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

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TIKKUN

Passover Haggadah: *A Supplement*
Personal Essay: *Edith Milton*
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A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY MARCH/APRIL 1991 $5.00

JEWS QUESTION THE WAR AND THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

Amos Oz, Rita Hauser, General Aharon Yariv, Shulamith Aloni, Danny Rubenstein, Stan Cohen, Michael Lerner, Haggith Gor Ziv, Aaron Back, Paul Berman, John Mack, Michael Klare, Cherie Brown



Race & Urban Politics
Christopher Lasch

My First Month in the Senate
Paul Wellstone

The Russians Arrive
Gail Hareven

The Buyout of Borough Park
Susan Hamovitch

Telemythology & Politics
Michael Schudson vs. Jay Rosen

Making America Home
Alice Kessler-Harris

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Todd Gitlin on Czech Guilt & the Press; Judith Plaskow on Anti-Paganism; Alicia Ostriker & Edward Greenstein on the Book of J; Terry Kupers on Men Without Cycles; Gary Gerstle on Nationalism; David Biale on the Savage in Judaism

Commerce

Meanwhile no one noticed what I was doing by the border fence.
People were busy moving pianos, carpets,
boiling the drinking water.
Other people walked with their hands up.
This was no dream. My mouth was parched
and the water not yet lukewarm, so in the meanwhile
through the border fence I trade with another girl
bubble gum from wet mouth to dry one for a slice of bread
with salty American butter, and the flies on the pus around her eyes
settling on mine for the while, import, export
the first taste of tourism.

That's how it was in Jaffa, July 1949,
when people were busy moving pianos, carpets,
boiling the drinking water.

—*Hamutal Bar-Yosef*

Hamutal Bar-Yosef is professor of Hebrew literature and language at Ben Gurion University. She has published studies of Gnesin and Zelda, as well as several books of her own poetry. This poem was translated by Alomi Halter.

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Letters

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IRAQ

To the Editor:

"The people, united, will never be defeated!" chanted the inspired crowd at the Washington, D.C. protest against the war on January 19th. The rally was not only against the war. It claimed to be against racism, and yet systematically excluded Jews. Each speaker made sure to include a list of all the oppressed, all the minorities for whom he or she spoke, and in whose honor the protest was occurring: the Afro-Americans, the Arabs, the Latinos, the Koreans, the gays. The list became a sort of litany repeated at the end of each speech, by the representatives of each of these groups. As each speaker went through the list, I would hold my breath, hoping that this time I would be named, included in a "people united" who were bonding and being given a voice. But the Jews were pointedly omitted. This was not a rally for peace; it was a splintered gathering of ethnic, religious, and political groups with specific agendas, each using the occasion as an opportunity for self-empowerment, each using the attack by the United States on Iraq as a metaphor for their own oppression. What united them was not pacifism but anti-Semitism.

The anti-Semitism was not restricted to tacit exclusion of Jews from the list of the oppressed. Several speakers compared the United States' attack on Iraq to the Israeli Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. There were sharp indictments of Israel, of Zionism, and of a potential Israeli attack on Iraq. Saddam Hussein was not condemned. No one mentioned that Iraq has already attacked Israel twice or that Israel has not responded.

The protestors at the rally emphasized the need to talk through problems and solve them peacefully. I wholeheartedly believe in this, but before I can again join protestors against the war, they have to accept me as a Jew, they have to recognize Jewish oppression, and they have to believe that Jews, too, want peace.

Hillel wrote, "If I am not for myself,

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JEWS REFLECT ON THE WAR ... AND THE ANTIWAR MOVEMENT

Editorials

Michael Lerner

After the Gulf War

Although I am glad that Saddam's armies have been militarily defeated in Kuwait, glad that at this writing battlefield casualties have been lighter than we feared, and glad that Iraq has been militarily weakened (and hence is less likely to pose a serious military threat to Israel), I am fearful that the short-term military victory in Iraq will eventually yield a long-term political quagmire, and that it will be Israel and the Jews who will pay much of the price. American strength on the battlefields has yet to be matched by American wisdom in addressing the basic needs of the people of the Middle East. A smart missile is no replacement for a smart policy.

I hope by the time you read this that Saddam Hussein will have been been removed from power. Having been outraged at Iraq's missile strikes at Israeli civilians and its disgraceful crimes in Kuwait, I welcomed U.S. action that has dramatically weakened Iraq's offensive military capacity—even though I would have preferred the longer route of economic and military blockade to achieve this same end. I am, of course, saddened by the terrible loss of life inflicted by the U.S. military on Iraqi civilians, many of them as much innocent victims of Saddam's brutal regime as the Kuwaitis are. I hope that Congressional investigators will determine if the loss of life that has occurred was really necessary and if the U.S. Army did its best to stay within its own guidelines of avoiding civilian targets. Yet I understand why so many Americans rallied around the war strategy of President Bush. Saddam Hussein is a disgusting character (and vicious anti-Semite) whose murderous policies had to be countered in some way: it was almost as if Saddam has been dreamt up by "central casting" and sent as the perfect embodiment of crass evil against whom an American president could mobilize the American people. The fantasy that whether by dramatically weakening Saddam or overthrowing him and his military elite we could find a "quickie" solution to the problems of the area is undeniably seductive.

Most likely, however, it may well be another group of fascists—be they advocates of Arab nationalism or Islamic fundamentalism—who will emerge to rule Iraq. Until the underlying problems of the area are addressed, no lasting peace will be possible in the Middle East. Nor would Iraq or the Middle East fare much better if the reactionary regime in Saudi Arabia, the fascists in Syria, and the moderates in Egypt were collectively to govern in place of an ousted Iraqi regime.

Quickie military solutions cannot solve deep structural problems shaped by a long history of colonial exploitation. Saddam Hussein is evil, but he is not a unique manifestation of evil. He is, rather, the predictable outcome of a long history of economic, political, and cultural exploitation that has led to pathological distortions within the political life of the Middle East.

Those distortions did not start with the West—they were already manifest in the Ottoman Empire's domination of the region. But exploitation was greatly intensified with the arrival of Western colonialists intent on controlling oil and on monopolizing trade with the Far East. The West's economic exploitation and political domination was facilitated by a systematic denigration of Arab culture and civilization—and this, in turn, produced a set of resentments that has festered for the past century. The resulting Arab nationalism was in part a desperate attempt by Arab peoples to reclaim their own dignity and self-esteem, to assert to the world that they deserved to be respected as much as anyone else, that Arab and Islamic culture deserved honor and study rather than caricature and ridicule, and to insist that the resources of their region be used for the collective interests of the Arab peoples.

I do not intend to romanticize Arab cultures—I am too well aware of the long history of militarism, anti-Semitism, racism and sexism to think that these cultures would not benefit from at least some exposure to the humanistic, universalist, and most human-rights-affirming strands of Western culture. But we must understand that the deep shame and humiliation that Arabs have felt under Western imperialism are legitimate though not always helpful responses to real exploitation and real oppression.

It is on this kind of emotional terrain that fascists and right wing forces traditionally feed. The response of the peoples of the Middle East to fascists such as Saddam is much like the response of many Americans to our own variety of right-wingers. Arabs responded to Baathist party pan-Arab nationalists just as they responded to various forms of Islamic fundamentalism precisely to the extent that these political and religious movements articulate the anger and frustration that they feel. So while we are likely to see many media presentations of Iraqis joyfully repudiating the dictatorial rule of Saddam—particularly because in defeat he can no longer represent their fantasy of reclaiming lost dignity—we should not be surprised if in years to come many of these same people rally to equally oppressive fascists.

The frustration that Arabs feel will only be intensified now that Saddam has been militarily trounced by the United States—one of the forces in the world responsible for the exploitation and cultural denigration of the Arab world. Supporters of Bush's policy like to assure themselves that

U.S. moves were legitimate by pointing to the Arab participation in the U.S.-led coalition that defeated Saddam—a coalition which will likely be given a major role in publicly defining the nature of the post-war solutions. Yet these Arabs are not the Arab masses, but Arab elites whose policies rarely reflect the desires and aspirations of the people whom they govern, and whose stay in power is more a function of the arms and political support they receive from various Western or Soviet patrons than of any consent of the governed. The post-war order that they will wish to impose will be aimed at perpetuating the balance of power rather than at redressing the underlying legitimate grievances of the Arab masses, grievances that continue to make the entire area fundamentally unstable.

Nor is the U.S. likely to help much. It will certainly seek to ensure that any post-war settlement protect the interests of its oil companies. And though Bush may initially call for a temporary halt to arms sales, it is unlikely to retain such a policy for any length of time—American arms manufacturers will claim that if the U.S. doesn't sell the arms, someone else will. So we are likely to see a continuation of the arms race, and that will mean that the region's repressive regimes will have arms to use—either against their own people or against Israel.

The only long-term solution requires demilitarization of the entire region, democratization of its economic and political structures, and a redistribution of the wealth in ways that would eliminate the extremes of poverty and deprivation. Yet however much the U.S. may be committed to democratic values in the abstract, governing elites in the United States see their interests tied to American corporate interests and to a vision of politics that trusts in balancing elites rather than in empowering the masses.

Once one recognizes this tilt in American policy, one must acknowledge that those who criticized the war had a deep and important point to make. However misguided some antiwar activists have been in their failure to criticize Saddam Hussein adequately, or in their Israel-bashing and anti-Semitism, themes to which I shall return below, they are right in one extremely salient regard: the basic goals of the U.S. cannot be trusted, because U.S. policy-makers will necessarily stand in the way of the fundamental transformation that is needed to bring lasting peace and stability to the Middle East. They will seek, instead, to create a balance between undemocratic regimes, hoping to play them off against each other, and hoping that they will allow America to control oil policy. These policy elites tend to see American power as an end in itself—and to a large extent their commitment to democracy and human rights is more tactical than principled.Yet from our standpoint, democratic and human rights forces in the Middle East are the only hope—and encouraging and strengthening them should be the central goal of American policy.

Many hard-nosed realists write off this possibility, believing instead that there is no chance for democratic transformation or for the development of a human-rights respecting attitude in the Arab world. Instead, they think the best that U.S. policy makers could hope for is to keep the Arab countries fighting amongst themselves in endless struggles and realpolitik "balances of power." While I have no illusions that there are powerful democratic forces ready to join a transformative campaign for liberal values at the drop of a hat, I also believe that it is important to resist the cynical and resigned attitude that underlies many policy suggestions for the post-Gulf war Middle East. If democratic and human rights values are intrinsically valuable—not just a reflection of Western prejudices or the fantasies of white men—then in the long run they can be recognized and embraced by most human beings. Rather than fall into racist assumptions that assume that Arabs have some mysterious cultural block towards accepting the same universal values that we believe are fundamental to a decent world, we should rather assume that whatever blocks do exist are the product of a messy history (in which, incidentally, we in the West are directly implicated).

So it is beside the point to emphasize the racism, militarism or anti-Semitic aspects of Arab culture as a counter-argument. We at *Tikkun* think that healing the world requires a new way of thinking—a way that seeks to understand those who are Other, to understand their pain, their legitimate grievances, and to see their embrace of noxious ideologies as an understandable (though regrettable) response to these pains. Instead of demonizing the Other, we need to humanize the Other. For example, those who are attracted to racist and anti-Semitic programs are often themselves the victims of economic exploitation, cultural denigration, or bureaucratic manipulation. What racist or fascistic forces succeed in doing is to provide a language to express the pain these people have been experiencing—plus an external "enemy" who is to be blamed for one's powerlessness or oppression. So to counter their appeal, democratic forces must speak to what is legitimate in the pain people feel, while discrediting in their eyes the racist, anti-Semitic and fascistic solutions they have been offered. It would be naive to believe that this is always possible. But it is equally misguided—the sin of ontologizing evil—to believe that people never change, that once one has bought racist ideas they are lost forever, or that once living in a militaristic or totalitarian system they can never be reached by alternative ideas (precisely what was wrongly claimed by Reagan era ideologues like Jean Kirkpatrick who justified endless spending on arms by insisting that totalitarian regimes could never be reformed from within because of the extreme forms of thought-control developed in these Eastern European dictatorships).

Rather than writing off our enemies as hopelessly reactionary or racist (an error, incidentally, that liberals and progressives frequently fall into when trying to explain why the American public doesn't respond to liberal politics), we would do better to assume that they are fundamentally understandable human beings. This compassion toward others does not require that we do not fight back when they are attacking us—obviously Scud missile attacks or other military threats to Israel must be stopped. But it does mean that we do not negate the other's humanity, and that even while opposing them we acknowledge what is legitimate in their underlying desires (e.g. in the case of the Middle Eastern Arabs, their desire to run their own countries free of Western-armed Arab elites).

Yet we will need to avoid an era of self-righteousness and patriotic smugness that is the most likely short-term consequence of the U.S. military victory. Since most Americans have been deprived of lives in which their daily work and families could be integrated into a morally meaningful framework, they are understandably hungry to

be part of some larger national entity that could give meaning to their fragmented daily lives. So it is with much empathy that we understand the need to celebrate America, and the fervent wish to portray the Gulf War as a morally valid enterprise. Whatever the economic or power- motivations of some of America's power elites, many Americans supported Bush's enterprise not because they are hoping for lower prices at the fuel tanks but because they are hoping to be part of a morally righteous society. How powerful a progressive movement could be if it could (a) honor the positive side of Americans who are rejoicing at the current military victory (b) recognize the deep thirst American have to be part of a morally decent world order, and (c) rather than dismiss Americans as hopeless dupes of militarism or a vapid patriotism, see Americans celebrating the defeat of a tyrant as expressing their fundamental human need for decency and justice. Such a movement would then be in a position to show these same Americans that the pretenses of the post-Gulf war period ought to be severely critiqued and that America's role in creating the necessity of a conflict in the Gulf deserves repentance rather than self-congratulation.

That is, we could separate the good instincts of Americans from the cynical way these instincts get manipulated by ruling elites to justify destructive and militaristic policies. After all, it was the U.S. and France and Germany and the Soviet Union that armed Iraq to the teeth and encouraged Saddam in his war against Iran. It was the same cynical "balance of power" thinking these elites now employ to devise the post-war policies that led them to support first the Shah of Iran, later Saddam (even to the extent of telling him in July that the U.S. had little interest in how he resolved his "border dispute" with Kuwait), and now seeking to sell arms to the reactionaries in Saudi Arabia. The idealism of Americans is precisely what can be used as the basis for helping them understand the defect in American policy makers commitment to the kind of "realism" that led them to passively acquiesce in Saddam's human rights abuses, just as it now leads them to cuddle up to the repressive and anti-Semitic regimes in Syria and Saudi Arabia.

The media, instead, will orchestrate a great celebration of American power and wisdom. The militarists, who now dominate the media with a level of sophistication that they lacked during the Vietnam War, have finally found a moment to recredit themselves, and they are likely to play it to the hilt. They will insist that their strategy has been validated, that war is really the way to peace, and that America can and should dominate and dictate to the world. So we will be facing a major ideological war in the next few months, whose outcome will determine the fate of America through much of the 1990s.

It will be futile for us to define that struggle in terms of whether sanctions would have really worked. Counterfactuals are notoriously hard to prove. Better instead to focus on what kind of world we want to see in the period ahead: and to insist that if the war has really been won by the good guys, then it should be possible to go back to the spirit of possibility that dominated the world from the fall of the Berlin Wall till August, 1990. Let us reclaim the vision of a democratic world that emerged with the collapse of the Cold War. Rather than allowing the militarists to lead us back into a world dominated by possibilities foreclosed, a reinvigorated paranoid fear of enemies, and resources diverted into military spending, we need a vision of a post-Gulf war era that recaptures the post–cold-war optimism that could lead to a new dynamic for American politics. Central to this is the insistence that Americans are entitled to the too-long-deferred peace dividend, aimed at rebuilding our cities, providing jobs, health care, housing, education, and day care, and at restructuring our economic life to better ensure the safety of our environment. Yet our vision must be larger than material goodies—lest it yield the moral high ground to conservatives emphasizing America's role as a force for good. America could be a force for good in the world, if it were willing to work through the United Nations, support democratic struggles for human rights, promote economic equality, and allow international planning to promote environmental safety.



Israel-bashing at antiwar demonstrations in San Francisco.

A perfect place to start in this venture would be to focus on one place where democracy and human rights are desperately needed—the struggle between Israel and the Palestinians. On February 26, as U.S. troops were liberating Kuwait from Saddam's vicious grip, Israeli Prime

Minister Shamir issued a statement once again making explicit what he has repeated over and over again until Palestinians turned to Saddam in despair: under no circumstances will Israel be willing to exchange land for peace; no deal with the Palestinians will be possible (except the idea of West Bank elections that had already been so discredited by conditions Shamir imposed on it that even hard-line defense minister Yitzhak Rabin had resigned from the government to expose its duplicity).

If the U.S. commitment to democratic values and human rights has any seriousness, it must not allow Israel to hold to this position. In a reassuring way, the U.S. must let Israel know that a new kind of world is being birthed, and that world cannot allow one people to rule another by force. There are many Israelis including younger members of the ruling Likud party who have recently awakened to the fact that they really are part of a larger world, and that they cannot ignore the expectations of the rest of the planet. Even the fear of "the inevitability of betrayal" that plagues the unconscious of so many Jews may have been slightly assuaged in the past few months—not only by the Patriot Missiles, but by the willingness of the Bush Administration to pursue the war and not to abandon Israeli interests. The U.S. should make sharp and clear demands for a change in Israeli policy—and couple those demands with the offer of a very powerful and iron-clad mutual defense treaty (guaranteeing total U.S. involvement in defending Israel from any attack from surrounding Arab states or from the proposed demilitarized Palestinian state) and with offers of substantial funding for Soviet Jewish resettlement. Such an offer would do much to support Israeli peace forces and to change the current rightward drift of Israeli society.

Of course, our task as peacemakers has been severely complicated by the fact that Palestinians sided with Saddam and cheered as the SCUD missiles fell on Jewish civilians. Nevertheless, as Amos Oz points out, Palestinians have the right to national self-determination *not* because we like how they respond to us but because they are human beings with the same fundamental rights as we. We may wonder, in any case, if it's really so surprising that people who feel themselves beaten around and suppressed by Israel feel an attraction to anyone who stands up to Israel or attacks it. Most likely, the way to get the Palestinian issue back on the agenda is as part of a regional peace settlement that includes peace arrangements between Israel and the surrounding Arab states. And that, in turn, should be the highest item on the U.S. agenda. Now that Saddam has been knocked out of Kuwait, no one can accuse the U.S. of buckling to his demand for linkage. At this point, the world and Middle East peace can only benefit from decisive U.S. action to speed such a peace settlement—whether it be in the form of an international conference or a string of bilateral peace agreements with Israel that are ratified temporarily, contingent on Israel also making such an agreement with the Palestinians.

Here, as in other post–Gulf War matters, the key is to be visionary, to reject the "realistic" thinking that assumes the world must continue to be a place of endless strife, to reject the pessimists who think that Saddam has proved the inevitability of evil, and to give support to those who believe in peaceful means to resolve conflicts. If Saddam is allowed to make us believe that the world will inevitably be Saddam-like, he will have won the ultimate victory over all of us.

Yet there is a legacy from this war that must inevitably trouble those who love Israel. If, as seems likely at the moment, the U.S. does not attempt to heal the underlying structural problems of the Middle East, there will inevitably be a legacy of resentment and anger that will continue to fester. Some supporters of the war imagine that one of its healthy consequences is that the delusional character of Arab politics—the fantasy that some redeemer will emerge who will overcome the Western intruders and redress past Arab humiliations—will finally be abandoned, because Saddam has tried and failed. After all, if the redemption that they dream of involves winning in a sea of blood, the rest of the world may repeatedly intervene and many may prefer to see continuing humiliation rather than the kind of bloody redemption preached by a Saddam Hussein. The hope, however, that the Arabs will finally "learn a lesson" assumes that there is a more rational path available to them. Yet, as I've argued above, the politics of redemption are usually a response to a situation where no viable alternatives appear on the scene. In such situations, people will find ways to justify to themselves irrational fantasies rather than face a seemingly harsh reality without any ideological framework for "coping." If we want the peoples of the Middle East to avoid the Saddams, it must be because there are viable alternatives to achieve their fundamentally legitimate needs.

Yet those alternatives are likely to be blocked by Western powers intent on maintaining their economic and political dominance. In turn, Arab anger will be expressed in anti-Western nationalism when they are feeling relatively powerful, Islamic fundamentalism when they are feeling relatively powerless. Eventually, it will be Israel, seen as an extension of the West, that will face the legacy of anger generated in this process.

Jews have been set up to play this role for centuries: to be the public face of the world's ruling classes. Though we were not ourselves the owners of land or capital in Europe, we were often placed in the position of managers and tax-collectors and shopkeepers—the public faces unfairly situated so as to absorb the anger that should have been directed at those with real power. This middle position has always made us vulnerable, and now Israel has been forced into this position on the international level in the Middle East: the anger that should be directed at Western imperialism and colonialism and at fascist and reactionary Arab rulers unfairly gets directed at Israel. The Jews have never benefitted from this arrangement. Our long term survival lies not with the power of Western military might, but with ending the economic exploitation and cultural denigration of the hungry and the homeless, of the exploited and the degraded, so that they no longer have legitimate angers that get unfairly displaced against us.

But we are not simply innocent bystanders. Israel's treatment of the Palestinians causes some of the anger that reverberates against all Jews around the world. Just as we should not allow the diplomats and militarists in the West to define the contours of a post–Gulf War settlement in ways that avoid the basic problems, so we should not allow the Israeli right to block a settlement with the Palestinians. Now more than ever the Israeli peace movement needs our support. And that's why *Tikkun* is sponsoring a conference in Jerusalem June 23–28 (see back cover) to develop a coordinated strategy between Israeli and Diaspora peace activists. I hope you will attend.

Our Problems with the Antiwar Movement

Though any antiwar movement would have had an extremely difficult time successfully opposing this war, the actual antiwar movement that emerged managed to cripple itself far more than it needed to. Suffused with what I call "Surplus Powerlessness," this movement managed to marginalize itself and alienate many of those who wanted to be part of it.

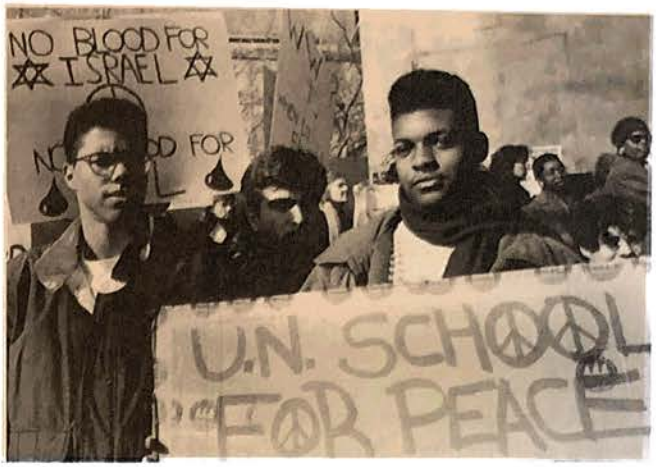
The most obvious difficulty was that the anti-war movement tried to fit the complex realities of the 1990s into the categories of the 1960s. But Saddam Hussein is no Ho Chi Minh nor even a Daniel Ortega. We were dealing with a cynical dictator and mass murderer—and the task of the anti-war movement was to find a way to convince Americans that containment and blockade would be preferable to bombings and ground war. The 1960s-style demand to "Bring the Troops Home Now"—like the music of "We Shall Overcome" or "Give Peace a Chance"—does not fit the 1990s. Agreed, the U.S. should not be the policeman of the world: U.S. troops should have played less of a role, and there should have been a larger U.N. force representing a truly international commitment to stopping Saddam. But there did need to be a policeman. So U.S. forces were necessary—and the implication that they were not, and that the only problem in the Middle East is U.S. imperialism, severely reduced the credibility of this movement.

Equally disturbing was that Jews from all over the country reported to us a disturbing amount of anti-Semitism and Israel-bashing in the anti-war movement.

We in the *Tikkun* community are not in the habit of crying "anti-Semitism" at the drop of a hat. All too frequently it is we who are being accused of being self-hating Jews, because we are critical of Israel's occupation of the West Bank. Our support for the creation of a demilitarized Palestinian state puts us in opposition to many Jewish organizations. We are very wary of those who see an anti-Semite behind every criticism of Israel. But it is precisely *Tikkun* readers who are reporting the unmistakable presence of anti-Semitism. Among the reports:

•Speakers at peace rallies who have nothing bad to say about Saddam Hussein but who spend all their time excoriating the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. We oppose the Occupation too—and we single it out from among all the unjust policies in all the world's countries to criticize, because this is a Jewish issue. But when we go to a rally in the larger world and hear Israel being singled out, we want to know why. It's no defense for those who single out Israel to say, "Israel really is doing something wrong in the West Bank." To see why this is no defense, consider how you would react if at each rally some speakers were to talk about *Black* crimes and *Black* murders in the ghetto, and how destructive this is for American society. Now, the truth is that there are plenty of Black crimes and Black murders—but there are also plenty of white crimes and white murderers. So if you selectively focus on one group, you can be doing so in a racist manner even if what you say is true. Thus, when Jews attend antiwar demonstrations in which speakers list the "crimes" of Israel but fail to list the crimes of Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, Iran or Saudi Arabia we begin to suspect that we are being scapegoated.

•Demonstrators at protests with posters that say "Israel is the real problem" or "Zionism kills" or "Stop Jewish power" or "Israel is worse than Iraq."



Antiwar turns anti-Israel outside the United Nations in New York.

•Speakers at teach-ins who talk about the "crimes of Zionism" and who then move on to talk about "Jewish reporters" who distort the news and "Jewish power in Congress."

•Distribution of literature from classic anti-Semitic texts—reappearing at literature tables of "anti-imperialist" and Black nationalist groups.

•Speakers who unfairly argue that Saddam's power-grab in Kuwait is analogous to Israel's occupation of the West Bank. Though the Occupation is unjust, it is motivated by a fear of surrounding Arab states who wish to destroy Israel; while Saddam's invasion of Kuwait was not motivated by security considerations.

•Listing of Palestinians as "people of color" while excluding their Semitic Jewish brethren from this category.

•Listing oppressed groups but never mentioning Jews, thereby obliterating from collective memory the fact that one of every three Jews alive in the twentieth century was murdered because of anti-Jewish racism.

Many leftists don't notice the problem, because they think that all they are doing is voicing legitimate criticism of Israel. Yet the left-wing analysis of Israel tries to force it into the category of "colonial oppressor"—a category that is ahistorical and misses the inner political reality of the Occupation: the majority of those who vote for the Right in Israel are Sephardic Jews who fled from Arab states where they were a persecuted minority. The Left likes to pretend that Israelis are merely taking their paranoid fears from the Holocaust and unfairly applying them to the Palestinian people. In fact, the Palestinians have always insisted that they are part of the Arab people—and it is precisely this Arab people who have a long history of racism toward Blacks and anti-Semitism toward Jews. This history meant that for more than a thousand years Jews lived in oppressive conditions; and when they finally fled the Arab states and moved to Israel they brought with them a deep-seated antagonism toward Arabs that has made them vote against the peace movement and for the Occupation. Over and over again they will tell you, "I lived with the Arabs, and I know that they only respect force. If you show them any weakness, they will walk all over you."

I disagree with the Sephardic Jews on the Israeli Right, and I don't think that the conclusions that some

(continued on inside back cover)

Uneasy Silences

Aaron Back

JERUSALEM—JANUARY 1991

1. After three weeks of war, we've begun to settle in to new daily routines. Most children are back in school with their masks in hand, and work schedules have been adjusted to enable parents to be home by dark. Few go out in the evenings: we have come to expect that the missiles fall between six and ten. We look for patterns in the recent events to help organize our lives. Daytime is "safe," as is Jerusalem at all times: no missiles have been launched in daylight or at the capital, yet. But the fragility of our new order is all too evident, as the unexpected missile strike at two this morning proved.

Those of us who managed to return to sleep after the early morning attack woke to good news. After months of drought the rains have arrived. Like the other more threatening events over the skies of Israel, there's no telling how long the rains will last. Weather forecasts, for the duration of the war, have been cancelled. When and where the rains fall and the strength of the winds have become "classified" information.

2. Israeli television, which normally ends its broadcasts at midnight, has extended its programming around the clock due to the war. Many Israelis, especially those whose homes lie far from neighborhood sirens, now sleep with the television on, the volume low. With the sensitive ears of new parents, we awaken instantly when the penetrating howl of air raid sirens replaces the bleary drone of American reruns.

Ten days into the war, at one in the morning, commentators on Israeli television are discussing offensive positioning, defensive strategy, aerial attacks, and the bomb. Thanks to Saddam, the Super Bowl is airing live in Israel for the first time.

3. Religious government officials, called to emergency consultations on the first Saturday of the war, found imaginative ways to minimize their desecration of the Sabbath. The Interior Minister arranged for a Druze police officer to substitute for his regular Jewish driver. The Cabinet Secretary, right-handed, wrote the minutes of the meeting with his left hand to avoid accustoming himself to writing on the Sabbath.

The war has also posed problems for observant Jews who can't turn on their radios or televisions for information during Sabbath missile attacks. The creative solution offered by the broadcast authority is a "silent" radio channel. From midnight to six, and all throughout the Sabbath, this station "broadcasts silence," interrupted only by air raid sirens and emergency news.

4. The ubiquitous gas mask is a constant reminder of the potential danger facing us. Nonetheless, despite the seriousness of the situation, Israelis have found ways to adapt. A typical classified ad now reads: "three-bedroom apartment for rent. One room sealed." Children decorate the drab brown boxes containing their masks with colorful designs and stickers. Tel Aviv has added to its promotional campaign for "the city that never stops" scenes of cosmopolitan life continuing unabated: street-cleaners, business people, and fashionable jet-setters, all with gas masks slung over their shoulders.

The adaptability of the average citizen can be chilling. Driving in Jerusalem one evening as the air raid sirens sounded, I entered a large supermarket to wait out the all-clear signal; inside, scores of shoppers continued to push their carts calmly through the aisles. They were all wearing gas masks.

The resilience of Israelis should be no surprise. For forty-two years, the country has weathered one crisis after another. We've become skilled at accommodation; often too skilled. Three years of intifada have taught us this much. A few miles from here another drama barely merits a moment's concern. Tens of thousands of Palestinian children, no less innocent than our own, sit under the third week of continuous house curfew.

5. The flight of many Tel Aviv residents from the "front" has been the topic of much discussion here. Who would have thought that Israelis coming to Jerusalem would be called "deserters," as the mayor of Tel Aviv branded them this week? The other side of the coin is the enlisters: the prominent American Jewish leaders who are displaying their patriotism by visiting Israel. Yeshiva University President Norman Lamm, in-

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terviewed in Jerusalem, declared that diaspora Jewish leaders now absent from Israel should refrain from criticizing or offering advice to Israel in the future. "Those leaders who didn't come have abdicated their leadership." *Commentary* editor Norman Podhoretz, also here for a time, concurred.

Those who made hastily arranged visits to Israel were, no doubt, well intentioned. Their constituents back home will appreciate photos of them donning masks in their rooms at the Tel Aviv Hilton. But home is where their real efforts are needed, and their comments and their "bravery" appear self-serving to most here. The only American Patriots generating real enthusiasm in Israel are the ones being shipped over by the U.S. military. □

Tel Aviv, Israel, 1991

Haggith Gor Ziv

What does the war do? It rouses the city of Tel Aviv from its slumber, as an entire network of friends telephone each other to relay the news of its outbreak. It sends a wave of nervous excitement surging through everyone's veins, gluing them obsessively to their television and radio sets. After the lights go on, one after the other, they don't go off again. They stay lit, illuminating things outside and inside that we didn't want to see or never had time to look at in our everyday busy lives. Dark corners, repressed pains, quandaries. The war aggravates and enlarges dilemmas, painting them in such livid, brilliant colors that we are forced to see and pay heed to them. It sharpens questions that have become blurred in our daily routines. It challenges thoughts, attitudes, opinions and feelings that are usually measured against a different, more lenient yardstick. It forces us to make practical decisions we were never called upon to make before based on the harsh criterion of life and death. It cuts sharply across all the intersecting circles of our lives: of children, friends, of political identity and allegiance, and of the link to place, Tel Aviv, Israel, 1991.

When I was jolted out of bed by the tremendous blast of the first missile to fall on Tel Aviv, I discovered it had jarred all the other members of my household awake, even my deaf son. The need to protect my own life and the lives of my children, my fear, tension, and uncertainty, revealed many things about myself I had never known before. As I sat behind my black gas mask, I was astonished by my ability to simultaneously experience contradictory emotions and different, opposite sides of my personality. I was overcome by my dread of gas and my concern for my children and my friend who was about to vomit into her mask and for the baby crying in its protective carrier; my stomach was churning and my knees shaking, assailed by visual fantasies of gas flowing across the floor of the room. At the same time I discovered an inner store of vitality, strength, and resilience. These simultaneous feelings of alarm and fortitude enabled me to calmly organize everyone, get them into the sealed room, comfort, caress, and joke with them. Since then, nearly every evening for the last three weeks, I have encountered these mixed emotions inside me, and wondered about them behind my mask. The war tests how well we withstand pressure in situations of incertitude. The mask conceals difficult associations.

As we sit and wait for the gas, laughing with our children, I cannot help but recognize that this strength is one of survival, the same strength that saved my grandmother at Auschwitz and seeped into my soul through her nightmares. My feeling of helplessness, and the inability to protect my children is akin to her experiences and my mother's, in another time and another place. Now my children and I, powerless to act, are at the mercy of people to whom we are nothing, for whom we do not exist as human beings. I am a captive in a political game that I have no part in, that is not of my choosing, that I never wanted. My life is being run by someone else, someone who has decreed that each day at 4 p.m. I will shut myself into my home. So here I am at the midpoint of my life, behind a black mask and a curtain of plastic. Midlife is the time to make a reckoning. A woman alone with an adolescent boy and a deaf child, in the solitude of the shrieking sirens, in touch with the

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life patterns of my mother, who survived because she knew how to be alone.

During this dreadful time, I spent a few days with a friend as she suffered the birth pangs that would bring a new life straight into a protective anti-gas carrier for infants. The pain of delivering new life amid the violence of war made me realize that I am unwilling to give in to the dictates of the madness raging in the Gulf, the dictates of the darkness engulfing Jerusalem, and the silence imposed by the Civil Defense authorities.

In the family sphere, the war brings me closer to my children. Since the schools are closed, we find ourselves at home together for hours, testing our closeness, our distance, and our strengths, trying not to get on each other's nerves. We give vent to our anger and tension, and then carry on. We have rediscovered the board games that were forgotten in the closet, and spend hours in soul-searching conversations. Here too I find myself re-evaluating the years I have spent educating my boys. What I have achieved, how much they actually absorbed that will stand the test of time. I am proud of their ability to express their feelings and am shocked by some of the things they reveal. A letter to a cousin: "Don't worry. I'm not dead yet, I'm alive." The war magnifies my deaf son's dependence on me. I am his only link to the world. It is not easy to be deaf when such dramatic events are taking place. He does not fully understand what is happening, but senses the unbearable tension. He does not hear the sirens. I constantly translate the war into sign language, and in that language it seems even more pointless. The energy and patience required of me stand the test. I cry for my own pain and for his when it becomes intolerable, and he remains alone, helpless. And in contrast, my adolescent son is experiencing his first love, now, during the war.

In the social circle, ties grow stronger. Friends are drawn together as if by a magnet. The fear that made me flee the city to find a refuge in other homes brings us together for long hours. We eat, argue, watch television until the early hours of the morning. We talk about our feelings. People no longer tell me that there is nothing to fear, and that I'm just hysterical (because there isn't going to be a war at all). Everyone jokes a bit at my expense, about my "deserting" Tel Aviv. Even the men are drawn closer together by this very real fear. We have all been officially granted permission by the authorities to cry, to worry. Suddenly, in this well-informed, intellectual, leftist circle, it is all right to simply be a parent concerned about her children. To say: "It's been hard." To tell how scared I was when my neighborhood was evacuated after a missile fell without exploding. They know they cannot pass judgement on me for packing blankets, taking my kids, and going south for a few days. Their friendship is a beam of light in this war. Their warmth and support give me the strength to cope. I am bolstered by the many phone calls we get in our sealed room, the offers of refuge in the north or south or with our Arab friends.

In the political circle, there are many painful disappointments. In the supermarket, everyone is an expert, a military commentator. Between the ketchup and the pasta, they can all tell you what is going to happen. I feel very alone when I find that friends who for many years were active in leftist political circles now express attitudes that we fought against together in the past. When my opposition to the twenty-day-long curfew in the Territories meets with reactions like, "What are you talking about?" and, "They are a hostile population," I wonder what this Israeli Left I belong to really is. After twenty days of being partially confined to our homes at nightfall, after twenty days of closed schools, I identify with my Palestinian friends in Ramallah, and they show understanding and concern for my well-being in Tel Aviv. Lately there has been an attempt here to set up small study groups in homes as a substitute for the closed schools. And I cannot help but recall the year when our army closed their schools and forbade them even to teach in their homes.

I also feel close to the Palestinian citizens of Israel, who at night worry about themselves and their children, their Palestinian brethren without masks beyond the green line, their Jewish friends in Tel Aviv, the well-being of the Saudis and the Iraqi civilians in Baghdad. I heard the ten-year-old daughter of Arab friends say that the destroyed houses in Tel Aviv and Baghdad look very much the same. I think about the mothers in Baghdad in houses without water and electricity feeling powerless to protect their children. At the same time, my thoughts go out to the American mothers.

I am pained by the sight of the Palestinians cheering on their rooftops, but I know I can expect no other behavior after three years of intifada, during which nearly a thousand Palestinians, men, women, and children, were killed, thousands more wounded and maimed for life, thousands beaten, thousands imprisoned. I am fearful about the way the army is likely to react to their joy and fearful that the disarray of the war will permit our government to do those things that world public opinion has prevented in the past. I am repelled by my own passivity and that of others in the Left, and their fantasies of a salvation that will emerge in the future when the U.S imposes a peace settlement.

The last, and perhaps the most troubling sphere of allegiance is my link to place. Tel Aviv, Israel. This is a tie I often question even in normal times. My criticism of the social and political failings of my country often

leads me to question my desire to take responsibility, to be a part of it. The accumulating evidence of the human-rights violations reminds me of how many red lines (both internal and external) I cross by remaining here. I am pained by the knowledge that wrongdoings are committed in my name. This knowledge never leaves me and mars the joys of life. Inside me a voice asks why I force my children to record in their consciousness impressions of gas masks, oppression, and wars. I gaze nostalgically at all the furniture and mementos in my home. I experience both the fear of homelessness and the firm resolve that this is my home, here in the center of Tel Aviv. I never want to be a wandering Jew again.

Right now my younger son is writing a story about a boy who goes to sleep, and neither his mother nor the doctor can wake him the next morning. My older son is flirting with his girlfriend. In the comfort of my home, I sit writing about our lives. For us, this is still a deluxe war. TV and video, good food and friends. Nonetheless as I sit by my stove, every speeding car in the empty streets of Tel Aviv sounds like a siren. The last three nights have been peaceful, raising my expectations that the next salvo is on its way. My greatest fear is that after the chemical bombs fall a chain reaction will follow, opening a new circle in all our lives. □

Palestinian Frustration and the Road to Baghdad

Danny Rubenstein

Ten years ago, at the end of the summer, I returned to Jerusalem from a short trip to Cairo. On my desk I found a pile of Arabic papers from East Jerusalem that had accumulated in my absence. I began to look over headlines and skim the more important pieces. Before long, something unfamiliar caught my eye. Arabic, like most other languages, has a fairly standard vocabulary reserved for the news pages. But one headline stood out. Phrased in classical Arabic, it was evidently an ancient quote of some sort. When I called an Arab colleague to ask for a translation and explanation of the verse, he laughed and told me that if I would just walk down the street, any Arab schoolchild could explain it to me. The quotation was from the opening sentence of a speech by the Muslim commander Hajaj Ben-Yuseph, who was dispatched to quell one of the first revolts against Islam, which occurred in Iraq in 694. "O people of Iraq," he rebuked the impudent rebels, "you are factious and hypocritical."

The headline, which appeared during the last week of September 1980, was meant to express the Palestinian's anger at Iraq for mounting a military assault on Iran. The attack took place in the area of Shatt al-Arab, near the Persian Gulf, and touched off a grueling eight-year war. But even before the bitter result could be foreseen, the Palestinians were enraged with Iraq's new leader. Saddam Hussein had taken power a year earlier, when the entire Arab world was intent upon boycotting Anwar Sadat's Egypt for signing the Camp David agreements and concluding a peace treaty with Israel. Instead of closing ranks with the other Arab states to subvert that separate peace, Saddam Hussein had suddenly opened another front that had nothing to do with Israel. And he did so against the new revolutionary regime of the Ayatollah Khomeini, who all but symbolized opposition to the United States—the chief benefactor of Israel.

In the decade since that initial burst of fury, much has changed for the Palestinians: a long and painful war in Lebanon; a political alliance with Jordan; the intifada and collaboration with Egypt; recognition of the State of Israel and moves toward a negotiated political settlement; and finally, deep disappointment with the political approach and, in its place, full support for Saddam Hussein. These reversals in the Palestinians' approach to Israel have resulted from neither the cool-headed decisions nor the caprice of their political leaders. For the heads of the PLO are not elected leaders. In order for Yasir Arafat and his colleagues to maintain claims to represent the Palestinian people, they must respond to the aspirations of their followers. Moreover, the top echelon of the PLO lacks any formal governing power and, headquartered as it is in Tunis or Baghdad, remains geographically remote from the large concentrations of Palestinians—almost all of whom live under regimes that are hostile to the PLO: Israel, Jordan, and Syria. Thus, if Arafat and his associates fail to move in accordance with the state of opinion in the Palestinian dias-

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pora, they will simply lose their constituency.

During the eight years of the Iran–Iraq war, and in the wake of Israel's punishing incursion into Lebanon, the Palestinians throughout the diaspora coaxed the PLO toward the formulation of a political strategy that would lead to negotiation and reconciliation with Israel. Essentially, they had no other choice: the Egyptian–Israeli peace had ruled out the possibility of a military option on Israel's southern border, while the war between Iran and Iraq ensured that the Israeli eastern front would also be secure. What's more, the popular uprising in the Occupied Territories increased the Palestinians' self-confidence and led them to believe that they could negotiate with Israel from a position of equal strength.

As long as Iraq was engaged in the Gulf War, Saddam Hussein backed the Palestinian peace policy. At the end of April 1988, Khalled al-Hassan, a veteran member of *Fatah* and close adviser to Arafat, announced that the PLO was prepared to support the principle of "two states for two peoples" within the land of Israel-Palestine. That same spring, there was an important development in the Iran–Iraq war: the Iraqis had begun to gain the upper hand. Their Scud missiles, systematically fired at Teheran and other population centers in Iran, so demoralized the Khomeini regime that by July 1988 Teheran declared that it would agree to a ceasefire. "I am forced to accept this decision, whose taste is more bitter than poison," the venerable Khomeini declared.

By the summer of 1988, Yasir Arafat was feeling very much at home in Baghdad. Saddam Hussein had allowed him to open additional PLO offices in the capital after a force of Israeli commandos had mounted a raid on Tunis and killed Arafat's closest deputy Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad). On the same day that Khomeini announced his agreement to a ceasefire, Arafat met with Saddam Hussein to ask for Iraqi aid in resisting the assaults of *Amal,* the Shiite militia in Lebanon, which (under Syrian patronage) had been attacking his men in the southern suburbs of Beirut. For years Lebanon had been a microcosm of the struggles in the Arab world. Syria and Iraq's enduring enmity heated up once more in Lebanon when Iraq began to aid Syria's opponents in Beirut—above all, the Palestinians supporting Arafat and a collection of Christian militias. Thus the cooperation between the PLO and Iraq in 1988 did not follow from the intifada or from Arafat's search for a political solution, but rather from a shared antagonism toward Syria and Syria's influence in Lebanon.

In the meantime, the intifada bore its first political fruits with two dramatic shifts. At the end of July, King Hussein announced that he was severing his country's ties with the West Bank, and Yasir Arafat declared before the European Parliament in Strasbourg that the PLO would accept Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. "I am searching for an Israeli de Gaulle," he said, "and I am prepared to meet any leader from Israel for talks under the auspices of the United Nations." Under pressure from the Palestinians in the Territories, the PLO prepared to convene the Palestinian National Council (PNC), the equivalent of a Palestinian parliament, and Saddam Hussein invited it to meet in Baghdad. On October 23, 1988, when Mubarak and Yasir Arafat met with Saddam, Arafat revealed the details of a peace plan—complete with recognition of Israel—that he intended to propose to the PNC when it reconvened in Algiers three weeks later.

As soon as Arafat made his symbolic declaration of the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, the Iraqi Revolutionary Council recognized it—strong testimony to the degree of Iraqi-Palestinian cooperation. By the end of 1988 the Palestinians left little doubt that they had chosen the course of negotiation, enlisting the support of most of the Arab states, foremost among them Egypt and Iraq. During the course of that year, Arafat had visited Cairo five times to coordinate his moves with Mubarak. In December he appeared before the UN General Assembly, meeting specially in Geneva, to declare the PLO's recognition of the State of Israel and renunciation of terrorism. In return for these concessions, the United States entered into a dialogue with the PLO. By the end of December, Arafat had again met with Saddam Hussein, who announced that from then on the solution of the Palestinian problem would be a top priority for Iraq.

The Palestinian shift away from a negotiated political settlement with Israel and toward support for Saddam Hussein, who openly vowed to destroy Israel, did not occur overnight. It took place over a year and a half, from the end of 1988, when the Palestinian position was pragmatic and compromising, through the first half of 1990, when most Palestinians lined up behind Iraq's radical policy.

The outcome of the Knesset elections in November 1988, held against the background of the intifada and the PLO's political initiative, was a crucial turning point in the shift of Palestinian strategy. Yasir Arafat even went so far as to call upon Israelis to vote for the leftist factions (and the Labor Party) to speed up the start of negotiations. But the Palestinian search for a political solution failed to make much of an impression on Israeli public opinion. The election did not produce a decisive victory for either side, so that Yitzhak Shamir again headed a national unity government. Only pressure from the outside—created by the intifada and the U.S.'s dialogue with the PLO—forced the Israeli government to come up with a plan that provided for elec-

tions in the Occupied Territories to choose a delegation of Palestinians to hold talks with Israel.

The Palestinian political initiative continued to enjoy solid Arab support throughout 1989. Four Arab states—Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Yemen—established a Council for Cooperation. At each of the Council's summit meetings (in March 1989 in Ismailia, August 1989 in Baghdad, and February 1990 again in Baghdad) its leaders declared their support for the PLO's peace efforts.

But Palestinian disappointment continued to grow. The dialogue between the PLO and the United States progressed slowly, and ultimately proved fruitless. Even the intifada had ceased to interest the world outside. The popular committees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which in 1988 had effectively isolated the Palestinians from Israeli military rule, were drastically weakened by mass arrests and other Israeli retaliatory actions. At the same time there was a wave of Palestinian murders of alleged collaborators, which the PLO failed to bring under control. A rumor made its way around Nablus that Sa'id Canaan, one of the city's leading public figures, brought the members of the popular committees a personal missive from Arafat, which had arrived by fax, ordering them to bring the murders to a halt. They flatly refused, telling Canaan that the leader of the PLO abroad did not understand the situation in the Territories. Nor did Palestinian laborers heed the PLO's call to stop working in Israel in order to weaken the Israeli economy. All in all, the intifada appeared to be on the wane. Attendance in the West Bank's schools returned more or less to normal; the number of people injured in clashes with the IDF decreased; and shops opened in the cities even during the afternoon, after more than a year of doing business only during three hours in the morning.

