent—is actually a dramatic betrayal of the interests of our people. Americans must use every possible means to convey to Israelis—in private communications, in letters to Israeli newspapers and to members of Knesset, in petitions to the government of Israel, in public rallies and teach-ins, and in statements issued by synagogues and communal organizations-that Israel is in deep jeopardy and that the occupation must end. . . .

The crisis in Israel is a moment of truth for all of us. It should be responded to with the deepest seriousness and with the full understanding that the choices we make now may have consequences that reverberate for centuries to come. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

אִמֵּינוּ רַחֲמֵנוּ חָנֵּנוּ וְעָנֵנוּ כִּי אֵין בָּנוּ מַעֲשִׂים

High Holiday Supplement

For the Ways We Have Missed the Mark and Gone Astray—*a* Spur to Transformation in 2016

You don't have to be Jewish to use this spiritual practice and can modify it to fit your own inner spiritual reality. On the Jewish High Holidays, or whenever we are doing repentance work, ***we take collective responsibility for our own lives and for the activities of the community and society of which we are a part. We affirm our fundamental interdependence and interconnectedness.*** *We have allowed others to be victims of incredible suffering, have turned our backs on others and their well-being, and yet today we acknowledge that this world is co-created by all of us, and so we atone for all of it.*

While the struggle to change ourselves and our world may be long and painful, it is our struggle; no one else can undertake it for us*. To the extent that we have failed to do all that we could to make ourselves and our community an embodiment of our highest values, we ask God and each other for forgiveness—and we now commit ourselves to transformation this coming year, as we seek to get back on the path to our highest possible selves. We use this period of atonement to actually work on the concrete steps we will be taking to live a more holy and ethically grounded life! Otherwise it's nonsense.*

Hebrew Chant: Ve-al kulam, Eloha seh'lichot, seh'lach lanu, meh'chal lanu, kapeyr lanu.

וְעַל כּוּלָּם אֱלוֹהַּ	*Ve-al kulam, Eloha*
סְלִיחוֹת, סְלַח לָנוּ,	*selichot, selach lanu,*
מְחַל לָנוּ, כַּפֶּר לָנוּ.	*mechal lanu, kaper lanu.*

For all the ways we "miss the mark" and betray our most loving and holy aspirations and the call of the universe for us to evolve into more conscious, ethical, environmentally sensitive, and joyous human beings, may the Force that makes forgiveness possible (Yud Hey Vav Hey) forgive us, pardon us, and make atonement possible.

Excerpt from the full version that you can find on line at www.tikkun.org/ForTheSins

Personal Lives

For the sins we have committed before You and in our communities by being so preoccupied with ourselves that we ignore the larger problems of the world . . . And for the sins we have committed by being so outwardly directed that we have ignored our inner spiritual, psychological, and ethical development;

For the sins we have committed by not forgiving our parents for the wrongs they committed against us when we were children . . . And for the sin of having too little compassion or too little respect for our parents or for our children or our friends when they act in ways that disappoint or hurt us;

For the sin of not sharing responsibility for child-rearing . . . And for the sin of not taking time to help singles meet each other in a safe and emotionally nurturing way, and instead making them fend for themselves in a marketplace of relationships;

For the sin of cooperating with self-destructive behavior in others or in ourselves . . . And for the sin of not supporting each other as we attempt to change;

For the sin of being jealous and trying to manipulate those we love . . . And for the sin of being judgmental or listening to (or even spreading) negative stories about the personal lives of others (lashon ha'ra);

For the sin of withholding love and support to our partners and friends, or being super-critical, failing to be empathic and generous in our caring for others and giving them the support they need to feel safe, or being manipulative or hurting others to protect our own egos. . . And for the sin of doubting our ability to love and both to deserve and get love from others.

Societal Issues

For the sin of allowing our elected leaders to continue to affirm the notion of economic growth as progress rather than repairing the damage economic growth has already done to our planet . . . And for the sin of allowing military spending and tax cuts for the rich to undermine our society's capacity to eliminate domestic and global poverty and to give quality caring to the powerless, the young, and the aging;

For the sin of not taking the leaflets or not opening the emails of those who tried to inform us of what was going on in the world—instead allowing ourselves to be too easily overwhelmed at the suffering on this planet so that we justified closing our ears to the cries of the

אִמֵּינוּ רַחַמֵּנוּ חָנֵּנוּ וְעֲנֵנוּ כִּי אֵין בָּנוּ מַעֲשִׂים

oppressed . . . And for the sins of not providing affordable health care and prescription drugs for everyone, refusing to provide safety for refugees, not making our country's number one priority saving the life support system of Earth, not democratizing our economy and our political system that have fallen prey to big money and corporate power, and allowing our leaders to pursue paths of violence or economic, cultural, and diplomatic coercion, including drone warfare and torture, in the mistaken belief that domination rather than generosity is the best path to homeland security;

For the sin of tolerating racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia and in not providing safety for those who are targets of rape, abuse, or other forms of violence . . . And for the sin of not providing reparations for slavery and making our educational, media, legal, and economic systems give priority to uprooting the legacy of these distortions in employment, housing, education, popular culture, policing, mass incarceration;

For the sin of being cynical about the possibility of building a world based on love . . . And for the sin of being "realistic" when our tradition calls upon us to transform reality.

Jewish Issues

For the sins we have committed by not publicly supporting the Jewish people and Israel when they are being criticized or treated unfairly . . . And for the sins we have committed by not publicly criticizing Israel or the Jewish people when they are acting in opposition to the highest principles of the Jewish tradition;

For the sin of not taking anti-Semitism seriously when it manifests around the world among our friends or in our community . . . And for the sin of seeing anti-Semitism everywhere, and using the charge of anti-Semitism to silence those who raise legitimate, if painful, criticisms of Israeli policies;

For the sin of allowing Israel to call itself "the Jewish state" when it is overtly violating the values of the Jewish people and the commands to "love the other/the stranger" that is the most frequent command in the Torah . . . And for the sin of allowing others to think that they are being pro-Israel when they support the Israeli government in racist or oppressive policies and arrogant behavior that actually weaken and isolate Israel and may lead to a growing (and always unjustified) anti-Semitism around the world;

For the sin of allowing the Jewish community to portray itself as the innocent victim and for allowing Holocaust trauma to legitimate oppressive treatment of others . . . And for the sin of allowing Judaism to be represented by the most wealthy and powerful, or those who cheer on fascistic or reactionary movements in American or Israeli politics, rather than those most closely aligned with God's injunction to pursue justice, peace, generosity, and love, not only for Jews, but for all humankind;

For the sin of blaming the entire Palestinian people for inexcusable acts of violence, kidnapping, and murder committed by a handful of terrorists . . . And for the sins that Israel committed stealing West Bank Palestinian land and access to West Bank water, creating settlements of ultra-nationalists some of whom regularly harass Palestinian children or uproot olive trees and otherwise intensify the evils of occupation, imposing checkpoints for Palestinians and building West Bank roads that are only available for Jewish Israelis, taxing West Bank Palestinians while not allowing them to vote in Israeli elections, and then pretending to be a democracy and on a higher moral plane than the Palestinian people;

For the sin of not putting our money and our time behind our highest ideals . . . And for the sin of not learning the Jewish tradition; for not studying Jewish history, literature, and holy texts; and for not learning the depth, wisdom, and meaning for our lives that can be found in Jewish spirituality and prayer or in some other equally rich spiritual path, not necessarily Jewish;

For the sin of not providing public support and financial backing to the few Jewish leaders, organizations, and publications that do actually speak our values . . . And for the sin of not recognizing and celebrating (with awe and wonder) the beauty and grandeur of the universe that surrounds us;

For the sin of not transcending ego so we could see ourselves and each other as we really are: namely, as part of the unity of all being, manifestations of God's loving energy on earth.

וְעַל כּוּלָם אֱלוֹהַּ	*Ve-al kulam, Eloha*
סְלִיחוֹת, סְלַח לָנוּ,	*selichot, selach lanu,*
מְחַל לָנוּ, כַּפֵּר לָנוּ.	*mechal lanu, kaper lanu.*

For all these, Lord of Forgiveness, forgive us, pardon us, grant us atonement.

Composed by Rabbi Michael Lerner, editor of *Tikkun* magazine, for Tikkun's 30th anniversary issue. RabbiLerner .Tikkun@gmail.com

Please join with others in this sacred work. Join the interfaith and secular-humanist-welcoming Network of Spiritual Progressives www.spiritualprogressives/org/join. If you can get to the Bay Area for High Holidays this year (Rosh Hashanah begins Oct. 2 and continues on Oct 3 & 4, and Yom Kippur begins the evening of Oct 11 and continues all day Oct 12), please join a unique Jewish spiritual experience with Rabbi Michael Lerner's Beyt Tikkun Synagogue-Without-Walls—info and registration at www.beyttikkun.org//hhd. And please feel free to add, subtract, and create your own atonement prayers as part of your regular spiritual practice. ■

The full version of this supplement is at www.tikkun.org

Waiting for Autonomy

Scenes from the Middle East

WENDY ORANGE

Vol. 9, No. 2. 1994

(ORIGINAL EDITOR'S NOTE: *As this issue of Tikkun goes to press, the Cairo Document has just been signed, indicating that Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and Jericho will soon be implemented. . . . The following scenes illustrate, among other things, why movement on that accord is so necessary.*)

Bethlehem

I'M IN THE OFFICE of Hamdi Saraj, a freelance Palestinian journalist. We're talking politics. . . .

As we talk, we hear shouting beneath his office window, accompanied by a volley of gunshots. Rella, his sister, interrupts us, says, "Army," as I follow them running down the stairs. Halfway up the small street I see kids' arms outstretched, throwing stones. . . .

The streets are now choked with people as everyone runs toward the action. . . . *Everyone*, I notice with surprise, is smiling or laughing as they instinctively move toward the fight, just as I instinctively insist in staying put until there's a lull.

Fifteen minutes later, Hamdi and I are driving away in his car, talking about cameras. I show him mine, made of cardboard, the kind you throw away after you're done with the film. He's never seen one and pulls into a gas station to take a better look, when suddenly there are two guys, dressed in black t-shirts and jeans, brandishing huge machine guns and blocking our way. Instantly Hamdi takes my camera, holds it outside his window, aiming it aggressively at them.

The sight of the camera drives these guys to extreme emotion; their guns are now pointed almost inside the car; one is an inch or two from Hamdi's head. My heart is pounding and in the suddenness of this scene there rises in me a numbing panic: "This is IT." For it's a scene you read about here every day which ends in death, with little certainty . . . about who provoked the "action.". . .

I grab Hamdi's arm, plead with him to put the camera down, to stop provoking them. . . . "This area isn't closed," he's shouting at them now in English—his whole body shaking, alive with fearless rage. He's screaming, "I can shoot any photograph I want." . . . The gunmen shout back in Hebrew, which convinces me they're settlers looking for Palestinian revenge victims, a certainty which adds to my panic.

There are now five or six soldiers approaching our car. We are ordered not to move. I'm about to yell, "I'm Jewish," but sensing that's ludicrous, on immediate second thought I shout: "I'm a journalist, American" to a young soldier who is leaning into my side of the car. "I hate guns," I scream, which gives everyone pause. I look into this soldier's young, vulnerable face. His expression mirrors mine. Only about nineteen, he too seems trapped in this ugliness. . . .

"We could have been killed," I say as we drive away. Hamdi shrugs, still pissed that my panic and screaming interrupted the fight. "They had no right. You have to show them you know your rights," he insists. These men in black, I later learn, were Shin Beit, the secret Israeli force, whose anonymity is critical. Hamdi's camera was a weapon that could have blown their cover. Savvy journalists assure me his show of power certainly could have provoked them to use those guns.

Sitting next to Hamdi as the Shin Beit approached and watching the earlier confrontation in Bethlehem, I had a front-row seat on the choreography of war. . . . What I saw was that inside the compulsion to show face, to meet violence with violence, inside those encounters no one is victim or victimizer, oppressed or oppressor. Inside the dance of hate, every participant colludes to keep the hostilities going. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

WENDY ORANGE PH.D., has been a correspondent in Israel and the West Bank for *Tikkun*.

On the Slope, Higher Than the Sea, They Slept

On the slope, higher than the sea, higher than the cypresses, they slept.
The iron sky erased their memories, and the dove flew away
in the direction of their pointing fingers, east of their torn bodies.
Weren't they entitled to throw the basil of their names on the moon in the water?
And plant bitter orange trees in the ditches so as to dispel the darkness?

They sleep beyond the limits of space, at a slope where words turn to stone.
They sleep on a stone carved from the bones of their phoenix.
Our heart can celebrate their feast in nearly no time.
Our heart can steal a place for doves to return to earth's bedrock.
O kin sleeping within me, at the ends of the earth: peace be unto you! Peace.

—Mahmoud Darwish

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Remapping the Landscape (After the Murder of Yitzhak Rabin)

SIDRA DEKOVEN EZRAHI

Vol. 11, No. 1. 1996.

The *shiva* is over. And the *shloshim*. After the countdown comes the trial, so now is the time for each of us to begin to write our own sentence . . . .

The signs of mourning have not been entirely erased by the rains and the routines of life in the aftermath: Hundreds of thousands of spent candles have left congealed wax on pavements, on rocks, on hedges. Dead flowers hang by limp stalks on lampposts and traffic lights. Fragments of poems and prayers cling to walls, *kvittlach* with petitions and pledges to the slain leader flutter in the wind, held down by wax or pinioned on the needles of pine trees or the spikes of iron fences.

The landscape did change: The rhetoric of hate disappeared for a while. The bumper stickers with the inflammatory slogans vanished the night after the assassination, their only trace the rivulets of water drying in the morning sun under hundreds of newly scrubbed cars. . . . The posters announcing activities against "*memshelet zadon*" ("reign of iniquity") and sporting pictures of Rabin in a kaffiyeh or S.S. uniform were scratched from the bulletin boards and walls. Replaced by huge posters of the same man with the words, "*oseh shalom bimromav*" (he who makes peace in the heavens . . . .) and "*hashalom yikom et damo*" (peace will avenge his blood). . . .

Coming back to the land has meant, for the post-'67 generation, reclaiming the *concrete* dimension of the Jewish imagination. Baruch Goldstein read a *quite literal Megillat Esther* and went out on Purim to reenact, in the Tomb of the Patriarchs, the Jewish tale of vengeance in "real time," against today's *goyim*—who just happened to be twenty-nine Moslems at prayer. . . . This past Yom Kippur, Kabbalistic curses written in Aramaic that constituted a contract on

SIDRA DEKOVEN EZRAHI is an author, Guggenheim Fellow, and Emerita Professor of Comparative Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Rabin's head were distributed in mainstream synagogues in Jerusalem. . . . During the weeks and months preceding his decision to kill the Prime Minister, Yigal Amir was hearing from authorities he trusted that Rabin was a "*moser*" and a "*rodef*" and he knew that such people must be stopped at all costs, even and up to taking their life. . . .

Since the religion which is the only source of collective identity for the Jews in the Diaspora has been implicated in the most hideous crime that this people has ever known, the breach will not be repaired without major and daring acts of redefinition. We cannot, here or there, return Judaism to its pristine state as a religion of the Book, like a genie sent back into the bottle. Maybe there are some places in the world where a "nonpolitical" Judaism can be reconstructed, untainted by the structures of power and the horrors of a sawed-off pistol held by a man wearing a *kippah* (he did remove it during the murder . . .). Some neo-Hasidic bubbles in protected places that look like Bratslav and have names like Westchester County or Brookline. Or as an intellectual and spiritual exercise that is safeguarded and contained within the confines of "The Text." But I rather doubt it. As one of the commentators said on television a few days after the assassination, "*sinat hehayyim hamithapeset leruhniut*" (hatred for life that masquerades as spirituality) is no longer tolerable among those for whom Judaism is still the wellspring of their consciousness and who must contend with its present contaminated condition.