Toward the end of 1989, Arafat made the final and perhaps most far-reaching of his efforts to save the PLO's political initiative. He agreed to forgo the inclusion of an official PLO figure in the Palestinian delegation appointed to hold talks with Israel in Cairo. But even that concession did not help. All the feelers and initiatives gradually led to a dead end. The indirect negotiations between the sides became bogged down in sterile arguments over the compromise proposals raised by President Mubarak and Secretary of State Baker rather than addressing more substantive terms of an Israeli–Palestinian settlement. Negotiations were reduced to such petty questions as whether a Palestinian Arab from Jerusalem who also owned a house in Ramallah was eligible to join the delegation to Cairo, or whether a deportee from the Occupied Territories who was not a prominent PLO activist was entitled to represent the Palestinians.

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The Palestinians suffered the worst blow, however, in the winter of 1990. Unexpectedly, it came not from Israel's refusal of the Baker proposal, but from a dramatic global development: the dissolution of the Soviet Bloc. For over thirty years the so-called Iron Curtain countries had been the chief political and military alliance shoring up both the Arab states aligned against Israel and the Palestinian organizations represented in the PLO. Then, in a mere matter of weeks, everything fell apart. First Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria renewed diplomatic relations with Israel. Finally, the Soviet Union itself gradually permitted hundreds of thousands of Jews to emigrate to Israel. The heads of the new governments in Eastern Europe made visits to Israel and a host of economic, scientific, and cultural delegations followed in their wake.

In retrospect it seems clear that by the beginning of 1990 the Palestinians found themselves in one of the most distressing political plights of their history. The intifada was dying out; Israel's right-wing government refused to make any compromise—not even to limit the settlement of immigrants from the Soviet Union in the Occupied Territories; and the Soviet Bloc had withdrawn its support for the Palestinian cause. "We need a big and strong Land of Israel to absorb the immigrants," said Prime Minister Shamir in a statement that was widely publicized but evoked no response beyond a slap on the wrist from the international community.

On the streets of East Jerusalem, Nablus, Hebron, and Gaza, however, the change in mood was dramatic. More and more the slogans scrawled on the walls were those of extremist fundamentalist groups. Moderates like Faisal Husseini and Sari Nusseibeh drew mounting criticism from young radicals demanding more vigorous action, since a "white intifada" conducted through protest



strikes and nonviolent demonstrations was leading nowhere. Official Israeli figures for early 1990 indeed show an increase in terrorist operations, the planting of bombs, shootings, and stabbings—actions that had been relatively limited during the height of the intifada.

Saddam Hussein and his advisers were quick to sense these changes and the Palestinians' deep disappointment. Saddam's mounting resolve to exploit the Palestinians' distress for his own political ends made itself known in headlines of the East Jerusalem papers over a five-day period:

March 29, 1990: "At a party in Baghdad marking 'Land Day,' Saddam Hussein greets Arafat and tells him: 'We will support you in driving out the Zionist enemy, a knife in the heart of the Arab nation.'"

March 30, 1990: "Report from London on the arrest of three Iraqis who tried to smuggle out electronic equipment for use in atomic development."

March 31, 1990: "Report from the *New York Times* on the development of Iraqi missiles that can reach Tel Aviv and Damascus."

April 1, 1990: "Iraq's ambassador to the UN speaks about the Iraqi missile arsenal."

April 2, 1990: 'Wide reverberations to Saddam Hussein's declaration: If Israel tries to attack us we will burn half the Zionist state.'

In the succeeding days, all the Palestinian papers expressed their enthusiasm over Saddam Hussein's threat, which was otherwise condemned throughout the world. "Why shouldn't Iraq be able to develop its military technology?" asked *al-Fajr*. "Does the development of Arab technology mean destruction and the development of Israeli technology mean progress?" Over the ruins of the Palestinian political initiative there suddenly appeared the image of an Arab ruler who proposed another way of coping with Israel's success. That same week, lecturers at Bir Zeit University could be heard saying, "Finally there's an Arab leader who speaks with pride of his ability to contend with Israel, and it's the same man who has proven himself by prevailing over Iran."

Saddam Hussein was well aware of how eagerly his declarations were received by the Palestinians. And if he was already planning the conquest of Kuwait at the time, he also knew that he needed Palestinian support. The nearly four-hundred-thousand Palestinians living in Kuwait are the country's economic backbone. Those in Jordan, where the Palestinians constituted a majority of the population, effectively ensured that country's support, and with it the backing of other nationalist forces in the Arab world. Saddam Hussein had probably already conceived the idea of a linkage between Kuwait and the Palestinian problem, to serve his own interests. One way or another, according to Israeli intelligence, it was the Iraqis who were behind the dispatch of terrorists from Abul Abbas's organization to mount a raid on Israel's beaches during the Shavuot holiday at the end of May 1990. The operation was a failure in military terms, but it was still a political victory for Iraq: Yasir Arafat refused to condemn the operation and expel Abul Abbas from the PLO. As a result, the United States suspended its dialogue with the organization, thereby driving the last nail into the coffin of the Palestinian peace initiative. From then on an alliance grew between Iraq's aggression and the Palestinian imagination.

On the afternoon of August 2, 1990, I had a meeting scheduled with Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi, the director of a Palestinian research institute in East Jerusalem. On the way over I walked through the market by the Damascus Gate and was surprised to see the unabashed glee the Palestinians showed over the conquest of Kuwait. Dr. Abdul Hadi explained that the joy came in response to the breakup of the status quo in the Arab world, in relations with Israel. "Still waters emit a stench," says the Arabic proverb, "and the time has come to stir things up."

The next day the Arab market was filled with posters of Saddam Hussein and the shops selling audio cassettes in East Jerusalem were playing songs by Iraqi singers; just as many years earlier they had featured the songs of Nasser's favorite, Umm Kulthum, and more recently had played only the popular songs of the intifada. Even before the PLO's leadership had met or Arafat had made any statement, it was quite clear that the Palestinian in the street felt a new ardor for Saddam Hussein's Iraq and was determined to stand behind it, come what may. □

Roundtable on the Gulf War

Shulamith Aloni is a Member of Knesset and chair of the Citizens' Rights Movement in Israel. General Aha-ron Yariv is a faculty member at the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University. Amos Oz is one of Israel's foremost novelists and a leader of Peace Now in Israel. Michael Klare is a professor of Peace and World Security Studies at the University of Massachusetts and Hampshire College. Rita Hauser practices international law and is U.S. chair of the International Center for Peace in the Middle East. Paul Berman is a writer on politics and culture, and a contributing editor of Tikkun. *John Mack teaches at Harvard University. Conducted in early February, 1991.*

TIKKUN: In late January several Israeli intellectuals held a press conference in which they criticized American peace activists who opposed the war with Iraq. Amos Oz, you were one of the participants in that press conference, so perhaps you could begin to help Americans understand better why peace activists in Israel support a war with Iraq.

Oz: The general attitude of the Israeli Peace Now movement is that we are peaceniks but not pacifists. We believe that there is one thing that is even worse than using violence and that is giving in to violence. Many efforts were made to avoid this war—but they all failed. So now we believe that this war needs to be won. It can only be won by a unified determination on the part of people who wish to defeat the tyrant and mass murderer from Baghdad. We are still committed to an Israeli–Palestinian compromise based on mutual recognition of the rights of self-determination of both Palestinians and Israelis. But we believe that a defeat of Saddam Hussein is a precondition for any progress in the Israeli–Palestinian process.

TIKKUN: Shulamith Aloni, you are highly regarded in the U.S. for your work in defending Palestinian rights and in critiquing the systematic violation of those rights by the Israeli government. Do you think that the best way to serve the peace process is to defeat Saddam Hussein?

Aloni: Yes, and I hoped that the European peace movement would demonstrate against Hussein, urging him to stop the war, since it was he who started it. I believe that once Saddam is defeated it will be easier to make progress in the peace process with Palestinians. Every day that the war continues to weaken Saddam increases our long-term chances for peace in this area.

Tikkun: Aharon Yariv, you are considered one of the leading military strategists who support the dovish position on the Israeli–Palestinian issue. Do you share the opinion of Oz and Aloni? If so, what is your vision of what a postwar Middle East might look like if the U.S. continues its struggle with Saddam?

Yariv: Yes, Aloni and Oz are correct. Saddam represents a direct threat to our existence and our survival. So we should support everything and everybody who wants to bring him down. Once he is brought down it will be possible to pursue a peace process. There will likely be difficulties, in part caused by coups d'état and other changes in governments in the Arab world that this war may precipitate, changes that are ultimately motivated by underlying problems in Arab societies. But taking all that into account, I believe that once Saddam has been eliminated we will be on a path that could in fact lead to peace.

Klare: From the standpoint of the American peace movement, there was no tremendous effort made to avert war. UN-sponsored sanctions, which the peace movement supported, were not given a chance to work. Instead of combining sanctions with an attempt to find avenues for negotiations, the sanctions approach was not given time and was sabotaged by George Bush in his desire to provoke a war with Iraq and to project American military power in the region. A peace process undertaken by the international community was sabotaged by the U.S. in its rush to go to war. The war that has been started will not produce peace for the U.S. or for Israel. It will provoke an unending succession of anti-Western conflicts by the Arab and Islamic peoples around the world. The consequence of this war will not be peace or reconciliation but rather unending war.

Aloni: Are you aware that the coalition against Iraq in-

cludes some of the most important Arab countries, including Egypt and Syria? You cannot speak of the Arab world as one group.

Klare: What you have in the coalition is several Arab governments, but these governments are unrepresentative of the views of the mass of the ordinary people in those countries. So the likely consequence of this war will be to provoke internal conflict in countries like Egypt, Morocco, Syria, Turkey, and others—and this will fuel a cycle of violence in the years ahead.

Yariv: And Saddam is representative of his population?

Klare: No, he doesn't represent his population, but rather represents the Ba'ath party elite. Most Iraqis wish this war could have been averted. Saddam Hussein was encouraged in his hegemonic ambitions by the U.S. government, which over the course of the past five years has provided him with billions of dollars of credit which he used to purchase Western military technology, which he used to buy weapons that are now being used against Israel. This is something that we in the peace movement also deplore—the proliferation of chemical and nuclear weapons throughout the region.

Hauser: I'm not a member of the peace movement that has developed in relationship to the Gulf War—my involvement is as someone involved in trying to build peace between Israel and the Palestinians. I was very hesitant about this war because I don't believe Washington has any clear view about what it wishes to accomplish besides getting Saddam out of Kuwait. What kind of order Washington wants to see in this area if it succeeds in destroying Saddam is something that has not been made clear. I fear that we may see a kind of Lebanonization of this area, which could be a formula for a long period of turmoil and upheaval in this area. A lot will turn on how the war ends, so it is hard to prejudge.

But I am not at all as optimistic as my friends Shulamith, Amos, and Aharon seem to be that once Saddam is dealt with it will be easier to get the Shamir government to come to the peace table. I believe that the contrary will happen: that governmental leaders will feel that there is nothing and no one who can threaten them, and that they have no reason whatsoever to make any concessions at all. The very ominous news that the Israeli government has now brought into the cabinet the extremists from the Moledet party doesn't bode well. Likewise, the arrest of Sari Nusseibeh and other moderates on the West Bank is a bad sign. If anything, I think the Israelis are likely to be more arrogant, more difficult to deal with, and not more open toward peace. It pains me to say that.

Berman: I'm a supporter of the peace movement in Israel, and support its current position also. I've admired the work of Michael Klare for many years. But I fail to hear from him an appreciation of the danger that lies in Saddam's war machine, though it's true that we will never know if sanctions would have worked had they been given more of a chance. But we do know something else: the longer they were being given a chance, the more Saddam seemed to dig in and the greater the danger became. It may well be that going to war when we did was a way to decrease the danger.

TIKKUN: Michael Klare, what about those who argue that they might have preferred not going to war at all, but that now that we are in the war, the world will be in far worse shape if Saddam is not decisively defeated, since anything less than his defeat would leave him in a position to dictate conditions in the Middle East?

Klare: Saddam Hussein has already won a huge moral victory because he stood up to the U.S. and to Israel. It's a very deceitful posture, and we can see what's wrong with it, but he has already won much of his propaganda victory.

TIKKUN: That's precisely the point of one argument we've heard being made against the antiwar position: that now that he has won this kind of stature, he will dominate the Middle East unless he is pursued and killed.

Klare: But he is no longer in a position to dominate militarily. His nuclear and chemical factories and much of his industrial infrastructure have already been destroyed. So I think it is a mistake to think that he will be dominating anybody after all of this. His country is in a desperate condition. We could have a cease-fire and continue economic sanctions and that would have considerable impact. People are beginning to starve in Iraq; there is no potable water. We don't have to worry about Iraq being a threat. He does still have weapons; and any relaxation of the sanctions would require that he surrender his remaining weapons. That is achievable—and it is certainly worth pursuing to see if it is achievable. It is certainly preferable to pursue a path of sanctions and diplomatic negotiations than to escalate toward a ground war which could prove totally devastating to all parties concerned and lead to terrible backlash for decades.

Aloni: I'm not so sure we have destroyed his military power yet. And to stop the war now would be to make Saddam Hussein the leader of the Arab world. Psychologically, he would be able to say that he lost a battle but he won the war—and other Arab states would ca-

pitulate to him or follow his leadership. So Saddam Hussein has to be finished. I don't necessarily mean physically, but he has to be the one who says, "Yes, I'm ready to stop. I started it, and I'm ready to stop it." Then you can give him a way to save face. But the man is a danger. Today we know what he can do and what he has in his mind to do, and as far as we, the Israelis, are concerned, every day the war is going on is really saving our lives.

Klare: If we could find a way to eradicate the person of Saddam Hussein as a magnet for violence against others, that would be one thing. But we can't reach him. Instead, we need to kill tens of thousands or perhaps eventually hundreds of thousands of Iraqis to accomplish that. We may have to destroy an entire country to achieve that end. We in the peace movement can't endorse a strategy that requires mass slaughter of innocent civilians.

Aloni: Why do you have to kill the people?

Klare: That is the American way of waging war. We are using non-nuclear weapons of mass destruction against the Iraqi people in order to crush their willingness to fight.

Mack: I think we are facing now a choice between evils. There are reports coming out of Kuwait and Iraq in early February that seem to indicate that Saddam's troops are very well dug in and that what it will take to get them out of Kuwait is a very difficult struggle that will involve enormous loss of life. What happens when the euphoria of a sanitized air war gives way to the recognition that this war is costing thousands of American casualties? What will happen in the Arab world? Might we not face a deep commitment on the part of Arabs to revenge this defeat—and new leaders who come forth to speak to those feelings, perhaps competing for who can best avenge the wounds that have been suffered in this war? Where will long-term security come from if we cause more violence and destruction than is needed at this time? What kind of a secure settlement can there be?

Oz: I don't think it will take the killing of tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of Iraqis to win this war, and I don't think the U.S. has been in the business of deliberately killing hundreds of thousands of Iraqis. This is not the point. Once you refer to the "genuine will of the Arab masses" in Iraq and elsewhere before the Gulf War as well as during the Gulf War— that will has been to see Israel eradicated. I cannot avoid the inevitable comparison with what would happen if the Arab states were to succeed in invading and occupying Israel. In August Saddam succeeded in occupying



Seventy thousand Jews pray for peace at the Western Wall before the January 15th deadline.

Kuwait in six hours and there was a worldwide outcry, and all that has happened subsequently. If heaven forbid he could have occupied Israel in six hours there would be no coalition, there would be no attempt to restore Israel by military force, there would be some protests to be sure from some sections of the American peace movement, possibly some demonstrations, and that would be it.

TIKKUN: Some pro-Israel people in the current peace movement share your concern, but that leads them to oppose this war. They argue that a bloody land war to save Kuwait will eventually lead Americans to want to wash their hands of any involvement in the Middle East, so that should Israel face a situation of real need for American intervention, it might find that the American people are unwilling to do so because the Kuwait involvement had such negative consequences. Conversely, these pro-Israel peace activists argue, if the Kuwait struggle is scaled down now before it turns to a ground war, and the U.S. reverts to a strategy of containment based on economic blockade and negotiations, the U.S. public would not experience the kind of anti-involvement backlash that might prevent it from becoming involved when Israel really needed it.

Oz: Would the American people prefer to see Israel

fighting against the whole united Arab world, including Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and possibly Iran? I think this is the alternative to acting now to stop this aggression in Kuwait.

Klare: Many of us in the peace movement are sympathetic to Israel's plight and do agree that Iraq's move in Kuwait needed to be blocked. Where we differ is on the question of means: many of us do not believe that war was the right solution to the problem.

Yariv: We in Israel are not at the point of being destroyed and asking for the U.S.'s support. What's actually happening is that the U.S. has been asking us to stay out of this conflict.

Klare: That only emphasizes my point: this war is not being fought for Israel. It is being fought by the U.S. for geostrategic objectives that I believe are contrary to Israel's interests. It will create a polarization in the entire Middle East with the United States and its allies (especially Israel) on one side, the Arab and Islamic masses on the other. It will fuel internal conflicts from North Africa clear across the Middle East all the way to South Asia and Indonesia that will eventually create a much greater danger to Israel, though in the meantime it will allow the U.S. to maintain domination of Persian Gulf oil for its own benefits.

Aloni: You forget that this war is backed by Europe and by the United Nations.

Klare: Nobody sees it that way in the U.S. We see all these countries standing aside and letting the U.S. do all of the fighting and only giving us a small amount of money. We don't see the UN as really behind it—UN support was managed from Washington and was not a genuine expression of a commitment from the countries of the world.

Hauser: Whether or not it was necessary, the war is happening and we will have to live with its consequences. But why doesn't the Israeli government announce that once the war is over it is prepared to go to an international conference and that it is ready to give Palestinians self-determination? Instead, the message that is now coming through is that the war is playing to the advantage of Israel's hard-line government. The recent David Levy proposal that the Arab states must become democratic before Israel is willing to talk to them is part of this hard line.

Oz: We struggle as hard as we always struggle for a compromise on the Israeli stand toward the Palestinians. I think that this war will make many Israelis realize that the West Bank and Gaza cannot and did not defend Tel Aviv and Haifa from the missiles that have been falling these last nights. This will eventually make many Israelis reconsider the importance of the West Bank in providing security. But such rethinking will depend on the ultimate outcome of the war.

Yariv: There still remains the problem of Saddam Hussein—and that cannot be solved through sanctions. I've yet to see one political problem solved through economic sanctions. The longer Saddam Hussein stays in power, the greater threat he is to everyone.

Hauser: I think it's academic now. We are in the war. The only question is whether we are going to pursue this to the point of destroying Iraq and Saddam Hussein and leaving a stupendous vacuum—and nobody has explained how we will fill that vacuum—or whether if he gets out of Kuwait that will be the end of the game. Here there is a difference between Israelis, who I think would like to see us pursue this war till we destroy Saddam, and those in the U.S. who think it would be sufficient to push him out of Kuwait and then continue an economic blockade.

Aloni: Nobody says that the aim is to destroy Iraq. The aim is to destroy the power the man has. If he would agree to withdraw from Kuwait and would participate in a conference to work out the problems of the whole area—nobody would say to destroy Iraq. Now, I agree with you that we have a problem with our government about making peace with the Palestinians. But in the peace conference that will take place after this war the issue of solving the Palestinian question will certainly be on the agenda, and at that point there will be many people in Israel who will press for the Israeli government to reach an accommodation.

TIKKUN: There's an ambiguity in what Yariv and Aloni are saying that might need some clarification. On the one hand, you say that you are not seeking his complete destruction, but only withdrawal from Kuwait. Yet on the other hand you seem to suggest that there could be a continuing danger to the whole region as long as he emerges from this struggle without having been totally defeated. If he brings back his planes from Iran and the various heavy artillery that he has buried and protected from U.S. attack, he may still be a major military danger in the region.

Yariv: Let there be no ambiguity on my part. I want Saddam Hussein and his military machine to be destroyed—otherwise there will be no chance for peace.

How to achieve that? That is a question for military strategy. This can be achieved by continuing to use your air force.

TIKKUN: Do you mean without engaging in a ground war?

Yariv: Continue the air war till you destroy all of his infrastructure, then soften up his troops in Kuwait, then move in to clean up the remnants of his troops.

Klare: We would be talking about hundreds of thousands of casualties in that process.

Mack: There are many military voices that say it is not possible to dislodge Saddam from Kuwait entirely by an air war. As the bombings continue and civilian casualties begin to mount, we may see the Arab peoples in the coalition countries identifying with the Iraqi people who are being killed. We may then see the coalition fall apart.

Oz: Every casualty is one too many. But the question is: How many casualties now versus how many casualties in the future? You can always pacify an aggressor temporarily by giving in to his demands—this has been tried before in this century and in other centuries. We saw Nasser try to unify the Arab world in a crusade against Israel. Saddam is now trying the second attempt to unify the Islamic world through fanaticism, extremism, and an anti-Israel campaign. The question is not whether it should be stopped—the question is at what time and space would it cost least casualties to engage in the struggle. Saddam wants to be the modern times' Saladin—if he could get that title he'd gladly trade Kuwait to get that recognition in the Islamic world. Because once he is seen as the modern-day Saladin he would be invited to return to Kuwait by the "revolutionary council"—and to Saudi Arabia and to Jordan! The only way that this can be stopped is to present Saddam to the Arab world as a loser, not as a winner. Nasser became a loser after the 1967 war with Israel—and that was the end of the Pan-Arab dream of Nasser.

Aloni: There is a gap between us here and the peace movement in the U.S. This is, of course, a war that we are not fighting. Yet we have the strong feeling and knowledge that this war is saving us. It's saving our lives.

Klare: Saddam Hussein would not have been the threat to Israel to nearly the extent that he is had it not been for the U.S., Germany, France, and Britain supplying him with the advanced military technology used in his nuclear weapons and chemical weapons programs. We in the peace movement have consistently been arguing



U.S. troops in Eastern Saudi Arabia.

for arms control and disarmament—and if our position had been followed over the course of the past ten years there would not be this threat from Saddam Hussein.

Oz: We Israelis could agree to this last statement. The U.S., France, and Germany—and the Soviet Union—have committed a crime in the irresponsible way they armed Saddam Hussein.

Aloni: It was because of Khomeini. The whole world was afraid of Khomeini.

Oz: But there is a lesson here ... because the same powers that are now saving Kuwait may start to arm Iran or something. We need to take Michael Klare's warning very seriously.

Hauser: This leads back to my concern that there has been so little thinking about what comes after this war. Iran is back in the act, and many countries are now trying to play to Iran. It wouldn't surprise me to see a new alliance between Iran and Iraq against Saudi Arabia. Lots of things could happen. We are going to have to set up some kind of postwar police operation and we don't have a clue as to what to do.

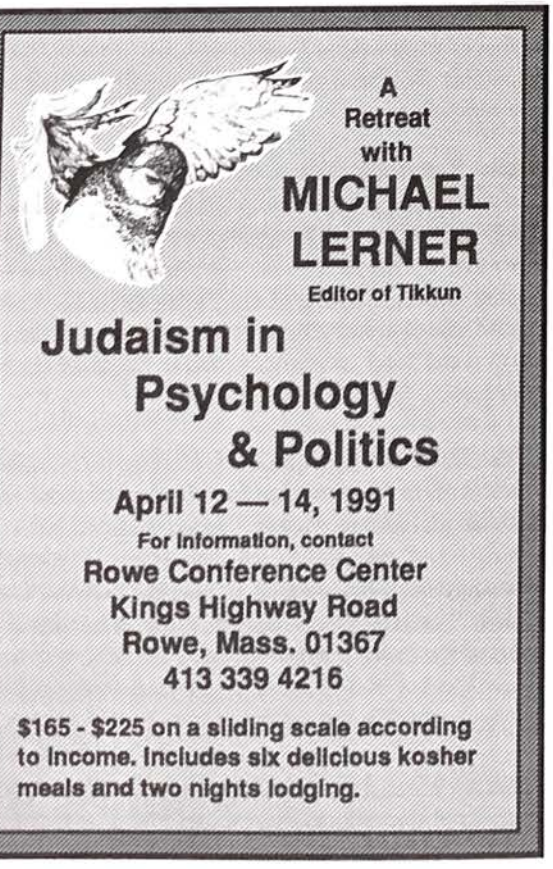
Mack: There is a paradox here. Because what appears on the surface to be serving the interests of Israel when the U.S. tilts strongly toward Israel ends up not really serving Israel's security needs. For example, in the present situation, who is going to play the role of "honest broker" between Israel and the Arab countries in the wake of the current catastrophic war? Who will be the "even-handed" force that can talk to the needs of both the Arab states and Israel?

TIKKUN: What do you in Israel say to those who fear that a land war will produce a backlash that eventually, perhaps in the course of the next few years, will lead

the American public to want to wipe its hands of any involvement in the entire region? Would it then appear that having gotten the U.S. involved in a war for the sake of Kuwait was a mistake from the standpoint of Israel's long-term security interests?

Oz: Suppose that the U.S. decided that a land war was too expensive and left it at that. Saddam Hussein is then regarded by the entire Islamic world as the winner. There is a domino effect—and there will be a triumph of Saddam or of Saddam-affiliated forces in countries throughout the region. Suppose that the U.S. is still committed to the security of Israel—how could it act to help the security of Israel if most of the countries of the Middle East have fallen to the forces of a modern-day Saladin? What can the U.S. do? Can it put together a coalition? The question is not *if* but *where* and *when* the U.S. and the rest of the world must draw the line before it faces this kind of a situation.

Yariv: I think that putting the alternatives in terms of either a ground war or no ground war misses a better option: continue the air war and rely on it primarily, but then eventually use a ground war to finish up the effort. But to leave Saddam with his power intact will be too dangerous for everyone in the region, including the United States.



Hauser: If the entire military structure in Iraq is destroyed, who or what will take over in Iraq?

Yariv: The opposition.

Hauser: I've listened to all the CIA briefings by those who know them very well. They are scattered, they are very weak, they don't have a unified leadership.... There is a very severe question of the stability of Iraq with other countries having historic claims to parts of it ... the Kurdish national movement.... I think the Soviets are profoundly concerned about this issue—they've raised it at every briefing that I've been at. The Israelis are ignoring what might happen if such a power vacuum ensues. We may face a Lebanon.

Aloni: There will be the forces in the coalition that will afterwards be pushing for some progress on the Palestinian issue. And there will be many of us in Israel pushing for forward motion. And progress will be more possible to the extent that Israelis feel secure.

TIKKUN: How could Americans who support the Israeli peace movement help make it more likely that the outcome of the war strengthens the peace camp rather than the Israeli right?

Aloni: By projecting a more optimistic view of what the outcome of this war will be in terms of building a peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. And to emphasize the principle of national self-determination that underlies this war.

TIKKUN: Israeli Prime Minister Shamir was reported to have stated in early February that he absolutely rejected the notion of an international peace conference after this war.

Aloni: After World War II, Churchill's Conservative government was voted out of office and a Labor government took over in England. Today Shamir is in power. Tomorrow he could be voted out of power and the situation could be completely different. Israelis are learning that we are not alone in the world—we are being saved by the United States, and I think that there will be a way for the U.S. to prod the Israeli government to make an opening toward peace.

Hauser: You know, Shula, how deeply I wish you were right. But I think you are expressing your wish rather than your understanding. The only way we are going to achieve peace afterward is if the United States is going to be as tough and as obdurate on this Israeli government as it was in trying to marshal a boycott against Sad-

dam Hussein. And in speaking to many of the key U.S. actors at the UN and in Washington, I've found no one who believes that that will happen—because of all the pressures we know, and elections coming up. It will go back to status quo ante, and you and other peace-oriented Israelis will be pulling your hair out at the failure of the Israeli government to do the right thing. It's very painful—because I don't see the way clear as to where to go in the postwar period, except that we will have more of the same and with a very embittered Arab world to make things even more difficult.

Oz: The scenario of a more obstinate and stubborn Israel is only one of many possible scenarios. What is going to happen after the war will depend on Israel, on the Palestinians, and on the surrounding Arab states. I do not rule out the scenario of another Camp David concerning the West Bank and Gaza.

We may be divided about whether this war should have started or when it should end; but we will not be divided about the kind of solution to the Arab-Palestinian conflict that we want to see.

Aloni: Every Israeli today knows that the Green Line is back—that there is not one unified Israel, but Israel and the Occupied Territories. That consciousness is there—and that is ground for optimism, because more Israelis think in terms of two distinct entities rather than of one united Israel.

Mack: When we look toward the future, the focus shifts to a concern about what American Jews will do to convince the American government not to go along with whatever program the right-wing Israeli government comes up with. We will have more responsibility as American Jews at that point.

TIKKUN: One of the things we hear from many in the leadership of the American Jewish community today is that the Palestinians have shown their true colors by aligning with Saddam and cheering as the missiles fall on Tel Aviv—so we no longer have any moral responsibility toward these Palestinians. So the actual impact of the war so far may have been to strengthen the conservative elements in the American Jewish community who oppose any accommodation with Palestinians.

Aloni: It's quite foolish, because there have been so many Israelis this past year who have been publicly calling for "Death to all Arabs" and there were so many Israelis who cheered when some of the missiles fell on the Occupied Territories. It's part of the fear, part of the agony—but when we come to a new situation and we have a possibility of peace negotiations, that kind of



Saddam's missile damage in Tel Aviv.

demagoguery will be irrelevant.

Oz: There may be an American tendency to confuse peace with brotherhood. Independence is not bestowed upon people as a reward for good behavior. If this were the case, three-quarters of the nations of the earth would not deserve to be independent. The Palestinians have a right to national self-determination not because they are nice and not because they are the victims or because they are the good guys—they have this right because they are a people. The behavior on both sides cannot change this.

Hauser: But many American Jewish leaders are saying now that Israel no longer has to deal with the PLO, and that we can pick the Palestinians we'd like to talk to because all the others have been discredited. At the same time, they make sure that Palestinian moderates like Sari Nusseibeh or Faisal Husseini are arrested or deported. In my view, the PLO is not out of the picture, even if Arafat himself gets displaced by younger leaders. If Saddam really is destroyed, the PLO will look around for some other protector, and the only other one around that they might seek could be Syria's Asad. He is no friend of peace and would strengthen the most confrontational voices in the PLO.

Oz: We all agree with you that whoever the Palestinians pick as their leadership is who we will have to talk to.

Hauser: That's not the view of the Israeli government.

Oz: You're not talking to the Israeli government.

Aloni: We know that these are serious problems, and we will try to overcome them.

Hauser: But these are part of the consequences of the war. Everybody is now talking as though the PLO is finished and no longer has to be dealt with. In my view they are not finished and they will return once again to be the central representatives of the Palestinians, and that will pose all kinds of problems.

Yariv: If we make a list of all the problems we are facing ....

Tikkun: One other argument made by some pro-Israel peace activists is that a hidden cost of cheering on a war against Iraq is that you legitimate a whole militaristic way of thinking—and that way of conceptualizing the world becomes an obstacle when you want to talk to Israelis about peace with the Palestinians.

Oz: There is no war mood and no war rhetoric in Israel. I am myself amazed at the fact that recent public opinion surveys in Israel reveal that about 85 percent of the Israeli population is supporting the Israeli government's policy of restraint. Could you imagine such a thing happening in the United States if missiles of a hostile country had started falling in the middle of Manhattan? There is no war rhetoric, and no beating of drums—there is a sober recognition that Israel is extremely vulnerable. It is our job, the job of the Israeli peace movement, to ensure that the conclusions drawn from this vulnerability by Israelis will not be arrogant, hawkish, or short-sighted. The current situation is not one of a consolidation of a hawkish consensus—rather we have a right-wing government acting in a nonconfrontational manner as though it were a left-wing, old-fashioned MAPAI (Labor Party) government. So we do not have a trigger-happy mood prevailing in Israel—far from it.

Aloni: I differ from Amos Oz in one point. Our party criticized the peace movement in Europe and asked them to demonstrate against Saddam Hussein. But it is hard for us to criticize the peace movement in the United States—after all, you are sending your people to fight and to die. We can tell you what we feel about this war, but it's very difficult for us to criticize a peace movement in the United States.

Berman: Some of us who have marched against U.S. interventions in Vietnam, Panama, Grenada, and elsewhere have declined to march against Desert Storm. We do accept the distinction Amos Oz draws between peacenik and pacifist; we do think the situation has something in common with the struggle against fascism. This may be a time when we have to choose between antiwar and antifascism, and in that case I think we should embrace antifascism.

Mack: Whatever our relationship to the struggle against the Gulf War, I think we all need to be aware of the energy that will be needed after this war to build support for a peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. The Palestinian support for Saddam has complicated that situation, and it will be necessary for liberal Jews here to play a leadership role in convincing Israel as well as the American Jewish community that the peace process still deserves our support.

Hauser: I think it is understandable that the American peace movement and the Israeli peace movement would look at this situation differently. The American peace movement is looking at the possible deaths of many American soldiers; the Israelis look at the possible de-

struction of their country. I feel that it is imperative to look beyond this whole thing to look at what happens after the war.

Aloni: It will take some time, but I think we can bring peace to our region.

Oz: If you took a survey of every person living from the Mediterranean to the Jordan, including Israeli Jews and Israeli Arabs, West Bank Palestinians and Jews living on the West Bank and you asked, "What is going to happen in the end?" either 70 percent or 80 percent would say that there is going to be some kind of partition. Many would say it with a deep cry of pain or a feeling of injustice. But the realization is increasingly there on the part of most Israelis and most Palestinians. How long before that realization gets translated into some kind of political reality I do not know, because I never underestimate the stupidity and shortsightedness of politicians on all sides. But the cognitive block is removed. I am more optimistic than Rita Hauser, and I am more optimistic than myself ten years ago. Ten years ago most Palestinians still believed that Israel might disappear, and most Israelis believed that there were no Palestinians, that they were merely a creation of Arab propaganda. Now we know that there will be a painful partition.

Mack: Whether the U.S. will be in a position to play a positive role in pushing for Israeli–Palestinian peace will in part depend on the number of casualties in the current war. There is a possibility that if the current war causes a catastrophic number of deaths and casualties, the American people may become disillusioned with any involvement with the Middle East situation, and may pull back from it. □

Justice Under Fire

Stanley Cohen

"The Reactions of the Israeli Left to Palestinian Support for Saddam Hussein." "Whatever Happened to the Israeli Peace Movement?" "Prospects of Peace After the Gulf War." "Is There Still Someone to Talk With?"

It's easy to see the titles of the articles, symposia, discussion groups, and conferences that will appear in a few months' time. We can even predict the exact lines of the debate: a collage of our conversations over the last six months as we helplessly sat by watching the crisis take its inexorable course. The *Tikkun* selection of "Notes from the Israeli Peace Movement" (Nov./Dec. 1990) already represented the emerging consensus.

Months before the dramatic opening scenes of the war—the missiles on Tel Aviv, the threat of gas attacks, the Palestinians "dancing on the rooftops"—the tone was clear. The initial PLO. support for Saddam (qualified as it might have been by formal opposition to the invasion of Kuwait) seemed to have touched some primeval nerve in the mainstream peace movement. "Disenchanted," "disillusioned," "stunned," "perplexed," "pained," "insulted," "despair," "frustration ... " The pathos is so deep, so personalized, that the outside reader gets the impression that these writers had been locked with Palestinians in long, intense ties of solidarity and comradeship, a joint struggle for a common goal. And then: betrayal by the perfidious Oriental. "It was as if a mask had suddenly been torn off the Arabs' faces, revealing their 'true' features," as David Grossman perceptively notes. "Years of sympathy, understanding, collaboration, and friendship have come to a bitter end," mourns Daniel Ben Simon—with no irony.

Now as I write—two weeks into the war—this bitter end seems confirmed. Shulamith Aloni cables Faisal Husseini that "all the dialogues between us and the Palestinians become irrelevant when the tyrant of Baghdad does everything to destroy us, and you make cause with him." A group of prominent doves from the literary community—*Tikkun* figures such as Amos Oz, A. B. Yehoshua, and Yoram Kaniuk—convene a press conference to denounce the international antiwar movement and to confirm that Palestinian support for Saddam has dealt a blow to hopes for Arab–Israeli peace. The issue has bitterly split the peace movement. The left part has stayed faithful to its traditional two-state position and its critique of the interests behind the war. But the loudest voices come from those who argue that as long as the missiles fall, and as long as the

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Israeli father forces gas mask on son.

Palestinians applaud them, we must rally around the maximalist war aim and doubt, if not completely disbelieve, the Palestinian claim to be ready for a compromise. The image of Massada has been replaced by the image of the sealed room.

But before being carried away by this pathos—before slipping too far into what Don DeLillo calls "the vortex of the cliché"—we need to remind ourselves of a few uncomfortable truths about this part of the Israeli peace movement. The first is that the "betrayed" relationship was never as deep and intense as it is now being portrayed. True, there were encouraging contacts, particularly over the last three years: dialogue groups; an engagement by Peace Now activists with the local Palestinian leadership; a flurry of meetings in Brussels, Amsterdam, and New York; real cooperation on human-rights issues. But with a few exceptions on the hard Israeli Left and the women's movement, a genuine collaboration based on shared political values has never existed.

The second truth is that too much of the "sympathy, understanding, collaboration, and friendship" that has existed has been based on fragile and asymmetrical motivations. On the Israeli side, there was the politics of bad conscience. Even if Zionism itself was beyond criticism, the whole Occupation came to be seen as a tragedy. A residue of unease built up about Palestinian suffering; perhaps, after all, they were victims. Even if they've behaved badly in the past and continue to do so, even if they don't really "deserve" a state, we must end the Occupation. Why? Three arguments are produced. The most morally compelling of these underlines the corrosive effect of the Occupation on Israeli society; the morally neutral position makes the pragmatic case for removing all the cost and trouble; the most morally objectionable rests on the "demographic problem"—the need for hermetic separation to preserve a Jewish majority.

In each of these arguments, however, the Palestinians—the eternal Other—become objects to be patronized. After all that we've done for them, why aren't they more grateful? Why don't they "give us a sign?" Why isn't there a "Palestinian Peace Now?" Though we ritually acknowledge that we cannot choose our enemies, we still have a desperate desire (which we translate into a moral imperative) for the Palestinians to behave better. By being too uppity—starting this uprising after twenty years of military occupation, and supporting Iraq—they are not conforming to the image we "need." As criminologists note, each society creates its suitable victims: the innocent drug-takers rather than the wicked pushers. The Palestinians are not being suitable victims.

On the Palestinian side, reactions are more complex than the current stereotype allows—but the sheer weight of the Occupation does not allow much departure from the script. The masses are too bitter, angry, and helpless to behave very nicely. If acts of individual terrorism signal that there is nothing left to lose, then Islamic fundamentalism promises that there is everything to gain. The semiofficial leaders vacillate between making gestures to well-meaning Israeli liberals (particularly in Brussels, Amsterdam, or New York) and appeasing the voice of the street. Only those committed to universal values of social justice (rather than nationalism as an end in itself) keep a steady head—but they lack any real power or influence.

The third truth about the Israeli peace movement—a truth that has been perennial, but that has now been cruelly exposed by the Gulf War—is that it is the only peace movement in the world that is pro-American. Amos Oz and others are no doubt correct to condemn the merely sentimental pacifism behind the European and American antiwar impulse. When there is a real or potential threat to physical existence, we have to acknowledge the obvious: an Iraqi military victory is a terrible prospect. However suspect and hypocritical were the motives behind the initial drive to war (and the subsequent American hijacking of the United Nations), the game is now different. But beyond this immediate reliance on American military power, the Israeli liberal's uncritical stance toward American foreign policy is pathological. No knee-jerk "Yankee Go Home" is needed to understand the deeply obstructive role that the United States has played in the struggle to win justice for the Palestinians.

No doubt these reflections sound self-indulgent. I think of the analogous debate in my own academic field: the criminologist who knows all about the structural causes of street crime one day finds him/herself about to be mugged. Yes, of course, this knowledge doesn't "help"—any more than a critique of Israeli liberalism or American foreign policy tells you how to react when the missiles start falling. So even though I can live without the kitsch of American Jewish leaders standing around the Patriot launchers near Tel Aviv singing

"God Bless America," I cannot pretend to ignore each night's warning sirens.

Whatever our political view, we all react with the same anxiety and instinct to survive. I, too, sit with my family in a sealed room hoping that tonight's Scuds will be intercepted. And I have sympathy with Haim Hanegbi—not a soft peacenik but a veteran leftist—who resigned as secretary and spokesman from the Progressive List for Peace (a radical Arab-Jewish party), because its Knesset representative Mohammed Miari apparently supports Iraq. Given all we know about Saddam's immediate war aims, about the threat of chemical warfare, about the nature of his regime and his plans for hegemony in the Middle East, how can anyone on the Left "support" Iraq?

I, too, regret the amorality—not just the lack of political judgment—of the Palestinian leadership and its apologists. This amorality finds its clearest expression in the argument (offered more by outsiders than the leaders themselves) that aligning with Saddam is just "going along with the street." Too many of us have spent too much time justifying the unjustifiable. Desperate people do not behave very well. If it is patronizing to demand that they behave better before we "help" them, it is insulting to exempt them from the same political standards we apply to others. The worst type of left romanticization of the Third World asserts that only military dictatorship, theocracy, and totalitarianism—the traditions that Saddam vacillates between—are to be expected from the colonial legacy, so who are we to pass judgment?

These are not the best circumstances, then, to run against the consensus—which is why so many attempts in these two weeks to formulate a "peace position" have failed. We need to arrive at a formula that is faithful to the antiwar impulse of our natural friends in Europe and America and that remains committed to social justice for the Palestinians—but is not psychotically cut off from Israeli reality. But however difficult are these thoughts, we cannot remain in our sealed room. As Hannah Arendt explained: "When everybody is swept away unthinkingly by what everybody else does and believes in, those who think are drawn out of hiding because their refusal to join in is conspicuous and thereby becomes a kind of action." Under conditions of special emergency, thinking "ceases to be a politically marginal activity."

The war is just such a special emergency. One thought has to be kept clear: just as being mugged on the subway should not change our theory of crime, war should not change our thought about the Palestinian issue. Nor will it erase the historical record of the intifada years. If liberals are so appalled by the rage unleashed by the Gulf War, they should not forget its historical causes. When Dr. Sari Nusseibeh is placed under six-month administrative detention for "revealing" where the Scud missiles have landed—information that every schoolchild in Israel knows—how can one doubt that his real crime is not "spying" but simply being a Palestinian?

It is not easy to translate these thoughts into a clear political program. One ad-hoc petition circulating here calls for a UN-supervised cease-fire, further pressure on Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, a consequent withdrawal of Allied forces from the Gulf, and an international conference (with an agenda including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a regional ban on chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons). Another petition calls for lifting the two-week curfew on the entire Palestinian population. I doubt that we will get much support for these views. To be honest, the cease-fire demand looks naive given the current state of hostilities. And the liberal disenchantment with the Palestinians has now twisted into simple anger: "Let them get what they deserve."

Something of the old peace impetus, of course, will be recovered. There is nowhere else to go, no one else to talk with. One thing, though, is clear: the ideological base of the traditional peace movement has been weakened. The sight of Israeli "doves" embracing and being embraced by Shamir is too sad to describe. And the combination of liberal sympathy and enlightened self-interest that informs the plea for "Peace Now" is extremely vulnerable. It depends too heavily on what the "victim" chooses: to collude, to manipulate, or to resist. At the same time, the type of leftism that uncritically identifies with Palestinian nationalist rhetoric and with every ritual United Nations condemnation, is not credible. It is too removed from the realpolitik of the Middle East, and far too insensitive to the history and existence of an Israeli "street."

This means finding an ideology that can draw upon something more than the flabby discourse of peace, and that is not so dependent on passing emotions. Everyone—from the crazy Israeli Right to the simplest American soldier sweating it out in the desert—is in favor of "peace." Far better is "social justice": a universal value that transcends the national conflict. The boring old truths remain: one, justice and democracy in Israel are totally incompatible with the Occupation; two, there can be no justice for the Palestinians unless their claim to statehood is fully recognized. The alternatives are exactly as they were before the war: continued brutal repression (the immediate prospect), an apartheid state, or mass transfer. This is clear, I would like to think, even to those now crying "betrayal," or else just staying at home. The endurance of these truths should persuade our supporters abroad (especially in the United States) that this is the time to form a "Justice Now" movement. □

The Dynamics of Anti-Semitism

Cherie Brown

Many Jews have encountered considerable anti-Semitism in the peace movement. To combat anti-Semitism, we need a deeper understanding of how it functions. So we called Cherie Brown and asked her to talk about how the oppression of Jews works and why it still persists in the peace movement and the Left.

The oppression of Jews manifests itself in two ways. The first is more widely understood: specific acts of scapegoating Jews. We all know about the overt acts, the bombing and burning of synagogues, the acts of violence against Jews, the discrimination against Jews. But there is another way that we are oppressed that is more subtle, but nevertheless equally vicious. Jews occupy some highly visible positions in public life that make them appear to be economically or politically powerful, though in fact by and large we are not. We are in positions where, by the nature of the jobs, we exert daily control over the lives of more visibly oppressed groups. We are not the owners of the corporations, but we are the managers, the lawyers, the doctors, the teachers, the social workers who staff large corporate and governmental bureaucracies. And we are the shopkeepers of small- and medium-sized businesses. The particular jobs that Jews hold are ones that give us the appearance of power or control over more visibly oppressed groups—and they resent us instead of the people who hold the real power. Jews are sometimes the ones who stick out, and this provides a focus for antagonism that might otherwise be directed at the real oppressors. When groups who are hurting, particularly economically, look for someone to oppose, they often turn against Jews.

Jews really have an invisible "loose noose" around their necks: Jews have more economic and political mobility than many other oppressed groups, so it doesn't look like we are oppressed. But the invisibility of our oppression is central to keeping us in this place. Every Jewish person fears that when times get tight it is possible that Jews will become scapegoats again. So most Jews carry inside feelings of terror and insecurity, and fears of imminent betrayal.

We Jews often push ourselves to function on top of the layer of terror. When some groups get scared, they become paralyzed. But when Jews are scared, we build five new organizations. Fear propels us into constant new activity and busy-ness—this is our particular survival strategy. Unfortunately it's very difficult to maintain fresh, creative thinking and responses when there is still so much fear propelling our thinking.

This survival strategy differs from that which others adopt when facing internalized oppression and fear. I saw this once when working with two Dutch women, one a working-class Catholic raised on a farm, the other a Jewish survivor of the Holocaust. Both decided they wanted to learn how to dive. The Jewish woman immediately went to the diving board and dove off; the Catholic woman required two weeks at the pool before she was willing to go to the diving board. Then one day, long after the Catholic woman was secure enough to dive, the Jewish woman got to the edge of the board and froze in terror. She hadn't overcome her terror just by acting as though she weren't scared. It was only after the Catholic woman felt more secure that the Jewish woman could risk feeling her own fears.

This is what happens to Jews. Our fears are still there. They show up in insomnia, in asthma, in overeating, in a failure to take good care of ourselves, in a drivenness to constant activity—all rooted in a deep terror. And living with that fear—and the crippling impact it sometimes has on our lives—is part of the way that Jews are oppressed. The worst part of it for many Jews, particularly progressive Jews active in social change movements, is that there is so much denial of any real anti-Semitism that we end up believing these difficulties are just individual problems—we don't know to connect these difficulties to less visible forms of institutionalized anti-Semitism being directed at us.