There are endless discussions these days . . . about the rhetoric of hate which no one thought would spawn violent deeds. I am only surprised at the surprise. At the masses of people beating their breasts and saying that as of Saturday night, November 4, 1995, Israel became a different place. Of course it is different. Yitzhak Rabin is dead. But evidently most of the people in this country needed a major symbolic event to teach them what had been staring us in the face for a long time: that the poison was just waiting for the first public (=Jewish!!) victim. Emil Grunzweig . . . who, just days before his assassination at a Peace Now rally thirteen years ago, had submitted a seminar paper pleading for a public discourse with "words, not swords," knew it. We who had our lives threatened by the "Sicarians," who spent . . . the past two decades being spat upon and cursed, told that it was a shame that the Nazis didn't get us and our families, that our mothers and our daughters were whores, knew it. All of us who watched in horror as the crowds in the demonstration of the "nationalist" camp chanted "*Rabin boged*" (Rabin is a traitor) and held up posters of our Prime Minister in Nazi uniform, knew it.

And of course the Palestinians knew it. They have been dying for years, but not being part of the "tribe," their deaths did not desecrate the communitarianism that drew strict boundaries between Us and Them and never allowed a true civil society to evolve in the Jewish State. Overnight, it is true, an intimacy seemed to reemerge within a community that had not lost its nostalgia for a Gemeinschaft in which everyone spoke Yiddish or Judeo-Arabic or Ladino. . . . But if it is to succeed, this new solidarity cannot revert to some romantic and anti-democratic, ghettoized idea of "consensus," but to something that weaves this society together in a fabric that respects the different colors and textures and ages of our lives. And it is the young people who are demanding it: What has been released into the atmosphere . . . is the energy of youth who are claiming three-score-and-ten rather than self-sacrifice as their legacy.

Memorial for Yitzhak Rabin.

Ron Almog | Flickr Creative Commons

After his death, Rabin became much larger than he ever was in life. Those who never forgave him for giving the order to "break bones" during the early months of the Intifada, and those who applauded him for it, cried along with those who registered his change of course from waging war to waging peace as an act of courage greater than any heroism in the battlefield. He became an icon not only of the peace process, but of the yearning for life that young people in this country never allowed themselves to express. . . . A kind of repository of all the blessings that every individual wishes for himself or herself. What we see is not just hedonism, the desire for a "better life," however legitimate that might be. It is a challenge to one of the last remaining sacred cows of Zionism: "*tov lamut be-ad artzenu*" ("It is good to die for our country"). Whether we believe what we will never know, that those were in fact Yosef Trumpeldor's last words, or whether, like Rabin, his last words (and testament) were: "*koev li, aval ze lo nora*" ("it hurts, but never mind . . .") may be the measure of the distance we have come as a country and as an aggregate of hurting and hurtful individuals. . . . ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

Jerusalem

Divided We Stand

SARI NUSSEIBEH

Vol. 6, No. 3. 1991

Jerusalem seems, and may well turn out to be, a problem that defies political solution. Israel has declared that it considers the entire city its sovereign, undivided, and eternal capital. Palestinians, for their part, have declared the eastern side of the city their own capital. Israelis as well as Palestinians will, on the whole, say that while they may be prepared to compromise on any other issue, they will never countenance a compromise on Jerusalem. Yet this being the case, the prospect for reaching a compromise on any other issue becomes impossible: because if it is true that no compromise over Jerusalem is likely, it is even more true that no compromise on any other issue is likely that fails to include a definitive solution to the Jerusalem problem. Israel seeks to exclude Jerusalem from negotiations, but Palestinians will not countenance negotiations, let alone a settlement, that excludes Jerusalem.

Thus the problem of Jerusalem comes to seem intractable. Paradoxically, but with the positions reversed, this is how the Palestine problem also seemed at one time to many people. Palestinians would not countenance any negotiations that implied waiving their claim to sovereignty in any part of Palestine. Jews, on the other hand, were satisfied with declaring their sovereignty in only one part of the country. Inevitably, war broke out. Forty years later, partition of the country begins to make sense to sizable sectors of the two communities. Partition still has not been achieved, but it no longer appears totally unnatural, illogical, or inconceivable. If it has not been implemented, then this is not because it defies logic, but because one party perceives its implementation as being in conflict with that party's interests. . . .

Arguments that Jerusalem is not as important or as vital to Palestinians as it is to Israelis, and that Israel should therefore maintain exclusive control of it—allowing, at best, for a measure of cultural self-rule among its Arab inhabitants and neighborhoods—are totally false, and simply inconsequential from a practical point of view. Palestinians regard Jerusalem as the natural and historical capital of Palestine, quite apart from any Jewish history affiliated with it. . . . Indeed, the city was a religious capital prior to the advent of monotheism. At a time when the descendants of the country's original inhabitants are living amid a renewed surge of nationalist sentiments and are seeking to exercise their sovereignty and their freedom as a nation on their own soil, it is only natural that they will not accept any argument that will exclude them from their historical capital. From a practical point of view, therefore, it is far more useful to exercise one's imagination in trying to formulate a partition that might be acceptable, and that could serve as the springboard for constructive unity between the two sides.

Such a partition is possible to the extent that it is symbolic. Here, one must recognize that the relative intransigence of either party on the question of where a borderline may be drawn, is itself a function of the relative porousness of that border. If this is true in general, it becomes even more true when the envisioned partition of the city must nevertheless leave the city physically united. The question is, how can we set up a formula whereby Jerusalem can remain physically united while being a capital city to two peoples?

In some respects, the question can be readily answered. For example, one can imagine two municipal councils cooperating very closely, even to the point of sharing vital civic functions. One can imagine that such a joint authority would be responsible for major "neutral" services, such as firefighting or sewage. Indeed, given the scattered nature of Jewish and Arab neighborhoods in the city, it is impossible not to imagine close cooperation among various municipal services, and it is impossible also not to imagine totally free movement across the imaginary lines of sovereignty, to and from the various neighborhoods. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

SARI NUSSEIBEH is a professor of philosophy and former President of the Al-Quds University in Jerusalem. His next book, to be published later this year, is titled *The Story of Reason in Islam*.

The Power of Tikkun

A.B. YEHOSHUA

Vol. 11, No. 1. 1996.

If someone were to ask me to explain on one foot the difference between the Left and the Right, this is how I would respond: The difference is in the belief, or in the ability to believe, that despite the natural and eternal powers that dominate us, those that are genetic and those that are geographic, above and beyond all of these, man and the collective not only have the ability to change, but have the desire for true *tikkun*. Herein lies the basic leftist orientation: the desire to change and the ability to transform oneself. While the right wing will talk about the need to be loyal to our forefathers, the commandment of generations, eternal fate which repeats itself, national mentality; the spiritual Left will talk of freedom from the past, re-examination of our origins, breaking of stereotypes. Zionism has always swung back and forth between Left and Right, between revolution and conservatism. . . .

Yitzhak Rabin was born into the generation of revolutionary Zionists, and maybe precisely because he absorbed so much ideology in his youth, he was a little reticent, suspicious, and impatient with ideologues.

As a man who experienced the complicated and difficult reality of the founding years of the state, he was critical of the simplistic solutions of determined, well-meaning people.

Even when peace was far from a reality, people who believed in it did not lose hope in Rabin. The peace camp was sure that when Rabin saw a sign that peace was indeed a possibility, he would move toward it, since his fathers and teachers had instilled in him a deep belief in the power of transformation, a desire and ability to change.

Three years ago when he commenced the difficult and enormous challenge of making peace with the Palestinians, the heart of the conflagration here for the last one-hundred-twenty years, Rabin wasn't equipped like Ben-Gurion on the one hand, or Menachem Begin on the other, with complex ideologies. He had to struggle with these tremendous questions that have entangled our existence, especially since the Six Day War, and which threatened to poison our existence here, without ideological scaffolding.

On seeing him fighting in the Knesset, in public debates, or groping for answers on television interviews, one often wished to offer him a helping hand, this agriculture school graduate, to provide him with a historical example, a suitable analogy, or the right passages from the Jewish texts.

Gradually it became clear that he had no use for intellectual flourishes. A stronger, truer force drove him, greater than any historical ideology, greater than correct or incorrect military or intelligence strategies.

All his wonderful talent as a soldier and statesman would not have been enough to facilitate the peace process the way he did in the last two years, had he not held the basic belief that not only you could transform yourself, but your enemy could also change and desire to change.

Goodbye, Friend: of all the wonderful sayings that we heard during the emotional and stormy *shiva* week, this is the one which has stuck. The word "friend" has taken the place of leader, or father, or commander. . . .

For you, Shimon Peres, he has become an older brother. I was profoundly moved when I heard you call him this at the graveside. The fact is that the peace process between twin nations for the same land was made by twin brothers, rivals. During the course of their work together, you and Rabin repaired your personal relationship, lending even greater moral strength to the peace process. Now you stand alone. The night of the murder I sensed for the first time in your words the shock of your aloneness.

It is not surprising that the key word when you addressed the cabinet was "partnership." Permit me to interpret: partnership meaning not just a good atmosphere or comradeship; rather, an internalized sense of responsibility for all aspects of leadership. Rabin and you came to create the peace together, not as friends but as brothers.

This is what has stopped Rabin's murder from becoming a political tragedy for the peace process.

That partnership is a gift to us by the late Prime Minister, amongst the many others that he left to us. We will guard them with our all. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

A.B. YEHOSHUA was awarded the National Jewish Book Award in 1990 and 1993, the Israel Prize for Literature in 1995, and the Los Angeles Times Book Prize in 2006.

Hostage Philosophy

Levinas's Ethical Thought

MARTIN JAY

Vol. 5, No. 6. 1990.

The Levinas Reader; edited by Sean Hand.

Emmanuel Levinas has been known to serious students of European philosophy for sixty years, ever since the publication of his influential study of Edmund Husserl, the work Jean-Paul Sartre said had introduced him to phenomenology. Some of his other writings, such as the demanding *Totality and Infinity* have been available in English since 1969, and there are several recent collections of scholarly essays devoted to his thought. . . .

Levinas is poised on the threshold of occupying the role that no one has really filled since the death of Martin Buber: that of the Jewish sage able to speak to the universal concerns of modern (or perhaps better, post-modern) men and women. . . .

Born in Lithuania in 1906, Levinas came to France after the First World War to study philosophy, particularly as it had been developed by Henri Bergson and his followers. In 1928 and 1929, however, he spent time in Freiburg, where he attended lectures by Husserl and Martin Heidegger. In the 1930s, when he assumed French citizenship and worked for the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, Levinas served as a critical champion of the phenomenological ideas he had absorbed in Germany. . . .

His French audience found in Levinas an extraordinarily subtle thinker who provided an original and challenging reading of the legacy of phenomenology strongly inflected by his Jewish beliefs. From Husserl and Heidegger he derived an understanding of the importance of lived experience prior to the intellectual reflection of the Cartesian *cogito*. He had first studied temporality with the Bergsonians, but his thinking was vastly enriched by Heidegger's explanation of its role in the drama of human finitude. And from the phenomenologists Levinas came to appreciate the costs of a philosophy of essential form based on the distant contemplation of a disembodied subject.

But in his radical critique of Heidegger's and Husserl's obsession with the ontological issues of Being and totality—an obsession he traced back as far as the Greek origins of Western philosophy—Levinas's particular Jewish identity explicitly came to the fore. For Levinas, the ultimate questions are ethical rather than ontological. The dominant focus of his thought became humanity not as immanent in Being, but as Being's transcendence, its beyond, its fracture. Or more precisely, it is humanity as the recipient of ethical commands from elsewhere that has concerned him. Levinas's abiding preoccupation remains less knowledge in the guise of descriptive statements of what is, than injunctions in the form of prescriptive imperatives about what ought to be.

Although Levinas has been careful to abjure the role of preacher, he gives a strong account of what might be called the ethical *a priori* underlying all moralizing. The fundamental ground of ethics is not, he claims, the abstract formalism of Kant's categorical imperative or the reciprocal "I-Thou" relationship of Buber's theology of dialogue. It is instead the submission of the self to the other, the principled suppression of self-interest in order to honor alterity (otherness). Ethics is thus rooted in asymmetry and hierarchy, in which other is always superior to self. The responsibility for the other is generated by what Levinas calls the *encounter* with his or her face, an encounter which is less directly visual than aural. We do not "know" the other by reference to his or her image, but rather enter a relationship of communicative proximity with him or her. Manifest in the intersubjective act of saying and listening, rather than in obedience to the already said, ethics demands that we put ourselves unconditionally in the place of the other without expecting anything in return. "Under accusation by everyone," Levinas concludes, "the responsibility for everyone goes to the point of substitution. A subject is a hostage."

The goal of ethics is thus not fusion with the other, nor is it even egalitarian reciprocity. It is instead the assumption

MARTIN JAY is the Sidney Hellman Ehrman Professor Emeritus of History at UC Berkeley.

of our own heteronomy, the willing abandonment of our ego's sovereignty, without cravenly accepting abasement or servitude. It is a never-ending openness to alterity, which embraces infinity without yearning for the closure of totality or the harmonious resolution of dialectics. Ethical conduct thus involves a nonerotic love for our neighbors that looks for nothing in return. As such it is uncompromising disinterested, in the etymological sense of not being "among beings" (*inter esse*), but rather being open to what transcends them. Ultimately, ethics thus means openness to God, who is not so much the divine creator as the ethical lawgiver. Although we can have no direct encounter with God, no I-Thou interaction with the supreme Other, He is present in the Third, the other, who is always in our midst, yet signifies something beyond.

Not surprisingly, Levinas is critical of humanist self-aggrandizement. Freedom as the autonomy of the acting self, the self of projects and initiatives, is a pernicious mirage. Sartre's famous identification of the subject with the "for-itself" should be supplanted, he argues, by the "for-the-other," a state best exemplified by maternity. What he calls our "difficult freedom" paradoxically requires accepting our ultimate dependency on the other. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

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Post-Modern Jewish God-Talk

ARNOLD M. EISEN

Vol. 8, No. 1. 1993.

Renewing the Covenant: A Theology for the Postmodern Jew by Eugene Borowitz.

Seek My Face, Speak My Name: A Contemporary Jewish Theology by Arthur Green.

THE AWKWARDNESS I have created in my title by the use of hyphens on either end is fully intended, symbolic of the difficulty Jews like me have finding balance between a culture and a religious tradition that often pull in opposite directions. God-talk has not come easily to Jews in recent generations, for now-familiar reasons: the age-old Jewish suspicion of claims to personal religious experience or direct divine authority; the modern suspicion that people who continue to believe in traditional religious notions have not fully come to terms with the legacy of Marx, Darwin, Freud, and Einstein, et al; Jewish reluctance to stand too much apart from the larger (and secular) elite culture of America; the formidable obstacle of the Holocaust, barring the way to confidence or willingness to accept that a supreme being of any sort is involved in the world's history; and, not least, the ability of even observant Jews (or perhaps particularly of observant Jews) to get by without thinking much about God, the central seam in the tallit that is their tradition. Most of the systematic American Jewish thought of recent decades has been devoted either to wrestling with the Holocaust or to rescuing the idea of covenant from its numerous modern challengers bent on protecting individual autonomy, with not much success on either score.

All the more reason, then, to celebrate accumulating evidence that quality God-talk is returning to sophisticated Jewish conversation. The late 1980s saw new and path-breaking efforts by Judith Plaskow, David Hartman, Neil Gillman, and Irving Greenberg, among others. And now Eugene Borowitz and Arthur Green have added their resonant voices to contemporary discussion of the divine. Both Borowitz and Green claim the mantle of the postmodern precisely to reassert the sort of powerful "meta-narrative" against which Lyotard cautions in *The Postmodern Condition*, each with a refreshing candor and a stress upon personal experience well-suited to the temper of the times. The tentative truths each wrests from massive uncertainty and recommends for our consideration, demand and command our serious attention. . . .

I don't read theology anymore for answers, let alone for Answers. Like histories, fictions, poems–and lives–they don't have Truth to offer, and are compelling nonetheless, if honest. These two books certainly qualify. Thank God we're now in a cultural moment when pursuit of absolutes and ultimates, despite doubts about absolutely everything, near and far, is once again respectable and valued, even urgent. "With this," as Green writes, "we are ready to begin." ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

ARNOLD M. EISEN, PH.D. is chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.

Potok on Roth

CHAIM POTOK

Vol. 2, No. 2. 1987.

The Counterlife by Philip Roth.