These dynamics have a big impact on how Jews act in the political arena. Many Jews find themselves having to choose between two different ways to live. They either choose a life built primarily on the theme that, "I'm for everybody else, I'm a humanitarian"—and embedded in this form of self-presentation is a great deal of shame about being Jewish, which leads people to

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take on everybody else's struggles and *not* Jewish struggles. Or they choose a life of being visibly Jewish, proud of being Jewish, and living a life predominantly with Jews, though all too often isolated from deep relationships with other groups. Most Jews are on a continuum somewhere between these two poles. These choices have dramatic consequences for how Jews function in the public arena.

There are plenty of Jews active in the leadership of progressive movements, but they are not there *as* Jews. As a result, the Jewish commitment to those struggles becomes invisible to other people in those movements.

Internalized anti-Semitism often limits our ability to be effective in political work. I have yet to meet a Jewish person (even those who lead actively Jewish lives) who does not carry somewhere inside an internal recording of self-disgust, deriving from hundreds of years in which the world has said to us: "There's something so wrong with you that you don't deserve to exist," and now, "You don't deserve a homeland." Those messages *do* get internalized, even in those who are proudly Jewish. One way that this disgust gets manifested is in not taking care of ourselves and our bodies, because at some deep level we don't see ourselves as precious beings. And we don't always have the courage to take care of each other or of the Jewish people.

Every oppressed group internalizes the record of its oppression and turns against members of its own group, particularly those who in any way behave according to stereotype. Some Jews will turn against Jews because they aren't "good enough Jews"; others will turn against Jews who act "too pushy" or "too assertive." Jews who more visibly show their fears tend to generate a lot more disgust or withdrawal from other Jews. I've listened to some Israelis, for example, who pride themselves on being strong Israelis who express contempt for Jews who look or act "like Holocaust survivors." It seems to be too painful for many of us to stay close to each other when we see the scars of the oppression etched in each other's behaviors. We can be highly critical of one another, holding each other to the same perfectionist standard that the world holds us to.

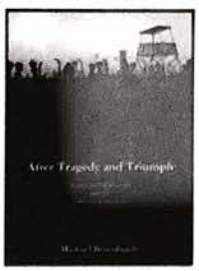
Rarely do Jews get praised by each other for the work that they do. We are good at pointing out the negative and forgetting to express the appreciations. Instead, we abandon each other or viciously attack one another—particularly when a Jew or small group of Jews tries to do something new or courageous. Our fears about security are enormous—so we attack those who try new directions or those who take courageous stands for fear that they will endanger all of us. However, none of these responses are our fault; they stem from a long history of anti-Semitism. We need to get rid of all these manifestations of internalized anti-Semitism, but we also need to be gentle with each other—even when we are acting out the internalized oppression.

"Brilliant...*After Tragedy and Triumph* is a triumph."–*John K. Roth*

AFTER TRAGEDY AND TRIUMPH

Modern Jewish Thought and the American Experience

Michael Berenbaum



"All those who wish to read only one book about the condition of Jewry in 1990 would do well to choose Michael Berenbaum's *After Tragedy and Triumph*. In his description of contemporary Jewish thought he sacrifices neither complexity nor lucidity." –*Raul Hilberg*

The story of American Jewry is inextricably entwined with the awesome defeat of the Holocaust and the rebirth of the state of Israel. However, for Michael Berenbaum, and others of his generation the tale is more anguished, for the Jewish people are now divided, uncertain about the implications of the past and the direction of the future. Berenbaum explores the Jewish identity of the first generation to mature after tragedy and triumph.

Michael Berenbaum is Project Director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C.
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Complicating all this, making it all the harder for us to build alliances is this: It's difficult for many Jews to relax enough to allow deep closeness to develop. Jews have historically been kept separate from the world, and have become used to feeling isolated from others. Even though the initial experience of isolation may have been with non-Jews, this isolation also gets internalized and will keep us from building close, trusting bonds with each other. And this sense of isolation often affects family relationships and our ability to have genuine closeness. We love each other, but we don't trust each other. A fear of being abandoned always keeps even the closest relationships from having a deep sense of trust.

Some non-Jews have accused us of being pushy, manipulative, controlling. What they don't understand is that they are seeing our terror and our isolation, not our power. In social change movements and the antiwar movement to date, the whole nature of anti-Semitism and internalized anti-Semitism remains unknown and unchallenged. Anti-Semitism involves *two forces*. Most people understand one or the other, but rarely both. Jews will sometimes participate in the oppression of another group (in Israel, it's the Palestinians) because we have been convinced by outside forces that it is our only



path to safety. Then, when we participate in this role of "surrogate oppressor," we get isolated, targeted, attacked, and betrayed. It is not the fault of Jews that this dynamic happens. Throughout history, ruling class interests have set up individual Jews over and over again to be visible oppressors. The only reason Jews have ever agreed to this role was the slim hope of survival—and the oppressors' offer to protect Jews. In this dynamic, the leaders representing the ruling class (Saddam Hussein, for example) are able to use Jews as a convenient scapegoat when they need one. Many leaders within the Jewish community will actively and correctly speak out about Jewish vulnerability and scapegoating but fail to understand and speak against the collusive role that Jews or Jewish leaders have been forced into playing, which contributes to this scapegoating. Many members and leaders of progressive social change movements will actively and correctly identify the collusive role that some Jews (or the Israeli government) play but will fail to understand or speak against the very *real* vulnerability and lack of security for Jews. This isolation pushes Jews further toward the Right. The antiwar movement then sees this alignment with the Right and incorrectly blames Jews even more. And so the cycle continues. The very policies the antiwar movement is striving to achieve will not happen without an active and vigorous policy against anti-Semitism.

The Left likes simple forms of oppression—"good guys" and "bad guys"—so they miss anti-Semitism, which requires a more complex analysis. It is this double dynamic—real, very systematic vulnerability followed by an effort to overcome vulnerability by accommodating to oppressive forces, who are only too willing to let Jews become the more visible oppressors of others. One of the major ways that progressive movements could effectively respond to the Gulf conflict would be for them to make a major commitment to dealing with anti-Semitism in all of its manifestations—because it is precisely this anti-Semitism that Saddam Hussein is seeking to exploit in the war.

Because of our internalized fears, Jews on the Left have had a difficult time requiring the peace movement to deal with anti-Semitism. Since the real dynamics of anti-Semitism are not understood, many Jews do not realize that combating anti-Semitism is not just good for Jews but absolutely necessary for the success of *every* social change movement. Anti-Semitism is not in the interests of Blacks, not in the interests of the labor movement, not in the interests of anyone who really wants to see a transformed world. The way anti-Semitism functions is that these groups come to believe that Jews are the impediment to their own progress—so that they never get to take on the real source of their oppression. Fighting anti-Semitism is really in the interests of all social change movements. None of these social change movements will succeed until they also deal with anti-Semitism.

There can also be enormous despair and discouragement and a fear that we will never have real allies in progressive movements. One way to break that cycle is to act from the assumption that there are allies out there waiting to be reached. They need the information about anti-Semitism just as much as we need them to have it. We need to heal enough of our fear so that when we are at peace events or other social change events we speak out about anti-Semitism. And we need to require that the issue of anti-Semitism be included in the central agendas of all progressive movements.

Jews need to have consciousness-raising sessions just as people did in the women's movement. We need to identify and heal the internalized messages that keep us scared and then functioning on top of fear (which leaves us open and vulnerable to being targeted). We also need to practice and coach each other to speak up against anti-Jewish policies and statements. We need to coach each other to reach out for allies with confident, powerful voices. And ultimately, we must expect that our allies in social-change movements will themselves speak out against anti-Semitism so that this does *not* fall entirely on Jews. We can do this by making one-to-one friendships in these movements and then by asking our friends to speak out.

The struggle against anti-Semitism in the Left and in the peace movement is a high priority—and should be seen as such by anyone who wishes to build an effective opposition to Bush and his policies. □

Mr. Wellstone Goes to Washington

Paul Wellstone

We were delighted to learn that newly elected U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.) has been a reader of Tikkun *for several years. We have invited him to share his thoughts with us about his experience in the Senate as he does his part in "healing and repairing." Conducted in early February, 1991.*

TIKKUN: What's the experience been? You came into Congress with the expectation that you could do something important. How does it look to you after a month?

WELLSTONE: I think that there will be chances to do some important things. There is a climate in this country that shows public concern about health care, education, jobs, the environment, and campaign reform—I think that these issues that I raised in my campaign are likely to be central in the period ahead and that there are going to be people here to work with on these issues. I felt good about getting my committee assignment, Labor and Human Resources, an excellent committee for dealing with children and education and health care and labor—issues that are real important to me, so I worked hard to get on that committee. I decided after holding public town meetings on the Persian Gulf from mid-November to mid-December that I wanted to serve on the Energy Committee. I heard people saying in all sorts of ways, "We need to have a decent energy policy," and to me that means saved energy, efficient energy, renewables. I'm also going to serve on the Small Business Committee and the Committee on Indian Affairs, both of which are important to me also. I've also started developing some good friendships with people here to work with.

The central reality, however, that is quite different from what I imagined would be happening, is the war.

TIKKUN: That must create a set of problems for you.

WELLSTONE: It's very difficult. There are three groupings of people now in the House and the Senate. There are those who supported the resolution authorizing use of force and now want to enthusiastically back the use of force; those who opposed the policy but who now think that they need to publicly emphasize that they support the troops; and then there are a few of us who opposed the policy, and who of course support the troops, but who also still want to say that the policy is mistaken. Of course we support the troops—but I'm still very worried about where Desert Storm is taking us.

I'm worried about this in terms of America's best interests and I'm worried about what this will do for the Middle East. I don't see this war as leading to stability in the Middle East.

But back home people are very evenly divided about the war. And some people who were my supporters are very angry at me because I'm questioning this war. And some people who remember the Vietnam War and feel that our troops didn't get support are now hearing any criticism of the wisdom of the policy as a nonsupport of the troops. Even if much of what you are saying is out of love and support for the troops, they are interpreting it to mean nonsupport.

So I've decided I have to be at peace with myself, and to continue to do what I think is right. I've already learned a central lesson here: the only way that I can keep grounded is if I go with my gut instinct of what is right.

TIKKUN: Who else is with you?

WELLSTONE: There are other people who share my concerns but at this point in the Senate there are very few who want to voice their criticisms out loud.

TIKKUN: So that puts you in an isolated position?

WELLSTONE: Yes. What a lot of people have decided is that they want to see what happens with a ground war. There are some who think that the ground war will be like the Vietnam War and some who think it will be like Israel's Six Day War (June 1967). A lot of people who question the policy are afraid that if they go way out on a limb against what turns out to be a "Six Day War," they will look pretty bad. My position is, "But what if you err in the other direction?"

At the same time, it's very difficult to figure out what it is that you can propose in this circumstance. Hussein doesn't make it easy. While I insist on the right of dissent and while I insist on the right of people to raise questions about this policy—precisely out of support for troops and country—I have been to gatherings

where there is a one-sided attack on Israel that deeply disturbs me—I know that you at *Tikkun* are doing a good job of raising this problem also. I went to a gathering of some ten thousand people before the war began, and the keynote speaker gave a long talk with hardly an unkind word about Saddam Hussein, but filled with lots of angry talk about Israel and nothing about the legitimate concerns of Israelis.

So one of the things that makes it even more difficult to find the right path here is that this sort of thing has been happening in some antiwar circles. And some of the demands, like "out now," are not my demands. At that rally I had to say that I was someone who had been very critical of the Likud party, but as a Jew here at this gathering I have to say that there's been no talk about the legitimate concerns of Israelis. And that upsets me.

TIKKUN: We at *Tikkun* have been setting up Jewish teach-ins about Iraq around the country, in part to create a safe space for liberal Jews to share their inner conflicts and ambivalent feelings about the war, in part to discuss the Israel-bashing and anti-Semitism in the antiwar movement. We've found that there is a terrific hunger for this kind of gathering, and tremendous upset among liberal and progressive Jews on this topic.

WELLSTONE: It gets even more agonizing because on the other side of the coin, there is the problem in the organized Jewish community. I spoke at a synagogue in my state recently, and it was a prayer gathering at which there were many people talking about the casualties in Israel, which deeply concern me, so I was delighted to be part of that. But I also suggested that we add a prayer for the many innocent Iraqi civilians who had become casualties of a war that they certainly had not chosen. I talked about the harassment of Jews and bomb threats—but at the same time we need to oppose the harassment of Arab Americans. I spoke recently to a group of Arab Americans, who are very successful economically but who are very frightened. Leadership for me is to try to bring out the best in people, so that means talking about the various sides of this issue, and the various pains of people caught up in this situation. And I know that that is not going to please everybody.

TIKKUN: So is there anybody we can turn to as an alternative to the "immediate withdrawal" antiwar movement, the Israel-bashing antiwar movement, the antiwar movement that is willing to play footsies with anti-Semitism?

WELLSTONE: Well, of course the vast majority who are opposed to the war policy are also opposed to all those things.

TIKKUN: The problem is that many of these people don't really recognize anti-Semitism when it's happening in front of them. They recognize it when it takes the form of blowing up synagogues, but they don't recognize it when it takes the form of attributing to Jews all sorts of power that we don't have, and they don't recognize that our position as a public face of oppressive institutions is a reflection of our powerlessness.

WELLSTONE: I think that's true. So it makes our task all the more difficult, because we need to educate antiwar people and we also need to deal with those who think that war can solve the problems.

But talking about all these issues is difficult. Saddam Hussein has his definition of linkage that everybody correctly rejects—that he'll leave Kuwait when the Israelis leave the West Bank and Gaza. But there are some people who are rejecting any peace plan for ending this war that mentions the concept of a Middle East "peace process," even when that does not have a particular time frame or particular demand connected with it, because they are afraid that that too is linkage! We've got to make clear that this war is not about blocking a peace process in the Middle East—the U.S. policy has never been to oppose such a process, so we shouldn't let ourselves now get boxed in for fear that it will seem to remotely resemble what Saddam calls linkage. Because we need to reach for a peace settlement beyond this struggle.

TIKKUN: That may not be easy. Israeli Prime Minister Shamir announced earlier today that he was opposed to Israeli participation in any international conference even after the war is over.

WELLSTONE: I want to make a difference here, to make a contribution... but I have a real profound sense of sadness because of where all this is going. I've had a sense of foreboding about this... I've wanted to be wrong, and I end up being right... The rejection of any peace process by Shamir is very upsetting. At the gathering at the synagogue that I mentioned was a representative of the Israeli government who said that if nerve gas is used, "we will respond with all weaponry at our disposal" and there was this huge sign of support from the audience, whereas I found it to be a chilling remark.

You have to keep seeing the goodness in people to be effective. The best organizers and political people are those who keep trying to understand why people are thinking what they are thinking and feeling what they are feeling rather than giving up on people. So I can understand some of what other people I disagree with are feeling.

I met a constituent last December who told me that

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A Tale of Two Moral Prisms

Todd Gitlin

I.

The Hotel Praha is an overwrought Communist knockoff of elegance. The proportions are all wrong. There are vast empty spaces, as in an airport. A huge chandelier drips glass over a marble staircase too wide for the lobby. The leather chairs in the lounges and conference rooms are squat and too plump. The round wooden doorknobs are a foot in diameter. There are saunas, a tennis court, various kitsch goddess sculptures resplendent in their mediocrity, and from the rear fountain a fabulous view of the Castle, golden in summer light—far from the soot-encrusted Gothic structure I had expected from the inescapable Kafka.

Plunked down behind iron gates in an outskirt of this luminous city, the Praha had been built strictly to serve the nomenklatura in the bad old days. Before the 1989 revolution, it was closed to all Czechoslovakians—even cabdrivers—except for high officials and the guests the Party chose to regale with the privilege of occupancy, in suites replete with marble bathrooms and private staircases for discreet arrivals and departures. The service remains the most efficient in Prague—no doubt a holdover from the ancien régime. This is a fine place to explore the ambiguities of transition to post-Communist society.

Here, the week of July 4, American and Eastern European journalists are having a getting-to-know-each-other, what-can-we-do-for-you sort of conference. Some of America's best-known and most influential journalists and publishers are there—Ben Bradlee of the *Washington Post,* Shelby Coffey of the *Los Angeles Times,* the young Arthur Sulzberger of the *New York Times,* Norman Pearlstine of the *Wall Street Journal,* John Seigenthaler of *USA Today,* Tom Winship of the *Boston Globe,* Bill Kovach of the Nieman Foundation, Sander Vanocur of ABC News, David Halberstam, and others.

Unexpected issues start floating into the well-conditioned air almost immediately. A fidgety President Vaclav Havel, tapping his fingers against the side of the podium, welcomes "the representatives of the most significant world newspapers" and adds that the Czechoslovakian press, "which is only learning to be free," needs their help, because "our press understands the concept of freedom of expression only as the job of a kind of private detective who is searching for sensations, and from time to time it forgets ... that freedom is only one side of the coin, where the other side is represented by responsibility." President Havel looks as misplaced here as was his alter ego, the young intellectual banished to work in a brewery, in playwright Havel's *Audience.* Anxiety begins to stir among the editors. Pressed, Havel amplifies: "Freedom for a journalist means that whatever he or she finds out can be published. But responsibility should mean that he or she will verify the news before it is published, OK?" The American press is growing more restless.

The next day's luncheon speech is given by Michael Zantovsky, a former Reuters correspondent, now Havel's press secretary. Speaking serviceable English, Zantovsky warms to his subject by acknowledging that freedom of the press is "great" but to simply say so "would make for a rather boring speech. So I'm going to speak about something more exciting—like sending journalists to jail, etc. I was inspired to think about this," Zantovsky goes on, "by the remarks that my current boss made yesterday at this conference about freedom and responsibility. And I noticed that the remarks didn't go down all that well with some of you—though the remarks my boss made were simply an extrapolation of things he's been saying for twenty years on every occasion he has: that freedom is very much a desirable thing, but it has to be accompanied by a sense of individual responsibility in each of us, whatever we are doing." Freedom of expression, he says, is "one of the best safeguards of the welfare of a democratic society.... It is also a sacred cow, largely of the press's own making, that it has nurtured for years to build a protective wall around itself." Zantovsky says he has three cases in point.

First, Zantovsky says, a Czechoslovakian journalist has written that, after only six months in office, Havel's staff "drank away more money than the previous government had done in ten years." Zantovsky says that investigation proved that more soft drinks have been imbibed in Havel's Castle than alcohol, and puckishly

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adds, "We're going to sue the bastard," who "will be sentenced to apologize in print."

Zantovsky goes on to case two, which is "more serious and complicated," an illustration that makes the issues of freedom and responsibility come alive. "There is a list," Zantovsky says, "of 140,000 names of people who were in the past informers or collaborators for the secret police. And of course there are pressures from the public that the list be published. There are journalists trying to get hold of the list in order to publish it. And of course it would be a major scoop.

"Well, we thought about it and decided that anyone who publishes this list will go to jail. Not because most of those people were not guilty—at least of dishonesty, and some were probably guilty of crimes—but some of them were victims as much as perpetrators of wrongdoing." And, he adds, they have families. "We just happen to think that the damage caused by the publication of such a list would justify sending someone to jail." As Ben Bradlee later observes, the Americans begin "muttering under their breath" about the Pentagon Papers, prior restraint, and so on.

Zantovsky presses on with his third case, the least conclusive and morally the most intricate. He relates that after a student demonstration in November 1989 he was told by a long-time dissident whom he utterly trusted that the police had killed a student. The man had an eyewitness. So Zantovsky filed on the Reuters wire and notified Voice of America, which broadcast the news. The story turned out to be false, but, believing it to be true, a much larger throng turned out the next day. Had the regime resorted to Ceaucescu methods and massacred the students, would Zantovsky have been responsible? He doesn't know, but wants his audience to savor the problem.

By now the assembled Americans are rising to the bait. David Halberstam thunders, "We've been lectured about our responsibility by lesser men than President Havel and you," evoking the shades of Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon. Indignation mounts. "We know all about lists," Ben Bradlee says. "Half the people in this room were on Nixon's enemies list." Self-promoting references to Watergate, the Pentagon Papers, and the general courage of the American press fill the room—the press is in its self-congratulatory mode, pronouncing itself the people's tribune that tells the truth without fear or favor.

Zantovsky replies that, to him, simple compassion rules out publishing the list. He says "journalists can cause more harm than any doctor," and notes that in the U.S. doctors can be sued for malpractice. Journalists "wield some very, very powerful tools, and these tools can hurt when they are misused or not used right." "There are 140,000 families involved," he says. He asks the journalists to consider the case of a hypothetical homosexual, blackmailed into informing—someone, moreover, whose actions did little or no harm. "Should his name be published? No, we think not." He cites the theme that has dominated Havel's career as playwright and statesman: the contention that the moral atmosphere of Czechoslovakia had been contaminated throughout by nearly universal collaboration. From his point of view, "we fear [publishing the list] could lead to a witch-hunt, and we don't want that."

The next day, Zantovsky tells an American professor, Owen V. Johnson, that his principal concern was moral, not legal. "What I want to say was that people should think about responsibility." But, he adds, "I was surprised how positive the American journalists were about what they said. I couldn't sense any doubt at all. We question our motives all the time. We really do think about them all the time." The Americans, by implication, don't.

II.

Speaking with Czech journalists and academics over the following days, I find no one who wants to throw journalists in jail. But everyone has an opinion about the meaning of the informers' list, and no one thinks the problem of what to do or not to do with it is clear-cut. The existence of the list, I come to realize, continues to bear witness to Czechoslovakia's precarious moral condition; and the question of what to do with the list is a kind of moral X ray.

I ask the philosopher Ladislav Hejdanek, a longtime Charter 77 activist and member of the editorial board of *Lidové Noviny* (the *People's Paper,* then closely identified with Havel), what the society's main problems are. He names two: economic recovery from fifty years of state-sponsored stagnation and decay; and "the moral situation." Hejdanek, at sixty-three, has just been permitted to teach his first university course; his deep involvement in Charter 77 made him persona non grata for twenty years, earning him the intellectual's most honored and premium jobs, first as a night watchman, then as a stoker, where, while tending furnaces, he wrote several samizdat books. Because of his activities, his wife was expelled from her position as a teacher of pedagogy. As we talk, I cannot help noticing that he sits under a painting of Don Quixote.

Hejdanek deplores the society's failure to undertake a collective moral reckoning. Just after the revolution, he says, "we lost our opportunity as a society to have a public acknowledgment" of the general complicity in the old regime. He had hoped that Charter 77 would produce that discussion, but the organization, lacking structure, could only have proceeded by consensus. And

Tikkun Passover Haggadah Supplement

1991

Have you ever been to a boring Passover Seder where people mechanically read through the text? This happens only because many of us have abandoned the tradition of heated argument and discussion about the meaning of the stories connected with Passover. In fact, from the time that Rabbi Akiba used the Seder to plan a revolutionary struggle against the Romans to the moment that inhabitants of the Warsaw ghetto celebrated the Seder before beginning their historic revolt, the Jews have used the Seder as a time to grapple with their current reality—applying the message of the historical struggle against the Pharaoh. It is in this spirit that we encourage you to make any Seder you attend a lively and spirited occasion to address the problems of the present moment in light of the lessons of our past. This year particularly the Jewish people must address its relationship with the Palestinian people.

Detach these additions to the haggadah along the perforation and bring them with you to your Seder. They are meant to be read as additions to the normal text at the places indicated. But, of course, you can add them elsewhere if you wish.

Kiddush

Before the Kiddush (the first blessing over the wine)

We are gathered here tonight to affirm our continuity with the generations of Jews who have kept alive the vision of freedom inherent in the Passover story. We proudly affirm that we are the descendants of slaves—the first group of slaves in recorded history ever to wage a successful rebellion against their slaveholders. Ours was the first historical national liberation struggle, and the prototype of many struggles that other nations would wage against those who oppressed them.

There are others who would have done their best to forget their humble past. There are other peoples that saw themselves as descendants of gods or of superhuman heroes. We are proud that our people has clung to its vision of itself as a slave people and has insisted on telling its story of liberation as the central founding event around which its culture was built.

Ruling classes have traditionally tried to convince their subjects that domination is inevitable and is built into the very structure of the universe. The Jewish people's Torah, telling the story of our liberation struggle, has been a perpetual thorn in the side of these ruling classes. Not only was our very existence a proof that the world could be changed, but every Passover, and every Sabbath, we insisted on recounting that story and drawing the lesson: the way things are is not the way things have to be; the world can be radically altered. While ruling classes, slave owners, bosses want no limits on how much they can exploit human labor, the Shabbat institutionalizes the first absolute limit and is the prototypical worker's victory over the power of bosses. For twenty-four hours the Jewish people declare that they are withdrawing from anything connected with labor—the activity of acting on and changing the material world. Getting and spending, using money, lighting fires, building, harvesting, and writing are forbidden. For twenty-four hours we stop attempting to dominate and control the world, and instead celebrate its grandeur—and celebrate the victory in our struggle for freedom which allows us to rest and rejoice in this way.

No wonder that the constant recounting of our struggle for freedom has predisposed Jews throughout the ages to support the liberation struggles of other oppressed groups. While there have been Jews in every age who thought that they best served the interests of our people by cuddling up to the powerful and allying with them, most Jews have rejected this strategy and instead have sought ways to ally themselves with the oppressed.

This year we celebrate Passover with a heavy heart. We are mindful of the threat posed by Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi military to our fellow Jews in the State of Israel. We were outraged when Saddam targeted his murderous missiles at Israeli civilians. In every generation there are those who rise up against us and who scapegoat the Jews. On this Passover, we pray that our fellow Jews be delivered from oppression, from war, and from the destructive consequences of war.

So, too, we pray for the well being of all those caught up in the maelstrom of anger and hatred in the Middle East—the troops from the U.S., many of them economic conscripts who joined the army as the only way to get employment and training, and who now find themselves fighting in a foreign land; the many Iraqi soldiers and civilians who are victims of a war that they did not choose and serve a government they never elected; and the millions of people of the Middle East who have been victims of economic exploitation and cultural degradation at the hands of outside powers and selfish corporate interests. We hope that they will quickly be freed from the tyranny of Saddam Hussein—and from the destructive legacy of Western colonialism and imperialism.

We are also mindful of the suffering of the Palestinian people. In recent years the Jewish people have themselves become the symbol of oppression to another people: the Palestinians. We have no sympathy with those Palestinians who recently rejoiced at the missiles falling on our sisters and brothers in Tel Aviv, and no sympathy with those Palestinians who cheered on Saddam Hussein. Yet we understand the frustration that they have felt as year after year the Israeli government officially and loudly proclaimed that it would never negotiate with those the Palestinians designated as their leaders, would never negotiate on the basis of "land for peace," and would never give up any part of the West Bank for a Palestinian state, no matter how many assurances they might get about Palestinians being willing to live in peace. We understand how angry it makes our Israeli brothers and sisters when they see Palestinians rejoicing at Jewish suffering. Yet misguided as these Palestinian political choices have been, outraged as we are that these people could embrace a dictator like Saddam, we nevertheless will keep in mind that these are the distortions generated by powerlessness and oppression. In our Seder tonight we will joyfully celebrate our own liberation—but, at the same time, we will remember the suffering of the Palestinians. Righteous though our indignation may be at the political choices they have made, we still understand that most of them live in exile, many in refugee camps, and in conditions that we would not tolerate for our own people. We pray that their liberation and freedom be achieved without harm to the safety, security, and freedom of the Jewish people living in the State of Israel. This is the radical message of our tradition: our own freedom celebration reminds us to affirm the Jewish vision that all other peoples must be allowed to live in freedom and in dignity.

After a decade of selfishly squandering the resources of our society, we now find it without the will or resources to eradicate the vast inequalities that the past years have deepened. We are glad that the United States has the military power to challenge expansionist dictators; but we still know that the military budget could be decisively cut and tens of billions of dollars could be redirected to fight hunger and homelessness. Any celebration of our own freedom is incomplete unless we use this occasion to rededicate ourselves to redistributing the world's resources—and to remedying the inequalities that allow many of us in the United States to live in luxury and self-satisfaction while turning our backs on and shutting our ears to the thirty million children who will die of hunger this year. We are mindful that the very international economic arrangements that have brought comfort and wealth to the United States have simultaneously brought increasing poverty and suffering to peoples in the Third World. Indeed, tyrants like Saddam Hussein win a mass following precisely because they have learned to skillfully manipulate legitimate anger many in the Third World feel at the legacy of Western exploitation—and to use these feelings to bolster their narrow, power-oriented agendas. When we see Islamic fundamentalism, various Third World nationalisms, and other ideologies used to mobilize masses of people into armed struggle, we realize that those mobilized are often decent people who have not found a more humane way to express legitimate anger. We will never condone the way this anger then gets linked to anti-Semitism, racism, and other reactionary belief systems. But we also understand the complexity of a world of oppression, we remember that even our real enemies are also human beings, and we understand that American selfishness and materialism is part of the problem faced by the peoples of the world. Passover, then, is not just a celebration of our own freedom—it is a moment in which we rededicate ourselves to the struggles for peace, justice, and equality for all peoples.

Blessing the Vegetation of the Earth in Times of Ecological Crisis

Add to section where we dip the parsley or greens of the earth in the salt water and say the blessing "boray pree ha-adamah"

Our holiday of freedom is also a time to rejoice in the bountiful blessings of the earth. The earth pours forth its riches, allowing us and a myriad of God's creatures to flourish and enjoy the splendor of life. Each spring we witness the miracle of renewal as vegetation returns to the planet.

This Pesach we pause to reflect on the ways that we have failed to take adequate care of the earth. The free market, in a relentless fury to amass profits without regard for ecological consequences, has generated tens of thousands of corporate ventures and products that have com-

bined to do incalculable damage to the life-support systems of the planet. Willing to let corporate concerns for profit count more than the general interest, we have restricted our responses to the ecological crisis to piecemeal efforts that do not adequately address the problems we face. Using the language of socialism to cover their own bureaucratic interests, dictatorial regimes in Eastern Europe sorely abused the environment as well. Now they are being replaced by born-again free marketeers who will ape Western ecological insensitivity. And in the Middle East a vicious dictator pours oil into the sea in the sort of reckless ecocide that takes Third World insensitivity to the environmental crisis to a much higher and more destructive level.

Our biblical injunction to work and to exercise stewardship over the earth has been transformed into a notion that the earth is simply a resource for exploitation. If we construct a society in which people are encouraged to look out for themselves and advance their own interests without regard for the consequences to others, an ecological crisis becomes almost inevitable.

As Jews, however, we recognize that our own fate is closely connected to the fate of others. The peasant in Brazil who has no other way to make a living but to cut down the rain forest, the Japanese fisherman who has no way to live but to harvest the sea, or the auto manufacturer who uses political clout to block funds for mass transit or for stricter environmental policies—all are acting rationally, given the logic of the competitive marketplace. Nevertheless, their actions have dire consequences for the rest of us. Our task is not to put these people down, but to construct an economic and social system in which people no longer have to choose between their own best interests and the best interests of the physical environment. This is not a question solely of learning as individuals to be more ecologically aware—though this is also important—but also of transforming the social system that makes it possible for some people to profit on activities that destroy or endanger our planet Earth.

We approach the earth not only as our sustainer, vital to our survival, but also as a sacred place, worthy of our respect and awe. The Bible teaches that the whole earth is full of God's glory—that every part is alive, holy, and miraculous. Today, as we rededicate ourselves to saving the earth from the ecological damage that has been done, we also rejoice in the earth and thank God for its beauty and wonder.

Blessed are you, God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the earth.

Drops from Our Cup of Joy

Before Reciting the Ten Plagues

It is traditional to spill a drop of wine from our cups as we recite each plague. Our cup of rejoicing cannot be full if our enemies are suffering. The Talmud recounts that when the heavenly angels sang songs of praise to God as the Egyptians were drowning in the Sea of Reeds, God reprimanded them for celebrating the suffering of his children the Egyptians.

Our cup of joy also cannot be full this year. The tragedy of the destruction of European Jewry seemed to bring in its wake a new redemption: the creation of the State of Israel. But that new homeland, a renewal of ancient dreams, has been restored to us at the expense of another people. The hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who fled in the midst of an armed struggle in 1948 have turned into millions of people, many living in refugee camps, most desiring to return to their homeland. A million and a half Palestinians now live under the direct military rule of the Israeli army.

Our people did not return to its ancient homeland with the intention of displacing or oppressing another people. The historical responsibility for the tragedy is two-sided: when we were refugees fleeing from the oppression of Christian Europe, the Palestinian leadership did all it could to block our return and refused to consider sharing the land. When the UN offered a two-state solution in 1947, Israel accepted and the Palestinians refused. Yet most Palestinians who fled were not involved in these decisions; they were peasant farmers with little knowledge of or involvement in the affairs that would eventually lead to their displacement from their land.

Today, the Palestinian people have openly rebelled against Israeli rule. While some of them fantasize about eliminating the State of Israel, identify with Saddam Hussein, and rejoice as missiles fall on Tel Aviv, many more are still willing to settle for a state of their own in the West Bank and Gaza, a state that would live in peace with Israel.

Perhaps even harder for us—yet required by our tradition—is the imperative to mourn the death of many Iraqi civilians and military conscripts, themselves victims of a brutal system that they are forced to serve.

Of course we also mourn the pain and suffering of those who are our families, our friends, our allies: the many Israelis who have suffered loss of life, painful wounds, destruction of their homes; the American troops fighting to contain Saddam; the coalition troops who have also suffered severely in the fighting. Yet our tradition tells us that we must also remember the humanity of our enemies.

For all this suffering, for the suffering of our fellow Jews, our fellow Americans, our friends and allies, and also for the suffering of those who are at this moment our enemies—the Palestinians, the Iraqis, and others—we dip wine from our cup of joy. Our tradition teaches us compassion—and from this teaching we can also learn that if we really want peace in the Middle East, we will have to approach the conflicts with compassion for all sides. Peace is impossible as long as we hold onto the idea that one side has all the good and the other has all the bad.

In Every Generation

After reading "vihee she'amda" (that in every generation there have been those who rose up against us, but God ultimately saved us from their hands)

Why the Jews? Why should we have been the subject of persecution for thousands of years?

Was it perhaps our exclusiveness, our separateness, our insistence on being special—or some other aspect of our internal collective pathology? No!

To counter this, we affirm our Jewishness today. We have not been the cause of our oppression. We have been a very convenient tool for various ruling classes: a separable and recognizable minority that could be used as a scapegoat, a convenient target upon which to vent their hostility.

Jews have not been the only scapegoats to be used in this way. But in Western Europe they were the primary and most consistent scapegoat.

Our target status was largely responsible for our headlong rush into assimilation once that was legally possible. The Judaism that was abandoned, full of tears and suffering, was a Judaism whose sense of joy and inner confidence had been replaced by a narrow defensiveness—itself a response to external oppression. Even Hasidism, born as a protest against the joylessness of a rigidifying Eastern European Judaism, eventually lost much of its spontaneity and its earlier creativity, increasingly reproducing the dogmatic spirit it sought to replace. It is only now, decades after one-third of our people was wiped out, that we can begin to imagine reclaiming the more joyous and life-affirming aspects of our Jewish heritage.

Yet even here we are not free of the dynamics of world oppression. In class societies, virtually everyone is enmeshed in a web of oppression, in some respects by forces outside our control, in some respects by participating and benefiting from the oppression of others. Whether as tax collectors and small tavern owners in Eastern Europe, or as shopkeepers, government bureaucrats, social workers, and teachers interacting with people in American ghettoes, Jews are sometimes perceived as representatives of the established order in their dealings with other oppressed groups. In the process, and quite unfairly, anti-Semitism is regenerated. It is understandable why we Jews would become angry at the groups who participate in these dynamics—the peasants in Eastern Europe or some African-Americans in the U.S. We wish that they would understand that we too are victims, yet it's understandable why they may see us otherwise.

Similarly, when people point to the relative material prosperity of Jews compared to other ethnic groups in the U.S. and use this as a reason to claim that Jewish oppression is a matter of the past, they fail to understand the history of that oppression. Jews were doing well from a material standpoint in prewar Germany as well. Anti-Semitism, like sexism, cannot be reduced to an economic category—there are other unique forms of oppression besides material deprivation. Jews who sympathize with the oppression of every other group but who have little understanding or knowledge of the history of their own people may be engaged in a massive denial of reality. This denial is sometimes inspired by internalized anti-Semitism and the resulting need to convince oneself and one's non-Jewish friends that Jewishness "really isn't very important," that it's "really just an interesting historical relic of the past."

There is no easy way out, no way for one people to make a separate peace with a world of oppressors or assimilate successfully and without moral compromise into that world. Our own liberation and our own mental health require the liberation of all, and the end of all oppression.

Pour Out Thy Wrath

After the meal, before opening the door for Elijah and before saying "Shefokh Chamatkha"

Tonight we remember our six million sisters and brothers who perished at the hands of the Nazis and at the hands of hundreds of thousands of anti-Semites who assisted those Nazis throughout Europe. We remember also the Jewish martyrs throughout the generations—oppressed, beaten, raped, and murdered by European Christians.

It's not fashionable to speak about these atrocities—particularly since some reactionary Jews use these memories to legitimate the current oppressive tactics of the Israeli government. But tonight we recall in pain and in anger what was done to our people. We do not think it appropriate to use this past as a blank check to justify what right-wing Jews wish to do to others. Yet we understand the pain that has led many of our fellow Jews to be deeply suspicious of a non-Jewish world that turned its back on us at the moment we were being systematically annihilated.

To get beyond the pain, we must first be allowed to express our anger. Permitting ourselves to articulate our anger, rather than trying to bury it or forget it or minimize it, is the only way that we can get beyond it. So, tonight it is appropriate to speak about our history, about the Holocaust, and about the ways that the American government and peoples around the world failed to respond to our cries and our suffering. What was done to us was wrong, disgusting, an assault on the sanctity of human life and on God. It is with righteous indignation that Jews have traditionally called out "Shefokh Chamatkha al ha'goyim asher lo yeda'ukha,"—Pour out your wrath, God, on those people who have acted toward us in a way that fails to recognize Your holy spirit within us as it is within all human beings. [This might be an appropriate place to pause for discussion.]

Yet, even as we speak our anger, we reaffirm our commitment to the messianic vision of a world of peace and justice, a world in which inequalities have been abolished and our human capacities for love and solidarity and creativity and freedom are allowed to flourish, a world in which all people will recognize and affirm in each other the spirit of God. In that day, living in harmony with nature and with each other, all peoples will participate in acknowledging God's presence on earth. We remain committed to the struggles in our own time that will contribute to making that messianic vision possible someday.

consensus was missing; some of the leadership had come to power, while others were divided or confused on political issues, not having expected to win. So the chance to purge the body politic of the moral contagion of collaboration had been lost. Instead, the list of police agents was used solely to check the credentials of the various parties' candidates for the June parliamentary elections. "It is probably not possible to go back," Hejdanek observes with regret. He worries that a copy of the list has already made its way to Moscow, where it could be used for blackmail. He fears that the press might again become complicit, however unwittingly, in the cause of those who wish Czechoslovakian democracy ill, for leakers also have motives. Then again, who could distinguish the genuinely guilty informers from the trapped, the tricksters, or the merely complicit? No one knows.

Hejdanek is saying, in effect, that the list is a loaded weapon. It must not be used but it cannot be wished away. Communist Czechoslovakia was a place of moral squalor; the truth of complicity has to be faced if society is to regenerate. Hejdanek notes: "It was known after the small revolution of '48—I mean in the last century—that one of our leaders collaborated for twelve years with the Austrian police."

In this part of the world, the history of complicity is long and complex. Totalitarianism was more than a slogan; it described, however imperfectly, a system of controls that penetrated the society from top to bottom. Yet some were more guilty than others, and profited more from their power. Today, people properly resent Communist apparatchiks who stand to keep, if not their former positions, their private spoils—homes, cars, accumulated capital. Who should be dispossessed of which ill-gotten gain, and by what means? Governments need the professional and managerial skills of the morally compromised—but at what price?

Nothing is simple in East Central Europe. Wars are fought to avenge the results of the previous war. One-time losers set out to be winners, to dislodge those who abused power. But mustn't there be a statute of limitations on settling scores? "There are no new beginnings in history," Hejdanek says.

III.

The poet and journalist Jáchym Topol, at twenty-eight, belongs to the second samizdat generation—less preoccupied by problems of moral complicity, more romantic, radical, and rambunctious. He observes that by the time the new administration had taken the secret police archives in hand, the top-level apparat had made off with the list of high-level informants—and worse, the rolls of the secret police themselves. "The secret police interrogated me," he says. "They were very active and brutal. But they're not on the list. If these people are not in prison and not even prosecuted, it's really strange to go after the petty informants."

"If the list landed on your desk," I ask, "would you publish it?"

"I don't know," he says. "I would have to see." He is the only journalist I talk to who thinks there is even a possibility he would publish it. Topol, his long blond hair hanging over his forehead, works on a laptop computer in the office of *Respekt,* a political-cultural weekly with a circulation of one hundred twenty-five thousand. Looming over the room is a poster for *Alphaville,* Jean-Luc Godard's brilliant film probing the possibility of love in a society run by secret police.

Who could distinguish the genuinely guilty informers from the trapped, the tricksters, or the merely complicit? No one knows.

The journalist Jaroslav Veis, in his early forties, argues that many people were coerced into becoming informers when their children were threatened. There is also the case of the rabbi of Prague, who had been told that the price for remaining rabbi was that he inform: when the pre-election screening committee of the Ministry of the Interior found his name on the list, he resigned his rabbinical post and was forced to give up his candidacy for Parliament. Is this just? Veis, who writes for *Lidové Noviny,* doubts it. He adds that another fourteen thousand informants, 10 percent, are not on the list. Pages were torn out of the registry of police documents, I learn later, and files deleted from the computer after the revolution.

Daniel Kumermann, a black-bearded Jewish activist and liberal former oppositionist who now writes for a right-wing daily—such are the oddities of post-Communist politics—says that a friend of his, looking through police records, found twenty-eight code names of informers in the Jewish community of Prague. What should be done about the list? Kumermann worries that democratic Czechoslovakia "is not completely secure." But he, like Zantovsky, thinks the problem of what to do with the list should be "moral, not legal." The problem is, "Who watches the watchman?"

Precedents are not exactly inspiring. In post-Nazi Germany, the occupying powers took it upon themselves to make such judgments with greater or lesser unsuccess. In 1946, for example, the Americans

established "denazification" tribunals composed of local citizens. All adult Germans were to fill out questionnaires, as a result of which they would be classified Major Offender, Offender, Lesser Offender, Follower, or Exonerated: a nice—indeed, Teutonic—grid. The first three categories were to be automatically removed from high positions in the educational system. But few, in the end, were actually fired. Truth was hard to come by. The Americans discovered that denunciations were not to be taken at face value.

During the war Slovakia was ruled by pro-Nazi fascists. Just after the war, Jews who came before tribunals to describe their persecution discovered they were complaining to their former persecutors.

IV.

Some consistent themes recur in all of these discussions of the list and its fate. No one thinks the problem of the list is strictly legal. No journalists I talk to say that if the list were dropped on their desks, they would surely publish it. Information for its own sake is not their game. Don't you see, they are trying to say, that we have just come out of half a century of moral squalor—seven years of Nazi occupation, followed, after a brief interregnum, by more than four decades of the party-state? Don't you see how widely the responsibility was distributed? How hard it will be to reconstruct? Isn't it obvious that we are obliged to do more than simply shower our country with information and feed the hunger for revenge?

I begin to understand why the president of Czechoslovakia and his press secretary have scandalized their influential American guests. Humanists like Havel and Zantovsky take pleasure and pride in tweaking the liberalism of the Americans. Czechoslovakians are also famous for irony—perhaps too famous. (Milan Kundera, who ought to know, has said that the Czechoslovakians turn it on for foreigners.) They relish theatrical fireworks, and winks.

Thus Zantovsky explains himself by claiming provocateur's license. This goes public in a curious way. A few days after the conference, Ben Bradlee writes a full-page account in the *Washington Post* about the Havel and Zantovsky speeches. He starts out thundering and ends up saying that Havel is a fine fellow and probably not to be feared. David Halberstam and the team of Bill Kovach and Tom Winship write their own op-eds in the *New York Times*. The *International Herald Tribune* reprints Bradlee; so does *Lidové Noviny*. Whereupon Zantovsky offers his resignation, which Havel declines to accept. "I spoke provocatively in order to trigger off a discussion," Zantovsky says on this occasion. "In retrospect," the idea of jailing journalists "is at variance with my conscience and I cannot support it. I do not believe ... that in this country a journalist should ever again be imprisoned for publishing the truth."

But I think the Czechoslovakians were also trying to tell the Americans a sort of parable. The Americans in their righteous indignation failed to grasp what was at stake for the Czechoslovakians, who were, in their clumsy and provocative way, groping for an approach to the spiritual problem of how to generate a moral order. For the Americans, the matter was simple—the black hats have been defeated, long live the white hats. Communism is over, freedom—read capitalism—has come. There are, of course, many Czechoslovakians who also like a two-toned color design. Vaclav Klaus, the powerful Minister of Finance, has said that any so-called third way (between capitalism and socialism) leads to the Third World. But the Americans are tempted to go even further. Other dualisms follow from the comforting either/or premise: The press is the defender of society and the state is its enemy. The press is to be trusted, the state is not. Freedom of the press automatically contributes to the common good.

For the Czechoslovakians of Havel's stripe—and for their counterparts in the former German Democratic Republic and Hungary, where similar issues have arisen—things are not so simple. These societies were corrupt in a way that Americans do not begin to grasp. Havel said it memorably in 1978—in such societies, the line between rulers and ruled runs "de facto through each person, for everyone in his or her own way is both a victim and a supporter of the system." Most people came to their own terms with the party-state; paths of least resistance presented themselves at every turn of daily life. This is why, according to Ladislav Hejdanek, the movement to finally topple the ancien régime had to come from students—they were too young to share in the guilt. But the work the students began is far from over; a moral corrosion so deep does not disappear when the rulers are overthrown, however velvet the revolution may be. Havel's appeals for responsibility are more than rhetorical exercises—they are meant to remind Czechoslovakians that their nation still lacks a social contract. If scores are to be settled among the vast numbers implicated in the old order, they could go on being settled forever. The man is speaking the language of reconstruction.

No social contract? After four decades of an order that draped itself in the language of obligation? For all that Communism droned on about duty to the people, it enshrined a practice of laissez-nous-faire. People got by, serving themselves as best they could. That has not yet changed. The intertwined habits of authoritarianism and inefficiency linger. One result is famously bad ser-

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Pathological Arrhythmicity in Men

Terry A. Kupers

Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) is upsetting the professional equilibrium of the American Psychiatric Association. APA members are debating whether to include PMS as a diagnostic category in the forthcoming revised edition of the Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV). The official title for the syndrome is late luteal phase dysphoric disorder—the luteal phase of the menstrual cycle denoting the time from ovulation to menses; dysphoria meaning a state of feeling unwell. Feminists argue that including PMS on psychiatry's official list of mental disorders would be just one more opportunity for men to pathologize the experience of women. Amid much debate, the APA has decided to leave this diagnostic category out of the fourth edition of the manual, but to include a description of late luteal phase dysphoria in the appendix—leaving open the possibility of declaring it an official category later.