QUITE DIFFERENT from the basically realist mode Roth has written in before, this book at key points simply comes to a dead stop, contradicts itself, goes off in different directions, doubles back, shifts voices and tenses, comments on itself, and comments on the comments. Different, too, is the way Roth deals, for the first time, with specifically religious Jewish issues that are woven into the work and become part of its intrinsic form. *The Counterlife* is meta-fiction with a vengeance. . . .

What are we to make of all this? And what, especially, are the specifically Jewish elements of the book—Israel, Zionist nationalism, gun-toting jingoistic Israeli rabbis, a lengthy argument for circumcision—all about? . . .

Much of the early furor about Roth and his supposed Jewish self-hatred appears to have diminished; the current generation of young Jews takes self-mockery with a greater measure of ease than did its wounded parents whose memories of Europe were still vivid and whose knee-jerk outrage over Roth's startlingly abrasive and comedic manner was all too understandable.

That same abrasiveness is present in *The Counterlife*, yet it seems somehow no longer to have its old cutting edge. Perhaps we've simply grown accustomed to it; perhaps it's the unusually fine writing; more likely, it's because it is balanced here by other elements: intelligent talk; serious issues involving Israel; the sudden experience of rabid, old-fashioned, Christian anti-Semitism . . . ; and here and there touches of deep concern about family life, the raising of children, and commitments to old values. . . .

Still, it is curious that Roth chose precisely this kind of work, with its highly quixotic mandarin structure, in which to introduce, for the first time in his writing, charged Jewish material. . . . It is precisely this Jewishness that hints at the possibility that there may well be a hidden structure here, a scaffolding that undergirds the novelist's apparent tergiversations. The peak Jewish events in the book are Henry Zuckerman's decision, just before the middle of the book, to settle on a religious kibbutz in the West Bank, and, at the end of the book, the decision by Nathan Zuckerman to have his son circumcised. . . .

The Jewish material that Roth has chosen to write about here tells us something about him as a writer and thinker. The comedic mode works best on material that lies at the extremes of the human spectrum; it works with darks and lights and finds it difficult to deal with nuances. . . .

There is no way of knowing from this book whether Roth chose to present extremes of Jewish life because of formal literary reasons or because he is simply unaware that subtle, rich, life-enhancing nuances really exist outside those two ends of this novel's Jewish world: fanatic Arab-hating Israelis and the sudden desire by a totally assimilated Jew (in an unconvincing argument that reads like an essay in anthropology) to have his son by a gentile wife undergo circumcision. . . . For it seems as certain as anything can be in this Nabokovian whirlwind of a novel that Nathan Zuckerman will probably be a different sort of Jew after his son's circumcision from the utterly vacuous sort he has been before. . . . One might reasonably ask what sort of Jew Zuckerman was before, if he is going to be this sort of Jew now. In any event, he appears to be heading at the end of the book for a new and heretofore unexpected counterlife: some sort of involvement with matters Jewish. . . .

Roth has succeeded until now in disturbing us through the *content* of his work; now he disturbs through its *form*. The book is Jewishly naive and set at the edges of the Jewish spectrum, probably for purposes of comedic effect and possibly because Roth is insufficiently acquainted with other more subtle forms of Jewish life. It is not that Roth is self-hating, for he does not in this work objectify a projection of any particularly hateful sort of Jew. It's that he is unaware that there exists in the contemporary Jewish tradition a passion for moral acuteness and ethical sensitivity that is not the sole possession of its particularist Gush Emunim adherents on the one side, or Jewishly attenuated universalists on the other. Judaism is far more than nationalist religious Zionism, and clearly far more than intermarried universalists who are suddenly in love with both a Gainsborough England and ancient rites of circumcision. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

CHAIM POTOK is the author of, among other works, *My Name is Asher Lev*, and *The Chosen*.

Fiesta on the Border

ILAN STAVANS

Vol. 9, No. 1. 1994.

Becoming Mexican-American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945, by George J. Sanchez.

Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story, by Ruth Behar.

A REFRESHING NEW concept has emerged in academic circles and beyond: to live in the cultural hyphen, to inhabit the borderland. Nowhere is the debate surrounding it more candid and more historically enlightening than among Hispanics in the United States. . . .

In the 1960s and '70s, most Latino intellectuals resisted the very idea of integration into mainstream American culture. Influenced by Juan Gómez-Quiñones, dean of Chicano history, the discussion centered on what theoreticians called "negative assimilation." Immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries, it was asserted, wanted to retain their ancestral heritage against all odds and costs; their daily existence in the United States was a painful chain of struggles against the Anglo-Saxon milieu. . . . The Chicano movement, inspired by César Chávez and Rodolfo González (among others) and linked to protests for Black power and against the Vietnam War, became, for many Latinos, the apex of opposition. To affirm collective traditions, to remain loyal to the immigrant culture, was deemed the crux of political virtue.

How things have changed. Led by feminist writers such as Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga—who analyze "the *mestizo* worldview" (one composed of both European and native identities)—interpreters today are engaged in an altogether different discussion. Living in a universe of cultural contradictions, Latino thinkers have ceased to revel, militantly, in their separateness. They have decided to embrace an ambiguous, labyrinthine identity—to enjoy their transactions with the Anglo environment. Down with political activism and radical rage, welcome to fashionable exoticism. . . . The fever that once surrounded Latin America's magic realism . . . has been eclipsed by barrio nightclubs and street jargon. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

ILAN STAVANS is the Lewis-Sebring Professor in Latin American and Latino Culture at Amherst College. This article was reprinted with his permission.

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Of Mice and Menschen

Jewish Comics Come of Age

PAUL BUHLE

Vol. 7, No. 2. 1992.

ONLY A FEW years ago, in *Jewish Experience in the Art of the Twentieth Century,* Avram Kampf noted that the acceptance and understanding of a "Jewish art" with a distinct history is recent, the very phrase still vague and elusive. The same could be said, with more painful accuracy, of the Jewish contributions to the visual art that enjoys the vast majority of appreciative observers: the comics.

But wait. Even as the daily newspaper—long the chief source of public access to comics—goes into a slow fade, postmodernism has surprises in store. The boundaries between genres in the art world, already under stress for half a century or more, blur and almost lose their meaning. . . . The idea of a comic novel, historically about as elusive as the "great American novel," suddenly comes to life. A Holocaust survivor's story by Art Spiegelman, a Jewish storyteller and one of the guiding aesthetic mavens of today's comics, attains international fame. . . . Meanwhile, out in Middle America, Harvey Pekar sets himself against the greed and stupidity of our times, recording daily life with absolute detail.

No coincidence, the obsessions of these two Jewish artists. Archmodernist Spiegelman experiments with form, like so many Jewish modernists of the century; he and . . . other artists . . . are as determined to expand the comic genre as Yiddish writers once were to stretch their folkish language to the limits of modern literature. Meanwhile Pekar, scarcely a stylist at all, has become the ultimate mensch of the comic world, following the intuitions of the self-educated, militantly egalitarian Jew in a world of pedigreed deceivers. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

PAUL BUHLE has edited 12 comic art books including *Yiddishkeit*.