Of course, from a traditional male perspective, women are too responsive to the menstrual cycle and to natural cycles generally. For instance, there is the familiar story of the woman being considered for a job or a promotion, only to be rejected when the male boss concludes that women are not as reliable as men—they take more sick days, they are more likely to quit when they get married, they require maternity leave, and they can be emotionally unpredictable, particularly at certain times of the month. Is it mere coincidence that just when a large number of women are proving themselves to be very competent in responsible positions of formerly male privilege, that a new category of mental disorder, reserved for women, finds its way onto the psychiatric profession's official list?

The male counterpart to late luteal phase dysphoria is pathological arrhythmicity. Before anyone turns to DSM to look it up, I should mention that I am inventing this category as I write. In contrast to women, men suffer from too little responsiveness to natural cycles—in fact to cycles of any kind. The coping styles we have developed in order to succeed at work—working long hours without letting up, arriving at work each day even when not feeling well, hiding our true feelings, remaining vigilant before the prospect of attack from as-yet-undisclosed enemies—all depend on our ability to override cycles. It is natural to cry when hurt and laugh raucously when something appears very funny; thus, our practiced stifling of tears and modulation of laughter are just two prominent symptoms of our arrhythmicity.

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Using whatever help she can get, the woman must prove the sexist assumptions of her boss wrong—she has to demonstrate that she can be as steady and reliable as any man.

We try to avoid all manner of cycles: dependence and independence; happiness and sadness; good fortune and bad; illness and health; potency and impotence. For instance, in an intimate relationship each partner will occasionally be dependent on the other, in what one hopes is some kind of reciprocal alternating rhythm. When the man is unable to tolerate thinking of himself as dependent, he tries to make it appear as if his partner is the dependent one. (Ironically, it is possible to depend on being depended on.) And men who are least tolerant of cycles in themselves tend to devalue most the cyclical experiences of women—hence the male insensitivity to PMS.

When Saul first enters my consulting room he insists we talk first about my fee. We arrive at a fee and he relaxes a little. Perhaps he is relieved that I am on his payroll; my financial dependence means that he does not have to see himself as the only needy one in this encounter. He proceeds to tell me that he would never be able to talk about these things with the men who share his fast-paced, competitive life. But since he trusts that I will be professional and guard his confidentiality, he has decided to tell me about the personal problems that trouble him.

His wife is the main problem, he explains. She is threatening to leave him because "she's not getting enough out of the relationship." He doesn't understand. He's never been very emotional or forthcoming with his inner experiences. But he is good to her in other ways: he's a good provider (though she thinks he doesn't make enough), and he takes care of their children evenings and weekends. "But I've always kept to myself in terms of feelings. When I'm depressed, I just want to be alone, to curl up in bed and blank out the whole world—including her. But I've always been like that. Why is she so upset about it now?"

Asked to explain his need to withdraw and be alone, he says he has always felt a need to hide his "weak spots," something he was taught to do when he was a child. No one wanted to hear about his feelings. His father told him men shouldn't cry for very long. Once while his father was coaching his little league team, Saul was hit in the face with a baseball. His father shook him and told him to stop crying and get back to his position: "What's the matter, do you want the other kids to think you're a sissy?" His mother was no more interested in his feelings—in fact she was chronically depressed and incapable of responding to him with empathy. Then there were the schoolmates who laughed at him when he cried after another boy had hit him in a fight. Saul learned early to restrain any display of emotion and vulnerability. "That's the image that got me where I am today. Now she says it's not good enough, there's something wrong with me because I'm not capable of telling her every little detail that's on my mind and everything I feel."

Several months into his therapy Saul contracts a case of the flu and has to stay home. The longer he is home, the more depressed and withdrawn he becomes. He cancels a session because he is not feeling well enough to come to my office. The next day he calls to see if we might reschedule. He seems agitated when he arrives at the make-up session, and reports a nightmare wherein he is beaten up by another man and humiliated in front of a crowd of onlookers. He wonders whether the dream represents his ongoing rivalry with a co-worker, a man whom he describes as "your all-American boy." This other man was a star football player and student body president in high school, went to the "right" college, and knows how to "pal around with the old boys" who run the corporation where they both work. He, on the other hand, felt awkward and unpopular in high school and college and still feels uncomfortable at office cocktail parties. The two men are currently vying for a promotion, and while he was home in bed Saul worried that his illness might cause him to fall behind in the race for that promotion.

Among the onlookers in the nightmare was a woman who he says looked a little like a girl he would have liked to date in high school, but who was dating the varsity quarterback. Until this point in the session, he's been sitting in a slumped position with his eyes fastened on a spot on the rug in my office. He looks up and asks if I think that girl might not also be his wife, and if perhaps his reluctance to share his feelings with her is related to the shame he feels about not being "the all-American boy."

This association leads us to a discussion of dependency in his marriage. He tells me that until recently he felt that his wife was very dependent on him, "clingy, as a matter of fact." Recently she has been very successful in a business venture and has established a circle of successful women friends who have helped to boost her confidence. She seems to rely on him less while demanding more of him in the way of emotional forthrightness. "I guess she is getting support from her women friends and doesn't need me as much anymore. That's why she is more critical. I kind of miss her clinginess—I used to enjoy her needing to be with me all the time. Now she prefers to be with her friends." He recalls that he enjoyed his mother's company most when she was depressed and "just around." He never felt that she wanted to hear about his feelings, but having her close was always reassuring.

Saul's is a classic case of pathological arrhythmicity. He is not able to express his emotions because doing so would amount to a break in the steadiness he congratulates himself on maintaining. Not surprisingly, he doesn't know his true desires: he spent so much time meeting the requirements of success that he has lost sight of what he really wants. He was attracted to his wife because she seemed so vital, but a vital woman craves emotional contact and eventually tires of relating to a man who cannot provide it.

Does the fact that women experience certain discomfiting states just prior to menses necessarily mean they suffer from a mental disorder—that the problem is internal to the woman? Perhaps the woman's problem as well as the man's does not lie with the woman's psychopathology, but rather with a disorder in our very "civilized" relationship to nature and to natural rhythms. In a society where being out of touch with nature is the norm, it is easy to see why the woman who reacts strongly to a natural monthly rhythm is viewed as mentally disordered.

Of course, biology does not determine gender relations; gender is socially constructed. The males and females of all species have different roles, if only because females bear children. But just about everything else

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I'm Not Fleeing, I'm Being Evicted

The following letter from an anonymous Russian woman originally appeared in the Soviet publication Ogonyok. *It was later translated into German by the Soviet literary critic Jury Ginsburg, who published it in the German journal* Tribüne: Zeitschrift zum Verstandnis des Judentums (Platform: Journal for the Understanding of Judaism). *Melvin Kornfeld, an American teacher and translator living in Israel, has supplied an English translation from the German.*

A gigantic queue in front of the American Embassy building. Today the 36,124th person has already been entered on the waiting list. The majority are Muscovites, but many have come from other cities—Tashkent, Kiev, Zhitomer, Vilna, Novosibirsk, Kishinev. At times, relatives from different cities coincidentally meet. To be sure, we are all accustomed to much, much more emotional queues. I too am standing here. I'm fortunate. A friend of mine, a very energetic person, had registered the two of us among the first thousands about two weeks ago when the queue started forming, and he now regularly checks the numbers. That's how I'm already getting tomorrow what everyone here is waiting for: the application for Soviet citizens who wish to leave permanently for the United States.

I would gladly have gone home. I had spent six hours standing in the frost; nonetheless I went afterwards to the New Zealand embassy. There too I registered; fortunately I was only number 79. (The day after there were already several hundred.) The checking of numbers was to begin at 5:00 p.m.; thus I wanted to sit down and have coffee. It was very cold, damp, and windy. Later it started to rain. It was around noon; there were queues everywhere, so that was the end of my coffee break. I walked through the center of the Moscow that I've always loved and wondered: Just what has happened to you and your country that you,who were born and bred here for forty years, are running around in the rain in your native city looking for some way to enable you to leave forever? And for what are nearly forty thousand of your fellow citizens silently crowding in front of the gate of a foreign embassy?

I don't want to leave because there is no meat, sugar, boots, soap, cigarettes, almost nothing in the country. And not even because the reward for any work undertaken is unimaginably small due to abstruse and grotesque obstacles. Of course all of that is terribly depressing, humiliating, causes bad blood, and probably even shortens our life spans. But no, that's not why I want to leave. Is it possible to abandon your country in such difficult times, like a rat abandoning a sinking ship?

It is intolerable when an entity to which you were once inseparably bound suddenly rejects you like some sort of foreign body.

However, I'm not fleeing; I'm being evicted. For me it's no emigration but rather an evacuation. I don't feel like a rat, but rather like a dog driven away by its evil master. And those silent people in front of the American embassy? Somehow one doesn't see in their faces even the slightest anticipated joy at a heavenly life in a utopia where there are no problems with meat and soap and the inhabitants' feet are shod, I imagine, in not less than ten pairs of boots per person. These emigrants are anything but the dregs of society. Quite normal, for the most part quite cultured people, and well dressed, some have even come with autos.... What's driving them into exile? What can they be looking for there? That's easily explained. We have one disadvantage in common which makes us unfit and useless for the country in which we were born. We are Jews. I too am Jewish. The identifying notation is in my passport. Each time the "Jewish question" comes up—more and more often these days—I mention this fact, and do so ever more loudly. I mention it because I don't want to leave the impression that I am afraid, or that I want to hide because of it. If, by chance, anyone I knew to be unconcerned about the "Jewish question" were to ask me whether I was a Jew, I would answer frankly that I don't

know. I really don't know, not just because there is also Russian blood in my veins. It seems I'll never be able to know for certain as long as I live in a country where the "Jewish question" exists. However, now I know quite certainly that I am a Jew since those splendid lads of Pamyat have promised to squash our kind like bedbugs; because the pensioner in the adjacent house regularly recommends we scram to Israel; because passersby made it immediately clear to me that we alone have led the Russian people to drink when I was about to drag a drunken woman from the street so she would not be run over. Therefore there is a certain "we" of which I am a part. If it were not so, what then could I feel?

Perhaps—no, probably!—it is bad, but Jewish culture had already been lost for generations before me in my family. My great grandfather was a religious Jew; my grandfather who fell in World War II wrote his letters from the front lines to his brothers in Hebrew; my grandmother knew only a bit of Yiddish; my mother knows neither Hebrew nor Yiddish. To my shame, I confess that except for Sholem Aleichem, who in any case belongs more to world classics than to Jewish literature specifically, I have read no Jewish authors. I learned to read at the age of four. My first reading material was Lev Tolstoy. As far as I can remember, my mother's three chief gods ruled in our home: Chekhov, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky. And Pushkin. And Lermontov. And Gogol. And Leskov. And Saltykov-Shchedrin. And Tyutshev ... Alexander Blok, Innokenty Annensky; Yakov Polonsky I discovered myself at the age of thirteen; Tsvetayeva and Achmatova at fifteen; Pasternak and Mandelstam at nineteen; Gumilyov not until twenty-three. I still remember it so precisely because it is my life, the stages of my life, just as much mine and just as significant as the birth of my son, or the memory of my no-longer-living friends and loved ones. All that is mine. And paintings. And music. And the landscapes. And the churches. And the villages. And here my grandfather fell. When the war began, he had just turned 54, had just had a serious operation. No one demanded that he go to the front. When my mother began to sob, pleading, "Papa, stay home! You're still sick and no longer so young, there are so many younger and healthier," he replied (I've heard it a thousand times from mother and grandmother), "What's the matter with you, my dear daughter! If everyone spoke and thought that way, who would then defend our country?" So he left and fell. In that very same year—1941. Just as his two brothers did. And all four brothers of my grandmother. All of them are buried in this country, but we don't know where.

Therefore, this is my homeland. Or, so I used to think. Now I think somewhat differently.

It would be hypocrisy to maintain that I've only recently become familiar with anti-Semitic remarks. I've had that experience, I've had very bitter experiences for a long time. However, anti-Semitism used to be quite different. It can be said that there used to be two kinds. First, the daily variety in the form of jokes, public slanders, and vulgar stereotypes, such as "All Jews are hucksters." These remarks were relatively rare and almost harmless compared to those that circulate today. To be sure, they offended me deeply, but they somehow seemed incongruous, atypical, and insignificant, especially since they were in my immediate environment completely inaccurate, unacceptable, and even incredible.

The second type of anti-Semitism was impersonal, official. My own example: I graduated from high school with excellent grades, along with a host of honors in literary contests. But I realized quite soon that I would never be admitted to the department of journalism at Moscow University, as had been my dream. (A highly talented classmate with an equally "bad" family name and equally "suspect" personal character applied to the biology department but wasn't admitted until his seventh try.) Even at my graduation—and constantly afterwards—I knew quite well where I would be permitted to work and where I wouldn't. Perhaps it is horrible, but I accepted it as something quite natural—as natural, say, as bad weather which you talk about when there's nothing else to talk about.

In 1987 one of the first articles about an organizaion called Pamyat appeared in the newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. If I'm not mistaken, it was at the end of May. I was walking on Gogelevski Boulevard and saw people crowding around the newspaper-stand, reading an article with much interest. (It was at the beginning of the era of glasnost.) Of course, I was also curious to see the newspaper. I no longer recall how it happened. Maybe I accidentally said something; or was the whole matter the fault of my eloquent nose? In any case, I noticed in the course of events that this was no arbitrary group of readers that had gathered but a special one. Suddenly a lively discussion developed between them and me. My God, what horror overcame me! It was a completely new, unfamiliar horror for me, not the fear of violence, nor fear for my own safety, but rather a fear mixed with revulsion, a fear mixed with embarrassment, a fear of them like a fear of God. Standing around me were not primitive, uncultured people. I was surrounded by genuine intellectuals with good faces, slim hands, who spoke excellently, without restraint, educated, with conviction. But oh, what they were convinced of!

I: What are you talking about? Admittedly, in Russia

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From Russia with Luggage: Absorbing the Exodus

Gail Hareven

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By the end of 1993, the State of Israel will have absorbed well over one million immigrants from the Soviet Union—a number that exceeds the annual immigration quota of the United States. This is proportionally equivalent to the entire population of France arriving in the U.S. Since the Soviet exodus began, the immigrants have continued to arrive from the Soviet Union at an astonishing rate: twelve hundred, fifteen hundred, three thousand per day. Even during the first week of the Gulf War twelve hundred people landed in Israel; they were given gas masks at the airport. Many are willing to risk the uncertainties and daily terror of the Gulf War. But Israel is ill prepared to make the massive changes necessary to absorb these Russian Jewish refugees.

In the most basic and literal way, the Soviet exodus into Israel defies comprehension. Surveying the changes it has already wrought in the daily life of Israeli society, one is at a loss to know where to begin. In a Jerusalem supermarket, where a musician from Leningrad sings a song of praise to fabric softeners? In a refugee camp in the Gaza Strip where a local factory worker has been replaced by a new immigrant? With an intellectual from Moscow who dreams that Russian will become an official language of the State of Israel? With an entire theater company which has arrived complete with actors, technicians, costumes, sets, and props? With three hundred immigrant authors? With the young doctor who, one month after her arrival in Israel, can already distinguish between Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews? With the sincere excitement of the *ulpan* teachers and thousands of volunteers who are providing assistance? With the anger and despair of young men and women who have completed their army service, only to find that they can no longer afford to rent an apartment?

The larger political questions arising out of this confusing picture promise to be no less wide ranging and no less troubled. Will the arrival of the new immigrants renew the dispute over "Who is a Jew" and the State of Israel? How will Soviet immigration affect the economic situation? Israel's foreign policy? Israel's policies in the Territories?

"Even I have trouble understanding these immigrants," says Masha Bouman, who left Russia fifteen years ago and is now working on her Ph.D. in Russian literature. All of us, veterans and immigrants alike, will pay a price for our ignorance about their culture and manners of thinking. The hopes and expectations we entertain for them border on the messianic: They will solve the demographic problem. They will enable us to annex the Territories. Absorbing them into our society will finally compel us to withdraw from the Territories. They will halt the "levantization" of Israel. They will fight against the Arabs. They will demonstrate a pragmatic attitude toward the Arab-Israeli conflict. They will stop the ultra-Orthodox. They will bring about a renewal of Zionism.

"This euphoria," says Dr. Yossi Dahan, a sociologist from the Bar-Ilan University, "is an expression of Israel's feeling of deep despair with herself—an expectation that an outside factor will save us from ourselves. Our relationship to this aliya is instrumental. We idealize them, and then place them in a purifying role."

Such hopes and such despair, like the immigration itself, occur on a scale that threatens to overwhelm us. To begin to grasp the proportions of Soviet immigration at the level of daily life, we should perhaps content ourselves with focusing on the experience of a single community. On the road to Ashkelon, a half-hour's drive west of Beersheba, lies the development town of Netivot. The town was established in 1957 as a transitory camp for North African immigrants. Because of its proximity to Gaza, which was on the other side of the border, the town was formerly called Gazata.

Netivot, which boasts the highest birthrate in the Jewish sector of Israel, is continually increasing its population. Of the some eleven thousand residents of Netivot, 65 percent are of Moroccan descent. Close to 20 percent of the population is ultra-Orthodox; 70 percent consider themselves "traditional." Netivot's attachment to traditional religion arises from three factors: the traditional affiliation of the town's original population;

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the presence of the Lithuanian "Yeshiva of the Negev"; and the presence of the Abunatzeira family, whose members are related to the famous *Tzaddik* (literally, a Righteous Man), Baba Sali the Healer, who arrived during the 1960s.

Baba Sali's renown is not confined to Netivot. "He has become a sort of National *Tzaddik* in Israel," says Dr. Yoram Bilu, a psychologist and anthropologist at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The Baba Sali, grandson of the kabbalist Rabbi Ya'akov Abunatzeira, is heir to a dynasty of Moroccan "practical *Tzaddikim.*" Some one hundred and fifty thousand people make an annual pilgrimage to the Baba Sali's grave site on the anniversary of his death, and no Israeli prime minister would consider missing the annual "Hilulah" ritual ceremonies. An additional one hundred fifty thousand people visit the gravesite throughout the year to pray and purchase amulets believed to have healing properties. The Baba Baruch, grandson of the Baba Sali, has inherited the role of *Tzaddik,* and has institutionalized the family charisma quite handsomely, with a company that enjoys considerable profits from the pilgrims' activities.

This year, eighty Russian immigrant families have arrived in Netivot. On a huge construction site larger than the town itself, apartment projects are being built to house the fifteen thousand additional immigrants Netivot is planning to absorb within a year and a half.

This is another way of saying that Netivot's population will double. The new half will be Ashkenazi and secular—a type largely unknown to the town. These Jews lack many of Judaism's defining characteristics: They know no Hebrew, hardly any Yiddish; they keep no traditions—in fact they have no knowledge of tradition, no knowledge of classical Jewish literature and Jewish history, almost no information about Zionist history and ideology, and minimal identification with the faith. "They are Jews because they chose to be," as Sovietologist Michael Agorsky observes; and for most that choice is still very new.

Netivot is prepared to absorb its incoming population in at least one way: it has a secular mayor. Born in 1956, Yehiel Zohar, one of a family of eleven children who made aliya from Morocco, arrived in Netivot at the age of six. Zohar made his way into politics as a Likud man, the Likud being the only secular political party that stands a chance in a place like Netivot, with its strongly traditional character. The traumas of the immigrant absorption (induced in part by the arrogant elitism of the Ashkenazi-led Labor Party) of the 1950s are still fresh in the town's memory and political present.

As a result of the long-standing conflict between the Lithuanian Yeshiva and the Court of the Baba Sali, Zohar manages the municipal government in a state of fragile coalition. "I sit with [the Orthodox factions]," he says, "and that compels me to observe the religious status quo; to consider them more than we would [the secular Jews]; to make economic concessions." To this day there isn't a single secular nursery or elementary school in Netivot.

The mayor of Netivot expects that the absorption of the Russians will provide his young son with opportunities that weren't available to him. "This aliya will strengthen sanity. There will be a cultural balance and a trend toward education for all. I know that my children will grow up in a different educational system, with a different quality of life, but in the meantime, the municipal government doesn't have the resources or the personnel to establish a new educational system. I am already planning to teach in the bomb shelters. And when there isn't enough room there? We will teach in tents." In 1991, approximately one hundred fifty new educators will be required in Netivot—how they are to be recruited and paid is much less certain.

Netivot is not the only place where answers are lacking. In a 1990 report, the Israeli Ministry of Education optimistically surveyed the prospects for the "Immigrant Child in the Schools," and cheerfully announced a large mobilization of teachers to accommodate the educational needs of thirty-five or forty thousand immigrants over the next three years. In a January 1989 conference of school principals, Hanna Levitch, the principal of an elite high school in Jerusalem, asked how many immigrants she should expect. "They told me that it wasn't necessary to plan since there wouldn't be any *olim* (immigrants) and certainly not in Jerusalem." Currently, Israel's education system is absorbing some four hundred new pupils each day. And by all accounts, this population of immigrants greatly values education. What will they do when the level of education that they are used to is not provided?

In a place like Netivot—and Netivot is but one, relatively stable absorption site—the Russians are likely to create their own independent educational system, in Russian. This could be a "third Israel," out of the socially distressed areas already known as "the second Israel." Cultural separatism among the *olim* intelligentsia is already gaining currency.

"I am very frightened," says Sovietologist Agorsky, "of a Russian cultural ghetto and a cultural war. In the USSR there are already rumors being spread that the Russian language will become an official language here. There is a great danger of a Lebanonization of Israel when the cultural war becomes translated into a political battle. The development will be like the situation

with the ultra-Orthodox. The Russians will create a political party and begin to make demands, receiving budgets, special channels on television and radio, separate schools—and then the Jews of Eastern origins will demand for themselves what the Russians receive. We are talking about a gradual nibbling away at the common base of Israeli society."

This is why Professor Agorsky is opposed to the founding of a Russian Party. Zohar views this possibility, like most things, pragmatically. "The airplane of the next mayor of Netivot," he says to me, "hasn't landed in Israel yet." In the meantime Zohar is trying to recruit the immigrants as allies in his programs for the town and especially in his struggle against the ultra-Orthodox.

The night that the Gulf War broke out, Zohar made his way from one immigrant apartment to the next, waking up families to explain to them what was happening and to make sure that everyone knew how to use the gas masks. The immigrants are very grateful, and are aware of their debt to Zohar. "Yehiel Zohar is the best," they tell me, "Netivot is the best." But this paternalistic phase of absorption will soon come to an end, after the massive building project is completed and huge waves of immigrants begin to arrive all at once.

Until now Zohar has refused to absorb people who don't have secure employment prospects. Netivot suffers from an unemployment rate of 15 to 20 percent. But soon the matter will be out of Zohar's personal control. Other towns face the same prospect. With more than ninety-four thousand unemployed in January 1990 —up from seventy-one thousand in January 1989—the State of Israel doesn't know what it can offer to the immigrants. There is hope that small local industries will develop. And of course, Israeli officials hope that the immigrants will take up a good deal of the economic initiative themselves. But such hopes could prove little more than wishful thinking, since they are fixed upon a population that lacks capital and experience in free-market conditions. "The Soviet regime has succeeded on one account. It has built the Soviet Man—a tolerant person lacking initiative who expects that the government will decide for him," says Leonid Rodin, who works for the Jewish Agency and has been in Israel for ten-and-a-half years. "In the older generation [of Soviet immigrants] there are people who can't even take the initiative to move to a different apartment."

In the meantime, Israel keeps building apartments, and its citizens are having difficulty thinking about what will happen next. More than two hundred million dollars are invested in the Netivot building project, although the municipal budget of twenty-five million dollars has not been increased by one shekel. "Already in the coming months," says Zohar, "we won't be able to provide basic services."

The immigrants, for the time being, are willing to compromise and work outside of their professions for low wages. The current price of a piano lesson is between forty and fifty shekels. A teacher at one *ulpan* offers her student from Moscow a job giving the teacher's daughter piano lessons for six to seven shekels. The student walks forty-five minutes to the *ulpan* in order to save bus fare.

"They aren't as spoiled as we are," says Zohar. "They are willing to accept any position." Yehiel Zohar knows that even the "bad" jobs are going to run out soon and then we will return to state-initiated work programs, the kind that employed Zohar's father during the 1950s.

Will the immigrants continue to arrive under these conditions? "The absorption process is becoming a catastrophe," says Leah Slovina, director of the Russian department of the Jewish Agency. "With this kind of absorption it may be that we will stop the aliya. People come to me who have no money for bread. One must remember that this is a pragmatic aliya. They are not refugees—in the Soviet Union they have apartments, cars, a wealth of free cultural activities, even dachas (summer cottages on small plots of land). The economic situation [in the USSR] is terrible, but no one is going hungry. There is despair, there is chaos, everything is crumbling, and this is a situation which they want to get away from, but to what are they coming? To hunger. Here there are hungry *olim*. Absorption is nonexistent. This is a mass deception."

Gradually, the immigrants are replacing the Arab workers from the Territories. "Exchanging our cousins for the *olim,*" in Zohar's words. On the building sites in Netivot, construction workers from Gaza work side-by-side with Russian immigrants, building homes for the Russians who will in turn push the Gazans out of the labor force. "Here we have workers, seventy, all from Gaza," says Boris, a building engineer from Smolensk. "On Friday Gaza is closed, no working. We need to teach our Jews building work. Doesn't depend to (sic) strikes, intifada."

Yehiel Zohar is quick to provide his *olim* with political education. "And the Arabs," Zohar asks Boris and Yuri, "where will the Arabs go?" "To the Territories," they answer.

Of the seventy workers from Gaza who were employed in the Carmel Carpet Factory in Netivot, only ten remain. The other sixty were fired and replaced by Russian immigrants. "What happened to those who were fired?" I ask Moti Landau, director of the factory, and Moti shrugs his shoulders. "They're throwing stones."

The frequent strikes coming out of the intifada and the IDF-imposed curfews in the Territories mean that

workers from the West Bank and Gaza are now regarded as bad employment risks. Other forces in Israeli society—rising fears from terrorism, the climate of nationalism and genuine economic needs of the *olim*—make the dismissal of Arab workers seem all but inevitable. "Currently there are workplaces that are profiting from the severance funds that are not being paid to the Arabs," Knesset member Shulamith Aloni tells me. "The workers are unaware of their right to receive advance notice of being dismissed, and of the severance pay due to them in the amount of one month's salary for every year worked. With the assistance of the military administration in the Territories, which is preventing them from demanding what is their right, a robbery is being committed here.... In the end," she concedes, "the aliya must quicken the pace of the peace process. The needs are so great that even in Israel there will be upheaval."

"If Israel thinks it can raise forty billion dollars without a political process, it is sorely mistaken," says Yamin Suissa. Mr. Suissa is the head of the *Ohalim* movement, which organizes protests in the poorest neighborhoods in Israel.

"And the Arabs? What will they do? Where will they go? What will they eat? Where will they work?" Yehiel Zohar repeats his questions to Ina Azarov, and she is embarrassed. A young woman of twenty-five, who has been in Israel for less than six months, she is already using her limited Hebrew to manage a group of construction workers from a small caravan on the building site. She is currently supporting her young son, her mother, her grandmother and her sister, who is still learning Hebrew in the *ulpan*. Her workday begins at 8:30 a.m. and continues until 3:30 p.m. At 4:00 she retrieves her son from his daycare center, and at 5:30 she is stationed at the *ulpan,* working on her Hebrew until 8:30. Azarov doesn't leave Netivot. She hasn't yet travelled to Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, or Haifa. "So, what about the Arabs?" Zohar presses her for an answer. "Well," she says, "let there be half Russians and half Arabs." "And what will the other half eat?" "If I knew the answer to that I would be head of the country, Prime Minister. I keep quiet. But I think that Arabs in Israel, not good (sic). This is a country for Jews." Azarov goes on to recount the incidents of anti-Semitism that had menaced her and her son in the Soviet Union.

Zohar has an answer to the questions he keeps posing to the immigrants, but he is careful not to state it explicitly. "It is impossible to engage the entire country in dealing with the intifada and the related arguments with the United States and at the same time absorb this aliya." "Are you talking about giving up the Territories?" I ask. "Do you want them to throw me out of the Likud? There should be autonomy, there should be anything. The success of the aliya depends on the political situation. You think the Likud doesn't know that? They know it. In the end," Zohar is quick to add when he realizes that he may have gone too far, "the Likud will provide the solution, and it will be a political solution. Just imagining my son as a soldier in Gaza being showered with stones ... "

"We are talking about an impossible task, but it is the fate of the Jewish people to mobilize around impossible tasks," said Shamir on January 21, 1990, when he appeared before one of the Knesset subcommittees in order to respond to the state comptroller's report on the inadequacies of the aliya and absorption program. The one who takes action is the one who makes the mistakes, and in the end the one who will be blamed for the errors. This is what happened to MAPAI, the Labor Party—and its policies in dealing with the absorption of Sephardim in the 1950s continue to be a major reason why the Sephardic majority now votes for the Likud. It is still too early to know whether this same dynamic will happen again—with the Likud taking the brunt of the blame. One of the things that sets Zohar apart from the old political hacks of the 1950s is that he lacks a condescending attitude toward the immigrants' culture. Nor would condescension toward Russians have the same impact as it did toward the Sephardim, given the Russians' belief that they are culturally superior to mainstream Israelis.

In Israel today, more than four-hundred-thirty-nine thousand people live below the poverty line, including two-hundred thousand children. "People who are close to the edge of the middle class, those who have just started to climb, will slip back down in two to three years. I hope that when the protest starts it will be directed toward the government and not toward the *olim,*" says Dr. Dahan. Zohar's stance is clear on this point. "I insist that when the building project is completed that it be populated not only by new *olim.*"

"In another year and a half," predicts Yamin Suissa, "there will be a million and a half people under the poverty line. I expect a protest movement to be organized. Even now we can see the beginning of its creation. We can already see some *olim* who are living in tents with other homeless families."

Dahan and Suissa are willing to suggest trying to reopen the gates of the United States, which Israel pressured to close.

When the euphoria subsides a bit and the stresses become more apparent, it is possible that even the Law of Return will be questioned by some Israelis. In a classroom of immigrants in Jerusalem I hear students who themselves have just been absorbed calling to slow down

(continued on p. 90)

Liberated Theology

Alicia Ostriker

The Book of J, translated by David Rosenberg, interpreted by Harold Bloom. Grove Weidenfeld, 1990, 340 pp.

Was J a woman? If the Jewish Bible is a fabric of multiple authorship, written down over a period of 1000 years—roughly equivalent to the time between *Beowulf* and T. S. Eliot—then the texts Biblical scholars have identified as "J" or "Jahwist," because of their use of "Jahweh" to name God, comprise probably its oldest and boldest thread of narrative. Or perhaps one should say its toughest set of yarns. "J" runs through Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers, includes versions of the creation, the flood, the tower of Babel, the sagas of the patriarchs, the Exodus, the encounter at Sinai, and the wanderings in the wilderness; it ends with the death and burial of Moses at God's hand. Thus its stories are those of our prehistory, the vast stretch of archaic Judaism of which no written record remains.

Scholars have speculated that Abraham might have lived in the eighteenth century B.C.E., that the Exodus took place in the thirteenth century B.C.E., that J dates from around the tenth century and was interwoven with other strands of writing known as the "E" or Elohist, the "P" or Priestly, and the "D" or Deuteronomist texts, by a synthesizing hand we call the Redactor, about 400 B.C.E. This vast span of time confounds our modern sensibilities. Moreover, the Bible as we read it today was not finally canonized until late in the first century C.E., after the fall of the second Temple, when it became the Book that was to knit Judaism together throughout the Diaspora.

Until a century or so ago, the authorship of the Bible's first five books was ascribed to Moses. Only quite recently has a combination of archaeological and philological research made reasonable guesswork possible about dates and authors, according to the fascinating accounts in Frank Moore Cross's *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (1973) and Richard Eliot Friedman's *Who Wrote the Bible?* (1987), and plenty of debate persists. Academics, however, make little attempt to explain the greatest mystery about the Bible: that after all these millennia people still read this archaic work with passionate love, still find it central to the human condition, still live by its myths. For the authors of *The Book of J,* the answer is simple: J is great literature, so great that it stands at the heart of the Bible and of Western consciousness, even after its most radical qualities have been "ignored, or repressed, or evaded" by successive waves of rabbis and theologians.

In his exuberantly provocative commentary on David Rosenberg's equally provocative new translation of the J text, literary critic Harold Bloom argues that J was neither a professional scribe nor a "school" of scribes, but a single brilliant artist of the court of King Rehoboam, Solomon's disastrous son and heir; that J was comparable in genius to Homer, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Cervantes, was equal in irony to Kafka; and that she was a woman. He proposes further that she neither loved nor feared God, and that "from the standpoint of normative Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, J is the most blasphemous writer that ever lived." His motive is to release the Book of J from its surrounding texts and from "twenty-five hundred years of institutionalized misreading," by biblical commentators. A second motive is to challenge our comfortable distinction between literature and sacred writing. Similarly, David Rosenberg's intention as a translator is to avoid both the mellifluous grandeur of the too-familiar King James Version and the blandness of modern versions, to seek J's combination of "ironic stance" and "intense drama."

How well do they succeed? If you like being jolted into attention and forced to rethink and reimagine everything you thought you knew about the Bible, *The Book of J* is a volume to treasure. Rosenberg, a poet and the editor of *Congregation* and *Testimony,* gives us a brisk and prickly narrative full of undisguised, abrupt transitions and mystifying ellipses, replete with wordplay and puns that aren't necessarily the same as those in the Hebrew but stand as robust equivalents. Sometimes the results are deeply satisfying, as when the play on Adam's name (from *ha–adam,* the earth) is rendered "Yahweh shaped an earthling from clay of this earth," or when the first man needs a "partner" who is taken from "part" of him and for whom man "parts" from his mother and father. Rosenberg calls both the first man and the animals "creature," as both are *nefesh* in Hebrew, instead of following the King James and the J.P.S. in calling man a "living soul" and animals "creatures." Rosenberg downplays moralizing: Abram's trust in God is accounted to him as "strength," not righteousness. What other translations call "sin" and "evil," Rosenberg tends to translate as "contempt." He also gives us playful pseudo-Hebrew etymologies, as when Rachel prays at Joseph's birth "may this son en*joy safe*ty"; and important recurrent motifs, such as the notion of bounds and boundaries in the Sinai theophany, where God and man veer dangerously close together. Some of the scenes are wonderfully vivid, like this one at Mamre:

> Now Yahweh was seen by Abram among the oaks of Mamre; he was napping by his tent opening in the midday heat. He opened his eyes: three men were standing out there, plain as day. From the opening in the tent he rushed toward them, bent prostrate to the ground. "My Lord," he said, "if your heart be warmed, please don't pass your servant, in front of his eyes. Take some

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water, please, for washing your feet; rest a moment under the tree."

Some of the puns are awkward, like the play on Hava (Eve) and "have all" and the one on Jacob and jaywalking; a pity because the names in Hebrew are wordplays pointing significantly in other directions—Eve's name derives from the verb meaning "lifegiving," while Jacob's plays on "heel" and is an anagram of "wrestle." I'm not sure why Rosenberg translates *hineni* "I'm listening" rather than "Here I am," or "I'm here," or calls Pharaoh's foremen "policemen." Making God tell Adam not to "touch" the tree of knowledge is a plain distortion—this is Eve's idea in the text. Nor do I understand why Rosenberg omits major sections in the Jacob story (the comic trick of the spotted and speckled cattle, the shocking betrayal and massacre of the town of Schechem by Jacob's sons), and whole dramatic dialogues in the Joseph story. An especially conspicuous omission is the beginning of Exodus, with its striking conspiracy of women (midwives, Moses' mother, his sister, and Pharaoh's daughter) united across class and ethnic lines to break Pharaoh's law. A book attributed to a woman author unafraid of impropriety should certainly retain such episodes. Nor do I see why the translation elides Exod. 2:13-14, the devastating scene in which Moses tries to intervene in a fight between two Hebrew slaves, only to be asked "Will you kill me the way you killed the Egyptian?" To argue that J was an aristocratic author, as contemptuous of the rabble as Shakespeare, would require retaining that passage. But despite such curious elisions, the Rosenberg translation still provokes the reader to alertness, and clings with astonishing closeness to the economy of the original Hebrew. Nobody will doze off reading it.

Harold Bloom's contribution to *The Book of J* presents the reader with a different kind of challenge. To begin with, I want to distinguish his controversial speculations on J's authorship from his commentary on the text itself. Unlike him, I have no trouble associating J with oral and communal tradition, even if the final hand may belong to a single aristocratic individual. In its speed and compression, as well as its coruscating liveliness, J sounds to my ear much more like Norse saga, Native American storytelling, or the tales associated with Australian aboriginal song lines, than the leisurely amplitudes of Shakespeare or Chaucer. By no means does this prevent the work from being sublime art. As Robert Alter has observed, we should be able to accept collective creativity in the Bible just as we do in film. We ought also to remember that storytelling in pre-literate cultures is highly skilled and specialized work, which often demands ambitious syntheses of memory and originality. The notion that preliterate storytelling is somehow quaint is a sentimental nineteenth-century conceit. Nor is communal creation inconsistent with divine revelation. On the contrary, the advent of literacy seems to reduce humanity's receptiveness to the sacred. Since we know that J brings together material from a long and densely peopled past, it makes sense to me to see it as a record of divine encounters and imaginings from an incalculable wealth of sources, forcefully synthesized.

There is no "original sin" in Genesis, no division of body and mind, no shrinking from biology.

Bloom's argument that J was a woman is thin—but rather delightful. Friedman's *Who Wrote the Bible?* includes the same speculation. Since historical evidence is nonexistent Bloom simply announces that J's treatment of female characters—Eve, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Tamar (his favorite), and Zipporah—and the text's proto-Kafkaesque irony sound like a woman's voice to him. "J has no heroes, only heroines," he claims at one point; and at another, "the only grown-ups in J are women." Well, maybe. I certainly have nothing to say against his interpretation of Genesis 2: "It is not just that J has given six times the space to woman's creation as to man's; it is the difference between making a mud pie and building a much more elaborate ... structure." Bloom observes that the woman is evidently superior—active, curious, and imaginative—while Adam merely imitates. Yet the toughness of J's women might have carried over from matrilineal tradition, or even from goddess worship, which was by no means dead in Solomon's time. Gardens and snakes are the property of goddesses in many ancient myths. Feminist biblical critic Ilana Pardes believes that the women in Exodus, including Zipporah, are splintered versions of Isis.

Taking the argument from a slightly different angle, however, we might notice the astonishing fact that none of the males in J's narrative is a warrior; on the contrary the patriarchs and Moses are all family men and avoiders of combat, given to negotiation and bargaining rather than violence. Now *there's* a case for a woman author. Maybe then J's monarchic ideal was the cosmopolitan and tolerant Solomon—who made trade, not war—rather than (as Bloom believes) the charismatic warrior David. And then again, maybe not. The writings of highly educated courtly women at a similar stage in other cultures, for example, Sei Shonagun's *Pillow Book*, Lady Murasaki's *The Tale of Genji,* or Christine de Pisan's *City of Ladies,* lean toward romance rather than mythopoeic narrative. In any case, it is an entertaining notion that Rosenberg and Bloom, finding in the J author a mysteriously transgressive voice, wish to assign it a female gender.

Beyond the question of authorship, what Bloom has to say about the text of J is outrageous, heretical, and often compellingly accurate. The Jahweh of this text is indeed amoral, as his later avatar in the Book of Job will be. His punishments can be irrationally harsh, his favor irrationally generous. He can be cosmically mean, as in the statement of Gen. 3:22 that the man must be prevented from eating of the tree of life lest he become immortal "like us." At moments, such as his strange attack on Moses in Exod. 4:24–25, or his warning to the Israelites to keep their distance at Sinai lest he break forth and consume them, Jahweh seems explosively and uncontrollably daimonic. Bloom argues that he is a figure something like King Lear, something like Freud's superego, and something like an extravagantly powerful child. His "essence is surprise." At the same time, Jahweh's intimate attention to Abraham and his people in contrast with the divine indifference of the gods in the Mesopotamian pantheon "is J's ultimate humanizing trope." The narrative's spine traces the transmission of a blessing that has little to do with conventional goodness, and everything to do with "more life, and the promise of yet more life, into a time without boundaries."

The J writer—and indeed Torah in general—exhibits little of the anxiety

regarding the flesh and sexuality that characterizes both Platonism and Christianity, and that ultimately seeps into rabbinic Judaism. There is no "original sin" in Genesis, no division of body and mind, no shrinking from biology. J is of the earth, earthy. In addition, the narrative is full of underappreciated comedy. Bloom cites a wealth of comic episodes: Shem and Yafat's "hilariously respectful" backward-walking to cover the drunken Noah; Sarah's eavesdropping, and her incredulous laughter at the news that she will become pregnant in old age; Lot's "comic and somewhat rancid" incestuous seduction by his daughters; Jacob's trickery of Laban; the encounter of Joseph and Potiphar's wife; the "wonderful fun" of the plagues; and the "high humor" of Balaam's ass in its nightmarish wilderness contest. Bloom is able also to notice the torment and pathos of Jahweh's relation with Moses as compared to the dignity of his covenant with Abraham. Indeed, one of the chief strengths of *The Book of J* is Bloom's ability to treat every character, every relationship in the text, as unique, delivered from the Procrustean bed of conventional piety.

Beyond his readings of specific passages and characters, Bloom's most valuable contribution to biblical scholarship is his insistence that the text belongs to whichever reader has the strength to seize it. We need not be intimidated by the learning of rabbis and scholars; we can read with our own eyes. In a sense this is something that mainstream commentators have already said. The scholar Gerald Bruns, writing on midrashic tradition, remarks,

> If the text does not apply to us it is an empty text.... We take the text in relation to ourselves, understanding ourselves in its light, even as our situation throws its light upon the text, allowing it to disclose itself differently, perhaps in unheard-of ways.

Literary critics, too, have reveled in the massive contradictions of biblical writing—what Geoffrey Hartman calls the "fault lines" of the narrative, which provide a garden of delight for the exegete. My own experience, perhaps different from Bloom's, is that Torah as a whole is like an immense force field in which contradictions are held together by the pure strength of the concept—dare I say the reality—of monotheism. Historically it is perhaps the case that the God of the Jewish people is an assemblage of impossibilities. Our God is tribal and universal, creator and destroyer, just and unjust, cosmically remote and intimately personal, wrathful and merciful, father and mother to us, because monotheist belief had somehow to absorb and digest many of the qualities of whatever male and female gods it was supplanting. Theologically, I believe that the God who is One is a God who includes and contains all contradiction, and must forever overwhelm the attempts of religious institutions and scholars to define and constrain the divine nature. Thus the art of compromise or synthesis whereby the deviant texts (and spiritual and political perspectives) of the Jahwist, the Elohist, the Deuteronomist, the Priestly writers, and the Redactor became Torah seems to me a continuation rather than a contradiction of what J was doing. If this seems implausible, I stand with Bloom's assertion that "J's fundamental scheme is paradox."

Nor can I quite condemn, as Bloom does, the traditions of normative rabbinic Judaism, however much I, too, find myself standing outside them. As a feminist and a committed anti-authoritarian personality, I would concur with Professor Bloom's assertion that "all our accounts of the Bible are scholarly fictions or religious fantasies." But the efforts to imagine Judaism afresh that we see in the work of writers like Judith Plaskow and Marcia Falk are efforts to do what Jews have always done—like Jacob, and like the authors of *The Book of J* themselves, we want to wrestle from God, or from the text, what will satisfy our spiritual needs. When the Temple fell, Judaism had one clear set of needs it had to meet in order for it to survive. Today, perhaps, it has a new set. If we persist, we too may wrestle a blessing. □

Doctored J

Edward L. Greenstein

The Book of J, translated by David Rosenberg, and interpreted by Harold Bloom. Grove Weidenfeld, 1990, 340 pp.

How to read, much less discuss, the earliest strand of biblical narrative as an opus, a discrete work, after its original shape has been continually reworked by millenia of redaction and pious exegesis? That is the challenge that Harold Bloom, a secular modern ironist, standing on the sidelines of the Jewish religious tradition, sets for himself.

The Bible is such a fixture that ordinary ingenuity cannot overcome what Bloom likes to call its "facticity": the way Christians and Jews, as a result of centuries of assimilating, adapting, and interpreting the Bible, package it in conventional categories of meaning. To transcend these traditional views demands extraordinary fortitude and creativity. To liberate us from the Bible's facticity, Bloom follows his oft-expressed view that we are our method. He recreates an author of his own temperament, an alter ego, standing behind the Torah, the cornerstone of Western civilization: an urbane, ironic commentator writing close to the center of power, wittily rendering human affairs and outrageously depicting matters holy. In the beginning was Bloom. Except that within

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the ancient Israelite world, where men controlled politics and cult, such an ironist would need to be a woman.

The sources of the Torah remain anonymous; they have come down to us fused into a unity. Working against the Bible's facticity, Bloom seeks to provide an identity of time, place, position, and gender for the original author, and to overcome the redactional unity of the Torah by dividing it into its supposed sources—deconstruction of a decidedly non-Derridean kind. Where Derrida would presume the incoherence of any and all unities, Bloom sets up unities within a divided whole. Bloom would undo what Judaism has done to J. Classical Judaism read J, or rather the Torah as a whole, as though the ancient Hebrew were espousing the views of the rabbis. Bloom would have the Torah read more to his own nonrabbinic way of seeing the world. In place of an orderly and just God establishing a framework of norms by which we might live, Bloom projects a world in which even God is an explorer, surprised by what he himself finds there.

Any competent examination of the Rosenberg "translation" will show free invention, distortion, and just plain error at every turn.

In order to accomplish his task, Bloom, a literary critic, has, ironically, sought to do what academic bible scholars began doing in earnest just over a century ago: to isolate the‹d‹ hypothetical literary sources of the Pentateuch and the Torah, and to interpret each as a distinctive document. But the historian seeks to place the sources in relation to one another and to the other Biblical writings, such as the Prophets, with a much different agenda in mind—to reconstruct the development of ancient Israel's religion and thought.

Source criticism of the Torah has become a much beleaguered discipline in recent years, beset by literary arguments for the Torah's unity and internal doubts concerning the reliability of its method. From within the fold, source criticism has splintered into a variety of approaches far more complex than one would gather from the rather orthodox account in Richard E. Friedman's *Who Wrote the Bible?* (1987). Bloom, however, largely follows what he claims is "traditional" source criticism's identification of the "J" strand in the Torah narrative—he omits J's law and poetry, and selects passages somewhat idiosyncratically—and interprets the story as an independent book, the "book of J."

Sometimes, Bloom's literary approach can yield valuable readings of the text. There is much sense, for example, in his characterization of J's deity as uncanny, surprising, even shocking. What else can one make of the demonic-seeming, divine assault on Moses' family just as Moses obeys YHWH's command to return to Egypt (Exod. 4)? In its redactional placement, the episode functions variously. The blood of circumcision anticipates how Israelites would later paint the paschal lamb's blood on their doorposts to propitiate the destructive force of the divine. Perhaps if the intended victim is Moses' son, then Moses is to learn what it is like to be threatened with the death of a firstborn son before he must threaten Pharaoh with just such a loss. Or again, the God who visits the Plagues upon Egypt's innocent children is not a stranger to us who have read of the unmotivated attack on Moses or his child. But in its putative prior life in the J narrative, the episode is as enigmatic as Bloom suggests.