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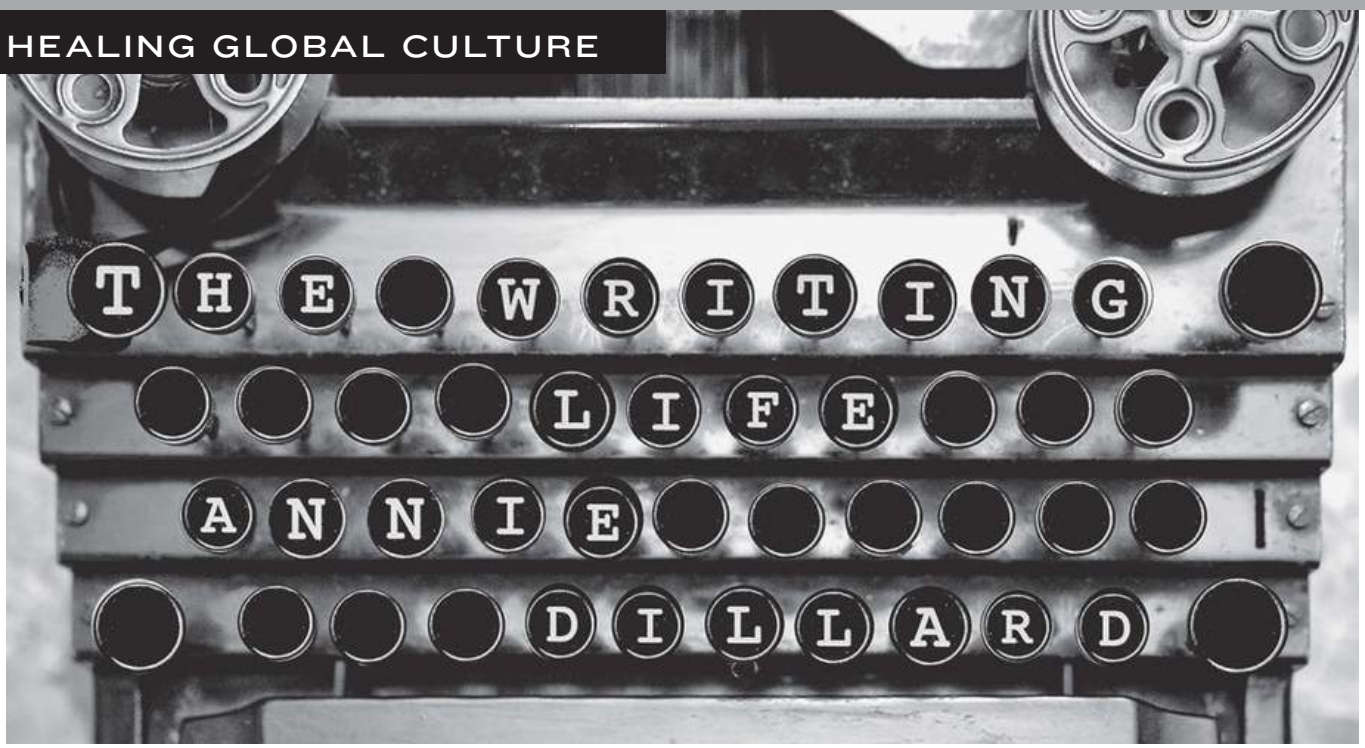

Vol. 3, No. 6. 1988.

(EDITOR'S NOTE IN 2016: *This 1988 version of "The Writing Life" has been slightly altered to reflect some changes found in Dillard's 1989 book by the same name.*)

What if man could see Beauty Itself, pure, unalloyed, stripped of mortality and all its pollution, stains, and vanities, unchanging, divine, . . . the man becoming, in that communion, the friend of God, himself immortal; . . . would that be a life to disregard?—Plato

I HAVE BEEN LOOKING into schedules. Even when we read physics, we inquire of each least particle, "What then shall I do this morning?" How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives. What we do with this hour, and that one, is what we are doing. A schedule defends from chaos and whim. It is a net for catching days. It is a scaffolding on which a worker can stand and labor with both hands at sections of time. A schedule is a mock-up of reason and order—willed, faked, and so brought into being; it is a peace and a haven set into the wreck of time; it is a lifeboat on which you find yourself, decades later, still living. Each day is the same, so you remember the series afterward as a blurred idyll.

The most appealing daily schedule I know is that of a certain turn-of-the-century Danish aristocrat. He got up at four and set out on foot to hunt black grouse, wood grouse, woodcock, and snipe. At eleven he met his friends who had also been out hunting alone all morning. They converged "at one of these babbling brooks," he wrote. He outlined the rest of his schedule. "Take a quick dip, relax with a schnapps and a sandwich, stretch out, have a smoke, take a nap or just rest, and then sit around and chat until three. Then I hunt some more until sundown, bathe again, put on white tie and tails to keep up appearances, eat a huge dinner, smoke a cigar and sleep like a log until the sun comes up again to redden the eastern sky. This is living. . . . Could it be more perfect?"

There is no shortage of good days. It is good lives that are hard to come by. A life of good days lived in the senses is not enough. The life of sensation is the life of greed; it requires more and more. The life of the spirit requires less and less; time is ample and its passage sweet. Who would call a day spent reading a good day? But a life spent reading—that is a good life. A day that closely resembles every other day for the past ten or twenty years does not suggest itself as a good one. But who would not call Pasteur's life a good one, or Thomas Mann's?

Wallace Stevens in his forties, living in Hartford, Connecticut, hewed to a productive routine. He rose at six, read for two hours, and walked another hour—three miles—to work. He dictated poems to his secretary. He ate no lunch; at noon he walked for another hour, often to an art gallery. He walked home from work—another hour. After dinner he retired to his study; he went to bed at nine. On Sundays, he walked in the park. I don't know what he did on Saturdays.

ANNIE DILLARD is a lifelong Democrat and wannabe Hasid.

Arif Qazi | cargocollective.com/arifqazi

Perhaps he exchanged a few words with his wife, who posed for the Liberty dime. (One would rather read these people, or lead their lives, than be their wives. When the Danish aristocrat Wilhelm Dinesen shot birds all day, drank schnapps, napped, and dressed for dinner, he and his wife had three children under three. The middle one was Karen.)

Like Stevens, Osip Mandelstam composed poetry on the hoof. So did Dante. Nietzsche, like Emerson, took two long walks a day. "When my creative energy flowed most freely, my muscular activity was always greatest. . . . I might often have been seen dancing; I used to walk through the hills for seven or eight hours on end without a hint of fatigue; I slept well, laughed a good deal—I was perfectly vigorous and patient" (Nietzsche). On the other hand, A. E. Housman, almost predictably, maintained, "I have seldom written poetry unless I was rather out of health." This makes sense, too, because in writing a book you can be too well for your own good.

Jack London claimed to write twenty hours a day. Before he undertook to write, he obtained the University of California course list and all the syllabi; he spent a year reading the textbooks in philosophy and literature. In subsequent years, once he had a book of his own under way, he set his alarm to wake him after four hours of sleep. Often he slept through the alarm, so, by his own account, he rigged it to drop a weight on his head. I cannot say I believe this, though a novel like *The Sea-Wolf* is strong evidence that some sort of weight fell on his head with some sort of frequency—though you wouldn't think a man would claim credit for it. London maintained that every writer needed experience, a technique, and a philosophical position. Perhaps the position need not be an airtight one; London himself felt comfortable with a weird amalgam of Karl Marx and Herbert Spencer. (Marks & Sparks.)

I write these words in my most recent of many studies—a pine shed on Cape Cod. The pine lumber is unfinished inside the study; the pines outside are finished trees. I see the pines from my two windows. Nuthatches spiral around their long, coarse trunks. Sometimes in June a feeding colony of mixed warblers flies through the pines; the warblers make a racket that draws me out the door. The warblers drift loosely through the stiff pine branches, and I follow through the thin long grass between the trunks.

The study—sold as a prefabricated toolshed—is eight feet by ten feet. Like a plane's cockpit, it is crammed with high-tech equipment. There is no quill pen in sight. There is a computer, a printer, and a photocopying machine. My backless chair, a prie-dieu on which I kneel, slides under the desk; I give it a little kick when I leave. There is an air conditioner, a heater, and an electric kettle. There is a low-tech bookshelf, a shelf of gull and whale bones, and a bed. Under the bed I stow paints—a one-pint can of yellow to touch up the window's trim, and five or six tubes of artists' oils. The study affords ample room for one. One who is supposed to be writing books. You can read in the space of a coffin, and you can write in the space of a toolshed meant for mowers and spades.

I walk up here from the house every morning. The study and its pines, and the old summer cottages nearby, and the new farm just north of me, rise from an old sand dune high over a creeky salt marsh. From the bright lip of the dune I can see oyster farmers working their beds on the tidal flats and sailboats under way in the saltwater bay. After I have warmed myself standing at the crest of the dune, I return under the pines, enter the study, slam the door so the latch catches—and then I cannot see. The green spot in front of my eyes outshines everything in the shade. I lie on the bed and play with a bird bone until I can see it.

Appealing workplaces are to be avoided. One wants a room with no view, so imagination can dance with memory in the dark. When I furnished this study seven years ago, I pushed the long desk against a blank wall, so I could not see from either window. Once, fifteen years ago, I wrote in a cinder-block cell over a parking lot. It overlooked a tar-and-gravel roof. This pine shed under trees is not quite so good as the cinder-block study was, but it will do.