Bloom's self-styled "fiction" of J can work as an independent interpretation of what Bloom and Rosenberg have isolated and reassembled as *The Book of J.* This book would not be the bible scholars' J, which includes poetry, law, and additional narrative fragments; much less would it be a part of the Jewish Torah. It would be another creation. As such, *The Book of J* might be viewed as little more than an intriguing, amusing, provocative English counter-Scripture. That, however, is not how Bloom and Rosenberg present their work. By describing their text as a translation of Hebrew passages from the Bible, and by ascribing the book's origins to a particular time and place—and to an author of specific social standing and gender—Bloom and Rosenberg are engaging in philology and historical criticism. And their efforts must be assessed accordingly. The interpreter and translator of *The Book of J* may only be playing doctor, but when they begin to operate on a real Hebrew source, we do well to show professional concern for the life of the patient.

That the hypothetical J source comments on the house of David and Solomon in its stories about Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph is a widely held theory among biblical scholars. In commenting on J's comments, Bloom offers many insights, some old, some possibly new—in sum, useful literary interpretation. What is novel in the Bloom-Rosenberg "Bible" is J's cynicism and her disconnectedness from Israelite religion, from the God–Israel covenant. The covenant is there, but it has been voided of content; only such props as Mt. Sinai and the ark are left standing. Bloom and Rosenberg most obviously excise all manner of ritual and civil legislation. At Mt. Sinai Moses receives the stone tablets—but there is scarcely any account of what is inscribed on them! Martin Buber has written that God can reveal only Godself, but the ancient Israelites seem to have understood revelation to include the legal *content* of the Torah.

Bloom may contend that even bible scholars have trouble discriminating between J and the next literary layer, E, in the so-called covenant code of Exodus 20–23. For that reason Bloom drops the binding-of-Isaac story from *The Book of J*—finding it too tough to disentangle J from J's later revision. But Bloom has no such problem in the Garden of Eden narrative, where critics rarely attempt to separate out the narrative's confluence of sources. By scuttling the subject of covenant, Bloom thins out *The Book of J*'s story after Jacob and Joseph give way to Moses the lawgiver.

Bloom and Rosenberg further purge the book of religious content by rendering such theological terms as "evil" and "sin" in secular substitutions like "monstrous" and "contempt." Apparently uncomfortable with authority, Rosenberg translates the verb "command" *(tsivva)* as "fill with desire." He despiritualizes the Hebrew original by transforming such a sentence as "the human became a living being" (literally, "a living breather") into "man becomes a creature of flesh." Rosenberg and Bloom thus turn a world where God authorizes normative actions into one where humans psychologize them. The Hebrew *nefesh hayya* contains no word for either creature or flesh. In

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Trout or Hamburger: Politics and Telemythology

Michael Schudson

Has television taken over the practice of American politics? Have cynically manipulated images and sound bytes mesmerized the American public? Have politicians bypassed the citizen's rational decision-making process with a shortcut to some image center in the brain that values appearance over substance, and flash over philosophy? In American politics today, do the eyes have it?

Anyone listening to political commentary in the weeks before the November elections would surely answer yes. The airwaves teemed with political commercials. The newspapers overflowed with commentary about the broadcast spots, and "truth boxes" monitored the accuracy of the television ad claims and counterclaims. And then new TV spots incorporated the print commentary about the old spots. At times, candidates and voters seemed to be on the sidelines, passively observing media consultants and ad agencies on the playing field.

As soon as the election was over, however, talk about the brilliance or mendacity of 30-second demagoguery faded. On November 5, every politician was a candidate, and took a candidate's obsessive interest in every little bit of good or harm that might come from advertising. On November 7, there were only winning candidates, glad to be in office, and losers, seeking some kind of solace in a bad time. The losers seemed to change quickly from activists to philosophers, from political strategists to political scientists. So Dianne Feinstein's campaign manager, Duane Garrett, was suddenly reminding people that for twenty-five years (with the exception of 1974, the Watergate year) California voted Republican for president and governor—so what else could one expect in 1990? In his post-election assessment, the story was not that Feinstein lost but that she came as close as she did.

Did Feinstein's TV spots make a difference? Did Paul Wellstone's in Minnesota? Or Jesse Helms's in North Carolina? The question, Duane Garrett notwithstanding, is still important. But it is notoriously elusive. Despite all the attention that the press had lavished on political commercials, it is no simple task to evaluate their potency, as opposed to observing their ubiquity and decrying their negativity. Even the newspaper "truth box" commentaries, for instance, have been criticized for focusing on the commercials' explicit claims rather than their visual imagery—for reading television as if it were radio and failing to understand the overwhelming power of the image.

But is the image overpowering? Does the image conquer all in political television? Even that apparently safe assumption can be questioned.

Take, for instance, the story media critic Michael Arlen tells in *Thirty Seconds* (Penguin, 1980) about the making of an AT&T "Reach Out and Touch Someone" commercial. In one version of the commercial, a group of men have gone off to a rural retreat for a weekend of fishing. The weekend is a disaster; it is pouring rain the whole time. We see them huddled in their cabin in the woods, cooking hamburgers, while one of them talks to friends back home, singing the praises of their manly adventure. The man on the phone is staring into a frying pan full of hamburgers while he says into the receiver, "Boy, you should see the great trout we've got cooking here." When test audiences were asked what the men were cooking for dinner, they replied overwhelmingly—trout. Trout. One of the advertising executives in charge of the project comments:

> I have to tell you we were very discouraged. Some of our guys were even talking of junking the commercial, which was a good one, with a nice humorous flow to it. Well, we ended up making it, but what we had to do was, when we came to that segment, we put the camera almost inside the frying pan, and in the frying pan we put huge, crude chunks of hamburger that were almost red. I mean, just about all you could see was raw meat. This time, when we took it to the audience, it tested OK. That is, most of the test audience—though, in fact, still not everybody—finally said "hamburger."

The trout/hamburger story has not made its way into the common culture of media consulting, political journalism, or academic criticism. The ability of verbal cues

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to trump the visual is forgotten while the contrary lesson, that a picture overrides ten thousand words, is regularly retold.

A current favorite is the story of the Lesley Stahl four-and-a-half-minute piece CBS ran during the 1984 presidential campaign. Its subject: how the White House staged events for Ronald Reagan and manipulated the press, especially television. Stahl later said that a White House official called her soon after the piece aired and said he'd loved it. "How could you?" she responded. He said, "Haven't you figured it out yet? The public doesn't pay any attention to what you say. They just look at the pictures." Stahl, on reflection—but not, I think, on very much reflection—came to believe the White House was probably right: all she had done was to assemble, free of charge, a Republican campaign film, a wonderful montage of Reagan appearing in upbeat scenes.

In the world of media criticism and political consulting, the Stahl story is presented as powerful evidence of the triumph of pictures over words and emotion over rationality in American politics. It is a major piece of evidence for *New York Times* reporter Hedrick Smith's conclusion that the eye is more powerful than the ear in American politics; it opens journalist Martin Schram's account of television in the 1984 election; *Washington Post* columnist David Broder and communications scholar Kathleen Jamieson cite it to similar account. But the story's punch depends on our believing that the White House official knew what he was talking about. Did he?

In this case, no one really knows. But in another case we have information that indicates that the Reagan White House did *not* understand the power of pictures on television. In 1982 the country was in the midst of a recession and the Reagan administration was faring badly in the polls. The networks were making efforts to dramatize the country's economic plight not only by reporting the national unemployment figures, but also by focusing on a particular person or family hurt by hard times. The White House was outraged and criticized the networks for presenting the sad tale of the man in South Succotash and missing the general economic trends that, according to the White House, were more positive. Obviously, the White House assumed that the emotionally compelling, visually powerful vignette had much more impact on the American public than dry statistics. But when political scientists Donald Kinder and Shanto Iyengar conducted a series of careful experiments with television viewing, they found that the captivating vignette on economic affairs did no more than the bare statistics to lead viewers to believe economic affairs were a major problem facing the nation. In fact, the evidence in Kinder and Iyengar's *News That Matters* (University of Chicago Press, 1984) ran modestly in the other direction—viewers were more impressed by statistics than by down-home stories about the gravity of the economic crisis. This result runs counter to common sense. Isn't it true that a picture is worth all those words? Are the social scientists in this case (and not for the first time) just plain wrong?

I don't think so. There is a way to understand their results, consistent with voting studies that political scientists other than Kinder have undertaken. People do not automatically extrapolate from individual experience, even their own, to the nation as a whole. When American citizens go to the polls, for instance, they distinguish between their own personal economic situation and their sense of how the nation as a whole is doing—and typically they vote according to their sense of how the nation as a whole is doing. They do not cast reflex-like "pocketbook" votes. When people see a television story on the plight of an individual family, they do not automatically generalize to the state of the nation. Indeed, the form of the vignette encourages them to discount the story as unrepresentative. If, say, the vignette pictures a black family, a significant number of whites may routinely discount the story as a special case, not a representative one, because they do not identify with blacks. If the news pictures a farm family, an urban family may not identify. In a sense, these viewers are not "visually literate"; they do not follow the visual logic by which one instance of poverty or unemployment is meant to represent the general phenomenon. Viewers find more general significance, then, in Department of Labor statistics than in artfully composed and emotionally compelling photographic essays on the economy.

The Lesley Stahl episode is the latest addition to our telemythology, a set of widely circulated stories about the dangerous powers of television. With respect to politics, there are three key elements of that mythology:

- Kennedy defeated Nixon in 1960 because he presented a more attractive image in the first television debate.
- Television's graphic portrayal of the war in Vietnam sickened and horrified American viewers, who were led by harsh photographic reality to oppose the war.
- The unprecedented popularity of President Reagan has no rational explanation but can be accounted for only by the power of a skilled actor at manipulating a visual medium.

But look again at each of the episodes. Kennedy just barely defeated Nixon in November 1960, and perhaps did not actually defeat him at all—we will never know

just how many ballot boxes were stuffed in Cook County on election day. Many observers of the election, including Kennedy himself, attributed his success to his fine showing in the television debates. The most discussed part of the debates concerns the failure of Nixon's makeup artists to prepare him properly for the hot lights of the television studio. Where Kennedy seemed cool, Nixon seemed to sweat; where Kennedy was self-assured, Nixon seemed to strain. Kennedy's appearance on national television galvanized his campaign; crowds instantly seemed larger and more enthusiastic in his campaign appearances. For Nixon, who added to Kennedy's stature simply by accepting the challenge to debate in the first place, the first debate was deeply unsettling.

Social scientists cite the finding that citizens who listened to the Kennedy–Nixon debate on the radio judged Nixon the winner; those who watched TV found Kennedy the winner. As with the use of the Stahl story, this is presented as conclusive evidence of the distorting lens of television. On radio, it is assumed, one listens to pure argument; on television, one is distracted by the appearance of things, the superficial look of people rather than the cogency of their arguments.

The basis for all this is a study undertaken by a Philadelphia market research firm that found that radio listeners judged Nixon the winner by 43 percent to 20 percent while a majority (53 percent) of television viewers judged the debate a draw or refused to name a winner. Of those willing to name a winner, 28 percent chose Kennedy and 19 percent Nixon.

Even if we accept this study as valid (and it was never reported in a form to make serious analysis possible), there are two problems with the way it has been used. The first problem concerns the presumption that radio is a distortion-free medium. Is the human voice itself not a medium? Is radio not a medium, too? Are words conveyed through radio a pure rendering of logical relations? Or does the voice—specifically, the radio-transmitted voice—give special weight to sonority and to the verbal tics and tricks of an experienced and skilled debater that have no necessary relation to the validity of the arguments themselves? Might radio have exaggerated Kennedy's Boston accent as part of his nature and therefore put people off? The human voice, from the cry of a baby onward, can stir passions. It can as easily be an enemy of reason as its epitome. A medium like radio that separates the human voice from the body is not necessarily a guardian of rationality.

Second, is television imagery so obviously superficial? Was it not important, and truthful, to see that Kennedy, despite his relative youth, was able to handle the most public moment of his life with assurance? Was it not important, and truthful, to see Nixon, despite his vast



experience, awkward and insecure? Isn't it possible to argue that the insecurity he showed betrayed his manner and motive in public life?

Let me turn briefly to Vietnam. Here we have been told repeatedly about the power of television to turn the American public against the war. The general argument has been that the horror of war, graphically shown to the viewing public, sickened Americans. Anything that the narration might have said about the legitimacy of the military effort, the pictures stunningly undermined. What is the evidence for this belief? There is, it turns out, almost no evidence at all. The public did, over time, become more and more disenchanted with the war in Vietnam—but, it turns out, at just about the same rate and to just about the same degree as the public became disaffected with the untelevised Korean War. Moreover, contrary to some popular reconstructions of television coverage, Vietnam War television coverage provided very little combat footage in the years during which opposition to the war mounted. It is possible, of course, that isolated instances of combat coverage had great impact; but, as Peter Braestrup points out in his book *Battle Lines* (Priority Press, 1985), the television archives provide no basis for the view that a day-in, day-out television portrait of bloodshed was ever presented to the American public.

The general understanding behind the "TV-turned-us-against-the-war" argument is that TV photography comes to us unmediated—it forces itself upon the viewer, who then recoils from war. In fact, Daniel Hallin argues in *The Uncensored War* (Oxford University Press, 1986), "television's visual images are extremely ambiguous." We don't know very much about how audiences construct the meaning of TV images, but "it seems a reasonable hypothesis that most of the time the audience sees what it is told it is seeing." Trout, in short, not ground beef.

The final piece of telemythology I want to examine is the view that Ronald Reagan's mastery of television led to his mastery of the American public. This is another curious story. Reagan's extraordinary popularity was heralded by the news media months before he took office. The sense in Washington of his popularity was so powerful that on March 18, 1981, not yet two months into Reagan's first term, James Reston reported the Congress to be very reluctant to vote against the budget of so popular a chief executive. Reston's column appeared prominently on the *New York Times* op-ed page the same day that, in a three-inch story at the bottom of page 22, a report on the latest Gallup poll coolly stated that Reagan's public approval ratings were the lowest in polling history for a newly elected president.

As it turned out, Reagan's average approval rating for his first year in office was, according to the Gallup survey, 58 percent compared to Carter's 62 percent, Nixon's 61 percent, Kennedy's 75 percent. His second-year average was 44 percent compared with Carter's 47 percent, Nixon's 57 percent, Kennedy's 72 percent. Polls that tried to separate Reagan's personal appeal from the appeal of his policies found the President to be notably more popular than his program; however, this has been the case with every president, and the margin of difference was smaller for Reagan than for other presidents. Later in his first term and in much of his second term, Reagan had unusually high public approval ratings. Still, the public impression and the media consensus about his general popularity was firmly established before there was any national polling evidence to corroborate it. How did this happen?

There are a number of explanations. The most important, I think, is that the Washington establishment *liked* Reagan. That establishment, Republican and Democrat, politician and journalist, had had enough of Jimmy Carter's puritanical style of socializing and humorless style of leadership. "For the first time in years, Washington has a President that it really likes," *Washington Post* political analyst Haynes Johnson concluded by the fall of 1981. Reagan was very likable, yes. He brought with him the allure and glamour of Hollywood. More than this, he turned out to be a first-rate politician in the most old-fashioned sense: he could count votes, he knew who to invite to breakfast or dinner and when, and he employed expert staff to deal with the Congress. When his aides asked him to make a phone call here or a public appearance there, he obliged. And if this direct courtship from the White House were not enough, Reagan succeeded in mobilizing a small but highly vocal right-wing constituency that, with just a whisper from the White House staff, would deluge congressional offices with telegrams and letters.

That is probably the heart of it, but I think there is something more—the strong belief of Washington elites that the general public can be mesmerized by television images. Many journalists shared a kind of "gee whiz" awe at the media skills of the White House, according to Laurence Barrett, senior White House correspondent for *Time*. According to Barrett, this "fairy tale" of White House media omnipotence was particularly strong because of the contrast between Reagan's smooth administrative machinery and the ineffective Carter White House. Consider the view of Barrett's colleague at *Time*, Thomas Griffith, who wrote that the "people in Peoria" are more receptive to Reagan's message than people who follow public affairs closely. The Reagan administration, he felt, aimed its message at the television audience, not the close readers of print. Reagan's was a "TV presidency."

What is a TV presidency? Reagan's was scarcely the first to be declared one. There was Kennedy's, of course. Even Nixon gets a vote: "Nixon is a television creation, a sort of gesturing phantom, uncomfortable in the old-fashioned world of printer's type, where assertions can be checked and verified." That unlikely judgment comes from former theater critic Mary McCarthy. Carter was regularly declared a master of symbolism and images in his first year in office. In 1976, Carter flew into office hailed as a genius at media manipulation. His own media adviser, perhaps not surprisingly, called him "the biggest television star of all time. He is the first television president." The comic strip *Doonesbury* added a new cabinet officer, the secretary of symbolism, early in the Carter administration. The *New York Times* television critic reported in 1977 that Carter is "a master of controlled images." David Halberstam wrote in 1976 that Carter "more than any other candidate this year has sensed and adapted to modern communications and national mood.... Watching him again and again on television I was impressed by his sense of pacing, his sense of control, very low-key, soft, a low decibel count, all this in sharp contrast to the other candidates." Note, however, that as is so often the case with discussions of Reagan, Halberstam attributes Carter's television power to sound, not look. A case could be made that Reagan's presence on television has to do most of all with his voice. People thought of Carter in his first years as a master of images—the president walking, rather than riding, in his inaugural procession; the informal, down-home Jimmy wearing a cardigan sweater. Reagan riding his horse on the ranch never gained the same kind of power. I suspect that we will one day recall Reagan as one of the least visual but most auditory of our presidents. What is memorable is the Reagan with the slight

choke in his voice when he told a melodramatic story about a G.I. or read a letter from a little girl, his quick intelligence with a joke or a quip, the comfort, calm, and sincerity in his voice. It was not even his look. It was not his words, as such, but his way with them. Reagan knew, if his critics did not, that it was his voice, his long-lived radio asset, that made his television appearance so effective.

The power of television is perhaps more firmly an article of faith in Washington than anywhere else in the country. There is an odd sense inside the beltway that the rest of the nation is not so much concerned with freeway traffic, paying bills at the end of the month, waiting for the plumber, getting the kids off to school, and finding a nursing home for Grandma as it is with watching Washington, especially in an election year. Otherwise it seems inexplicable that George Will, for instance, should have judged Robert Dole's relatively high poll ratings among Democrats early in the Republican primary season as "an effect of the televised Senate—he's had a chance to be seen in what is manifestly his home turf, where he is very comfortable." Who, George, is watching the televised Senate? C-SPAN is just not much competition for "Wheel of Fortune," "General Hospital," "Roseanne," or, I'm afraid, even "Sesame Street." How could anyone be so hopelessly out of touch? But so as not to pick on a Republican unfairly, I call to mind Walter Mondale's mournful plaint after his landslide loss to Reagan that television never warmed up to him nor did he warm up to television. Did Hoover lose to Roosevelt because he didn't warm up to radio? Could a Depression have had something to do with it? And might Mondale have lost because 1984 was a time of peace, apparent prosperity, and a likable incumbent Republican?

The phenomenon of people believing that only *others* are influenced by the mass media is what W. Phillips Davison calls the "third-person effect" in communication. The assumption that gullible others, but not one's own canny self, are slaves to the media is so widespread that the actions based on it may be one of the mass media's most powerful creations. The power of the media resides in the perception of experts and decision makers that the general public is influenced by the mass media, not in the direct influence of the mass media on the general public. That is to say, the media's political appeal lies less in its ability to bend minds than in its ability to convince elites that the popular mind can be bent.

If experts overestimate the direct power of the visual, they underrate their own power to reinterpret the visual. In 1976, Gerald Ford said in his debate with Carter that "there is no Soviet domination of Eastern Europe." Although recent events suggest his misstatement was truer than he knew, that gaffe was reputed to be a major break for Carter and the beginning of the Ford campaign's unraveling. Again, it appears, television demonstrated its enormous power in American politics.

Television archives provide no basis for the view that a day-in-day-out television portrait of Vietnam War bloodshed was ever presented to the American public.

But few television viewers noticed or cared about Ford's remark. A poll conducted by a market research organization employed by the President Ford Committee found that people judged Ford to have done a better job than Carter by 44 percent to 35 percent in the two hours immediately after the debate on the evening of October 6. By noon on October 7, Carter was judged the winner 44 percent to 31 percent, and by that evening Carter was judged the winner by 61 percent to 19 percent. On the evening of October 6, not a single person interviewed mentioned the Eastern Europe statement as one of the "main things" the candidate had done "well" or "not well" during the debate. But the next morning 12 percent of respondents mentioned it and the next evening 20 percent of respondents mentioned it. By that time it was the most frequently mentioned criticism of Ford's performance.

What happened in the interim, of course, is that the news media intervened. Journalists, print and broadcast, told viewers what they had seen and heard. Viewers did not take their hint from the cathode ray tube but from the lessons the journalists taught them after the fact. Trout or hamburger? People did not know until they were told.

In 1984, in Mondale's first debate with Reagan, there was widespread agreement that Mondale was impressive and Reagan surprisingly ill at ease and defensive. Polls conducted during the debate, however, showed that people felt, by a slight margin, that Reagan was winning. An hour after the debate, Mondale had a 1 percent edge in a poll on who won. A day later his advantage was 37 percent and two days later 49 percent. Again, the evidence compellingly shows that even when people "see for themselves," they take as cues for their own thinking suggestions from experts that come after the fact.

In this respect, Reagan's administration did under-

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TV as Alibi: A Response to Michael Schudson

Jay Rosen

Michael Schudson's essay alerts us to a disquieting possibility: not only do the media regard us as unthinking masses, but we have learned to see each other that way. For that is what we do when we accept, uncritically, the popular tales about television's influence in politics. That Kennedy defeated Nixon because Nixon didn't shave, that Reagan was liked merely because he presented a likable image, that most people "just look at the pictures," allowing the image to overwhelm the word—Schudson claims that these are myths, unsupported by any careful review of the evidence.

Of course, myths always answer a need, as Schudson is well aware. Take what he calls "third-person effect," the assumption "that gullible others, but not one's own canny self, are slaves to the media." This is more than self-flattery; at a deeper level, it permits us to share in a fantasy of political control, in which pictures implanted by a clever producer work their unconscious magic on other people's minds.

Listen for a moment to Michael Deaver, media advisor in the Reagan White House, describing a typical photo opportunity he had staged, in which the President was shown hoisting beers with the patrons of a Boston bar. "It may sound cynical," said Deaver, "but a picture of an Irish President in an Irish pub at two o'clock in the afternoon raising his glass with a bunch of blue-collar workers and an Irish priest—that will last you for a long, long time."

This is the kind of story that sounds dubious to Schudson, and for good reason. The fantasy of the implant reflects well on Deaver, who is eager to exaggerate his own skills. But the story also has a seductive pull on Reagan doubters and critics. To assume that Reagan's political victories were triumphs of the image offers a simulated feeling of power. For it confirms the savvy and cynical tone that separates the political sophisticate from the aging hippie, the youthful idealist, the ignorant masses. In many conversations about politics during the 1980s I would hear someone say of Reagan (in that savvy and cynical way), "What do you expect? He's an actor for chrissakes." All would agree that this was the really important fact, not only about Reagan, but about America under Reagan: it had elected an actor because, through TV, its politics had become the management of illusions.

This attitude allows us to pay ourselves a psychological dividend, and Schudson helps us see it with the idea of the "third person effect." If we assume that the image has overtaken politics, and it is other people who are seduced by it, then we who see through the image see everything worth seeing. In this way the imagined power of the image is transferred to ourselves; we feel like omnipotent seers of politics because we decipher the omnipotent image. Politically, however, we are nowhere. To win the support of those allegedly entranced by the image we would need our own "Morning in America" ads, our own Deaver, our own actor-president (Robert Redford, perhaps?) reading from cue cards. This is not a foundation of political program, but a fantasy that wishes politics away. Persuasion, analysis, rational debate, coalition-building, organizing the unorganized—all disappear behind the imperative of media manipulation.

So Schudson is right to doubt that television has the sort of magic power Deaver and many others ascribe to it. He helps us see how dangerous and anti-political our telemythology can be, and this is why we should read him with care. But having done so, I remain dissatisfied.

To refute the popular stories that illustrate a thesis is not to refute the thesis itself. Certainly I agree with Schudson that elections aren't decided by makeup artists. But that doesn't mean television hasn't profoundly affected our political landscape in some other fashion. Nor does Schudson convince me that I should distrust the intuitive sense, which a great many people share, that Reagan and television were somehow made for each other.

Because his goal is not to formulate a thesis but to counter "a set of widely circulated stories about the dangerous powers of television," Schudson varies his argument with each bit of telemythology he examines.

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The point of the trout vs. hamburger story, he says, is the "ability of verbal cues to trump the visual," a fact we often overlook. In reexamining the Kennedy–Nixon debate in 1960, he concludes that even if Kennedy did "win" because of his superior image, this was a just outcome because it was both "important, and truthful" for voters to observe how the two men performed at a critical moment in their political lives. Finally, in dismissing Walter Mondale's attempt to blame his 1984 defeat on television, Schudson suggests that media performance is a negligible factor compared to "peace, apparent prosperity, and a likable incumbent Republican."

Thus, at various points in his essay Schudson says that television imagery is not as powerful as its verbal cues; that television imagery *is* powerful but justifiably so; and that TV is not very powerful at all compared to other political factors. What then, should we conclude from his essay? Don't worry, be happy, for TV doesn't matter? In fact Schudson never makes such a bold and counter-intuitive claim. He doesn't say that television isn't powerful and isn't dangerous, or that we shouldn't be concerned about its influence. What he says is that the stories that circulate about television's dangerous effects don't hold up when the evidence is examined. But perhaps these are the wrong stories. Even Schudson, I think, would have to agree that television greatly assisted Oliver North in his important victory over the congressional committee investigating the Iran-Contra scandal. Through a rich performance steeped in movie mythology, North won the battle for public sympathy, outwitting a committee that had no comparable TV presence. Schudson might want us to observe that it was North's voice as much as his looks that contributed to this victory. Quite so. But when we talk about the importance of "North's image," what we usually mean is his media *persona,* the total impression conveyed through his performance on screen. We are right to be concerned when this impression—including voice, looks, manner—counts for more in the public mind than the implications of his deeds.

Perhaps Schudson is satisfied that the Iran-Contra scandal was fully investigated, its threat to democracy publicly exposed, its lessons safely learned. But if he's not satisfied (and many of us are not) then he would have to conclude that TV is part of the reason the scandal faded from public concern without its full meaning being grasped. The problem, then, with refuting the popular stories about TV's influence is that when new stories become available the old refutations may not apply. What we need, in addition to the healthy debunking Schudson provides, is a theory of television as a political force. His only positive contribution to such a theory is the interesting notion that TV is powerful because people in Washington assume it's powerful, and behave accordingly. But in the case of North, the committee and its lawyers assumed the opposite: that the *evidence* was powerful, and would impress the public more than North's TV performance. It appears they were wrong. About the implications of this for democracy Schudson's essay has little to say.

It's not so much that "the eyes have it." It's that TV has the eyes, while politics is practiced in another field entirely.

Despite his skepticism, Schudson seems to share the intuitive feeling that TV matters deeply in American life. He notes that we all "seek some kind of reckoning with television," but adds, in an important observation, that we have not found "the language for that reckoning yet." I believe he's right. But if we lack a vocabulary for confronting television, then any attempt to total up "the evidence" for its effects is premature. We don't yet know what should count as "evidence" because we don't have the language that tells us where to look.

Where might such a language be found? My own view is that we should look to novelists, poets, critics, or literary journalists—to anyone willing to regard television and its "effects" as mysteries worthy of a writer's imagination. For what is needed in the reckoning with TV are richer metaphors, wilder guesswork, sharper efforts to locate and define television. TV programs, TV images, TV people are everywhere, but where is—what is—"television" itself? We still await the prose style that would make the phenomenon of "television" real to us. According to Norman Mailer, TV says to America, "I am here to deaden you—you need it!" Whether he's eerily right or goofily wrong, Mailer's style is instructive: he tries to make television, as a phenomenon, "speak" to the country that invented it. It is through such attempts that our reckoning with TV might begin.

"On television," writes Jonathan Schell, "the world draws closer but matters less." I doubt that anyone can prove that this is one of TV's effects. Nonetheless, Schell has captured an elusive truth about the geography of television's influence. And he allows us to see a little further into what remains an important question: How should we understand Ronald Reagan and his relationship to TV?

With an amiable personal style familiar to TV viewers, Reagan drew himself toward us, until (like Johnny

Carson) he almost seemed to belong in our private worlds. At the same time, his perpetual smile, his "aw, shucks" manner, and his famous inattention to detail permitted us to believe that the problems of the public world were less serious than commentators and critics said. Through television, Reagan brought politics home in a way that allowed for its easy dismissal; the public world came closer, but mattered less. Its "impact" was slighter, and this slightness (or lightness) was central to the experience of politics in the Reagan era, when, it should be remembered, the no-stick or "Teflon" president first appeared on the scene.

The Teflon president was the idea of pollsters and reporters who needed to explain how Reagan retained his personal appeal despite the unpopularity of his policies. Schudson doubts that Reagan was as popular as Washington insiders said he was, especially during his early years in office. But the Teflon metaphor is an important hypothesis about television's effects. If, as the metaphor suggests, TV allows political facts to lose their "stickiness," then the power of the medium may reside precisely in this peculiar weakness. "Television is powerful because it can dominate the moment," Schell writes. "It is weak because it cannot outlast the moment—cannot make an impression that endures."

Students of TV are often misled by the tremendous energy and talent that go into producing it. Observing TV's lavish spectacle, they explain it by concluding that it must be compelling—to others. But the reasoning here is often tautological: the evidence critics usually cite to support this conclusion is the very lavishness that needs to be explained. This is why Schudson insists on other evidence—poll results, social science findings—before he will accept the notion that the spectacle shapes our political behavior. But we need not posit such a direct "impact" to understand TV's influence in politics. An alternative explanation is Schell's: because it struggles to make an enduring impression, TV overproduces every moment of the spectacle. What seems (to Deaver and others) like the power of TV—sumptuous imagery calculated to look just right—actually testifies to the inability of any one image to "stick."

Where TV is truly powerful, however, is in its temporary claim on our attention. By dominating the moment (with weak results), TV occupies public time, and takes up public space. Meanwhile, politics proceeds, regardless of whether its true concerns are communicated. More than a no-stick president, then, our problem is a no-stick political environment, dominated, not by the power of television, but by the weak effects of its spectacle. We take at least cursory note of this weakness whenever we lament our shrinking national "attention span."

In the words of Mark Crispin Miller, perhaps our most perceptive student of TV, television has become fundamentally "illegible." The spectacle it offers is so promiscuous, so fragmented, and so vast that it's difficult to find something to juxtapose TV against. "Through its monotonous aesthetic of incessant change, TV may make actual change unrecognizable," Miller writes. In this remark is the germ of a thesis. It would start with the possibility that massive political changes can now escape democratic controls, escape politics itself, by assuming a form that is unrecognizable in a television environment. Here, the emphasis would be not on the power of imagery, but on the ability of policy to elude imagery, and thus to escape a politics nominally "represented" by images.

Schudson doubts that "the eyes have it." TV has not, he says, "taken over the practice of American politics." But the problem may be subtler than that. It's not so much that "the eyes have it." It's that TV has the eyes, while politics is practiced in another field entirely.

From this angle, TV can be identified by its most prominent feature: the screen, understood simultaneously as a barrier to vision and a surface at which to gaze. Television doesn't dominate politics; it screens it—screens it for us, but also *from* us.

Consider, then, the fiscal logjam created by the federal deficit. The deficit, we know, has structurally altered the conditions of national politics, wiping out the government's ability to address social problems. However, this fiscal program of malign neglect never took shape as a public policy that had a name, a sponsor, or a place in anyone's platform.

Unproposed and undefended, the deficit, employed as an expensive and risky device to restrain social spending, seems to have just "happened." In reality, it was a political act consciously brought about through massive tax cuts and high levels of defense spending in the 1980s. To this day, no one is "in favor" of the deficit; and no one is held responsible. Reagan left office insisting he had nothing to do with it. But there it is, a political fact that came into being without ever passing into public consciousness as an articulated policy. Indeed, the policy most responsible for the deficit, supply-side economics, was presented as a way to reduce it.

The connection to television here is indirect, but important to understand. In order for us to grasp the political deeds disguised by the deficit (or, for another example, to understand where responsibility lies for the savings and loan scandal), we must engage in forms of discourse and habits of attention that play poorly on television. What plays poorly on TV does not "stick" to our environment. It's not that the deficit

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PERSONAL ESSAY

Letters to Mutti

Edith Milton

I have a friend, a writer, for whom I feel the most abject envy because her motivations for working are so sound and uncontorted. Remembering she wrote stories that her parents and the rest of her family lovingly read, she recalls the warmth of their approval and the pride of being at the center of their interest. Writing, for her, she claims, stems from a theatrical urge, a need for applause and love, and the proud sense that she is the reason people have come together into a common understanding, that their agreement has been made possible by her words.

My reasons for writing are very different: more sinister, ambiguous, convoluted—even self-defeating. I know them to be related, not very distantly, to a nervous expertise in telling lies.

I began to write, and then got in the habit of writing, because of the weekly letters I had to compose to my mother between 1939, when I was seven, and 1946. She was living in America during that time, while my sister Ruth and I—because of various convolutions of history and the baroque policies regarding international visas, immigration, and so on—were living in England.

During those seven years I completely forgot my mother—except in the most theoretical and abstract sense that acknowledged her existence. We got letters from her, of course: clumps of them, three or four at a time. By mid-1941, when she'd settled down in Philadelphia, we also began to get packages filled with dates and chocolates and dried bananas, the sort of things that were known to be unobtainable in England: I remember, especially, the dried bananas because I took a box of them to my room in secret, hid them under the pillow, and devoured them in their entirety by morning. Soon I flowered into alarming red blotches, either from an excess of bananas or from guilt, and I remained in a state of intense eruption for two weeks.

In exchange for the letters and packages we received from her, my sister and I were also expected to write to Mother—we wrote each week on Sunday morning right after church and before Sunday dinner.

"Liebe Mutti," I would write. But the rest of my letter was in English, and the person I was writing to, Liebe Mutti, wasn't my mother at all. I am not sure if I knew this at the time: I suspect that, at least on some level, I did know, because the idea of ever seeing Liebe Mutti again in the flesh filled me with overwhelming dread. But if I knew, it was the sort of knowledge one doesn't pay much attention to, confined to a depth where it is safely beyond reach.

Meanwhile, in my imagination, I nurtured the image of the woman who would receive my correspondence: tall, slim, graceful, blue-eyed, with graying blond hair tied back attractively into a loose bun. Liebe Mutti had a kind face with even features, the sort of face worn by mothers in illustrations of children's books: mothers who baked scones, held cats on their laps, and carried baskets of flowers cut from the garden—who were, in short, the antithesis of my real, small, dark, ironic, disastrous mother in as many ways as it was possible to be without changing species.

The letters my mother wrote were equally ill aimed at their target: to begin with, she always directed them inclusively at both my sister and myself, and put us under the single heading of *Lieblingen,* as though we were not six years apart and totally dissimilar in character. Because of this, her correspondence had all the warmth and intimacy of the xeroxed pronouncements people enclose in their Christmas cards.

But for my purposes, my mother's *Liebling* abstraction was ideal; it didn't burst my fantasy of the Maternal Being with any prickly realities, and it allowed my sentimental notions to continue inflating themselves undisturbed. My mother and I had a wonderful relationship during that period: in fact we never again came even close to establishing the high level of admiring affection we had developed during those seven years when we had nothing to do with each other.

I should mention that there were photographs that arrived quite regularly during this time, at the rate of about two or three a year. My mother had been a doctor in Germany, a pediatrician. And though she started out her American life in Philadelphia cleaning people's houses, she soon graduated to being a nursemaid and then a babynurse. Early photographs of her therefore usually included an infant, wrapped to the eyeballs, being displayed by my mother like an award-winning melon or a prize fish.

Not that she looks proud and happy—far from it. She never smiled for a picture—not even later, when I took snapshots of her with my own children, my husband, my dog, my cats, all of whom are grinning from ear to ear. My mother stares out from the midst of these frivolities almost expressionless, but alert. Her face is the face of the professional, put on film for the office records. My favorite picture of her, which I recently framed, is a rare portrait in which she is not staring straight out at you, but looking down, intent on what she's doing. Her face, simultaneously relaxed and concentrated, is the face of a happy woman. The picture was taken when she was well into her seventies and shows her at work in the emergency room of the New York Infirmary, which she ran for going on twenty years before she retired, finally, at eighty. The patient she is apparently examining in the photograph is below camera range—but Mother is clearly in her element,

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busy, secure, totally without self-consciousness.

This was much later, of course. In England we got only a series of frontal representations. She had moved on from infants to bigger things—literally, since she was now medical officer at a summer camp, from which she sent us snapshots of herself surrounded by smiling little girls in hiking boots. Glowering, we cast these photographs into oblivion alongside the others at the back of a sock drawer.

Given this faithful, ongoing documentation, one might assume that I'd have known what Mother looked like. I can only guess that I chose not to: quite unconsciously and quite absolutely I simply discarded the evidence from my mind. I suppose this happens all the time: one edits, cuts, and rearranges memory inadvertently, but inevitably, as though it were videotape; then having also taken care to erase any recollection of this falsification, one goes on to consult it as long as life and memory last, as if it were gospel.

Still, with all the reproductions of my mother's dark, long-nosed, small-chinned, close-coifed head lying around in the sock drawer, you'd think that I'd have had some hesitation about confusing her with the smiling Anglo-Saxon lady to whom my letters were addressed. Instead, I perfected that first fervent lie on which my writing rests; creating the imaginary reader to usurp the real woman who received and opened the letters I mailed to her. This was, I suppose, a necessary concomitant of my second lie: the recreation of the writer whose words I was sending out in my own name; the development, that is, of a total fiction of myself.

Before I go any further, let me explain briefly a phrase that slipped past me several pages back: the phrase, "on Sunday morning right after church," may in the present context be puzzling. For hadn't my mother gone to America, wasn't I living in England, wasn't our separation, in the first place, caused by the fact that we were fleeing the Third Reich because we were Jewish? So what was I doing on Sunday morning going to church?

What I was doing, in fact, was discovering in myself an alarming ambition to become a Christian of a sort. But my urge to convert myself and any other heathen I might encounter would not have been considered orthodox by most existing churches: the naked suffering of the young man dying on the cross had begun to speak intensely both to my compassion and my awakening sensuality, but it really wasn't his congregation I longed to join. Probably, unconsciously recognizing in him a fellow outcast and a fellow Jew, I intuited that I might already belong to that in some way; that I might need rather less conversion than most of the praying public did.

In any case, what I wanted to enroll myself in was something else entirely, something that involved more protocol than spirituality: a club of people who knew how to converse with the vicar, when to genuflect and make the sign of the cross, what was the right hat to wear Whitsunday and the right detached voice for reading the weekly lesson—devoid of the staccato, impassioned Yorkshire inflection that was said to mark people of Nonconformist tendencies. It was to these mysteries, along with the proper presentation of afternoon tea and correct pronunciation of the names of the royal family, that I wanted to convert the heathens, including myself; not to the Christian Church, but to His Majesty's—a bland, soothing institution that might best be placed in the theological hierarchy at about the same position as blancmange in the culinary one.

I suppose I felt that by entering the High Anglican mysteries I might, with luck, become English—something I longed fervently to be—perhaps because it seemed quite urgent that I should take strong measures to be something or other. True, my family had been reasonably happy being—as far as I could tell— nothing in particular, but they had been greatly inconvenienced by having their identity thrust upon them by outside and unfriendly interests. In fact I am sure that I avoided my own Judaism, absolutely and quite unconsciously, because I simply didn't see it as mine. It was someone else's idea—it certainly didn't belong to me—which had been thrust unpleasantly and indiscriminately upon almost everyone I knew. Agreeing to be Jewish would have been a sort of giving up of myself—and giving in to my enemies.

Being English, to the contrary, would be highly original—my own invention entirely. And embracing the Church of England would certainly be the best way to go about it. Perhaps I thought that if I converted other heathens as well, preferably dark, short heathens, no one would notice what a peculiar specimen of Episcopalianism I was.

I should explain that when I say "English" the term must be understood not in its vulgar, generalized sense, but in its evocative, Romantic one. I mean "English" not as a label to be applied to every Tom, Dick, and Harry—Celt, Gael, or Colonial—who happens to hold citizenship in the British Isles, but as a title that specifies a blessed and graceful breed: the breed that emerged from the nineteenth century dripping pink countries around the map, died in the trenches with wistful alexandrine couplets on its lips, and wrote heroic tales about burying dead cats between the floorboards at Marlborough and Winchester. Anglo-Saxon, to be sure, upper-class, to be sure, but that isn't all, or even half, of it. The state of Englishness to which I aspired was a condition of the mind, a fictional ideal invented by a tribe of bellicose merchants for their poets and storytellers to write about at home while they themselves were abroad shortchanging the greater part of the known world in the name of civilization. But as they loaded their vessels up with the usual raw material, their legacy on the alien shores of the world was that invented, poetic condition: being English. By 1935 it had become an extraordinarily fashionable state of mind, a state to which most of the globe aspired.

Unfortunately an intrinsic difficulty about being English is that becoming it somehow paradoxically negates it: like grace, it is something one has to be born to. Like grace, even in the general population of Great Britain, almost no one except Sir Philip Sidney has ever really achieved it.

My foster parents, Aunt Helen and Uncle Bourke, came very close: closer than anyone else I have ever met. Aunt Helen had come to London to meet my sister and me at the boat train from Rotterdam. A thin tube wrapped in tweed and topped with a species of tweed cheese with a feather in it, she had kindly attempted to take me up onto her lap during the train ride home. But she seemed merely amused and rather sympathetic when I flung myself instead, screaming, at the window in the opposite corner from her. Immediately, I saw in her my mother's antithesis: six slim, humorous, handsome feet of calm authority, compared to my mother's five-foot-one of seething human folly.

Uncle Bourke introduced himself somewhat later: that evening, after we had arrived and settled in, he appeared in our room in a dinner jacket. A uniformed maid had magically already brought us soup, crackers, and apples to eat in bed; at Uncle Bourke's side was Aunt Helen again, this time in a long white evening dress with many buttons. They had come to kiss us goodnight—two inches above our left ears—on their way down to supper, as they were to do every night of the more than seven years we stayed with them.

In the place I'd come from everyone seemed to be screaming—Hitler screamed on the radio, my mother yelled at me, my father screamed in his bedroom, dying; my nurse shouted at the cook, my teacher berated the class. To speak German seemed to me to be loud with anger and crisis, jagged, dangerous, mean—and above all serious. German became for me a language made for anger and crisis, for war and flight and desperation.

But in Uncle Bourke's stories about fun and games in the Indian cavalry, I discovered a way to speak of anguish with amusement. In one story someone called Biffy fell off his horse while playing polo. He fell on his head and stayed on his head, and when orderlies came to take him away on a stretcher, he screamed that he was a carrot and they were ruining his roots. In English, life's nastiness and people's cruelty to each other were wrapped up as though they were games, as though they were fun. No one yelled. I assumed, in my innocence, that no one killed, maimed, cheated, or betrayed either. Or not as mirthlessly, at any rate, as in other places and other tongues: it was all done with a decorously jolly sort of sadism. For what you did if you were English was laugh.

It was the laughing gods of England that I longed to worship. It was the laughing God of England I sought in His Majesty's Church every Sunday. And I suppose it was because I wrote my weekly letter to my mother directly after coming home from seeking Him (and not quite managing to find Him in Mr. Hutchinson's earnest, Yorkshire-tinged sermons) that my second lie developed such strong roots and grew so large that it finally enveloped me.

When I wrote to my mother, Liebe Mutti, I wrote to her as though I were the person I would have liked to have been: the little English girl with a certain, slightly foreign, penchant for poetry, but an enormous fondness for dogs. I was, in fact, rather frightened of dogs, but I knew I had to get over it. If I hadn't been so terrified of horses, I would have ridden one now and then, just so I could have written about that as well.

The two halves of this double fiction of author and reader were of course dependent on each other for their survival. My English persona as the writer of these epistles would have disappeared into nothing, into mere delusion and wishful thinking, if it hadn't been supported by the tacit recognition, the baptismal blessing, so to speak, of the gracefully maternal recipient I had invented as the reader of the letters. And conversely the charming, approving mother, reading them in America, would not have existed at all except insofar as the English longing of this fictional narrator made her edification necessary.

But the odd thing was, the very odd thing was, that once these two interlocking inventions had been created, they ceased to be altogether fictions. My mother believed—wanted to believe—that the decorous little girl writing of "summer hols" and pronouncing them "smashing" actually lived and breathed, was in truth blood of her blood and flesh of her flesh; and in the process of believing this, she began to take on the smiling Liebe Mutti role I had assigned to her. In reciprocity, my charade of the Anglican virtues increasingly began to acquire extraordinary urgency and conviction.

We might have gone on happily like this forever, turning more and more into what I was pretending we should be, if we had merely continued with our correspondence and never seen each other again.

But in the summer of 1946, on a dock in New York Harbor, we did see each other again, and I discovered at a single glance not the woman of my imagination—the mother, that is, of my dreams—but the creature I had been shoving to the back of my sock drawer: the mother of my nightmares, in effect.

In my recollection, that moment when my mother and I came face-to-face on the New York dock after our seven years' absence from each other is a scene from a Roadrunner cartoon: the Roadrunner and the Coyote have just rounded a corner and—to no one's astonishment but their own—bashed into each other yet again. If we were cartoons, my mother and I would have had two little balloons over our heads with S*H*R*I*E*K written in both of them.

I think—I hope—that a small element of the dismay I felt as that appallingly familiar piece of unfamiliarity stepped forward to claim me as its own was a recognition of my own ability to distort fact. But my largest sensation was simple terror: I knew I knew this woman, I knew I wished I didn't, I knew that it was hopeless yearning that the gods, who'd blessed me with the chance to erase her for seven years, would give me another go so I could get rid of her for eternity.

Not that I wanted to kill her, you understand. Violence—even the thought of violence—cements the victim's existence in blood, anger, and memory, and cementing my mother in anything was the last thing on my mind. In fact, I felt indignantly that she should have been the last thing on my mind; that she was a distracting intrusion that had somehow, through some sort of fatal negligence, ruined the integrity of my existence by appearing in the middle of it, like telephone wires in a movie about eighteenth-century France. She didn't belong there. She ought to have had the grace to disappear.

But like the telephone wires, it was certain that she was the reality: all the rest was doubtful, anachronistic, mistaken. In fact, what I experienced that moment when the disapproving little woman with baggy eyes came toward me and I knew who she was, was a stunning, disastrous demonstration of the power that the word "reality" implies. I had been floating in my little fishtank of happy illusions: all it had taken was one acid drop of that potent essence to precipitate this creature out of the cloudy solution where I had my being. She was the sedimentary solid about to crush my dreams—she was palpable, indissoluble, and, above all, there.

I suppose, looking at the scrawny adolescent with hairy legs and blackheads on her sallow nose, my mother may have undergone her own, somewhat similar, epiphany.

In time, my mother and I learned to accommodate the disappointing truth. And after that first cold shock of recognition there was really nothing worse left to discover about each other: that was it, the sum total of what we

could complain of, that we were weirdly, drastically distant from the people our letters had promised us to be. We weren't unpleasant, violent, stupid; we weren't even dishonest, except insofar as the inadvertence of my fiction had enabled us to lie to ourselves about ourselves and each other. It may have taken twenty years—maybe even longer—but at some point I found myself taking for granted that my invention of Liebe Mutti had been laughably insipid compared to the dramatic and ambiguous reality. Mutti bore about the same relationship to my actual mother as the rouged, sweetly powdered death mask (a dear little flowered lace veil obscuring the ravages both of the brain cancer that had killed her and the autopsy that had established this) bore to my mother's living face. Each was an evasion of the inconvenient facts; each was grotesquely vulgar.

What convinced me I was a writer was seeing my mother, seeing the unhappy present descending upon me. Grim fact was so distant from all my laughing Anglo-Saxon fantasies that after the first sickening shock I must have understood what power those fantasies had held to have lasted even an instant, let alone long enough to have convinced the two of us to play along with them as if they were true. Seeing my mother affected me as losing affects a gambler one number shy of winning the lottery; or as an alchemist who can turn lead only to wood, to stone, to glass, is moved when he transmutes it yet once more into iron pyrite: he knows he will never find the formula to create gold, but knows, too, that he is hooked on alchemy for life.

It was failure, precisely, that addicted me. And that addicts me, perhaps, still.

It is a well-known fact, much discussed in writing classes, that all writing needs a fictional "voice" with which to communicate with its reader. Even the most objective reports of scientific inquiry have to choose a language and a form for their objectivity, and the language and form they choose to some degree bias what they say—or at least what other people think they are saying. The very act of writing is, in fact, to a very large degree, a species of manipulation; and with the exception of a few grocery lists and occasional instructions written for the people who feed our cats when we're away (and even these are tainted with the cheerful dissimulation that I think everyone's happy and all will be well) I haven't written an honest word in my life. Or read one.

It goes without saying that in most cases this fictional "voice," which governs almost everything ever written, also governs and is governed by the fictional reader whom it is addressing: the catalog buyer, the manual owner, the student, the bereaved relative or happy bride—none of them really what the written word in hand supposes them to be. Not even our dearest friends are the people we speak to in our letters. But the good writer, like the gifted actor, can bring the reader to agree with her, see what she sees, buy what she sells, understand what she teaches, be what she wants.

We never again came even close to establishing the high level of admiring affection we had developed during those seven years when we had nothing to do with each other.

My fantasy of the ever-so-slightly foreign little English girl and her gracious mother across the sea demonstrated this truth all too well for me. It was, after all, a brilliant success in the area of the fictional voice and literary manipulation. Unfortunately, now that the little English girl lay dead—not to mention her gracious mother, stiffed by reality, both of them—I had absolutely nothing to replace her with. I still have absolutely nothing to replace her with. Her life convinced me so completely that the shock of her demise was brutal; I have not recovered from it altogether.

For me, therefore, the question of the fictional narrator and the imagined audience is fraught with such danger and insecurity—even more than it is for most writers, though naturally all of them complain of it—that I am often paralyzed. I cannot quite decide on the hat to wear, the tone to take, the place to stand. Unable to make the ruthless choices necessary for all forms of creation, I dither in a chaos of possibilities, like a neurotic, pretty woman going through a closet full of dresses: putting on one, then another, and another. Finally, by the time I have decided on the difficult, the impossible disguise necessary for going to the party as myself, it becomes obvious that it is now too late anyway and everyone else will already have gone home.

It should be said, however, that on the rare occasions I do grope my way to an acceptable camouflage in which to present myself, my sense of satisfaction in having assembled an accommodation to all my multiple misgivings is absolute. The whole miserable process—not even counting the question of what the other partygoers are going to think of me—seems suddenly and totally an enchantment, an act of brilliant transformation in which at last I lose my clamorous and uncertain self. Despite all the previous neurotic hesitation, I see myself, then, conducting a sort of dream-symphony, a perfect harmony of the impossibly incongruous that comes together effortlessly—not because of anything I am doing but because for one divinely inspired moment I seem to have stopped doing it.

My yearnings to be English did not die all at once or altogether, of course. They dwindled little by little, and I only realized how pathetic and marginal they had become when I made a foolhardy, last-ditch stab at Englishness by attempting to convert to the Episcopalian church.

I must have been in America for a year or so when I got a letter from the bishop of Ripon, who was worried about my eternal soul and said he had written to the Episcopal diocese of New York on my behalf asking them to do what they could for it. He was a friend of Uncle Bourke's, and his gaiters had quite frequently and impressively graced Sunday dinner, so I suppose he had been asked for his pontifical intercession when the state of my soul became noticeably disheveled. He wrote me a very nice letter, and my mother, whose religious tolerance amounted to spiritual anarchy, thought that she should go to the Episcopal diocese with me and we should find out what they were willing to do for me in this life or the next—she liked going to the city, anyway.

I forget what it was that I was actually asking for, but it seems to me that it may have been nothing more complicated than help in finding a sympathetic minister who could direct my study

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Redeveloping the Shtetl: The Buyout of Borough Park

Susan Hamovitch

It was 3:00 on a warm June day when Mrs. Lillian Schneck returned home to prepare a modest sabbath supper. As she made her way upstairs, clutching a bag of groceries, Mrs. Schneck considered her joys and her troubles. She and her husband Sam had much to be thankful for, but they also faced growing problems. His recent heart troubles worried her, and his eyes were so bad that reading was out of the question. Sometimes she read him the leading stories in the Jewish paper. But mostly they watched TV for news and a little entertainment. Mrs. Schneck climbed slowly up to the third-floor landing. The door to Apartment 3C opened and its sole inhabitant, a woman in her eighties, came out to receive the groceries that Mrs. Schneck brought her at this time every week.

The milk and gefilte fish delivered, Mrs. Schneck turned to open the door to her own apartment. The dead bolt clicked; she turned the key in the bottom lock and gave the door its customary gentle shove. But for some reason it wouldn't open more than a few inches. She realized it was chained. Why would Sam chain the door? He knew, after all, that she was just out shopping.

Suddenly she heard the sound of rushing water. It was coming from the bathroom. For a second she was seized with utter panic. Maybe Sam had slipped in the tub. Maybe he was unconscious. Something terrible must have happened! Peering through the opening that the chain allowed, she saw that the water had flooded the entire apartment. Then she noticed a figure standing on the chair in her bedroom. It was a man—she thought—and he was hurling things onto the floor. He must have heard her, because he stopped abruptly and disappeared through a jagged hole he had cut through the back wall of her closet.

Mrs. Schneck set her groceries down and hurried upstairs. She pounded frantically at the door of the young Israeli who lived above her. He was home, thank God. Wasting no time, he climbed out his window, onto the adjoining fire escape, and into her apartment. He unfastened the chain, allowing Mrs. Schneck to step inside the apartment. Sam was nowhere to be found. A ten-ton weight lifted. He hasn't come back from the Y yet, she realized. Then she surveyed the wreckage of their home. Mattresses, springs, books, clothes—everything was thrown helter-skelter onto the floor, while the lake of water slowly soaked into the green carpet.

Mrs. Schneck, a resident of the Borough Park neighborhood of Brooklyn, told this story to a state hearing officer at the Office of Rent Administration, the New York City agency that handles tenant charges of harassment by landlords. Mrs. Schneck claimed that the sabotage was the work of the landlord, the B'nos Yakov of Pupa Yeshiva, a highly respected school for Chasidic girls. Just three weeks earlier the Schnecks had received a notice from the yeshiva's administrators warning them of the possibility of a break-in.

Representatives of the Pupa Yeshiva opted not to appear at the Office of Rent Administration. Instead, they sent a terse note of defense. It read: "This entire claim is a lie, a fabricated story for publicity purposes.... Is this the first time in New York City that someone broke through a wall and into an apartment???!!! These thieves and vandals caused us severe damage for our whole building." The yeshiva did not notify the police of the break-in and damage, its representatives insisted, only because the building was uninsured. Thomas Pfeifer, a spokesman for the yeshiva, now goes further. The Schnecks, he charges, "filed their complaints in an attempt to extort the yeshiva." Pfeifer claims the Schnecks were holding out for $50,000 to vacate the building, after the yeshiva had offered them $10,000. Their complaints, he reiterates, were "absolutely false," and "proven wrong" in court.

The Pupa Yeshiva, the Schnecks charged, had engaged in extensive construction work which had disrupted the lives of tenants over the previous three years. The yeshiva no longer provided maintenance or janitorial service; it had notified Con Edison to cut off the electricity in tenanted apartments; it had installed a timing device on the heating system to shut it down at 3:00 p.m. (when school let out), and it failed to repair the broken bell and buzzer system. Without a working bell in the building, the Schnecks claimed, many elderly tenants were effectively cut off from the food and other deliveries upon which they depended.

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At the time of the hearing, in the fall of 1985, only four tenants remained in the twenty-unit building. Classrooms and offices, meanwhile, expanded to fill the vacated apartments. The Schnecks now had the ironic privilege of attending religious lectures for young female students: through the hole in their closet they had an excellent view of a refurbished classroom filled with girls in neat plaid uniforms, learning Torah and a selection of secular subjects. The irony was especially wrenching for the Schnecks. Sam and Lillian, both in their seventies, considered themselves Orthodox. They observed the Sabbath and the laws of Kashrut, although the fact that Lillian wore her long hair uncovered might have led some to believe that she was not ultra-Orthodox. At the end of the Office of Rent Administration hearing, Sam said haltingly, "I couldn't believe my ears, the people who are ultra-religionists.... It did not occur to me in my lifespan this should happen."

Between 1982 and 1985 I worked for the Borough Park Housing/Senior Citizen Project; as the project's sole staff member, I was the only paid tenant advocate for the community. The Borough Park Housing/Senior Citizen Project, whose lengthy title belied a tiny, unstructured organization, was composed of founder and director Marvin Schick, and myself. We received $15,000 a year from the New York Foundation, our primary funding source, for three years. Another $1,500 was due to come in from the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies in our third and final year of operation. (Subsequent requests for funding from the Federation were denied.) We tried to prevent the illegal evictions of tenants wherever they were occurring in Borough Park. We were to prevent the forced eviction mainly through linkages with the Legal Services Office (the federally funded civil counterpart to the Legal Aid Society), government agencies, and local services and politicians. Marvin Schick saw these efforts as part of the agency's wider strategy: "getting others to act," as he liked to put it. Schick's irrepressible faith in the essential goodness of people led him to believe that once his fellow Jews, community leaders included, were informed of the situation, they would respond with an outrage equal to his own. The abhorrence of cruelty in any form, basic to Jewish teachings, would prevail. "We call on all Borough Park *mosdos* (religious institutions) not to purchase tenanted buildings and to recognize their responsibility to our elderly and needy tenants. The *klal* (community) cannot be built on the misery of the individual," Schick exhorted the religious leaders in a local newspaper.

In Borough Park, where a large influx of newcomers competed for limited housing and institutional space, tenant harassment and illegal eviction had become alarmingly commonplace. Driving through the streets in the early 1980s, I noticed dozens of vacant, tin-sealed, walk-up buildings in an otherwise peaceful Brooklyn community. We at the Project estimated that at least two thousand families had been illegally evicted over the course of seven years.

During my tenure I documented an array of tactics designed to force the emptying of buildings: an entire boiler was dismembered and removed from a building's basement in mid-winter; front-door locks were broken in many buildings and derelicts would take up residence in the lobby; young Chasidic boys banged on tenants' doors each morning to inquire idly as to the scheduled opening of the yeshiva; gas, electricity—even water—were cut off. I heard of acts of intimidation that were sheer terrorism—large dogs set loose in hallways, firebombings, and arson. What the *Miami Herald* has described as Borough Park's "Holy War of sorts, pitting Orthodox Jew against less religious Jew" (August 25, 1985) has caught over a thousand people, Jews and non-Jews, in surreal and hellish scenarios. The Schnecks, who pressed charges against their landlord and won press coverage of their plight, were able to save their home. Most of the others were forced out of their apartments, and usually out of Borough Park.

The story of Borough Park is in part about the way an ethnic community in America acquires its character. It is also, in part, the by-now familiar story of how the life of an American community is deliberately manipulated by a powerful few.

The community was born in the late nineteenth century, an era of American capitalist adventurism. The neighborhood was the creation of builder and developer William Reynolds, a former state senator with interests in Texas oil and Long Island real estate, who put the neighborhood together out of four thousand lots he bought from railroad magnate Electus Litchfield. In hopes of attracting settlers, he named the swampy development Borough Park. In 1916, once the New Utrecht Subway Line was extended to 62nd Street, the area began to attract fairly affluent buyers. These first- and second-generation Jewish and Italian businessmen and their families sought "a start, a move up," as Egon Mayer writes in his near-exhaustive sociological study, *From Suburb to Shtetl: The Jews of Borough Park* (1979). Borough Park at that time, with its private yards and quiet tree-lined streets, was one of the growing number of settlements that connoted status in metropolitan New York.

The nouveaux riches of Borough Park coexisted with their employees and a growing number of Italian and Jewish factory workers who prior to the Depression were able to make down payments toward the purchase

of small homes. In the talks I had with many residents, the thirties called up memories of struggle, cramped quarters, and a street life and community spirit that powerfully affirmed Borough Park's participation in the common history and fate of America. Gloria Rosenzweig, a longtime resident, remarked, "It was an Orthodox community, although there were some non-religious people and there were Italians mixed in. We went to public schools. We were middle-class Jewish and very much involved with being American children."

The children of immigrants who had come to this country shared a familiar litany of American goals that were not to be disputed: education, status, assimilation. Borough Park was the home of "great Americans," Mrs. Rosenzweig boasted. "The yeshivas before produced brilliant people. Judges and lawyers came from Borough Park—Ezra Chaim, Alan Dershowitz—they were the Jewish community!" A young Orthodox man who volunteered to dig up the old records and write the community's history beginning from its days as Dutch farmland took equal pride in Borough Park's contributions to American culture. As I sifted through his materials one afternoon, he plied me with names. "Sandy Koufax comes from here, and Danny Kaye." With a pleased smile he added, "and Buddy Hackett. You know him?"

Now this small, self-contained neighborhood is often compared to an eighteenth-century European shtetl. Gone are Borough Park's two Loew's movie houses, its bowling alley and billiards hall, which were all bought out after World War II and closed shortly afterward. They have been replaced by some three hundred small prayer houses, *shtibleh,* located in the basements and ground floors of private homes. Each harbors a different style of prayer brought from Eastern Europe, and is identified by only a modest Hebrew sign. The "grass roots" ritual life of the *shtibleh* also is complemented by larger, more formal institutions. The chasidic congregations, in particular, have erected elaborate synagogues with attendant yeshivas, dormitories, and mikvas. The Conservative shul has closed for lack of a congregation.

Most striking to the outside observer, however, is the community's unique atmosphere, conveyed by the small details of daily life. The distinctive dark dress of the men often incorporates a frock or topcoat of fine gabardine in the style of the nineteenth-century Polish aristocracy. In summer and winter, women modestly cover elbow and knee. *Sheitls,* or wigs, are worn by those who are married; most are by the age of twenty. Everywhere children chatter to each other in fluent Yiddish. When a loud siren from one of the larger Chasidic synagogues heralds the arrival of sabbath, the streets grow quiet. Stores and offices are sealed shut and hundreds of men, tallisim billowing out behind them, a half-dozen boys in tow, stream through the streets in an anarchic procession toward shul. There is an air of pageantry, a hush on such days.

By 1979 Borough Park was home to ninety-one thousand people; fifty-five-thousand were Jewish. Mayer has estimated eighty to ninety percent of the Jewish population were Orthodox. "More importantly," wrote Mayer, "it is the Orthodox who are the most visible segment of the community and who, therefore, define what it means to be Jewish in Borough Park."

This contingent has without a doubt taken the initiative to define the nature of Jewish identity in Borough Park. And many would say that the ultra-Orthodox community's absolute certainty that it represents the correct position is what drives the furious pace of its real estate activity—and its ability to evict anybody who stands in the way.

The "shtetl" of Borough Park today is founded on the desparation, anger, and mourning of a people rebuilding its memories.

There is a deeper, fundamental dispute, then, just beneath the surface of this battle over the right to own and inhabit Borough Park's housing, a dispute over what it means to be Jewish in America. On one side are Jews (including many observant Jews), who claim their home is and always will be "America." On the other are the ultrareligionists, those whose only allegiance is to a community that exclusively observes the law of Torah.

The more assimilated Jews of Borough Park barely conceal their resentment of their ultra-Orthodox neighbors, a sentiment that gains force as the ultrareligionists show an infuriating indifference toward everything outside religious practice. The ultrareligionists, according to their less devout Jewish counterparts, are un-American: Thanksgiving and Fourth of July do not take place here. One woman summed up the attitude of Americanized Jews and doubtless of many non-Jews as well. "It used to be a neighborhood," she said, and then practically spat, "Now—it's a ghetto!"

The process of "ghettoization" was hastened deliberately by Agudath Israel, the international organization of ultra-Orthodox Jews. Since the early years of this century, the ultra-Orthodox have ar-

gued for the creation of an insular Jewish community to shield the true practice of Judaism from the forces of modernity that have steadily drawn yeshiva *buchers* away from their studies—Marxism, Zionism, American adventurism, modern literature, and, to a lesser extent, Conservative and Reform Judaism. In 1912, in a section of Poland known as Silesia, Agudath Israel was founded. Its members (known as the Agudah) sought to reinforce the correct practice of Orthodoxy for modern believers, and thereby established what was later to be called "Torah-true" Judaism. The goals and methods of the Agudath demanded insularity and an authoritarian organization. The Agudath founded the *Moetzes Gedolai Ha Torah* (the Council of Torah Sages), a group of renowned rabbis, to interpret the problematic areas of modern life according to Torah law. Scientific and medical discoveries such as autopsies and organ transplants (neither of which is permissible for Torah-true Jews) constitute a large number of the cases requiring consideration. The central idea of the Agudath's revolutionary brand of Orthodoxy was its concept of a single, "true" Judaism, an all-inclusive order, independent of the "nations of the world," to which the Jewish community could return. George Kranzler, in his study of another ultra-Orthodox neighborhood in Brooklyn, *Williamsburg: A Jewish Community in Transition,* describes the ambitious scope and the fundamentalist nature of its aims. "Bound by its faith in the divine authorship of the Bible, the Jewish people can only accept a Torah-nation, a Torah-culture, and a Torah-leadership in every realm of Jewish endeavor."

In America, where the dangers of assimilation were especially strong, the Agudah were greatly concerned to keep Orthodox youth busy on Saturday nights. The Borough Park branch of Agudath, which later came to be known as the South Brooklyn Community Organization (SBCO) was established in 1977. It served primarily as a youth center; typical activities were organized study groups and rousing ritual celebrations, where as many as two thousand young men might participate.

However, by the mid-1970s, the Agudah had instituted a new program, *Rishum,* which advocated greater involvement in Jewish communal affairs, as well as stronger political influence on a national level. Accordingly, SBCO's mission shifted to local real estate development. By the early 1980s, SBCO had become the largest land and building developer in Borough Park, responsible for over a thousand units of new and rehabilitated housing.

SBCO's move into real-estate development proved that ultra-Orthodox vigilance against the secularizing tendencies of American culture need not preclude profitable relations with the secular state. To create an Orthodox enclave within Borough Park required extensive government assistance. In 1983, HUD Secretary Samuel Pierce made a rare personal appearance in Borough Park to present SBCO with a $5.5 million grant for the construction of new senior housing. With the assistance of a Federal Urban Development Action Grant, SBCO constructed thirty-four subsidized condominiums with design features geared for Orthodox families, each selling for about $55,000.

It was at the local level, however, that the ultra-Orthodox more effectively established their claims on government largesse and the leadership of the community. The Borough Park Community Board, a neighborhood arm of New York's city government, turned a deaf ear to tenant complaints. Community Board manager Noach Dear—a city power broker who sports a yarmulke—questioned the extent of the problem. "There have been some heat complaints," he conceded, "but so often the elderly think it's much colder than it is." Responding to the charge that tenants in the neighborhood required protection from building-wide eviction, he claimed that to date there had been no calls for such assistance. A college intern with the Community Board who was present at my first, and last, meeting with Dear jotted our number down. Over the following months, she called to notify us of several cases of attempted building-wide eviction. Dear, now a city council member in New York, reiterated that he has "absolutely no recollection" of any such complaints during his tenure as Community Board manager and dismissed *Tikkun*'s article as "a smear against the Orthodox Jewish community."

According to the then-chair of the Community Board's housing committee, Sherman Alpert, a large number of tenant complaints to the Board—which had the power to refer them to the appropriate city agencies—were buried, never to be considered at its monthly meetings. One local businessman, a modern Orthodox who requested that his name not be used, complained that the Community Board's variance committee would not discuss any important variance requests while he was at their meetings. Bitterly, he told me, "If you try to go against them (the ultra-Orthodox), they will make life miserable for you." Members of the Board now claim that since Dear left in 1985, tenant complaints have begun to get a hearing under new Board manager Priscilla Cellano. But during the three years I attended the Board's meetings, I never heard the Board address the question of evictions, except upon the few occasions when we initiated complaints.

By the time our project had set up shop, all other forms of public tenant assistance in Borough Park had ceased to exist. Maimonides Hospital, which had funded and staffed the Borough Park Ten-

ant's Council, denied renewed funding to the Council group. SBCO had fired its tenant organizer. "We couldn't do everything," SBCO representative Jacob Lonner explained at a meeting of the local branch of the Inter-Agency Council on the Aging.

It became clear that our agency's role would have to expand well beyond the purview Schick had optimistically outlined for it in preliminary proposals. In addition to monitoring the housing situation and serving as the "eyes and ears" of government agencies and local organizations, we became involved in building-wide and, to a limited extent, community-wide organizing. At any given time, we were working with the residents of about fifteen buildings. Most were larger than six units, the smallest building size covered by basic city and state housing regulations. With only a few exceptions, these were buildings whose entire tenant population was threatened with eviction. The core of our program was simple advocacy: protecting "endangered" buildings, rallying tenants to appear on their own behalf in housing court or at government hearings, filing protocol complaint forms, and occasionally attempting to negotiate with building owners or their representatives. We ran workshops on tenants' rights, organized a forum of local candidates running for City Council, and even set up a modest drop-in center for tenants at the Y. Although these programs could not meet the overwhelming need for a local tenants' council (our office was housed in Schick's primary organization in lower Manhattan), we nonetheless successfully "saved" almost all of the buildings we sought to defend—roughly a dozen by the end of our three-year program. Perhaps four times as many, however, never received assistance from anyone, and were lost.

The character of Jewish life in Borough Park made for many inconsistencies. Perhaps the most perplexing to me was Schick's firm insistence on our need to retain a low profile. Demonstrations, pickets and any sort of publicity in other than local papers were strictly prohibited. One afternoon, after I had returned from a publicized picket of the central office of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development in protest of a Department decision regarding a Borough Park case, I found a sealed envelope on my desk. It contained a memo from Schick which read, "under no condition are you to participate in demonstrations or in any other kind of public protest and also not in writing letters or press releases. I am putting this into writing because I am absolutely determined to maintain discipline regarding a matter that can prove very costly to us."

Schick's injunction came partly out of deference to the traditional cautionary outlook of the Jewish community toward the "gentile state," an attitude which, while perhaps no longer meaningful in today's New York City, was still taken quite seriously in enclaves of Jewry such as Borough Park. The ghettoized Jewish communities in Europe harbored a necessary suspicion of their gentile "host" countries during the nineteenth century and before; they thus instituted several prohibitions that were deemed essential to the Jewish community's preservation. Jews did not criticize one another or create any sort of overt commotion so as to attract the attention of the gentile press. Similarly, a Jew would not prosecute another Jew in the state courts, but rather would attend the *Bet Din,* established specifically for the purpose. For this reason, several Orthodox tenants I met refused to appear in housing court against their landlords.

This "ghetto" mentality seemed oddly relevant to the stubbornly insular community of Borough Park's ultra-Orthodox, yet coming from Schick it was completely incomprehensible to me. Marvin Schick is a modern Orthodox Jew who manages to combine an active secular career with his religious practice and participation in communal affairs. A political science professor who has published on constitutional law, and a former aide in Mayor Lindsay's administration, he has also been involved in a large number of projects that serve Jewish, and, more specifically, Orthodox causes. He was one of the founders of the National Jewish Commission on Law and Public Affairs, an organization dedicated to the protection of religious practice (of any faith) in the public arena. He was founder of a downtown Brooklyn branch of the Legal Services Office, which was one of the few agencies in the City that boasted a Yiddish-, Hebrew-, and Russian-speaking staff. He was perhaps proudest, however, of his role as president of the Rabbi Jacob Joseph School, which, as he would delightedly inform any new listener, is "the oldest yeshiva in the country." Schick worked tirelessly to raise funds for the school and print its monthly publication, the *Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society.*

The housing problem in Borough Park posed an unpleasant dilemma to Schick and indeed to most liberal Orthodox Jews. Agudath Israel, together with the many Chasidic groups who have settled here, shared a vision of a strong, self-perpetuating Orthodox community, a vital bastion of the Torah-true faith for thousands of believers. And through steadfast fund-raising, publicity, and hard work, the dream had begun to take shape. The dream's promise had as much power for Schick and the modern Orthodox tenants in Borough Park as it did for the most vigilant of the Agudah. And thus the strife in Borough Park seemed that much more of a nightmare. As Schick confessed in one of his weekly columns for

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FICTION

The Fire Raiser

Ivan Klima

The small town was not situated by the sea, but if you climbed the mountain whose slopes began to rise steeply immediately beyond the last house, you could see the sea in the distance. Although accommodation here was only half the price of the seaside resorts, tourists hardly ever visited the place, despite the fact that it was a pretty little town, clean, and with honeyed perfumes wafting up from the gardens. As I walked up one of the steep streets lined with detached houses, a street leading toward the vineyards, I noticed that several of the trees had charred branches.

In the evening I asked my host about this strange phenomenon. He was an elderly man, and although he ran a business he was fond of talking to me about music, literature, and human passions. Like so many people in these parts he was an excellent raconteur, punctuating his speech with the expressive gestures that go with a southern temperament.

He'd had a lifelong friend in the little town, they'd both gone to the local secondary school, but while he himself had not continued his education, his friend had qualified as a pharmacist. As youngsters they had danced in the same ensemble, later they had both sung in the church choir, and eventually they had both got married the same year. Whereas my host had traveled a good deal and had often been away from home for months on end, the pharmacist had remained here; he'd loved the surroundings. He'd soon realized the danger threatening it from the growth of industry and of tourism. So he'd founded a local branch of an organization for the protection of nature, addressed countless meetings, and fought a long and ultimately victorious battle against the construction of a plastics factory in the neighborhood. He soon became one of the best-known and most popular men in the little town. He was not yet forty-five, but he was regarded as the most suitable candidate for the post of mayor. At that point, however, the will of God, or whatever it is that guides our destinies, intervened. First his son died—shot dead accidentally during an army exercise. Soon afterward his wife developed a malignant brain tumor, and although she received all possible treatment she died within a few months. Mourning was not yet over when his daughter's husband, an engineer in an agricultural machinery factory, suffered a fatal accident at work.

Within three years my host's friend, who had lived happily surrounded by his family, found himself as lonely as Job. His daughter and little granddaughter were all that was left to him.

The three of them moved in together for mutual comfort. But his friend withdrew into himself, as if he had lost all interest in what was happening around him. His name and appearance faded from public consciousness. Even at the pharmacy he remained hidden in the prescription cabinet and never showed himself at the counter. He was hardly ever seen about, only now and again would he walk with his little granddaughter. He'd walk up the steep street with her, the street where they lived, all the way to the vineyards. And they'd return the same way.

The little girl was four when death struck for the last time. It was shortly after Christmas and there had been a rare fall of snow. To please his granddaughter the old man took her out for a walk.

The road climbing up to the vineyards was normally deserted; at that time of year, especially, there wouldn't be anyone about who didn't live there. And yet the fatal car appeared. Maybe the child had taken a sudden step and this had alarmed the driver, but nobody will ever discover why the car went suddenly out of control at that point—maybe some higher authority had decided that the final act of an incomprehensible tragedy should take place there.

The car only struck the child, and then crashed into the stone pillar of a fence. Not many people collected—the street was too empty. The ambulance arrived in no time: it took the injured driver and the child away. But the child was already dead. Oddly enough, no one noticed that the pharmacist had disappeared. No one saw him during the rest of the day, or else whoever saw him remained anonymous. Maybe the unhappy man had wandered blindly about the snow-covered hillside

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above the vineyards or along one of the paths through the fields that led toward the sea. At some time during the night he must have returned to the town and entered his pharmacy. No one realized how much pure petrol was stocked there: he alone looked after the store and petrol was rarely used. But he took all of it. In the lower part of his street ten cars were parked. He poured petrol over them, one after another. It was a cold windy night and no one observed his actions. What he did could not have taken more than a few minutes.

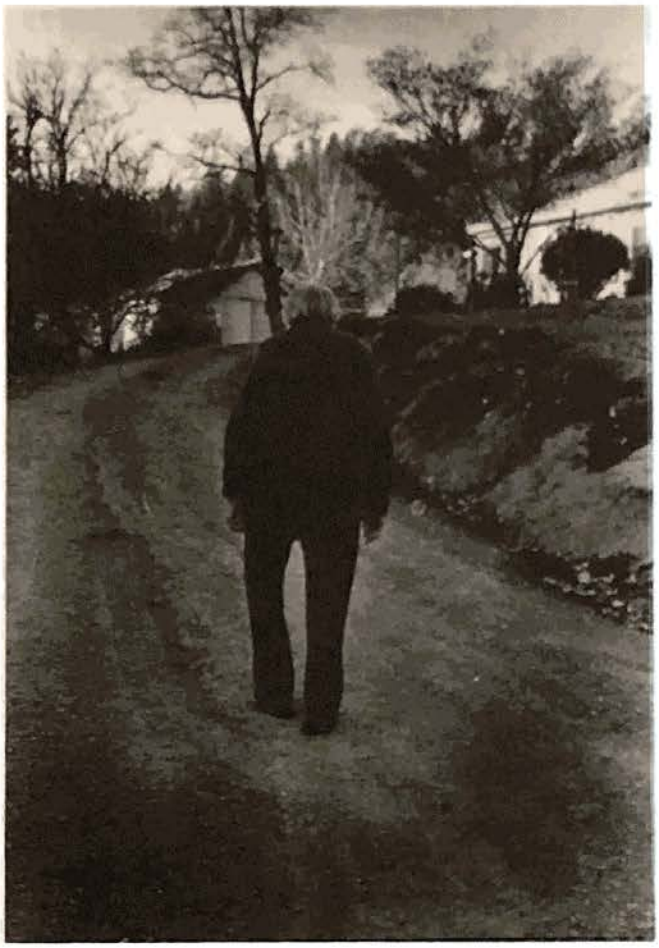
The cars burst into flame almost instantly. As their tanks exploded the fire flared and spread; its glow was so bright that it was virtually like daylight in the adjacent streets. Apart from the cars, however, the fire almost miraculously caused no damage and injured no one—the arsonist alone died in the flames. Nobody will ever find out if he was too slow getting away or whether he was overcome by despair.

My host added that his friend had been a peaceable man and had obviously acted from shock. His rebellion was pointless, it could not solve anything. The insurance companies paid up and the owners bought themselves new cars. It is unlikely that they, in particular, would run down a child, but others will undoubtedly do so: statistics show that hundreds of children are killed under the wheels of cars every year. And that's not counting those who are fatally affected by their exhaust fumes. But can any fire remove all the cars in the world? There is no force that can deflect man from the road he chooses. Where to? Most probably to hell, my raconteur laughed, to everlasting perdition.

At night, as I was falling asleep with the honeyed perfumes of the gardens and the restful chirping of the cicadas washing over me, that fiery scene appeared before my eyes. For a moment I felt another man's crushing depression. There are desperate or insane actions whose fire illumines the hopelessness, pettiness, or dubiousness of our behavior. Anyone fixing his eyes on them can see what he would not see otherwise—but I don't believe that anyone does this anymore.

In the morning it occurred to me to ask what had become of the driver who'd caused the child's death. Strange that I should have asked, as though I had guessed that the story was not concluded with that horrendous event.

The driver had not been a local. He was a young man and he was devastated by what he had done. He'd been sentenced to prison for some time. When he was released he began to turn up in the little town, or more



accurately at the pharmacist's house. Perhaps he felt a need to offer some comfort to its last inhabitant.

It was even being said that there was something between the two of them, and that was why the young man had turned up in the town with his car in the first place. People just couldn't understand how a woman could become involved with a man who'd killed her child and indirectly caused the death of her father. There were some women who'd spit whenever they saw her in the street. As if anyone was entitled to judge God's dispositions. Suppose the child's tragic death was the climax and end of some curse or some trial? And that he who had been its unwitting messenger and instrument was also to announce the advent of a time of conciliation?

In the end the two decided to vanish. One morning he came for her with a horse and cart. They loaded up only a few things and left—no one knew where.

My host saw them with his own eyes as they set out on their way with their horse and cart. One of the horses was totally black, while the other was white, without a single dark patch. It was impossible, he said, not to be reminded of hell and heaven and of their denizens.□

Jewish Anti-Paganism

Judith Plaskow

> Beware of making a covenant with the inhabitants of the land against which you are advancing, lest they be a snare in your midst. No, you must tear down their altars, smash their pillars, and cut down their sacred posts; for you must not worship any other god.
>
> —(Exodus 34:12–14)

Perhaps because "some of my best friends are pagans," and perhaps because the charge of paganism has been easily and wantonly levelled at Jewish feminists, I find myself increasingly angry that biblical exhortations against paganism receive scant critical attention in the Jewish community. While I have been part of Torah discussions in which people struggle with the intolerance and virulence of such passages, criticism rarely extends to the Bible's basic image and understanding of Canaanite religion. Instead, Jews internalize and defend a set of stereotypes that lead to contempt for others and undermine our understanding of our own tradition.

There are two major components to the image Jews have of Canaanite religion, and paganism more generally. First, pagans worship concrete images—they cannot tell the difference between sticks and stones and the living God. This is a constant theme of biblical literature. "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths but cannot speak, eyes but cannot see.... Those who fashion them, all who trust in them, shall become like them" (Ps. 115:4–5,8). This is the paganism Jewish children hear of in the often-told midrash in which Abraham destroys the idols in his father's shop, then tells his father that the largest idol smashed all the others.

Second, Judaism portrays pagan worship as licentious, revolving around forbidden sexual practices. The repeated characterization of Israelite apostasy as "whoring after other gods" (see, for example, Exod. 34:15, 16; Lev. 17:7; Deut. 31:16), combined with the Levitical injunction against the abhorrent sexual acts performed by the people of the land (Lev. 18:24–30), convey a picture of Canaanite worship as largely prostitution and Canaanite society as bereft of sexual morality or order.

I find Jewish willingness to accept the truth of these images deeply disturbing. We Jews have long been victimized by the propaganda of New Testament writers, yet we rarely stop to ask ourselves whether analogous processes are at work in our own sacred texts. We know that the New Testament portrait of the Pharisees is a caricature that emerged out of the competition between Judaism and early Christianity, and was designed to prove the superiority of the new religion. But we do not ask whether a similar situation of religious competition produced an equally distorted portrait of Canaanite religion, a portrait designed to prove the superiority of Judaism.

In fact, like the New Testament picture of the Pharisees, Jewish images of pagan religion cannot bear close scrutiny. If we look at ancient religious texts and living traditions that use plastic images in worship, we see that there never has been a tradition that identified the work of human hands with the essence and reality of the sacred. Images serve many functions: they are manifestations of the sacred; they reveal certain of its qualities; they provide foci for worship or meditation. But they are not the sacred itself. Moreover, the notion that Canaanite worship involved ritual prostitution and other forms of sexual immorality has drawn fire from scholars of ancient Near Eastern religion. Jo Ann Hackett recently suggested that the dominant scholarly construction of "fertility religion" is basically a projection of the fantasies of Protestant clergymen who, accepting the biblical invective against Canaanite religion at face value, combine fragmentary, controversial, and disparate evidence into a portrait of their own making.

I do not mean to suggest that New Testament anti-Judaism and Jewish anti-paganism have had the same destructive effects. For the last two thousand years Christian anti-Judaism has had worldly power and has claimed a great many victims; Jewish anti-paganism has not. But the fact that, until recently, there have been few pagans to suffer from anti-pagan attitudes does not mean there are no consequences. Five consequences in particular trouble me.

The Jewish caricature of paganism cuts us off from aspects of our own history. It disguises the important role that concrete artifacts played in ancient Jewish practice. Cherubim, for example, covered the ark in the Holy of Holies, and the golden calf was not a unique example of apostasy in the desert but part of the cult of the Kingdom of Israel (I Kings 12:25–33). Caricaturing paganism leads us to project the battle over paganism as a battle between "us" and "them" instead of a protracted struggle within Israel between those who advocated worship of Yahweh alone and the apparently far larger number who worshipped Yahweh along with the other deities.

It keeps us from asking what was gained and what was lost in the Jewish victory over paganism. Pagan traditions offered their followers a wide range of male and female images of the sacred and allowed women to serve as dancers and diviners, musicians and priestesses in the cult. The biblical polemic against paganism renders invisible the abolition of female images and the exclusion of women from the religious leadership that accompany the consolidation of monotheism.

Envisioning paganism as dangerous, licentious, and foolish prevents

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us from seeing that so-called pagan concerns find their way into contemporary Judaism. As Jo Ann Hackett remarked, once we rid ourselves of the stereotypes evoked by the phrase "fertility religion," we find that religious concern for fertility is everywhere, as much in the Bible as in the competing Canaanite cult. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz's recent book, *The Savage in Judaism,* argues convincingly that many themes and modes of thought dismissed as savage or pagan have striking parallels in biblical and rabbinic Judaism and continuing Jewish practice. (See David Biale's review in this issue.) Circumcision as the mark of the covenant, for example, symbolized hope for a son's fertility and for his ability to propagate male descendants. Recognizing such parallels does not diminish Judaism but leads us to appreciate the extent to which diverse religious traditions respond to fundamental human dilemmas in similar ways.

Defining paganism as the worship of man-made objects affects our attitudes toward other traditions and prevents us from seeing our own idolatries. When we see a Hopi kachina ceremony, or a Hindu procession, or a Christian kneeling before a statue of Mary, are we able to understand the complex conception of the sacred involved in the use of imagery? Or does the biblical caricature of pagan worship shape—consciously or unconsciously—our attitudes toward other religious practices? Conversely, because as Jews we only see idols in material terms it is difficult to realize that the identification of particular verbal images (such as the image of God as male) with the reality of the sacred is just as much idolatry as the deification of sticks and stones.

Jews internalize and defend a set of stereotypes that lead to contempt for others and undermine our understanding of our own tradition.

Lastly, the use of the label "pagan" to attack Jewish feminism shows that the biblical projection of the pagan "other" still evokes strong images and passionate feelings that can be wielded against modern enemies. Jewish feminists who use female or natural metaphors for God have repeatedly been accused of paganizing Judaism, as if women or nature were intrinsically pagan symbols, as if a variety of images were the same as a variety of gods. Feminist calls for reconsideration of Jewish attitudes toward sexuality have been countered by lurid portraits of pagan licentiousness, as if there were no moral alternative to a patriarchal sexual ethic. Such charges conjure and build on unexamined stereotypes in order to strike fear into the hearts of feminists and any who might listen to them. They also allow critics to dismiss serious feminist questions without considering the merits of the issue.

I suggest these are five good reasons to attend more closely and critically to the theme of anti-paganism when it appears in the Torah. Such projections left unquestioned and unexamined end up being used against real human beings, and distort our understanding of ourselves. □

D'VAR TORAH

Consuming Commitments

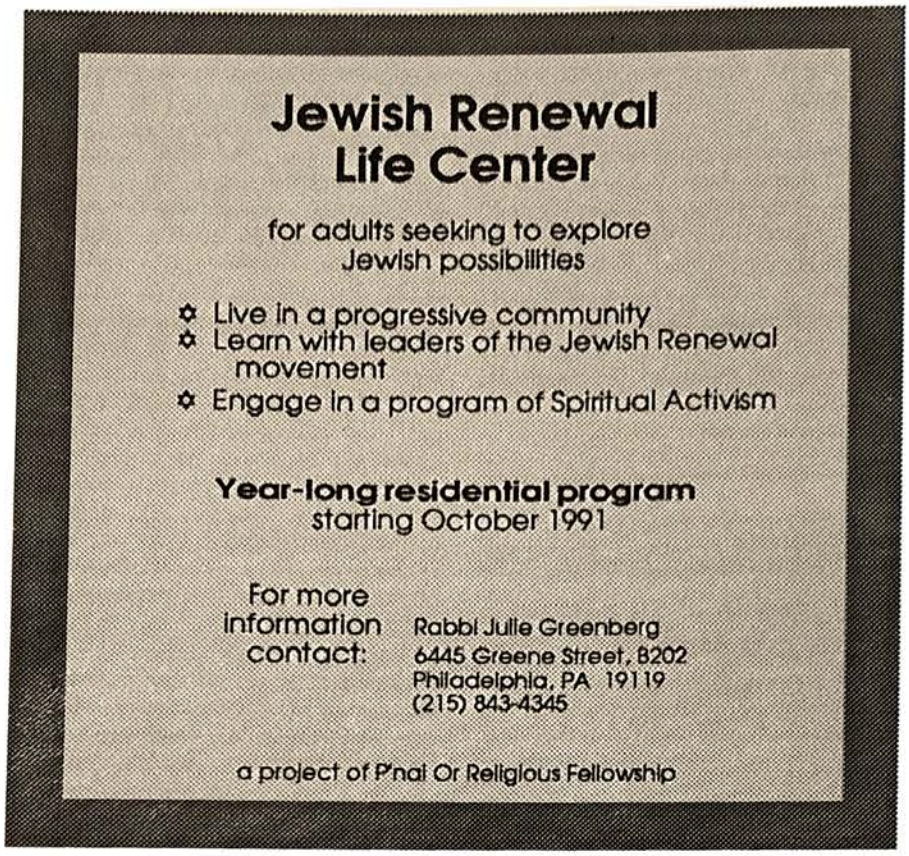
Eliezer Diamond

The strange and terrible deaths of Nadab and Abihu, the two sons of Aaron who brought an "alien fire" before God on the final day of their consecration as priests, jump out at the reader like an angry welt on the otherwise smooth body of *Vayikra* (Leviticus), most of which is made up of formulaic descriptions of law and ritual. The tale is jarring in part because of its seeming impenetrability: What is the "alien fire" (*Vayikra* 10:1) that sparks God's wrath? What is the intent of Moses' response to the tragedy, "This is what the Lord meant when he said: Through those near me I show myself holy, and gain glory before all the people"(10:3)? What thoughts and emotions underlie Aaron's silence in the face of both the event and Moses' words (10:3)?

What is also disturbing, however, is that this narrative appears as the conclusion both to the bloc of sacrifice laws that comprises the first section of the book, and to the consecration of the sanctuary and its priests. Such positioning invites the conclusion that the death of Nadab and Abihu is, in some sense, a sacrificial act as well. Linguistic as well as contextual evidence supports this supposition. Identical phrases describe the flame that consumes the dedicatory sacrifice—"fire came forth from before the Lord and consumed (*va-tokhal*) the burnt offering"(9:24)—and the flame that immolates Nadab and Abihu—"and fire came forth from before the Lord and consumed (*va-tokhal*) them" (10:2). Moses' command to Aaron after the tragedy to eat the remains of the meal offering (10:12) seems to draw a parallel between those remains ("the meal offering that is left over [*ha-noteret*])" and Aaron's remaining two sons, Eleazar and Ittamar ("those that remain [*ha-notarim*]"), implying that both are the unconsumed portion of a sacrificial offering—as rabbinic midrash suggests.

Even Moses' response seems, for all its ambiguity, to impute a sacrificial role to the deaths of Nadab and Abihu. He has God speak of the brothers as

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kerovai, "those close to me", using the same root, *krv,* that is often employed to describe both the act and the object of sacrifice. God is described by Moses, moreover, as "gain[ing] glory before all the people"—apparently through the deaths of the brothers. This is the same glory or presence, presumably, that Moses promised (9:4) and that the people experienced (9:22) through the dedicatory offerings.

To be vital, prayer, like sacrifice, cannot be safe.

If the above observations are correct, the narrative of Nadab and Abihu reads as a sobering sequel to the *Akedah,* the binding of Isaac. In that instance, according to Shalom Spiegel and other interpreters, Abraham is ready to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice; Abraham—and, along with him, all future generations—is then taught that God does not want human sacrifice but rather an animal substitute. Yet this interpretation leaves a nagging question about the *Akedah.* Why could God not simply have informed Abraham of his wishes? Why was it necessary to bring Abraham to the brink of slaughtering his son before imparting the lesson of animal sacrifice? One answer is that Abraham must experience the horror of human sacrifice to understand fully why animal substitutes are necessary. Perhaps our narrative provides a second answer. Abraham comes ready to offer his son but is granted a reprieve through the substitution of a ram. In *Vayikra* Aaron comes bearing animal offerings and ends by offering up his own flesh and blood. True, God accepts animal sacrifice—but only from one who understands that the animal is only a symbol, and that he or she is the true offering. This understanding has many crucial implications; at least two of them, it can be argued, are developed in the second half of *Vayikra.*

The first implication is that a covenantal relationship with God is potentially dangerous, like any other intimate relationship but more so. One cannot enter the covenant without accepting the responsibilities it entails and the possible consequences of failure or dereliction of duty. Yet to live "safely," without covenant or commitment, is not to have lived at all. Aaron must face this truth when he is commanded, "after the death of [his] two sons" (16:1), to purify the sanctuary "in the seventh month on the tenth day of the month" (16:29)—that is, on Yom Kippur. The purification ceremony is clearly intended to be a corrective to the rash acts of Nadab and Abihu; it is preceded by a warning to Aaron "that he is not to come at will into the Shrine behind the curtain ... lest he die" (16:2). He is only to come on Yom Kippur and in accordance with the instructions following this caveat. At the same time, as part of the Yom Kippur ceremony, Aaron is called upon to retrace his sons' steps and to repeat the very act—bringing incense in a firepan into the Holy of Holies—that led to their deaths. In a word, Aaron commits himself to the covenant and renews it on behalf of Israel by risking the fate suffered by his sons. The risks of failure and death always remain, the Torah seems to tell us; rather than avoid them, we can make peace with them only by facing, and even reliving, them.

Because the offerer becomes the offering, sacrifice does not begin only when one reaches the precincts of the sanctuary, nor does it end when one leaves them. As Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik has pointed out, sacrifice is the underlying motif of religious life generally and of halachic life particularly; one renounces a portion of one's desires and appetites in order to be a fit vessel for God's service. The sacrifice of the sanctuary must be of a piece with one's life outside the sanctuary; it merely reflects and reinforces one's sacrificial commitment to God. Perhaps for this reason the horizon of *Vayikra* suddenly broadens after the death of Nadab and Abihu. The arena is no longer the sanctuary, but the land of Israel. No longer is the topic exclusively sacrifice but also what one eats, how both priest and Israelite maintain purity, how one treats one's workers and the poor. The entire land is the sanctuary, says *Vayikra*; all its inhabitants must serve as priests, offering acts of holiness to God (19:2).

Vayikra speaks not only to a society that practices animal sacrifice. It speaks, if we let it, to us in our synagogues as well. If it is to be vital, prayer, like sacrifice, cannot be safe; when we worship we must be ready to accept the attendant risks. We cannot decide in advance who God is and what God can and cannot do. We must allow our prayer to be true dialogue, without attempting in advance to limit or dictate

God's response, or non-response. We must also, of course, be prepared for disappointment; granting the possibility that God answers some prayers allows that God may not answer mine.