"The beginning of wisdom," according to a West African proverb, "is to get you a roof."

*

It was on summer nights in Roanoke, Virginia, that I wrote the second half of a book, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. (I wrote the first half in the spring, at home.) Ruefully I noted then that I would possibly look back on those times as an idyll. I vowed to remember the difficulties. I have forgotten them now, however, and I do, in fact, look back on those times as an idyll.

I slept until noon, as did my husband, who was also writing. I wrote once in the afternoon, and once again after our early dinner and a walk. During those months, I subsisted on that dinner, coffee, Coke, chocolate milk, and Vantage cigarettes. I worked till midnight, one, or two. When I came home in the middle of the night I was tired; I longed for a tolerant giant, a person as big as a house, to hold me and rock me. In fact, an exhausted daydream—almost a hallucination—of being rocked and soothed sometimes forced itself upon me, and interrupted me even when I was talking or reading.

I had a room—a study carrel—in the Hollins College library, on the second floor. It was this room that overlooked a tar-and-gravel roof. A plate-glass window, beside me on the left, gave out on a number of objects: the roof, a parking lot, a distant portion of Carvin's Creek, some complicated Virginia sky, and a far hilltop where six cows grazed around a ruined foundation under red cedars. ■

Read the entire article at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

Sex in Israel

DAVID MARGOLIS

Vol. 10, No. 2. 1995.

Lovers,
Hanna Barczyk

The Hope of Two Thousand Years

Uri: the name means light. But another meaning inheres, for in the first syllable of "Uri" blinks the name of the ancient city out of which our forefather Abraham, touched by God, arose to meet his new life. In English, by no coincidence, the word "ur" means something primitive, unpolished—something at its beginnings. As an American friend once said to him, "Uri, you are a rough draft."

Which was not completely fair to Uri, an Israeli man not yet thirty, who possessed that combination of sweetness and brash self-certainty that marks our brothers in the Homeland. Yes, he was unpolished, but which of us is not, after all, an unrevised early version of what—like artists, revising as we go—we know we could become?

Uri had an easy manner. If he was behind you in the supermarket line and you lacked ten shekels for your purchase, without even thinking he would plunk down the coins for you, addressing you with a click of the tongue and an upturned hand to let you know he's half insulted that you even think you need to thank him.

True, his generosity is partly impatience: His hands and feet are already moving behind the obstacle you represent, he wants to get going and you have already taken one hundred seconds of his time while you laboriously explore your pockets and purse and explain your predicament to the checkout girl. He's willing to pay ten shekels just in order to *stop standing on this line*.

Because he is part Moroccan, with that beautiful dark, pouty, ardent, expressive face that can burst—*pitom!*—like sunshine into a big smile, and because he wears tight European-style pants and keeps the top four buttons of his shirt open to display the golden Star of David he wears on his chest, some people mistake him at first for one of the *chakchakim* who may be found in public places in the development towns especially, trying to make the acquaintance of young women. "Hey, sweet, you want to drink a cup of coffee with me?"

But Uri is really nothing like a Moroccan *chakchak* guy. He is tall, for one thing, which is probably because his mother is American, and Americans somehow grow tall. Also, because he is half-American, he thinks differently than most of the guys he went through the army with.

For example, he thinks about God. His mother, who was a Conservative Jew in America, maintained fervently that you didn't have to be Orthodox to be "spiritual."

After she made *aliyah* and married Uri's Moroccan father, she insisted, when Uri was growing up, on joining the only Conservative synagogue in BeerSheva.

DAVID MARGOLIS (1943 - 2005) was an award-winning journalist and fiction writer. His novels *Change of Partners* and *The Stepman* (Permanent Press), describe with lovingly piercing insight and wit, the radical counterculture's sincere attempt to change the world. His last day job was Jewish World Editor of the Jerusalem Report.

Hanna Barczyk | hannabarczyk.com

Uri's father, on the other hand, went to a Moroccan synagogue when he needed to go to synagogue and didn't understand why praying the wrong way and talking in English made things more spiritual. Uri, like his father, doesn't often go to synagogue. But he takes after his mother by sometimes using the word "spiritual," or talking about the meaning that he sees in a Jewish holiday. When he does, his Moroccan buddies wag their heads and say, "Oo-wah, Uri's getting *spiritual*." Uri retorts, "Hey, it's Torah - it's your heritage," which really makes them whoop, so he gives a grin and shuts up.

After the army, he went to college but didn't like to study. Also he realized a secret that is the same in both Israel and America: Having a college degree doesn't mean you're going to get a job.

So he left after a year. He worked on a kibbutz for a few seasons, then waited on tables in a Tel Aviv dance club, then used his knowledge of English to train as a tour guide. For six months he carted groups of tourists to Masada and the Western Wall. But a person gets impatient from saying the same things over and over again or making up entertaining lies.

Uri didn't know what to try next. In the army, he had been good at fixing and building. Finally, his father's Moroccan cronies in the Jewish Agency landed Uri a job as chief handyman at "Building Our People," an educational program in BeerSheva that brought young American Jews to learn about Israel and Zionism.

Now that Uri has found a niche at the Building Our People program, our romance can begin. ■

Read the entire story at www.tikkun.org/tikkunat30

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Poor Thing

JOYCE CAROL OATES

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TOWARD MORNING we were awakened by the sound of Pepi's hoarse, strangulated breathing, and when we discovered him, not in his pile of rags in the warmest corner of the storage room but in a far, dark corner, it almost seemed we were too late, and poor Pepi was dying.

Poor thing!—he'd been ailing for weeks. Since birth Pepi has been susceptible to respiratory infections, a genetic flaw for which someone is to blame, yet what good are accusations, at such a time?

Pepi himself is partly to blame, I'm afraid. One of us would notice that Pepi was behaving oddly, coughing, wheezing, pushing his food away in a gesture of revulsion, and say, Maybe we should take Pepi to be examined?—and the other would agree, Yes, we should. But cunning Pepi overheard, and understood, and, as if deliberately, he would seem to improve, for a few days. And since it was upsetting to the entire household to force Pepi into the car and drive him anywhere—I still have a scar, on the back of my left hand, from one such episode, last spring!—we kept postponing the task.

And it did seem, for weeks I swear—Pepi *was* holding his own.

Of course, with Pepi, it's easy to be deceived. That has been an aspect of his life with us, from the start.

How many years ago had it been, when Pepi had first come to live in our household?—the happiest, most energetic, most delightful creature you could envision! Everyone marveled at his frisky antics, his unflagging high spirits. Ah, the miraculous flame of life itself danced in him, unquenchable. In those early days his eyes were clear and shining; lovely, iridescent, shifting shades of amber. His pert little button nose was pink, damp, and cool—how I shivered, when he nuzzled it against me! His ears stood up erect, his pelt crackled with static electricity when we brushed it, his small, sharp teeth were glistening and white—you would not want to tease him, in the vicinity of those teeth. Pepi! Pepi! we would cry, clapping our hands as Pepi raced about the lawn, pink tongue lolling. Inside the house, though it was forbidden, Pepi loved to scramble up the staircase, nails scraping and clicking against the polished wood. Pepi, naughty thing!—oh, isn't he *darling*!

We forgave him, we had not the heart to seriously discipline him, as he pushed his heated face against us, eager to know we loved him, and only him.

As, of course, those years, we did.

JOYCE CAROL OATES is the author of a number of books, including novels, short story collections, poetry volumes, plays, essays, and criticism. Among her many honors are the PEN/Malamud Award for Excellence in Short Fiction and the National Book Award. Oates is the Roger S. Berlind Distinguished Professor of the Humanities at Princeton University, and has been a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters since 1978.

But then, it seemed so suddenly, Pepi was no longer young, and no longer in good health.

If he snapped at one of us—if his teeth caught in our flesh, or his nails snagged—our forgiveness didn't come quite so readily.

For weeks, as I've said, we procrastinated, postponing what was inevitable. Poor thing! Pepi had little of his old appetite, and when he did eat, he guzzled his food in a way loathsome to see; and vomited it, in dribbles, through the house. So—what choice had we?—we kept him more and more in the storage room, which, though unheated, is adjacent to the furnace room, and draws some of that heat.