Vayikra also reminds us to seek continuity between our life inside the synagogue and outside it. The words of prayer are hollow if they do not reflect the actions of a life lived in God's service. True, we sometimes approach God in prayer precisely because our life has not been godly and we wish it to be so; we must still know that God demands acts that give substance to our words.

But all the explanations above do not mean that we can read the story of Nadab and Abihu, indeed the entire bloody catalog of sacrifices, without a shudder of terror. On the contrary, life everywhere is fraught with horror and danger. Our sanctuaries can only serve us, as Michael Wyschogrod has noted, if we allow terror to enter there as well; for the sanctuary can teach us to face that terror and thereby to live with it in peace. □

PERSONAL/POLITICAL

Opening the Family Closet

Gad Horowitz

Many years from now when I look back on the history of my relationship with my daughter, three moments will stand out in sharp relief: the joyous moment of her Bat Mitzvah, the very sad moment of her father's death—my husband's death—and the moment just a few weeks ago when she said to me: "Ma, I'm a lesbian." My only child, only eighteen years old.

What shocks and upsets me most is not that she's a lesbian, but my own inability to simply accept this. Since I was a youngster I've been socially and politically progressive. I have had lesbian friends. I have challenged expressions of homophobia. If anyone had asked me: What would you say if your daughter turned out to be a lesbian? I would have responded sincerely that it would make no difference to me.

But it does make a difference. I keep thinking: My only daughter will never have a boyfriend, she'll never get married, she'll never have children, I'll never have grandchildren, she'll be lost to our people. And I keep thinking: maybe she's not a lesbian. Isn't it true that at her age homosexual impulses and even homosexual experiences don't necessarily mean she is a lesbian? Shouldn't she be encouraged not to come to any conclusions about her sexual orientation until she's older? And I keep thinking, would this have happened if her father were still living? Could this be a psychological manifestation of mourning, involving an unconscious fixation on her father, or an unconscious decision never to rely on the presence of a man?

So far I've put on a big act, pretending everything is OK. I try to ignore it, I try not to think about it. It really is OK, but I do keep thinking these things. Why can't I stop thinking these things?

You can't stop thinking these things because you are not perfect. "Homophobia" has been an essential feature of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim culture for hundreds of years. Only in the past few decades has it been possible for people who are sexually attracted to their own gender to come out and say proudly or matter-of-factly "I am a lesbian" or "I am a gay man." These new identities are emerging out of the struggle of every single homosexual person with his or her internalized homophobia. Why should the mother of one of those persons be exempt from the struggle?

These things you are thinking are not simply homophobic nonsense; they deserve to be thought through, to be treated respectfully, and to be put in perspective. It's true that at her age homosexual desires and actions don't necessarily mean fixed identity as a lesbian. However, it's even more true that at her age heterosexual desire and behavior wouldn't necessarily mean she's heterosexual. After all, she has been raised from babyhood in an exclusively heterosexual world, completely surrounded by heterosexual imagery, heterosexual language, and heterosexual models. Yet, if she had said to you: "Ma, I'm a heterosexual," would you have thought: maybe she's not heterosexual, maybe she's simply mirroring the behavior she sees all around her? The reason this would not have occurred to you is that our culture is not simply homophobic; it is heterosexist. Only exclusive heterosexuality is assumed to be natural and normal. Homophobia—actual aversion to homosexuality—is just one extreme manifestation of heterosexism. There is no good reason why young homosexuals should be expected, any more than young heterosexuals should, to shun any conclusions about their sexual orientation until they are older. As a matter of fact, persons of all ages need not come to any final conclusions about their sexual orientation at any time.

The more we question heterosexist presuppositions, the more normal homosexuality becomes not only for identified homosexuals, members of the "gay nation," but for everyone. It's already clear that the "homosexual-heterosexual" polarity is a terrible simplification imposed on a complex and fluid reality. It fails to adequately describe not only homosexuals and heterosexuals, but also people who are simultaneously homosexual and heterosexual in various ways and various degrees ("concurrent bisexuals"), people who alternate between homosexu-

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ality and heterosexuality ("sequential bisexuals"), and people who have very little interest in sex (maybe that can be normal too!). And people can move from one of these positions to another several times or many times during their lifetimes.

Would your daughter be a lesbian if her father were still alive? Is her lesbianism merely a manifestation of something else, having to do with the loss of her father? I would suggest that issues relating to mourning may well call for your attention, and that these issues ought to be considered entirely separate from the matter of sexual orientation. Since Freud we have been taught to question every conscious motive, to treat all motives as disguises for something deeper, less conscious, often less praiseworthy. We have been taught to ruminate endlessly (Freud himself called it "analysis interminable") about why we want this and not that, why we behave thus and not otherwise. Maybe that's what Freud meant when he said to Jung, en route to New York to introduce psychoanalysis to the Americans, "Little do they know we bring them the plague." Psychoanalytic investigation and speculation, interesting and productive as they may sometimes be theoretically (and even clinically), have for almost a century raised cultural prejudices and taboos to the level of Scientific Truth. Homosexuality is an "arrest of development" or a "disorder." The clitoral orgasm is a sure sign of "immaturity." A baby is a "compensation" for the missing phallus. Young revolutionaries are "fixated" in the Oedipus complex. But the only truth in these matters is our ignorance. Nobody really knows why people are heterosexual or homosexual, have different kinds of orgasms, make babies, and try to change the world. We do know that people have an incredibly powerful tendency to stigmatize those who are different in any remarkable way.

Some analysts might find a connection between the death of the father in this case and lesbianism. Others might not. The former position would deny the validity of your daughter's revelation of her lesbianism: she's not really lesbian, she's really just reacting to the death of her father. Psychoanalytic thinking deserves to disappear unless it stops putting itself in the service of sexism and heterosexism. If your daughter had announced that she was going steady with a man, the question of a connection with the death of her father would not have come to mind—unless the man were too young, too old, belonged to the wrong religion or ethnic group, or were otherwise unacceptable. Sexual orientation is a mystery, one among many mysteries which require no explanation unless we are seeking to control or destroy them. We don't know and we don't need to know why someone is heterosexual or homosexual. It would be more helpful in many cases to ask why someone is afraid of homosexuality, or heterosexuality, or voluntary celibacy, or any perennial aspect of the human condition. If you feel that there is some message for you about your family history in your daughter's lesbianism, it's up to you to decide whether and how to clarify that message without invalidating her lesbian desire.

Persons of all ages need not come to any final conclusions about their sexual orientation at any time.

Even if your daughter never has a boyfriend and never gets married she may still choose to have children; and even if she becomes totally heterosexual at some point in her life she may choose not to have children. I think that this part of your question comes out of the sadness you feel when you see that your daughter's way of life may be very different from yours. For many thousands of years, parents have been pouring their lives into their children and in this way trying to attain a kind of immortality. If we are childless, or if our children do not replicate and perpetuate our own identities and ways of life, it is almost as if they have died, and with them essential parts of ourselves. Jewish parents, even in these times, might "sit shiva" if a child diverges too far from the paths acceptable to them. Whether she has children or not your daughter may not replicate your way of life, or that of your family, or that of the Jewish people, sexually speaking. But we should remember that it is not gay people who have separated themselves from the Jewish family and the Jewish community; it is the Jewish family that has excluded its gay sons and daughters.

It's time to realize that the exclusionary nature of many of our traditional identifications is narcissistic and idolatrous, confusing adherence to God's will and teachings of the Torah with self-perpetuation. Heterosexism need be no more necessary an aspect of Jewish identity than animal sacrifice and the subjugation of women. In these times the Jewish people are called to liberate the sense of self so that it is no longer captured by any rigid forms. We are called to expand our personal, family, and national-religious identities so that they include those who have hitherto been excluded. This is particularly difficult when it is a matter of sexual practice which is often so closely bound to our deepest images of ourselves. But you can't not think about it. If you try to ignore it, you exclude your daughter, and you perpetuate the conflict within yourself between your old identities and this new unintegrated identity: mother of a lesbian. Therefore, be brave: do think about it, but more completely, and in a new way: Picture in your mind's eye two women whom you could admire or respect, making love. Then let one of them be your daughter. Dwell with these images until you feel comfortable with them. Then again be brave: imagine what it might have been like for you to have been in love with a woman, until you are comfortable with that. You will have extended your sense of self into those images. You will have expanded your identity, and resolved the conflict within yourself.

Nor should this process stop with your own inner conflict. A gay psychotherapist and community activist in Toronto, Jeff Kirby, has initiated a project called Letters from Home. The idea is to ask gay people all across Canada to get their families to write to the Canadian government to say: "This is my sister.... This is my brother.... This is my child.... This is my spouse.... This is my cousin ... and I demand that they be treated and seen as equal because they are part of my family." Kirby says: "I am asking gay people to take ownership of themselves as family and to offer the opportunity for their families to own them in a way that could be pivotal for the inclusion of gay people in family status." Conservative groups "only see family as they want to see it, not as it really is." Your sons and daughters are reaching out to you. The response must go beyond pretending it's OK and trying not to think about it. □

Civic Wrongs

Christopher Lasch

The Closest of Strangers: Liberalism and the Politics of Race in New York, by James Sleeper. W. W. Norton, 1990, 497 pp.

Jim Sleeper moved to Brooklyn from Boston in 1977 and was "amazed to discover" that New York seemed as familiar as if he had lived in the city all his life. Before moving to Manhattan three years ago to join the staff of *New York Newsday,* he taught writing at Queens College, worked as a reporter for the *Brooklyn Phoenix* and the *North Brooklyn Mercury,* and served as a speechwriter for Brooklyn City Council president Carol Bellamy. His wife, a native New Yorker, worked for a time on the staff of Major Owens, a black congressman from Brooklyn. Sleeper's knowledge of the city—the product not just of a varied experience of its neighborhoods, its politics, and its journalistic lore but of an appreciation of its civic institutions and traditions—appears to be almost inexhaustible. It is because he knows and loves the city so well that his unsparing account of its decline carries so much conviction.

The glory of New York, according to Sleeper, lies in its "integration of proletarian strength with professional excellence and high cultural achievement." It is a city of "walkers" and "readers." Its array of institutions—public transit, schools (including a city-wide university system), hospitals, libraries, parks, museums—makes "intellectual development possible without the sums of money usually needed to cross the threshold of higher education." Such institutions do more than provide large numbers of New Yorkers with "a leg up the ladder of personal advancement"; they "link the poor city-dweller's personal upward mobility to a broader cosmopolitan purpose." Unlike those neoconservatives who preach self-help to minorities, Sleeper wants us to see, I think, that opportunity is dependent on a vigorous public sector and that public institutions, moreover, can shape the very structure of ambition. Shaped in this way, ambition is directed not to the conventional goals of money and suburban exile but to the kind of intelligent awareness of their surroundings that is the hallmark of native New Yorkers—a knowledgeable, sophisticated, and contentious lot.

Civic institutions link neighborhoods, based on ethnic and familial ties and highly parochial as a result, to the impersonal culture of the larger world. Sleeper understands that neighborhoods play an invaluable part in forming civic virtues, but he does not glorify neighborhood life as an end in itself. Neighborhoods provide shelter from the anonymity of the market, but they also serve as "launching pads for the urban young." A stable neighborhood where the priest, the teacher, the basketball coach, the corner grocer, and the policeman are clearly visible as models of adult authority can teach lessons that will prove invaluable in the larger world beyond the neighborhood. Sleeper's summary of these lessons stresses personal responsibility and respect for others—the qualities essential to civic life, in other words, not necessarily the qualities that bring commercial success and professional advancement: "Don't drop out of school unless you've got a steady job; don't parent offspring until you can support them; treat other people and their property with respect."

New York is a "city of insular communities, yet one of the emblematic themes of its civic culture is that of breaking with the old neighborhood and finding the world." The break is not irrevocable, however, unless the object is conceived simply as material success—upward social mobility in the crudest sense of the term. Finding the world implies, above all, finding oneself, not losing oneself in the struggle to succeed or to acquire the cultural distinctions that go with material success. It is a common mistake to think that exposure to the world's culture necessarily leads to the loss or renunciation of one's particular subculture. Except for those whose only aim is complete assimilation—the ostentatious display of all the cultural trappings of power and status—moving beyond one's parochial identity leads to a more complex, even to a painfully divided, identity. To extrapolate from Sleeper's remarks about the importance of neighborhoods, we might say that this creative tension between the neighborhood and the city, between the subcultures peculiar to New York's many nationalities and the world culture embodied in its civic institutions, has always been the source of the city's singular vitality.

In the past, efforts to relax this tension—which can easily become almost unbearable for individuals torn between two cultures, and which in any case is easier to grasp in its negative than in its positive dimension—have usually taken one of two forms. Condemnation of particularism, in the name of "Americanism" or some other form of cultural conformity, invited an embattled defense of particularism that verged on racial and ethnic separatism. In the black community, the long-standing conflict between nationalist and integrationist strategies obscured the ways in which both strategies worked to resist a more complex understanding of black identity. Nationalists held that black people would never be accepted as Americans and should think of themselves as African exiles, while integrationists envisioned assimilation into the mainstream as the logical consequence of political equality. Neither program captured the "two-ness" of Afro-American experience, as W. E. B. Du

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Bois called it—the divided loyalty that was painful, unavoidable, yet promising as well, if it contributed to a new definition of Americanism that respected particularism without denying the need for a common American culture.

Neither black nationalism nor integration retains much of a following today. These positions may have been one-sided, but at least they had a certain consistency and coherence. Each addressed one side of a complex reality. Integration rested on the understanding that the color of one's skin is irrelevant to a whole range of human pursuits—to building bridges, say, or to running a business or discharging the obligations of citizenship. Black nationalism, on the other hand, took account of the dense historical background that made it impossible simply to discount the importance of race. As long as these positions confronted each other in a clearly defined opposition, it was possible to see why each was incomplete and to hope for a synthesis that would do justice to both sides of the black experience. The civil rights movement of the fifties and early sixties, unfairly dismissed by nationalist critics as purely integrationist, in fact anticipated the elements of such a synthesis.

The collapse of the civil rights movement has left a confused and more deeply discouraging situation in which the merits of black nationalism and integration alike have disappeared in clouds of racial rhetoric. On the one hand, the nationalist argument, in the work of Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and other champions of "cultural diversity," has now been carried to the extreme of denying any universal or transracial values at all. It is no longer a matter just of asserting (in the style, say, of Marcus Garvey) that blacks have nothing to gain from integration into a corrupt society, a society that refuses to practice what it preaches. Now it is Western culture as a whole, Western rationalism as such, the very notion of a common tradition or a common civic language or a set of common standards, that is said to be necessarily and unavoidably racist. On the other hand, this extreme form of rhetorical particularism, which has come to dominate discussions of the race question, has grown up side by side with a relentless assault on neighborhoods, which deprives cultural particularism of the only material conditions in which it can be expected to flourish. The "new tribalism," which finds favor not only among postmodernist academics but in the media, in the world of commercial entertainment, and in the cultural boutiques and salons frequented by yuppies, appears on the scene at the very moment when tribalism has ceased to have any substantive content. "Tribalism" is the latest fashion thrown up by a consumerist capitalism that is rapidly replacing neighborhoods with shopping malls, thereby undermining the very particularism it eagerly packages as a commodity.

"Tribalism" is the latest fashion thrown up by a consumerist capitalism that is rapidly replacing neighborhoods with shopping malls.

"Some New Yorkers," Sleeper notes, "seem not to want neighborhoods at all." The business and professional classes, for the most part, make up a restless, transient population that has a home—if it can be said to have a home at all—in national and international organizations based on esoteric expertise and dominated by the ethic of competitive achievement. From the professional and managerial point of view, neighborhoods are places in which the unenterprising are left behind—backwaters of failure and cultural stagnation.

Political battles over open housing and school desegregation have exposed neighborhoods to additional criticism on the grounds that they breed racial exclusiveness and intolerance. From the mid-sixties on, the racial policies favored by liberals have sought to break up the black ghetto, another kind of undesirable neighborhood, at the expense of other ethnic "enclaves" that allegedly perpetuate racial prejudice. The goal of liberal policy, in effect, is to remake the city in the image of the affluent, mobile elites that see it as a place merely to work and play, not as a place to put down roots, to raise children, to live and die.

Racial integration might have been conceived as a policy designed to give everyone equal access to a common civic culture. Instead it has come to be conceived largely as a strategy for assuring educational mobility. Integrated schools, as the Supreme Court explained in the Brown decision, would overcome the psychological damage inflicted by segregation and make it possible for black people to compete for careers open to talent. The misplaced emphasis on professional careers, as opposed to jobs and participation in a common culture, helps to explain the curious coexistence, in the post-sixties politics of race, of a virulent form of cultural particularism (according to which, for example, black children should read only black writers and thus escape exposure to "cultural imperialism") with strategies having the practical effect of undermining particularism in its concrete expression of neighborhoods.

In the forties and fifties, according to Sleeper, liberals took for granted a "social order cohesive and self-confident enough to admit blacks" on its own terms. There was a great deal of racial tension and injustice, but there was also a considerable reservoir of goodwill on both sides. White ethnics, Sleeper thinks, were still "up for grabs." Uneasy about black migration into their neighborhoods, they were nevertheless committed to principles of fair play. (Even today, Sleeper observes, "the city's beleaguered white ethnics know that ... it isn't really minorities they're losing out to; there are the eternal rich and a new managerial elite that, in an exquisite irony, includes radicals who tormented them in the sixties and then cleaned themselves up in the eighties to claim their class prerogatives.") Those who feared or resented black people found themselves disarmed by the moral heroism, self-discipline, and patriotism of the civil rights movement. Participants in the movement, by their willingness to go to jail when they broke the law, undertook to "prove the depth of their commitment to the society they [were] trying to awaken," in Sleeper's words. The movement dramatized blacks' status as "quintessential Americans, ... dependent on the country's living up to its promises."

The 1960s program of "disastrous social engineering," as Sleeper calls it, led to a rapid deterioration of race relations. Busing and open housing threatened ethnic neighborhoods and led lower middle-class whites "to see resistance to integration as a physical and economic necessity." In the face of

this opposition, liberals "reacted with self-righteous indignation." Black militants encouraged racial polarization and demanded a new politics of "collective grievance and entitlement." They insisted that black people, as victims of "white racism," could not be held up to the same educational or civic standards as whites. Such standards were themselves racist, having no other purpose than to keep blacks in their place. The white Left, which romanticized Afro-American culture as an expressive, sexually liberated way of life free of bourgeois inhibitions, collaborated in this attack on common standards. The civil rights movement originated as an attack on the injustice of double standards; now the idea of a single standard was itself attacked as the crowning example of "institutional racism."

The recent Tawana Brawley fiasco indicates just how far professional black militants, together with their liberal and left admirers, have retreated from any conception of common standards—even from any residual conception of truth. When the "rape" of Tawana Brawley, proclaimed by Al Sharpton and Alton Maddox as a typical case of white oppression, was exposed as a hoax, the anthropologist Stanley Diamond argued in *The Nation* that "it doesn't matter whether the crime occurred or not." Even if the incident was staged by "black actors," it was staged with "skill and controlled hysteria" and described what "actually happens to too many black women." William Kunstler took the same predictable line: "It makes no difference anymore whether the attack on Tawana really happened ... [It] doesn't disguise the fact that a lot of young black women are treated the way she said she was treated." It was to the credit of black militants, Kunstler added, that they "now have an issue with which they can grab the headlines and launch a vigorous attack on the criminal justice system."

Sleeper's book enables us to see the effects of a campaign against "racism" that increasingly turns on attempts to manipulate the media, and recasts politics as racial theater. While Sharpton and Maddox "grab the headlines," living conditions for most of the black people in New York continue to decline. Affirmative action provides black elites with a "bureaucratically sanctioned slice of the pie" but leaves the masses worse off than ever. It is bad enough, Sleeper points out, that "one's surname or skin color becomes by itself a means of advancement"—a policy that "undermines the classic liberal American ideal in which individuals are held significantly responsible for their fates and rewarded according to their performance." What is even worse is that most blacks do not advance at all; and they are held back, Sleeper argues, partly by the very militance that is supposed to set them free. Black-culture strategies reinforce the defensive solidarity of black students against academic overachievers, accused of "acting white." They excuse academic failure on the grounds that black students should not have to master a "Eurocentric" curriculum. They use victimization as an excuse for every kind of failure, and thereby perpetuate one of the deepest sources of failure—the victim's difficulty in gaining self-respect.

Meanwhile the city's economy is falling apart. The flight of industry creates a vacuum that is only partially filled by finance, communications, tourism, and entertainment. The new industries do not provide jobs for the unemployed. New York needs a tax base and full employment; instead it gets words and symbols and lots of restaurants. The new industries, moreover, encourage a self-absorbed, hedonistic way of life, "corrosive of families or neighborhood obligation." Real estate speculation—an industry that "is to New York City what big oil has been to Houston"—is equally subversive of an older way of life, since neighborhood turnover is more profitable than neighborhood stability. Speculators let buildings run down and then collect insurance when they go up in flames. The real estate industry spreads the word that a given neighborhood is on the rise or going down, thus "creating self-fulfilling prophecies of neighborhood improvement or decay."

Sleeper's careful analysis of the economic and institutional roots of New York's racial crisis usually goes unmentioned in reviews of *The Closest of Strangers,* most of which leave the impression that the book blames everything on white liberals and the black militants who play on their guilty conscience. Haywood Burns, in a ludicrously inept review in *The Nation,* predictably accuses Sleeper of "blaming the victim." (His review contains a long list of other grave offenses—for instance, referring to African-Americans, even in the appropriate historical context, as Negroes.) Even J. Anthony Lukas, writing in the *New York Times,* thinks Sleeper is too hard on liberals. But the point here is not for commentators to line up for yet another debate over the liberal politics of race. Sleeper is not particularly interested, as his reviewers assume, in distributing praise and blame. He is interested in understanding what makes a city work and how a city can fall apart. When he insists that a city as complicated as New York cannot be neatly divided into two camps, "oppressed people of color and unthinking white oppressors," his intention is not to deny the reality of white oppression but to show that it cannot be corrected by breast-beating, radical posturing, and political theatrics. When he advocates a "transracial" politics, he does not speak as a supporter of the socioeconomic status quo. On the contrary, the question raised by David Dinkins's election as mayor, according to Sleeper, is precisely whether a transracial politics can avoid the pitfall of establishment politics. (In Dinkins's case, the answer seems to be that it can't.)

What New York needs, Sleeper argues, is a politics that will emphasize class divisions instead of racial ones, addressing the "real problem, which is poverty, and the real need, which is jobs." Working people have a common stake in liberating the city from the parasitic interests and industries that now control it. To be sure, they also have a common stake in "upholding standards of personal accountability, public honesty, and trust." A commitment to common standards is a necessary ingredient in any interracial coalition. But a populist coalition of the kind Sleeper has in mind has to include a commitment to egalitarian economic reforms—to a frontal assault on corporate power and privilege. Perhaps this is the real source of the uneasiness that so many of Sleeper's reviewers betray. Instead of a politics of radical gestures, he offers a substantive radicalism that would lead to real and not merely to rhetorical changes—always an unwelcome prospect for those (including many self-styled radicals and cultural revolutionaries) with a heavy investment in the existing arrangements. □

Making the American Dream

Alice Kessler-Harris

Getting Comfortable in New York: The American Jewish Home, 1880–1950, edited by Susan L. Braunstein and Jenna Weissman Joselit. The Jewish Museum, 1990, 110 pp.

Daughters of the Shtetl: Work and Unionism in the Immigrant Generation by Susan A. Glenn. Cornell University Press, 1990, 312 pp.

Adapting to Abundance: Jewish Immigrants, Mass Consumption, and the Search for American Identity by Andrew R. Heinze. Columbia University Press, 1990, 276 pp.

The Jewish immigrant experience of America is often presented as an intense effort to achieve economic prosperity. And indeed, it often was. Many a Jewish immigrant's grandchild knows about her family's swift climb out of poverty and up the ladder of occupational mobility to material affluence. But the same grandchild has often heard romantic tales of the great uncle or aunt with socialist ideas who became first a trade union activist and then a devout supporter of FDR. Contrary as they seem, these two strands of immigrant experience may be more closely related than we have imagined. The volumes under review here indicate that both emerged from efforts by turn-of-the-century immigrants to reconcile heightened expectations of America with deeply rooted cultural traditions. Most Jewish immigrants found the two goals far from incompatible.

Where an earlier generation of historians asked dichotomous questions about whether immigrants adapted passively or resisted fiercely, scholars are now arguing that the newcomers were neither paralyzed by alienation nor engaged in a fruitless effort to retain tradition.Immigrants, according to this interpretation, made a deliberate attempt to become fully part of the world to which they had migrated. They defined the American dream for themselves and then sought to realize it.

In *Daughters of the Shtetl,* Susan Glenn finds on the shop floor some of the materials from which a new identity would be constructed. The vast majority of unmarried Jewish women and girls who emigrated to the U.S. between 1880 and 1921 spent a number of years working in the garment industry, which then thrived in every large American city. For most, this was a relatively brief experience of about seven years, followed by marriage, a family, and perhaps the taking-in of garments to be sewn at home. Still, for the teenagers and young adults who lived with the intense pace of work and noisy chaos of a burgeoning young industry, the experience was formative. Young women were relatively free from parents yet they typically contributed most of their wages to the parental household, for which they had a heavy responsibility.

Glenn emphasizes their eagerness to make money. The wages of young women paid for food and rent. Wages bought the tickets that transported loved ones from the Old World. And they provided a cushion that enabled families to save enough to survive the inevitable periods of unemployment, illness, and short-time. But the drive for income also placed these women at odds with traditional values. It encouraged them to abandon the small, neighborhood workshops of the Lower East Side and seek better-paying and often more secure jobs in modern, efficient factories "uptown." To immigrant girls, the closely supervised neighborhood shop seemed a restrictive and controlling environment. The factory, in contrast, represented progress and modernity—the freedom to participate in the anonymity of a broader culture. There women managed to circumvent restrictions on acquiring skills, and developed expectations of occupational mobility in order to enlarge their earnings. But the move subjected them to the hazards of the impersonal workplace: to the sexual harassment and favoritism routinely practiced by foremen, the frequent speed-ups of the pace of production, and the ever-present threat of industrial accidents. In response, young girls banded together, creating a peer culture that promised both economic protection and a close network of friends during and after work hours.

These were not passive women, buffeted by events and clinging to Old World values. Placed side by side in large workrooms where only the foremen and the skilled cutters were men, women developed their own forms of sociability. They shared stories of romance and encouraged each other to seek love-matches that violated parental wishes. They made friends among women of other ethnic groups and exchanged their knowledge about American manners, clothes, and lifestyles. They traveled together to night-school English classes. They sought out their own forms of leisure, inventing and attending cafes, theatres, and dances with a freedom few native-born, old-stock American women had ever experienced. The women's culture that emerged from the shop floor created a world that vastly extended the boundaries of the urban ghetto and made an American identity conceivable.

In the winter of 1909–10, widespread wage cuts turned this culture to a political purpose. Young garment workers went on strike, defending their actions in language consistent with their version of the American dream: their right to be treated respectfully at work and to be fairly paid for the work they did. Led by skilled and already well-paid female workers who had

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"worked themselves up in the trade," these uprisings of women expressed the outrage of those who had lived up to their part of the bargain, yet were excluded from the rewards that American ideology held out to ambitious workers. Glenn demonstrates that the Jewish immigrant community supported these women in part because they were breadwinners, and in part because they were only demanding what "America" seemed to have promised to all immigrants.

But did the garment factory permanently shape the outlook of the young women who worked in it? Glenn argues persuasively that no sharp division between home and work governed the lifestyles of these women. They brought back to their parental households new forms of behavior that influenced their mothers' expectations and later their own. Wage-work provided daughters and their mothers with a sense that American ideas of ambition and achievement might apply to women. It offered women a legacy of altered expectations about their own value to the family and thus shaped their identities as active agents in the process of acculturation.

While Glenn locates the construction of identity in the workplace, she would certainly agree with Andrew Heinze that other arenas were equally important. In *Adapting to Abundance,* Heinze argues that too much attention has been paid to immigrants as producers while their roles as consumers have been neglected. "Whereas 'producing,'" he writes, "suggests the positive act of creation, 'consuming' implies destruction and waste." But many immigrants defined the meaning of America by their ability to attain the vaunted "American Standard of Living." Consumer goods were therefore not peripheral to the emergence of a new identity but central to it.

Clothing constituted the first port of entry. Upon arrival, immigrants almost immediately shed their Old World garments and donned American outfits. After a man got his new suit and a woman her new shirtwaist, both paid a photographer to capture their new appearance as tangible testimony to their instant Americanization. Then came household utensils and new furnishings to replace the secondhand goods with which most immigrants started out. Finally, with the dawn of prosperity, came a new neighborhood and a slightly larger apartment that could accommodate a piano in a separate room, the parlor. If many of the items were bought on credit, they still demonstrated not only economic mobility, but the desire to become an American.

This was far from the display-minded excess of conspicuous consumption that Thorstein Veblen satirized. Instead, Jewish immigrants seemed to equate consumption with democracy. Mass-produced, brand-name products such as Crisco or Quaker Oats carried, as the factory did, an aura of progress and modernity. They encouraged immigrants to feel that they belonged to a larger culture. If brand-name goods displayed a rabbinical seal of approval, they also helped smooth the transition to an increasingly secularized daily life, narrowing the gap between traditional ritual and New World desires.

Immigrants defined the American dream for themselves and then sought to realize it.

Religious ceremonies provided the clearest occasions for mixing old and new. In Europe, ritual objects may have been the only luxuries a poor household possessed. But in America, adherence to tradition seemed to require the purchase of new items. For Rosh Hashanah, one needed a new suit of clothes. During Sukkot, an abundance of fruit, nuts, and luxury foods adorned the Sukkah. Chanukah, a modest festival in Eastern Europe, became a patent imitation of Christmas. The Jewish daily *The Forward* rationalized this change with the rhetorical question "Who says we are not Americanizing?" and then the half-apologetic explanation that gift giving at Christmas was "the first thing that demonstrates that one is not a greenhorn." The annual ritual of housecleaning at Passover became an occasion for discarding old utensils and even furniture and replacing them with new purchases that symbolized American prosperity.

But most consumption was not dedicated to the secularized celebration of sacred festivals. Rather it reflected the perception that a person's dignity as an American increased in proportion to his or her possession of consumer goods. Heinze perceptively acknowledges that the role of women in selecting, purchasing, and displaying these goods altered their status from preservers of a traditional culture to agents of transformation. But he fails to look at the cost of the transition. If their rapid acquisition of goods created a "sense of social membership" for immigrant Jews, it also obscured the waning of the spirit of social justice that had animated generations of Eastern European Jews. Even at its most grudging, that spirit had been protective of the larger Jewish community. It was a tradition of mutual care amid unfriendly neighbors. The young garment workers who regarded themselves as American producers relied heavily on an ethic of social justice to justify their new activism. But this was a more difficult stance to maintain for those who identified themselves as consumers. As Heinze puts it, "they inevitably acquired a new perspective, one defined by the awareness of abundance, the sense that surplus would govern the American future as it had the past." Since most Jews were both producers and consumers, the home served to mediate the battle over the construction of identity.

The Jewish woman who became a skilled consumer evoked the blessings of capitalism on behalf of her family. She reached for a new American identity, transforming the frequently unsatisfying experience of work into the hopeful expectation of a comfortable home. Family goals may have undermined the passion for socialism. But they also made the work experience appear more rational and provided the basis for a new type of community life--one that joined ritual with mass cuture.

Getting Comfortable in New York nicely demonstrates this transition. The book is an exhibit catalog designed to guide the reader through the array of objects displayed in the Jewish Museum's nostalgic recreation of the history of the American Jewish home.

But its profuse illustrations and three short essays speak directly to the issues of identity and acculturation raised by Glenn and Heinze. Here are the kitchens in which the immigrant girl handed her wage packet over to her mother and saw it converted into the objects of household comfort that were the art of the *baleboste,* the talented homemaker. Here is the ubiquitous piano. And here are the linens and glass bowls that provided the visible evidence that this family had absorbed the most important lesson of a democratic

culture: that one's possessions represented a willingness to shed the constraints of the past in favor of the social and economic progress that was the shared destiny of Americans.

The core essay of the catalog is Jenna Weissman Joselit's "'A Set Table': Jewish Domestic Culture in the New World, 1880–1950." Joselit traces Americanization through an emerging code of manners illustrated by the objects that code required. What appears to have been private behavior, she argues, is better seen as "a collective endeavor promoting matters of manners and morals as vehicles of acculturation." She uses the material objects collected by the museum to demonstrate the persistence of Jewish culture and its gradual adaptation to the American scene. But both exhibit and catalog could as easily be read as the opposite: the gradual transformation of Jewish culture into an American lifestyle. Widespread distribution of simple editions of the Passover Haggadah by companies like Maxwell House and Barricini, for example, blurred the line between domestic spirituality and commercial enterprise. The catalog provides fascinating, tangible evidence that whether the process of cultural assimilation occurred most rapidly at the workplace or in the marketplace, it was translated into people's lives in the messages transmitted at home.

Taken together, these three volumes offer a way to reconcile seemingly opposite interpretations of the immigrant experience. They suggest that the market functioned both as a challenge to achieve economic justice for workers (measured by the extent to which increased wages would enhance family well-being) and as a test of individual achievement. Immigrants who were simultaneously producers and consumers related to it in both ways. By the same token, ethnic and religious identifications provided both deep roots in the past and vehicles for change. They functioned as conservative forces when the community felt threatened and as safe havens for individuals whose Judaism was preserved for weddings, funerals, and High Holidays. Women, who on the one hand reproduced apparently traditional families, also introduced their families to their version of the American dream—a dream fed both by their experiences as workers and their work as consumers. Far from being an impediment to the process of acculturation, women may have been in the vanguard. However, they defined Americanization not so much as an abandonment of old values but as a response to the consumer market—a response that helped to change the market as well.

There is a contemporary lesson here. Understanding the immigrant experience as a subtle dialogue between the imaginative construction of America and newcomers' ways of coping with daily life in a new world should make us a bit more humble about the millions of non-Europeans who have migrated to the U.S. in recent years. They too are struggling to define and achieve an American dream; they too must find a way to reconcile traditional beliefs and practices with the enticing promises of the mass market. And when they demand social justice, let us respond as if our grandparents were doing the picketing and protesting. □

Capture the Flag

Gary Gerstle

Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality by Eric Hobsbawm. Cambridge University Press, 1990, 191 pp.

One of the more depressing spectacles of the 1988 election was Michael Dukakis's utter inability to defend his patriotism—and liberalism's honor—against George Bush's attacks on him as a "card-carrying member" of the ACLU. Dukakis seemed constitutionally incapable of grabbing an American flag and wrapping his civil libertarian politics within its protective folds. His belated, and strained, turn to a populist rhetoric that depicts ordinary, hard-working Americans—not wealthy elites—as the true guardians of the nation's democratic traditions revealed how deeply he was alienated from patriotic politics of even a progressive sort.

Some of Dukakis's haplessness was simply personal idiosyncracy. But it was also symptomatic of a long-standing, disabling estrangement of liberals from the idea of nationalism. Rooted partly in the distaste liberal modernizers have for any sort of ascriptive cultural association—be it tribal, ethnic, religious, or nationalist—and partly in the New Left's revulsion for flag-waving American intervention in the Third World, this evasion has contributed mightily to the political eclipse of liberalism. Most Americans (or, at least, most who vote) have wanted to believe in their country's essential goodness and have repeatedly chosen to be governed by Republican presidents whose patriotism they could trust.

Outside the United States, nationalism is even more central to political and social movements. It helped Margaret Thatcher secure her conservative ascendancy in Britain. It makes the Palestinians' quest for statehood a passion that, much to the regret of the Israeli government, refuses to cool. The many peoples of the Soviet Union—Lithuanian, Estonian, Latvian, Ukrainian, Armenian, and others—are defying the once-comfortable belief of western analysts (including most anticommunists) that state socialism had swept away all national and ethnic affiliations, which it deemed

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counterrevolutionary.

All this makes Eric Hobsbawm's inquiry into the origins and meaning of nationalism especially timely. Hobsbawm, England's most distinguished Marxist historian, admits to a frank dislike for nationalism and nation-states. "No serious historian of nations and nationalism can be a committed political nationalist," he writes, for "nationalism requires too much belief in what is patently not so." This declaration ominously resembles the old Marxist view of nationalism as "false consciousness" whose primary function is to divert the masses from "true socialism." But Hobsbawm is too good a scholar not to realize that the appeal of nationalism has been broader, deeper, and more resilient than that of socialism itself. If this phenomenon rests on something that is "patently not so," it nevertheless requires a serious examination of why it matters so much to so many people.

Hobsbawm's book is an engaging study that illuminates social origins, variable meanings, and political significance of nationalism. Few historians can match Hobsbawm's erudition or his ability to make that learning accessible in simple yet elegant prose. He knows as much about nation-building and nationalism on the European periphery—the Balkans, southern Italy, Catalonia, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, Scandinavia, and the Baltic states—as in its English-French-German core. He also ranges far beyond Europe to the farther shores of North America, Africa, and Asia. He is equally at home reconstructing the etymology of the word "nation" and pondering the ways that mass spectator sports fuel patriotic fervor. It is a book to be savored.

Yet this has not been an easy book for Hobsbawm to write, for his historical reflections lead far away from conventional Marxist formulations. In fact, one puts down the book convinced not of nationalism's artificiality but of its vital importance to the tradition Hobsbawm holds most dear—that of modern radicalism, born in the French Revolution.

Hobsbawm argues that "the nation" acquired the first of its modern meanings in revolutionary France of the 1790s. At that historical moment, the nation was defined as a body of citizens living within a large territory with well-defined borders, exercising sovereignty over that territory through a democratic state. Notably missing from this definition was the idea that nationalism might rest on some linguistic or ethnic basis; anyone living within that territory, regardless of ascriptive background, could become a citizen. One had to assimilate—to become a citizen—but no one, in theory at least, was excluded; even peasants, the urban poor, and Jews could become French.

The association of the nation with popular sovereignty endowed it with an unmistakably democratic, even revolutionary, air. The modern French nation had been created by the rising of the "people" against the privileged estates; its very purpose was to represent "the common interest against particular interests." In such words Hobsbawm formulates, somewhat tentatively, a theme to which he returns again and again: modern radicalism and modern nationalism were born together, the fraternal twins of the French Revolution.

Hobsbawm shows how an extraor-

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dinary range of radical movements—from the French Jacobins and English Chartists to pre-World War I socialists, Popular Front Communists, and Third World revolutionaries—hinged on the integration of the language of class and nation, of social and national protest. "The conglomerate national/citizen," Hobsbawm writes, "forms the soil in which all other political sentiments grow."

These words amount to a startling rejection of the traditional Marxist perspective on nationalism. Since the early twentieth century, most Marxist intellectuals in Europe and the United States have cast nationalism and socialism as opposites. In part, this reflected the configuration of *fin de siecle* politics: most prominent nationalists, such as the accusers of Dreyfus, were right-wingers who defined "the nation" as a unique and superior group of people distinguished by racial, ethnic, and linguistic homogeneity and profoundly threatened by industrialization and the rise of labor movements. In contrast, socialist internationalists had long held the belief that capitalism, in its revolutionary transformation of the world, was obliterating national distinctions and national traditions, especially among the proletariat. Marx expressed this belief in its purest form in 1848 when he wrote that "working men have no country."

Many leftists reconsidered these views as a result of World War I, when European workers rallied to their national flags. Stalin and Lenin both proposed theoretical ways to distinguish between those nationalisms that would push communism forward and those that would slow its advance. After World War I, socialist parties tried to incorporate patriotic aspirations into their programs—some, as in France, with an impressive degree of success. But it was the rare leftist who recognized that nationalism satisfied a deep, authentic human need. Most Marxists saw nationalism as a kind of crabgrass to be vigilantly controlled, if not eliminated outright.

Even today this old hostility survives, and in unexpected places. In Eastern Europe, where Communist parties have been routed and the socialist ideal seems all but dead, the Polish intellectual Adam Michnik has framed the struggle for a post-socialist order in classical Marxist (and liberal) terms: he and his allies are fighting for "democracy" and against "nationalism." To be sure, Michnik is responding to political groups that have made nationalism a conservative cause. Moreover, Michnik is acutely conscious of the region's still-recent history of mass expulsions and mass murder, a history that can be traced to the same cultural intolerance Polish xenophobes harbor today. Nevertheless, if Michnik and the political forces he represents continue to accept, let alone to reinforce, the right-wing's monopoly on nationalism, they will effectively doom "democracy" to defeat.

One had to assimilate, but no one was excluded; even peasants, the urban poor, and Jews could become French.

Hobsbawm rightly concedes that democratic movements of a liberal or radical sort in Europe, the United States, and the decolonizing Third World have been most successful when they have resisted the impulse to place nationalism and democracy in strict opposition to each other, and instead insisted on their own national, and populist, character. Franklin Roosevelt's victory in 1936 (which secured the establishment of the American welfare state) rested largely on his ability to identify his Democratic party with the Founding Fathers and to depict his opponents as "Tories" and "economic royalists" who were undermining the American republic. The post-World War II popularity of the French Communist party depended heavily on the party's identification with the wartime defense of the French nation against the Germans. Chinese, Vietnamese, and most other Third World Communists staked their political triumphs on the idea of *national* liberation. It is even conceivable that in the early 1930s, German Socialists and Communists could have more effectively resisted Hitler and his National Socialists had the German Left understood the need, not only to unite with each other, but also to refuse the class vs. nation opposition forced on them by the Right.

Of course, the mere mention of the phrase "national socialist" highlights the difficulty and peril confronting radicals who have sought to articulate an idea of nationhood that is inclusive and democratic rather than exclusionary and authoritarian. The conservative, traditionalist vocabulary that entered the language of nationalism in the late nineteenth century remains firmly in place, and its presence makes nationalist movements of the Left vulnerable to being either contested or coopted from the Right. For every working-class movement that has successfully taken on reactionary notions of nationalism and recovered older, democratic versions (such as the CIO of the 1930s, which brought together a variety of ethnic groups under the banner of Americanism) another two have succumbed to racism and xenophobia. This sobering reality confirms leftists and liberals in their internationalism and prompts them to dissociate from nationalism altogether. And it moves Hobsbawm to declare his opposition to nationalism even as he convincingly shows that radicalism cannot succeed without it.

Still, hope springs eternal, and Hobsbawm thinks the future will prove more hospitable to a non-nationalist radical politics than has the past. As a historical materialist, he takes greatest comfort in the declining importance of the nation-state in the world political economy. The nation-state flourished in the nineteenth century, when it offered the best possible environment for capital accumulation; it flounders now because national boundaries only hinder the multinational corporations that are driving capitalism forward. Nationalism, argues Hobsbawm, cannot long survive the erosion of its economic and political base.

This makes sense if one accepts Hobsbawm's Marxist premise that, ultimately, nationalism is a form of consciousness rooted in material forces. But his argument is, at least, insufficient for understanding the fierce attachment that individuals almost everywhere feel toward their nation-states, even those that have only been recently invented. People may find in the "nation" answers to, or at least solace regarding, their own misfortunes. And this suffering arises not so much from economic deprivation as from our vulnerability to disease, injury, deformity, and aging. Apostles of the Enlightenment—Marxists and liberals alike—have been reluctant to address these issues or have stressed steps made toward the control, even eradication, of pain through improve-

ments in nutrition, medicine, employment, and income. But while such programs can ameliorate suffering, they cannot sanitize the future or soften the inescapable, terrifying fact of mortality.

Nationalism addresses the question of death. Membership in a nation offers citizens the possibility of transcending their own finitude. Nations, unlike individuals, are immortal: their "lives" stretch endlessly back into the past and forward into the future. In this respect, they are like families; members of both collectivities carry within them the "blood" of both ancestors and descendants. Think of the ease with which words referring to family and home—*heimat, patrie,* "homeland," "fatherland," and "motherland"—are applied to the nation. Such linguistic transfers suggest emotional transfers as well, which helps explain why dying for one's country, as the British scholar Benedict Anderson has noted, "assumes a moral grandeur which dying for the Labour Party, the American Medical Association, or perhaps even Amnesty International cannot rival." Dying for one's country, like dying for one's family, ensures that the *patrie* will survive; as long as it does, the individual, in an important sense, lives on.

Hobsbawm frequently uses Anderson's phrase "imagined communities" (taken from his 1983 book of that title) to denote the invented traditions and false myths that sustain every nation-state. But Anderson himself chose the adjective "imagined" to give the idea of nationhood a more positive connotation, implying creation rather than manipulation. Anderson would not dispute Hobsbawm on the strong connection between nationalism's ascendancy and the rise of capitalism. But he would also stress that nationalism owed much to the sixteenth-century fragmentation of Christendom, an event that sent Europeans scurrying in search of new ways to cope with the dread of infirmity and mortality. Some found their "fictions" in new religions, others in nationalism, still others in socialism or a combination of these beliefs. The need to transcend human finitude will certainly outlive the current stage of capitalism. And radicals and liberals must begin to appreciate this abiding need if they want to regain their moral authority in the modern world. □

Fleshing out the Faith

David Biale

The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism by Howard Eilberg-Schwartz. Indiana University Press, 1990, 289 pp.

In late antiquity's Oedipal struggle between Judaism and its Christian offspring, the Church theologians argued that Judaism was a primitive religion, an "Israel of the flesh," now superseded by the new "Israel of the spirit." Christianity, by such accounts, was all lofty spirituality, while Judaism trafficked in bloody rituals of sacrifice, menstruation, and circumcision, and prescribed an onerous regimen of food taboos. Throughout the Christian Middle Ages, this prejudice not only fed theological polemics, but also anti-Jewish folklore, such as the myths of ritual murder and desecration of the host.

These libels are, of course, false, but it is certainly true that Judaism is concerned with the material world. Yet in this respect, Judaism is no different from any other religion, since all religions necessarily struggle with the symbolic relationship of the spiritual to the flesh. Christianity itself is no exception: after all, Christian doctrine holds (following the Evangelist John) that "the word became flesh" and Jesus is considered the perfect sacrifice, depicted on Church crucifixes with all his gory stigmata. It is no small irony that those who believe in the mystical transformation of wine into blood should have accused Jews of making matzot with Christian blood.

While the substance of earlier debates over Judaism's "fleshliness" is no longer in theological dispute, analogous kinds of discourse persist into modern times. Following the discovery of the New World, the Jews were at times equated with Native American "savages." Depending on whether Europeans saw the savage as noble or degenerate, they now had a new standard by which to measure the Jew. In the Enlightenment, the dominant question was whether the Jews were a primitive people and should not be emancipated until they became more civilized. With the rise of theories of race and, later, racism, the polemic sharpened; racial anti-Semites claimed that Jews were hypersexual, an erotic variant on their innate lust for money. The Jews' very connection with the material in all its manifestations, according to these anti-Semites, causes them to subvert and destroy Christian society.

The apologetic Jewish response to this kind of polemic was to try to turn Judaism into a spiritual religion, consonant with the prevalent image of Christianity. Judaism was considered a "high culture," alien to the messy symbolisms of the body, such as eating and sex, that characterize the so-called "primitive" religions. Many Jews became paragons of bourgeois society, not only religiously but in terms of family and ethical values as well.