Not that it was easy to forget him—with his whining, whimpering, and clawing at the storage room door, and the disgusting messes he made, which one of us (more often, I) would have to clean up each morning.

Yet, it was impossible to be angry, or exclusively angry, with Pepi. When he gazed up at us with eyes rimmed in mucus, that look of mute animal sorrow, animal hurt, apology, bewilderment—terror!

More than once, I broke into sobs, simply seeing him. For it soon became clear, Pepi's time had come.

We can't let him suffer, one of us said, finally; and the other said, We can't, we *can't*.

We owe the poor thing that much, at least.

So: Very early this morning, before the sun had fully risen, we surprised Pepi where he lay in a corner of the storage room, and quickly wrapped him in an old blanket. Fortunately, he'd grown too feeble to put up much resistance. I carried him out to the car, and, following the plan we'd devised, we drove at once to the twenty-four-hour Family Pet Veterinary Hospital & Emergency Clinic out on the highway. This was an establishment we had often passed, in the many years we have resided here, but had never visited. Indeed, we had some difficulty finding it, for it turned out to be several miles farther away than we recalled.

My husband drove. I held Pepi in my arms, in the blanket, as gently as I could, for he struggled if I gripped him too tightly. He was whining, and whimpering, and growling, and drooling; and breathing in quick, shallow pants. Pepi, good Pepi, sweet Pepi, I crooned, everything will be all right! Trust us!

The parking lot at the rear of Family Pet Veterinary Hospital & Emergency Clinic was surprisingly large; yet, so very oddly for this hour of the day, nearly full. Inside, the barn-like waiting room was so crowded, not a single seat was free! Fortunately, while we were giving our names to the receptionist, a couple was called into the examining room, and two seats opened up for us.

How unexpectedly busy it was in this place!—and how warm, airless, and oppressive the atmosphere. Pepi began to whimper and fret, but, thank God, was too weak to cause any trouble.

Nor had he apparently eaten for some time, a blessing since in panic, or out of sheer bad temper, he would have vomited on me—or worse!

Thus, we sat; and waited. I had had the foresight to wrap Pepi carefully in the blanket, so that only the very tips of his ears showed. I was determined to protect the poor, dying thing against the curious stares of strangers—infuriating enough that they should stare at my husband and me!

A very long time passed. My husband whispered, Shall I hold Pepi for a while? and I whispered, Oh no, he isn't very heavy any longer, he's no burden. My husband wiped at his eyes, and said, He's being very brave, isn't he? and I said, carefully, for I was on the verge of bursting into tears, We are all being very brave.

So many people in this waiting room, with their ailing creatures!—what a din! Yips, barks, whining, cries, groans, pitiful to hear. The waiting room was vast—larger inside than one would have predicted from the outside. In the unwinking fluorescent glare, rows of seats stretched virtually out of sight. There was a feverish pulse to the air, and such a medley of smells!

Just as our names were called, Pepi put up a last, faint struggle, but I gripped him tight. Everything will be all right, Pepi, soon!—I promised. Have faith in us!

As my husband and I rose to enter the adjoining room, dozens of pairs of eyes leapt to us; but I made sure that Pepi was wrapped up tight, and, in his misery, shielded from strangers' eyes. Poor darling! And so brave!

A young assistant in a soiled white uniform led us into the examining room, which was windowless, with grim, gray, bare concrete walls and floor, a high ceiling, harsh fluorescent lighting, and a pungent odor of disinfectant. This person—who might have been male or female—behaved with studied indifference, instructing us to put the patient—the exact words were "your patient"—on a metal table, which we did; and to remove his blanket, which we did. Just then the doctor appeared, entering the room briskly, whistling thinly between his teeth, wiping his hands on a paper towel which he tossed, carelessly, in the direction of a trash basket. He was young, and the look he gave us, before turning to Pepi, was one of frank impertinence.

By this time, my husband and I were exhausted. We explained that we'd been waiting for hours with poor Pepi; we'd come with the hope that Pepi might be granted a merciful end to his suffering, but, thus far, he had only suffered more.

(Pepi was lying, quiveringly, on the cold metal table, his hairless belly exposed; ribs and pelvic bones protruding shockingly. I had not realized the poor thing had lost so much flesh! Yet, though his eyes were encrusted with dried mucus, they shifted alertly in their sockets, and it was clear that the poor thing heard, and no doubt understood, everything that was being said.)

Doctor, my husband and I pleaded,—just look at him! Will you help us?

The young doctor had been staring at Pepi, in silence.

Doctor—?

Still, the doctor stood, staring at Pepi. What was wrong? Why did he stare so—incredulously?

At last, looking at us, he said, calmly, Is this some sort of joke?

My husband said, faltering, Joke?—what do you mean, Doctor?

Drawing himself up to his full height, the doctor continued to regard us with an expression of disbelief and revulsion. What do *you* mean, he said,—coming in here with *this*? For what purpose?

Now very agitated, my husband and I said, Why, Doctor, we would like a—a—merciful end to poor Pepi's suffering. As you can see, he is very, very sick—he is suffering needlessly—

The doctor said, in a voice trembling with fury, My God! I can't believe this!

Doctor?—what do you mean? Can't you put him to—to sleep?

All this while, poor Pepi was lying on the table, panting, shivering, a thin line of drool descending from his bloodless lips. Ah, how cruel, that he should be a witness to such a scene!

The doctor had resolutely turned away from Pepi, as if the sight of the poor thing was obscene; he conferred with the slovenly assistant, who seemed, now, less indifferent than previously, and we heard them speak in low, urgent voices. What were they saying? Why were we, and Pepi, being treated so rudely?

My husband said, hesitantly, Doctor?—what is wrong? You do it for others, don't you?—*Why not for us*?

Preparing to leave the room, as if he could not bear our presence another moment, the doctor said, Impossible. Just take it—him—out of here. Of course we don't do such things.

My husband repeated, You do it for others, doctor?—*why not for us*?

And I joined in, pleading, my fingers stretched as if to touch this intolerant young man's arm, though of course I did not dare touch him, Oh, Doctor, yes, please—*why not for us*?

Our words hung in the air. The doctor did not reply, but strode out of the room, and shut the door firmly behind him. Was anyone in such a position of authority ever so rude to those who have come begging for help?

Was there some error?—some terrible misunderstanding? We looked at Pepi, in dread of what we might see. But it was only Pepi—our Pepi.

Lying there on the metal table, beneath the unwinking fluorescent lights, watching us, hearing every word.

The doctor's assistant handed us Pepi's blanket as if it were contaminated, and said, with an air of righteous disgust, You may leave by this door at the rear.

And so—don't judge us harshly!—we did it ourselves.

For, after all, society failed us. We had no choice.

About fifty yards behind the pet hospital was a deep drainage ditch filled with brackish, ill-smelling water, in which there floated, like shards of dream, threads of detergent scum. Trembling, sick at heart, tears brimming in our eyes, my husband and I carried Pepi to the ditch, to put the poor thing out of his misery.

For we had resolved not to bring Pepi back home with us. No, we simply couldn't go through all that again!

Not in our very worst dreams could we have anticipated such an ending to Pepi's life in our family. So heartbreaking a task, yes, and so arduous and physically demanding a task—forcing poor Pepi into that cold, foul water, and pushing his head under! And how fiercely he fought us!—he, who had seemed so feeble!—he, our beloved Pepi, transformed into a stranger—an enemy! We would think, afterward, that Pepi had never so willfully disobeyed us, and he'd never demonstrated such strength: as if, in the years he'd lived in our household, *he had been unknown to us in his deepest, most secret self.*

Pepi, no! we cried.

Pepi, *obey*!

The hideous struggle must have required ten minutes. I am still trying to forget. Never had I, who'd loved him so, dreamt that I might one day be Pepi's executioner—never had I dreamt I might be anyone's executioner. My clothes were splotched with filthy water, my good kidskin gloves punctured and torn from Pepi's teeth! Nor did my husband, the gentlest and most civilized of men, ever imagine he might find himself provoked to rage, grunting, cursing, ugly veins standing out in his forehead, as he held this thrashing, squirming, desperate creature beneath the surface of ditch water in a suburban field, at dawn! For we soon forgot what we were doing, in the human desperation of doing it.

And you, you damned hypocrites, what will you do with yours? ■