Given the hoary history of this discourse about "Israel of the flesh," it is no surprise that applying the tools

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of anthropology to study Judaism might be controversial. For most of its history as a discipline, anthropology presupposed a distinction between the "primitive" religion of the "savages" and the "civilized" culture of the West. Although contemporary anthropologists have moved far away from these colonialist assumptions, the popular image Jews have of their own religion (which many others share as well) is typically based on the old distinction: Judaism is a civilized "Western" culture not to be confused with "savage" religion. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz is therefore entirely correct in his claim that doing away with the old apologetic dichotomy between Judaism and "savage" religions is a profoundly political act. It forces us to consider Judaism as one of many world religions, with no special privilege born of lofty monotheism or refined ethics. And it helps collapse the distinction between the monotheistic religions of the West and the rest of the world. Once these distinctions are collapsed, not only are the Jews not a chosen people, but neither, for that matter, are the Christians or Moslems.

Eilberg-Schwartz is not the first anthropologist to study ancient Judaism: he follows in the well-known footsteps of Mary Douglas and Edmund Leach. But he is probably the first to do so with a systematic training in Jewish studies and, particularly, in rabbinics. In fact it is precisely by studying how the rabbis used and transformed the Bible that one can see most clearly the singular nature of the biblical system.

Eilberg-Schwartz has actually written two books in one. Part I is a history, from the Renaissance to the present, of the discourse of Judaism as a primitive religion. By showing how various kinds of apologetics sought to divorce Judaism from the "savage," he prepares the ground for Part II, where he applies the tools of anthropology to the Bible. The purpose of a comparative anthropological approach to the Bible is not, however, merely to equate Judaism with the less exalted practices of tribal religion, but rather to shed new light on what has become all too familiar.

In his comparative approach, Eilberg-Schwartz takes issue not only with those who treat Judaism as unique, but also with the "diffusionists," who see many biblical customs as relics absorbed from other Near Eastern cultures. While he does not reject the possibility that the Israelites were influenced by their surroundings, Eilberg-Schwartz is concerned with how their symbols worked as a system, regardless of their origin. His portrait is therefore very much an "internalist" one: Jewish symbols develop and change more as a result of their own internal logic than through outside influence. Ironically, this stance has the unintended effect of restoring a certain uniqueness to Judaism against those who would see it as a variant on Canaanite religion.

Such ironies notwithstanding, Eilberg-Schwartz boldly situates Judaism in an anthropological context. Following the anthropologists Radcliffe-Brown and Lévi-Strauss, he suggests that animals and plants serve as foundational metaphors for Israelite society, much as they do for other rural cultures. The Bible often describes Israel with metaphors that evoke the flora and fauna of Israelite farms; these are also the foods that the Jews are permitted to eat and sacrifice. Conversely, those animals, typically predatory, that serve as metaphors for the enemies of Israel are defined as unclean. There are precise homologies between the laws governing animals and the laws concerning Israelite behavior: Eilberg-Schwartz views the prohibition on boiling a kid in its mother's milk for example, as a metaphor for incest.

Holiness comes not from renouncing the body but from fully embracing its divine nature.

The pastoral culture of the Israelites contrasts dramatically with the foundational metaphor of early Christianity, which was not based on agriculture, but rather on the body of Christ; it expressed sexual offenses in terms of betrayal of God's body. Here, for Eilberg-Schwartz, is the fundamental difference between Judaism and Christianity: for Jewish believers, God has no body, so the natural world must provide social relations; for Christians, the body of God becomes the controlling metaphor, since God is presumed to have become incarnate (another example of Christian "fleshliness").

One suggestive homology between a religious practice and nature links circumcision and fruit trees. Eilberg-Schwartz notices that immature trees are called "uncircumcised" (Leviticus 19:23) and their fruit, "foreskin" (*orlah*). Other cultures frequently associate fruit with sexuality, and the Israelites saw a direct analogy between pruning maturing fruit trees to increase their yield and pruning the foreskin to enhance fertility. Circumcision was therefore not originally an arbitrary sign of a unique covenant between God and Israel. After all, other Semitic peoples also practiced circumcision. It was rather a specific fertility rite arising out of an agrarian society.

One might wonder about the implications of this claim in light of the contemporary polemic against circumcision. Does revealing the origins of circumcision as a fertility rite and showing it to be ethnographically commonplace, or "primitive," undermine its status as a covenantal symbol? Does this revelation conversely support circumcision today when, as in the biblical period, Jews have become obsessed with fertility?

The priests adopted circumcision as their covenantal symbol since they were particularly concerned with problems of lineage. Eilberg-Schwartz argues that other cultures associate kinship with the penis and that cutting it is a way of representing a distinctive lineage. It creates, as he puts it, an "intergenerational continuity between men," for this is an act performed only on men by men (although in Exodus 4, Moses' wife Zipporah performs the rite). The covenant symbolized in Judaism by circumcision is manifestly a male covenant.

Eilberg-Schwartz sees the same patriarchal agenda in Israelite religious strictures concerning menstruation. Menstrual blood, he argues, was associated with death and it contaminates, much as a corpse was believed to: "Women's blood is contaminating; men's blood has the power to create covenant." Menstruation signifies infertility; it prevents women from conceiving. To have sex with a menstruating woman violated the procreative politics of the priests: homosexual intercourse and bestiality were prohibited for much the same reason.

Moreover, he argues that menstrual blood, unlike other bodily fluids, is uncontrollable. For the priests, this made it that much more dangerous a source of pollution: blood shed in

deliberate sacrifice—or by circumcision—affirms the sacred order of patriarchy, while the uncontrolled blood of menstruation threatens to contaminate that order. Eilberg-Schwartz thus asserts a further connection between gender and control: "Males are disciplined and orderly, females disorderly and out of control."

Eilberg-Schwartz contrasts this priestly system with that of the later rabbis. The priests defined Israel and their own caste, in particular, as a patrilineal community of descent; hence their preoccupation with procreation and fertility. The rabbis, on the other hand, created a community based on achievement, on discipleship rather than descent; they focused on the reproduction of knowledge rather than people. Eilberg-Schwartz goes so far as to say:

> Torah knowledge is for the rabbis the really significant kind of fertility.... In shifting the symbolism of genealogy and procreation to the Torah community, the flesh ceased to be the sole instrument of procreation.

Fruit trees, symbols of fertility in the Bible, became symbols of Torah in the rabbinic literature. Without abandoning the biblical source, the rabbis constructed a thoroughly revolutionary symbolic system based on knowledge rather than the body, and on human will rather than nature.

In priestly Judaism, eating and sex therefore served as potent (in all senses of the word) signs for the social order as a whole. They perform the invaluable anthropological functions of preserving lineage, demarcating the holy from the profane, and separating men from women. In stressing these key functions, Eilberg-Schwartz has made a singular contribution to our understanding of ancient Judaism. Yet he goes on to argue that this cultural code conceals a theological contradiction: the priests believed that God has no body. Since humans are created in God's image, it seems more likely that they could best achieve holiness as the early Christians professed to, by renouncing their bodies. Eilberg-Schwartz sees in this theological contradiction a "cultural neurosis," an unresolved tension in priestly Judaism between theology and the commandments of the covenant, between the body as polluting and the body as fulfilling God's will. By hazarding such interpretations of Jewish theology, however, he moves his argument onto much shakier ground. Indeed this too-neat opposition of anthropology and theology finally throws his whole effort to restore the "savage" to Judaism into doubt.

There is no good reason to suppose that the priests suffered from the cultural neurosis that Eilberg-Schwartz describes. Did they really hold, as did medieval Jewish philosophers, that God has no body? They did, of course, believe that no one could look at God's body and live, but this is quite different from saying that God is "nobody." While they do not describe God as copulating and eating, they do suggest in Genesis 1:27-28 that as a consequence of being made in God's image, men and women must procreate and fill the earth. To engage in sex is to be like God, regardless of whether or not He has a penis and uses it. Sexuality is not antithetical to theology, as Eilberg-Schwartz would have it, but is rather contingent upon it.

Similarly, one might say that semen and menstrual blood are polluting not because they are associated with death and loss of procreative opportunity, but because they are divine fluids, the forces by which men and women do God's commanded work. As such, they are enormously powerful and, as Mary Douglas suggested in her pathbreaking book, purity and impurity are bound up with danger. Bleeding, or any other discharge from the genitals, whether from a man or woman, creates impurity, while any other kind of bleeding does not, for the reason that its source is the mysterious, divine power to create life. The important thing about menstrual blood in the priests' system is not that it is uncontrollable, but that it comes from the genitals; it is a procreative fluid, quite possibly considered the female equivalent of the male "seed." When such fluids are not in their proper place, even for natural reasons such as menstruation or intercourse, they endanger the person who enters the divine realm, since the source of their power is God. By failing to perceive this subtle dialectic between pollution and divine power, Eilberg-Schwartz describes a false contradiction between holiness and sexuality. The cycles of purity and pollution which characterize sexuality would seem, on the contrary, to be precisely the sphere in which the body becomes holy: holiness comes not from renouncing the body but from fully embracing its divine nature.

Seen from this perspective, Eilberg-Schwartz's account of how the rabbis supposedly transformed procreation into knowledge seems less momentous. The rabbinic values of knowledge and discipleship do, indeed, qualify sexuality and genealogy; the "rabbinic system," if there is such a thing, did value the intellect over the body and Eilberg-Schwartz is right in observing, contrary to several centuries of Jewish apologists, that the rabbis often tended toward asceticism. But if the rabbis are so uninterested in procreation, why do they turn it into a duty, a mitzvah? Why is there virtually no celibacy in the rabbinic caste? If the rabbis open their ranks to all, regardless of lineage, why do they prohibit marriage with an *am ha-aretz* (an uneducated Jew)?

The answers here are once again dialectical. For the rabbis, as for the priests, the body is simultaneously a snare and the vessel for fulfilling the commandments. One must enter the realm of the *yetzer ha-ra* (evil force) and conquer it in order to be holy. Therefore, the rabbis married and had sex, but were obsessed with controlling sexual pleasure.

By drawing an exaggerated contrast between the priests and the rabbis, Eilberg-Schwartz has substantially weakened his argument. He wants to restore the "savage" to "Israelite religion and ancient Judaism," but he ends up distinguishing too sharply between the two, ascribing the anthropology of the "savage" strictly to the priests and the theology of ancient Judaism strictly to the rabbis. The rabbis constructed an intellectual system that "could dispense with the flesh." In this portrait, rabbinic culture looks like "high culture" and biblical culture like "low." Eilberg-Schwartz may have "salvaged" the savage in Israelite religion, but he has in the process erected a new set of distinctions that leave biblical religion divorced from all subsequent Judaism.

Despite these shortcomings Eilberg-Schwartz's anthropology of ancient Israel remains a pathbreaking work, which forces us to consider the body and its functions as integral to Judaism, just as they are integral to all human culture. The study of Judaism can no longer be a study of rarefied ideas divorced from their social and physical contexts. In creating this new definition of Judaism as a mode of

human culture, Eilberg-Schwartz has opened up fresh possibilities for Jews to overcome the obstacles of segregationist theologies. Yet this contribution to dialogue also contains an implicit attack on the priestly system itself, since the priests believed in unchangeable distinctions between classes of things: pure and impure, permitted and prohibited, Israel and the nations.

While Eilberg-Schwartz desires to build bridges to other traditions, countervailing tendencies are at work elsewhere. In a kind of eerie time warp, Christian feminists today accuse Judaism of creating patriarchy, and African American theologians see the Bible and the Talmud as the source of racism. The ancient polemic between "Israel of the spirit" and "Israel of the flesh" is by no means dead. Adherents of the old discourse need to learn from Eilberg-Schwartz's new anthropology of ancient Judaism that all religions have their elitist and segregationist tendencies and that all religions are equally concerned with the flesh. □

CZECHOSLOVAKIA & THE PRESS

(continued from p. 34)

vice in banks, hotels, restaurants, the places tourists frequent—not so important in itself, but exemplary. The parachuting journalist encounters tiny but telling examples of the spirit of accommodation Havel has described—and also the little resistances that spring up. At the art nouveau Hotel Pariz, Ruth Rosen and I decide to stay a few extra days and are moved to a room without a private bath. The public bathrooms are locked. We ask for the key. Sorry, the desk clerk says, the key was lent to another guest and has not been returned. Can you call the other guest and retrieve the key? No, this is not possible. That night, we are eating in the hotel restaurant with Jaroslav Veis and his wife Veronica, also a journalist. We enlist their help. Where, one of them asks the clerk, is the manager? "Comrade manager is not here," says the clerk. "Comrade manager?" Veronica is indignant. The clerk accuses her of making too loud a fuss. The next morning, the clerk in charge says we must leave that day; there is no more room. She has heard about the terrible scene that our Czech companion has made. I tell her we have come to Prague because we were inspired by President Havel's call to responsibility. Her face softens. She seems amazed to hear this language. She says she is ill paid. We do not understand, she says, how badly off the country was after forty years of Communist rule. The hotel, for example, was given a computer but not shown how to run it. She will have to see about the room. Later, miraculously, she says it is available.

Two prisms, two worlds; a gulf between them.

Americans tended to think that when the Eastern European revolutions broke out, that what these broken countries needed was the restoration of capitalism. What had been wrong with Czechoslovakia was Soviet-style institutions; what Czechoslovakia needed now was American-style institutions. This is incomprehension.

Somewhere in the baroque and picayune drama of the Hotel Pariz we are probably being asked for a bribe, and fail to get the point. But American incomprehension is all of a piece. Failing to understand why humanist Czechoslovakians mean it when they talk about responsibility, Americans lecture them about freedom. I am, of course, dead set against throwing journalists in jail anywhere. But this is the beginning, not the end of the story. I can't help thinking there is a moral not only for Czechoslovakians but for Americans. The Czechoslovakian situation seemed incomprehensible to the Americans because they hadn't the language to think about journalists' obligations to society. As soon as the word *responsibility* was uttered, they heard the slam of the cell door. Journalists must be free to excavate any facts they please. The occupational tool journalists claim is newsworthiness. In its pursuit, Americans believe, journalists must be answerable to no one; they must proceed "without fear or favor." Behind this is a premise: that the institutions exist to rectify wrong. Newsworthiness serves the public good because knowledge is power. We know the truth and it sets us free.

But what if the premise is faulty? What if the institutions for converting knowledge to power don't exist? What if the deepest, most consequential facts—whether about Nixon's bombing of Cambodia or the theft of billions by savings and loans pirates—remain, by and large, undisclosed, because journalists are more involved in the stenography of official events than in what is quaintly called investigation? If the end of the cold war is nothing more than the beginning of a long brag, just how much do we have to brag about?

V.

Postcript, January 1991. Months after the Hotel Praha conference, I finally hear a strong case for publishing at least part of the police agents' list. The issue of the list and what to do with it has surged

back into the Czechoslovakian press, and a new line of argument emerges about the political stakes. The parliamentary committee that has been painstakingly studying the secret police documents is growing more radical. Since last summer, the committee has been headed by Jan Ruml, a former editor of *Respekt* who was active in the resistance. Ruml's committee found the files divided into three categories. In Group 1 were the big shots, volunteers, who recruited other agents and established networks, safe houses, and the like. In Group 2 were the agents who had specific tasks, like penetrating the opposition and organizing provocation. Some of these were volunteers, others compelled by blackmail and other such means. In Group 3 were the informers pure and simple, who squealed on people around them. Most of Group 3 were compelled.

The problem of what to do with the list, says Martin Hala, a thirty-year-old Prague professor spending the year in Berkeley, is more than moral, it is deeply and urgently practical. The old police agents are at work in Czechoslovakian politics. There is reason to believe that a considerable number of the current members of parliament are on the list of police agents. How is this possible after candidates for last June's parliamentary election were screened? Apparently the original screening committee, within the Ministry of the Interior, was inefficient. Moreover, other police spies seem to be at work in the Slovakian separatist movement. As the economy convulses, the opportunities for domestic upheaval proliferate. Finally, even high officials are falling under suspicion. Bedrich Moldan, the Minister of the Environment of the Czech republic, was suspended in January after the Ruml committee found that the secret police had listed him as a "candidate." After several trips abroad, Moldan, a scientist, had apparently turned in reports to the secret police. Although a "candidate" wasn't even a Group 3 agent, and Moldan denies any prior knowledge of his "candidate" status, he is now regarded as compromised and was sent on a forced vacation.

Martin Hala is one who believes, for all these reasons, that "we should have no mercy in releasing" the names of those agents at work today in public life. "Neither the President nor Zantovsky should say whether the list should be made public. People have the right to know who represents them." Officials should be above suspicion. As we go to press, the parliamentary commission has agreed with President Havel to subject the top five-to-six-hundred officials and members of parliament to yet one more round of scrutiny.

Months after the flap at the Hotel Praha, Havel's language of responsibility remains a powerful force in Czechoslovakian life. But it will not go uncontested. To invent a new language for politics is not the work of a single season. These issues are going to remain alive throughout the former Eastern bloc for a long time. When the cry to purge old Communists came up in Hungary last summer, longtime dissidents like the novelist George Konrad and the sociologist Ferenc Miszlivetz opposed it, wishing to end the cycle of recrimination. For a long time, there will be a running tension about the means by which a social contract can be founded on a basis other than vengeance. Criminals must be punished, politics opened up, while wholesale purges must be avoided. In the effort to unearth moles, whole fields can be devastated. □

PATHOLOGICAL ARRHYTHMICITY

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about human gender relations is shaped by culture in its historical permutations. Women are not biologically fated to maintain natural rhythms for the collectivity. Men can serve that function as well; consider the sun dance of American Plains Indians wherein men pierce their chests so that their blood will spill on the ground, symbolizing the (male) sun's importance in the fertility of mother earth. I am arguing that women and men alike are all too willing to connect themselves to the tempo of a competitive marketplace and public life, a tempo that upsets natural rhythms in a particular way. If one is to understand the arrhythmicity of men, it is important to understand why the rhythms of women are pathologized.

The advance of civilization, particularly since the Industrial Revolution, has made us slaves to the clock. Where agricultural societies regulated activities according to natural rhythms—the rising and setting of the sun, the seasons of the year—with the advent of modern technology and factory organization, the clock has replaced the sun and the moon as the measure of time. The worker's activities, from the rate of productivity to the frequency of visits to the bathroom, is regulated by the clock. Service and white-collar workers are no better off: the number of cases or clients can be measured, as can the bulk of paperwork.

With time and work thus quantified, people learn to do things they might once have considered unnatural. They wake with an alarm, work nights, and wear out their bodies doing monotonous tasks. Men have adapted well to such demands; and many women have also proven quite skilled as they rise to places of prominence previously reserved for men only. But women have to pay a high price for their entry into the top echelons of a previously all-male world. They, too, are becoming alienated from nature; for instance, they must

learn not to let their premenstrual symptoms or their plans to have children interfere with their reliability on the job.

Premenstrual sadness might be understood as a period of mourning for a missed opportunity to bear a child, a moment to pause, to grieve, perhaps to take a deep breath before re-entering the bustling outside world. Many traditional cultures have rituals to mark and honor this time in the woman's cycle— for instance, women might move to a separate menstrual hut and be served by other women. In the more complicated world of work, the menstrual cycle becomes something else. The premenstrual woman today is less likely to be concerned about rituals; less likely to measure time by the cycles of the moon; and more likely to curse the fact that she's a month older, that her body holds her back, or that she has not been as successful as she had hoped to be by this time in her life. Where once the cycles of a woman's body seemed to fit the rhythms of a culture, today the woman's monthly changes in body and mood are not well tolerated in the male workplace—and the lack of tolerance can turn transient mournful sadness into depression and self-castigation.

The modern working woman must ignore her natural rhythms if she is to fit into a man's world and excel. The woman must learn to "be tough," just like a man. If, at times in her cycle, she feels bodily pain, she can take medications to increase her tolerance. If the pains are emotional and spiritual, then she may find psychotherapy helpful, or turn to psychotropic medications. Using whatever help she can get, the woman must prove the sexist assumptions of her boss wrong—she has to demonstrate that she can be as steady and reliable as any man.

Men dread natural rhythms. As we have noted, such cycles threaten the time-and-motion efficiency of working life. But there are deeper, less conscious reasons for our dread. In a male world there are only two positions: top dog and fallen subordinate. If a man wants to avoid missing a step and falling into a subordinate position, he must learn to function smoothly, efficiently, and regularly. There is no time to take off when one is serious about one's work or one's projects. There is no time to pay attention to the inner life. Besides, there is really no one to talk to about personal matters—other men cannot be trusted because they are just as intent on getting ahead by climbing over others. (Women, too, are perfectly capable of climbing over others, even though one hopes that with more women entering public life there might be less competition and more cooperation.) So one learns to cover up, to hide one's pains and depressions, and to get the job done without divulging anything about one's inner self. Then—and this is a relatively recent development—if stresses overwhelm coping strategies, one can always consult a therapist.

Some men believe they suffer from a mid-life crisis, others complain of marital problems, others find that they do not seem to be able to make intimate relationships work, and still others succumb to depression. Regardless of their initial complaint, these men are suffering in one way or another the pathological arrhythmicity that our "advanced" civilization has created as the norm for the successful male.

The control of nature is the most prized accomplishment of advanced civilization, but we pay a huge price for this control. The more synthetic products we manufacture, the more difficult are our problems of disposal and pollution; the more a sped-up and efficient workplace demands steadiness and insensitivity from its workers, the more personal lives suffer. Meanwhile, men in record numbers are seeing therapists, joining groups, and gathering at large meetings and conferences in order to find a way to break through the arrhythmicity that erodes the possibility of change and drains their vitality. Will they be satisfied attending therapy sessions and gatherings and working out some of their personal foibles—or will they also see the link between men's tendency to overcontrol nature and the tragic dilemma confronting the world?

The war in the Middle East presents many examples of pathological arrhythmicity. President Bush did not even miss a stroke when, in the middle of a round of golf, he received news of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and ordered American troops to the region. Then, after ordering over 400,000 troops to Saudi Arabia, he gave Americans a rationale for war that they could finally understand: Real men don't back down. Saddam Hussein repeatedly matched Bush's call for men to act as real men, for instance in his accusation that American forces were cowardly pursuing a prolonged air assault and avoiding the more manly pastime of ground warfare. The message from both leaders betrays severe pathological arrhythmicity.

If current trends continue, our workplaces and our public arenas will be populated by women who are as aggressive, competitive, and emotionally closed as men are today. Quite a few men, meanwhile, will be discovering a more sensitive side of themselves. Young men will be less and less inclined to compete in the ruthless male power game; and older men who consider themselves successful enough at the game will start thinking about the fact that they will one day retire. In fact both groups of men seek therapy precisely because they need help in preparing for a life centered more on personal relationships than on the struggle for power in the public sphere. But if women become like men, and men who are fed up surrender their power in disgust or begin

preparing to retire, who will be left to change the social arrangements that reward competition, distrust, greed, and the obsessive conquest of nature? And who will be able to mount a morally compelling challenge to a world order in which war is such a ready alternative to rational negotiation? □

SOVIET WOMAN

(continued from p. 38)

there were pogroms, but the Russian intelligentsia were always repelled by them. They had hidden the Jews in their homes and protected them with icons. And today you're. . . .

They: Yes, and look at the results! This very liberalism has driven Russia to the edge of the present-day abyss. (What was I to reply? Was it liberalism or perhaps something else?) Give us time and we'll annihilate all of you in the name of Christ. Soon everything will be set in motion. . . .

I: Annihilate—in the name of Christ? That sounds rather illogical.

They: The main thing is that we'll be rid of the likes of you. Afterwards we can be logical.

I: Listen, I'm not your enemy. We grew up in the same country; we read the same things . . . Russia also means for me . . . Lev Tolstoy . . . I've just come from the Pushkin Museum. . . .

They: Typical! The Jews who grew up in the Russian culture are the most dangerous, because they work from the inside.

So, there we are. I am an enemy. I am, it seems, the most dangerous enemy of all for my own country. My people and I must get out of here or be annihilated. Including my mother, evidently, who worked hard for fifty long years in the not-very-thankful field of Soviet justice and who in her three-week vacation yearns to be back in Moscow. Including my husband, evidently—a Russian gentile—who is now no longer a talented journalist but doubtless a collaborator in the Zionist conspiracy and thus even more dangerous than I; including my son, the half-Jew who ended his first love affair because the girl didn't care a fig about Russia's destiny. . . .

It was my first, but by no means my last, discussion with them. My bewilderment, my horror and astonishment, and my incomprehension still remain: I am a foreigner in my own land.

When the thousand-year anniversary of the Russian Orthodox Church was celebrated we didn't go as planned to the seat of the church in Zagorsk. Instead, we sat in our Moscow apartment behind a locked door while my husband deliberated with my juridically knowledgeable mother whether he should fight back in case they should break in. Pogroms were proclaimed for the anniversary day. In letter boxes we found leaflets with obscene curses. Apartment doors were marked with crosses. The streets were swarming with police, but guards could hardly be posted at every Jewish apartment.

I come home after a shopping trip. In my own courtyard my path is blocked. "Hey, you Jew swine, show me what you have in your shopping bag! It's you who are consuming all our meat!" (Finally they've discovered the cause of hunger all over the country!)

At the editorial office of a progressive newspaper two sweet women of my age approach me, hissing into my face, "Leave amicably before we slaughter the lot of you!" I enter the office and am going down the corridor with a journalist friend. Two employees are walking towards us. As they pass I hear a sentence fragment, ". . . and 24 percent of the department bosses are Jews!" We exchange glances. "Did you hear that?" And that in the office of a progressive paper!

People try to console me, "Pay it no mind. Be certain, there won't be any pogroms. The government won't permit them." I believe that. The present government needs pogroms just as little as my mother and I do. But is it strong and ubiquitous enough? And after all is said and done, is it so important whether there are pogroms or not? Maybe there will be; then again, maybe not. Or there will be and I'll escape them, perhaps in contrast to my nephew and his father, the philosopher. Or in contrast to one of my neighbors—a "100 percent Russian," moreover—who because of her constant quarrels with anti-Semites is continually forced to change jobs and subsequently is considered a sure "enemy of Russia."

I fear for this country. I have studied history. I know very well what it means when a country degenerates into national hysteria. And I have no desire to be a witness, completely powerless to change anything. It is intolerable when an entity to which you were once inseparably bound suddenly rejects you like some sort of foreign body. For myself I have no fear; moreover, it seems demeaning to me even to be afraid of them. But I regret having to fear every day for my husband, who is accustomed to joining in every street discussion on this theme on his way home. Some day he'll get a knife in his gut or a pistol butt on his head as a definitive argument from one of his opponents. I do not want my son to be asked what he's doing associating with that Jewish girl with whom he was seen by one of his fellow students. I don't want my eighty-year-old mother to be killed by one of those criminals she defended during

her life-long career as a lawyer—a criminal suddenly reborn as a "patriot."

I no longer want anything from this country. I no longer need more self-realization here, nor do I wish to be of use here—even after striving long and hard, and successfully, to contribute my talents to the good of my country. When I emigrate, I shall take nothing along. Diaries, letters, photos inscribed with dedications are in any case not allowed out of the country, I've heard. Anything else, except for my books, I neither need nor own. But even my books I shall not take along. I'll buy myself new ones. I need nothing of yours. I'll have no homeland, nor do I need one, if it doesn't need me. I want nothing more, only peace and security for my family.

Moreover, if my emigration contributes to Russia's salvation, then fine, so be it; I am prepared to sacrifice myself for the high Pamyat ideals. Who knows, when I have finally withdrawn from the Russian culture, perhaps peace, happiness, and prosperity will immediately come to Russia. Excellent! That would make me happy. Except that I don't believe it. I don't believe that two neighbors in a house can live peacefully and harmoniously with one another only because they've expelled a third. It doesn't work that way. Hatred raging in souls and suddenly losing its immediate object does not disappear without a trace. It will turn against those who remain, against each other, against itself. God is my witness that I wish this land only good. But why don't we—no, you—learn a lesson from these bitter truths? Why don't you see that happiness and prosperity cannot be built on the blood and tears of others? So many times already you have shot and driven others away and still happiness refuses to come to you. You say you've shot the wrong people? Good, then try it once again. Maybe you'll have better luck this time. But without me. Tomorrow I'm going to the Australian embassy. □

TELEMYTHOLOGY

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stand television very well. Reagan's aides did not expect television to implant in Americans a love of Reagan or his policies by itself, and they did not treat a television appearance as simply a matter of finding an appropriate stage set and working on the president's makeup. They did all they could to assure the success of a television appearance by preparing the audience for it in rather old-fashioned ways. Before a presidential TV address, the administration's public liaison office arranged for Reagan to meet personally with groups of allies, several hundred at a time, and brief them on what he would say on television so that they could alert their comrades at home. According to media analyst Stephen Wayne, these briefings helped unleash the flood of responses the White House and Congress received on the budget and tax proposals of Reagan's first year in office. This is not to say the television appearance was without effect on the public—although recent analysis by political scientists indicates that the influence of staged television appearances was very slight in the Reagan years. It is to suggest that even here Reagan was more successful at manipulating congressional opinion than general public opinion—but the manipulation came through encouraging the Congress to believe that the public at large was aroused by television. Since this so readily coincided with a view that Washington elites already held as gospel, it was a relatively easy trick to manage.

If the belief in television power is a large part of what makes television powerful, it may be not television but our beliefs about it that help undo a vital politics. The fascination of critics with devil television, in any event, takes political discourse off track. We—American citizens, cultural critics, social scientists—seek some kind of reckoning with television, the culture it presents and the culture it represents. But despite the growing abundance of media critics, I don't think we have found the language for that reckoning yet. The object of our attention keeps shifting, for one thing; we've gone from an era of the sponsor to an era of the network to the present (still undefined) era of the proliferation of cable and the declining network-share of the television audience. The kinds of television experience also seem too varied to be easily encapsulated—from the live coverage of the Kennedy funeral, the Olympics, a presidential debate, or a natural disaster to the evening news, daytime soap operas, old movies, or reruns of old sitcoms. The judgment we make of one of these genres is not likely to stick when applied to the next.

Beyond the difficulties in keeping the object of our attention steadily in view, there is the complicated problem of the mixed motives of our own curiosity. There are professional career-making ambitions, an inevitable product of the proliferation of the study of communication in the universities; there is the *ressentiment* of intellectuals who feel unfairly overlooked in an era of celebrity; there is the anger, seeking an object, that arises in the general population from a sense of impotence in dealing with the wider world that both print and television news brings to our homes daily. There is also a sense, one I certainly share, that the people who bring

us television live in time-and-space capsules closely linked to research reports on market trends but very far from deeper currents of experience in the contemporary world. And since they do not yet know this, may never know this, may not want to know this, they may never tell us the stories about ourselves from which we could genuinely learn. □

TV AS ALIBI

(continued from p. 54)

was never talked about, on television and elsewhere. It was talked to death, but none of this talk could make the deficit appear on TV in its true shape: as an undeclared political act with enormous present and future consequences. Its failure to make an appearance (in the sense that an actor "appears" on stage) continues today to lend the deficit an air of unreality. The public, it is said, "doesn't care"—which is the point. A thing we don't care about, and can't see clearly, is determining more and more of our domestic politics.

Under these conditions—in which TV is implicated but not as a clear villain—politics, in effect, escapes the polis. Massive shifts in public policy become "illegible," to use Miller's word; they take place behind a screen that occupies our attention. Meanwhile, TV's "monotonous aesthetic of incessant change" gives us the feeling that we're getting continuous reports from the front, that the public world is being screened, not from us, but *for* us. This feeling—a misleading sense of political activity and currency—may be one of the medium's most potent "effects." Images of events reel past us, simulating the process of change, while the real changes take place in another dimension of discourse, shielded from our view by the busy spectacle on screen.

Here, then, is an important lesson of the Reagan years: politics could be elsewhere, in the details of impossibly complicated fiscal policy, while Reagan himself, through TV, gave politics a presence whose "hereness" was an illusion. TV can thus be understood as a kind of alibi. It allowed Reagan to say: you think I'm here, when actually I'm over there. You think I'm on the White House lawn, waving hello, when actually I'm in the interest rates that prevented you from buying a house, the rusting girders beneath the bridge you travel to work.

Whenever I close my eyes and think about Reagan (which, sadly, I continue to do) the same image always comes to mind: he's waving to me from my TV screen. This waving seems to have been his "idea" about television and politics. It was brilliant, in its way, for by waving to us at home Reagan completed the logic of the alibi. He made sure he was seen by everyone, officially representing politics, so that politics could actually take the mean and complicated turns it did during the 1980s. With television, this is one of the dangers we face: TV can create a permanent audience for a sideshow, allowing the main events to go on, not in secret, but in a form of discourse that increasingly repels the public. As Garry Wills said of the "Star Wars" program: "Others have the arguments; Reagan has the audience." To create programs like this—where the arguments against them expire from poor ratings—is an indirect way of exploiting the resources of television, which involve the power to collect, disperse, and distract attention. You think I'm here, but actually I'm over there. So said our most televisual president. And so says television to anyone who would take its measure. □

BUYOUT OF BOROUGH PARK

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the *Jewish World,* "Nothing that I have written about causes me as much difficulty or pain as this subject does." That Schick courageously endured the community's ostracism—to the point of seeing rocks fly through his living room window—was testimony to the difficulties of being a modern Orthodox Jew in Borough Park.

For neighborhood residents who obstructed ultra-religionist development plans, the difficulties were, of course, even closer to home. Tenants in a large, eleven-building complex known as Midwood Gardens struggled to resist efforts to clear them out, but ran into one frustrating dead end after another when they sought intervention. Their complaints included a series of more than forty suspicious fires over the course of three years, the denial of heat, hot water, and all maintenance and, according to one official source, the physical ejection of heavy furniture through apartment windows. But these grievances went unheeded at the Community Board and at SBCO. SBCO, it turns out, was the official sponsor of the proposed conversion of the property into luxury condominiums. The organization stood to gain a 1 percent profit from each condominium sale. The tenants were told by a sympathetic city official that their plea in the city's Housing Court to have a court-appointed receiver manage the property would be hopeless. "The fix is in," he said.

After our organization folded, I found, buried in the

city's files, the clear evidence we had long been seeking of government favoritism toward SBCO and signs of SBCO's unscrupulous methods of acquisition. An investigation initiated by the mayor's Arson Strike Force reported numerous fires in buildings just before their sale to an SBCO subsidiary.

Equally troubling was the sale price of the buildings—$1 in some cases—raising further suspicions of impropriety. Yet an attorney for the Investigator General of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, responding to a clearance request for an SBCO project, dismissed the inquiry. "I see no information which requires the Department to deny approval for the requested clearance because of such fires." In another memo, handwritten by Charles Reiss, Deputy Commissioner at the City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development, SBCO's hefty influence was made clear. "I'd really appreciate a clearance here," he wrote. "The issues are complex and insupportable. Every level of government supports them [SBCO] fully. This would set off a chain of events which would be very difficult to control." The investigation in both cases did not continue. Reiss subsequently left the department to become a private developer; one of his first projects was a joint venture with SBCO's ex-director, Shmuel Lefkowitz, to market the converted Midwood Gardens condominiums under the name "Boro Park Village." Questioned about SBCO's seeming ease in obtaining clearances through his agency, Reiss acknowledged that "there were some questions raised about vacates in Borough Park," but maintained that SBCO had little trouble getting clearance "because they were a good group. They had no more or no less trouble getting clearances than any other good group."

Chaim Israel, SBCO's director of housing and development, also stressed that SBCO "has accomplished a great deal of good ... It has stabilized neighborhoods that were in danger of going the way of so many other once vibrant but devastated neighborhoods in New York City." Allegations that SBCO enjoyed unusually close ties with local government or was unscrupulously acquiring and vacating properties are "inaccurate in both substance and detail," Israel maintained. Upon reviewing the agency's files, Israel declared that "we [at SBCO] unequivocally deny any insinuations of wrongdoing."

During zoning hearings proposed by a consortium of real-estate interests and supported by SBCO, New York City's Planning Commission noted that Borough Park's rising Orthodox population made a variance in the city's zoning ordinances necessary. The Commission's report made no mention of Borough Park's Italian and assimilated Jewish communities, or of the rising population of immigrants from other parts of the world.

Charles Katz—a contributor both to SBCO and to Noach Dear's successful campaign for a seat on the City Council—was one of the chief proponents of the zoning variance. An established developer in Borough Park, he successfully vacated the one-hundred-unit building he owned in the heart of Borough Park just after the zoning variance passed. The old structure, which had a walled front garden and was the only turreted building in Borough Park, was slated for demolition. In its place would appear triplexes—a type of housing allowed by the new zoning regulations, and one that could earn about $1 million per triplex. The emptying of the building was hastened, according to a tenant advocate, by releasing menacing dogs in the hallways and by boarding up apartments while their residents were away on errands. Katz told *Tikkun* that he was a former shareholder in a corporation that owned the property, but that he sold out his interest before the property's conversion. He categorically denied these and all charges of tenant harassment. The building was torn down less than a year after it was vacated—suddenly, and without the requisite demolition permit. Eight brick triplexes were erected in its place.

Over the next several years publicity mounted over the desperate landlord-tenant problem in Midwood Gardens and elsewhere in Borough Park, and the city's Investigator General began an inquiry into the evictions. Even so, SBCO continued to obtain the sole Community Consultant Contract awarded by the city government. Under the $75,000-per-year grant, it was permitted to drop its tenant assistance program. Meanwhile our request for a small grant to extend our program, the only tenant advocacy program in Borough Park, was denied.

And the evictions continued. I witnessed an extraordinarily savage attempt to vacate a building; one of the most extreme cases I ever dealt with, it brought home to me the painful emotional toll the evictions exacted from more assimilated but still Orthodox Jews. Sam Berger lived at 1314 50th Street where he was the self-proclaimed tenant leader of a twenty-unit building in the heart of Borough Park. Sam, who had brought the Vilna Shas, a rare edition of the Talmud, with him from Poland, died in the winter of 1981. It was the second heatless winter after Congregation Ishmartem Vaesisem purchased his building, intending to convert it into a yeshiva. The extreme conditions tenants were subjected to seemed diabolical in intent: the lobby was unlit, frequently flooded, and inhabited at night by vagrants; the superintendent, according to one elderly tenant, Irene Lantos, played rock music late at night at top volume.

"The walls shivered, it was so loud." Gas lines were tampered with two days before Shavuoth, preventing the four remaining families, all of whom were elderly and Orthodox, from preparing meals for the holiday; a month later, water service to the building was cut, forcing the residents to fill jugs of water at the Y or at fire hydrants; without permits, the managing agents began to demolish vacant apartments, creating more leaks and leaving the smell of rot.

Reports of these conditions were met with bureaucratic apathy. Judge Arthur Aaron of the Brooklyn Housing Court granted adjournments that delayed tenant-initiated complaints for more than two years. Similarly, complaints that our office placed with the Office of Rent Control seemed to languish. It was only after the building was finally empty that the office levied a $16,150 fine on the owning corporation for harassment. No individual members were named or charged.

I watched Tibor Lantos, the new tenant leader, who had feigned madness in a Hungarian asylum to escape the Nazis, waiting all day, for days on end, for return calls from the Brooklyn District Attorney or the Mayor's Office or from the building inspectors at the Department of Housing Preservation and Development. He claimed that neither the Community Board nor SBCO had ever responded to his or to any other tenant's calls.

Finally, at our request, the director of the Legal Services office intervened and negotiated a cash settlement of $7,000 each for the remaining four tenants. Sarah Lipschitz, who was living on a monthly social security check, turned it down, stating that she could not take money from a yeshiva, although she would agree to move. The yeshiva obtained city and federal approval for a $1.3 million "rehabilitation" of the building into subsidized senior-citizen housing—a cruel irony, since all of the building's former tenants were elderly.

The Holocaust had a profound effect on Borough Park. I heard it in the contradictory comments of many tenants I met, who felt all the more pained for being evicted by Jews who, like them, were often Holocaust survivors. Irene Lantos, who lived in a building owned by a survivor, had herself survived Auschwitz. One afternoon she told me in all seriousness that what she suffered in Borough Park was worse than the camps. Mr. Mellinger, the sole survivor of his large Budapest family and now the tenant leader of a mostly Hispanic building, targeted for forcible evacuation, decried the behavior of the ultra-Orthodox. I learned through our innumerable conversations that he lived with a paranoic fear that their deeds were hastening a revival of the Holocaust. Yet, in an off-guard moment, he admitted that he didn't begrudge them the world they were attempting to build in Brooklyn. "I'm glad they have ten, twelve children," he said. "Six million died."

John Santos, a former union organizer turned *Ba'al Teshuvah* felt the same ambivalence. He knew well the human costs of ultrareligionists' efforts to build their community; he hated the eviction and harassment of tenants. Yet he could still tell me, "I admire them tremendously. Without them, there'd be nothing left of the religion."

Drawn by the strongly Orthodox character of Borough Park, great numbers of religiously observant Holocaust survivors have immigrated to the neighborhood, making it the largest community of survivors in the country. Perhaps the most celebrated tale of survival is that of the Bobover Rebbe, Shlomo Halberstam. The rabbi's court was decimated during the Holocaust. Halberstam's continued observance of the Sabbath while he was interned in the camps has become a Chasidic legend. After the war he established a watchmakers' school and drawing from there slowly began to rebuild his congregation. His next step was to move his new, small following to New York, where he settled in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, near an existing community of Lubavitcher Chasidim. Harassed by the high crime rate in Crown Heights, he then bought a parcel of vacant land in Flushing, Queens where he might build in relative isolation. But the scheduled groundbreaking of a fair-sized plot was blocked by local opposition.

In 1967, Halberstam reaffirmed his legendary status by moving to Borough Park, along with his 4,000 followers—he had found a haven for what Bobov's newspaper, the *Boro Park Voice,* called the "wandering Jews." The Muncaz Chasidim followed, and the Pupa and the Ger, the related Klausenburg sect as well as small numbers of Lubavitch and Satmar. The Bobov became and remain, however, the largest and most powerful of the Chasidic groups in the area. Their housing and institutional development record stands unrivaled, except, perhaps, by the real estate work of the SBCO. According to the Bobov, "Complete blocks of slums were cleaned up and renovated. Bobov was the first organization to rehabilitate abandoned buildings into apartments." Buildings often were not merely abandoned, however; many were forcibly vacated to make way for housing or dormitories.

Some observers have suggested that the source of ambivalence toward the ultra-Orthodox—among tenants, professionals, Orthodox onlookers, and secular advocates—can be traced to a sense of guilt we all share about the near-total decimation of the European shtetl. Borough Park, we assume, is a hard-won attempt to preserve a vanished and beautiful way of life, based on the family and interwoven with Jewish reli-

gious and cultural traditions. I remember being joyously startled to walk into one of the small delis, or "coffee shops," strictly kosher, often providing customers a pitcher and basin of water in the corner for ritual hand washing. I was struck by the low-key vitality, warmth, and *mishegas* that infused the everyday life of the neighborhood. Offices in Borough Park seemed more like quarrelsome, loving families than modern, alienated workplaces. Lipschitz, Mellinger, Schick, Santos, myself, and countless others had partially succumbed to the new Borough Park. We couldn't protest, form picket lines, scream to the press—not against the preservers of a nearly extinguished world.

Amos Oz, describing similar communities in Israel, mercilessly criticizes this outpouring of guilt and admiration as

> A bubbling fountain of scorching guilt feelings. Guilt feelings in mass production ... You cannot afford to loathe this reality because between then and now it was choked and burned, exterminated by Hitler. Nor can you even afford yourself a measure of secret admiration for the incredible vitality of this Judaism, for as it grows and swells, it threatens your own spiritual existence.

In Borough Park, where the threat is to one's physical as well as spiritual existence, where laws of decency are absent and civil laws ignored, the ideal of cultural and ritual preservation needs to be doubly examined. Borough Park's shtetl quality, which the casual observer finds fascinating or charming, is hardbitten and defiant. We are not revisiting the shtetl as it was chronicled in I. B. Singer's prewar stories, where its Orthodox and Marxist residents both fought and got along as relatives.

The "shtetl" of Borough Park today is founded on the desperation, anger, and mourning of a people rebuilding its memories—of the houses, schools, and prayer halls that were lost. And as memories must, they have simplified edges and do not change. This shtetl of memory houses an additional irony: being taken seriously as Jews comes with clear, formal prerequisites based almost exclusively on a legalistic interpretation of the texts, the Torah, and Talmud. The tendency for the lines of definition to grow ever finer is inevitable. And unlike the Nazis, who looked only at birth certificates to determine Jewishness, these sectarians respect only those Jews who adhere strictly to ultra-Orthodox standards.

Perhaps the cruelest irony of the real-estate wars in Borough Park is that the success of the ultra-Orthodox mission has depended on cultural chauvinism, public relations savvy, federal rent and mortgage subsidies, and a blatant disregard for civil and ethical law—the same tough and unscrupulous methods used by many other real estate successes in New York. Borough Park, indeed, is in the swim and floating to the top of one of the most competitive business environments in the world. The promise of a New World shtetl, so attractive to those like myself who seek contact with the rich heritage of traditional Judaism and Jewish culture, remains still, very sadly, unfulfilled. □

ABSORBING THE EXODUS

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the entry of new immigrants. Students make the same argument in an *ulpan* near Tel Aviv.

Suissa maintains that this generation of *olim* is "going through what we have been dealing with for forty years and haven't been able to resolve." Many Israeli citizens are either first- or second-generation immigrants, and the memory of their own experience narrows the gulf separating them from their Russian counterparts. "Mostly I remember long days of roaming around the streets alone," a teacher at an *ulpan* says, recalling her childhood immigration. "There wasn't even an educational system then." Her family first came to a transitory immigrant camp with "no electricity, no running water, no bathrooms in the building." Each family was confined to one large room.

Soviet immigrants at least can expect an infrastructure to soften the initial shocks of arrival—but that infrastructure is already showing signs that it is overburdened. The teacher reports that in her school building "there weren't even any air conditioners" as the *olim* began to fill her classroom. "They had to get through much of the summer that way." She feels unprepared to equip her students to face the world when they leave her classroom—especially since most of them are already retired, as is nearly 30 percent of the total immigrant population. The State of Israel is obliged to absorb all the immigrants without selection criteria, even if it lacks the resources to do so. "What will be with them now?" asks the teacher. "Where will they go?"

★ ★ ★

Is it possible to predict when an abused child will become an abusing parent, or when he will become understanding and empathetic? In present-day Israel, it is difficult to speculate that the traumas of one wave of aliya will feed aggression toward the new wave. As long as the Jewish-Palestinian conflict over the right

to the land of Israel continues, patriotic Israelis see opposition to Jewish immigration as pulling the rug out from under our feet.

During the 1950s, traditional families who immigrated from North Africa found themselves forced to send their children to secular state schools. In Netivot, an apparently similar demand is being made of the new immigrants—though the religious/secular affiliations of the immigrant and non-immigrant communities are now reversed. At the national level, Yitzhak Peretz, the minister of immigration and absorption, has expressed reservations about the immigration, observing that 30 percent of the immigrants are not Jewish and that it will be necessary to sort out who is who. The day after Peretz's remarks appeared, I sat in an *ulpan* classroom full of immigrants. The students were furious—not about the actual remarks, but about the estimated percentage. "No more than 10 percent to 15 percent," they insisted.

"How can I tell that there are non-Jews here? Is it possible to distinguish?" Zohar asks Ina Azarov. "It is impossible," answers Azarov. "Actually, it is possible," says Zohar. "I sit with a family. We are drinking a cup of coffee and a glass of vodka. Then more coffee and more vodka. On the third round of vodka the man says to me: 'Jews, actually, I like them, a good people.'" "Jews or non-Jews," Zohar says to me, "I don't care. I don't want to get into that; I don't want responsibility for tragedies. The only thing is, my wife is religious and my sister is religious and afraid that her son will marry a non-Jews, and when my daughter grows up and wants to marry, they are liable to tell her in the rabbinate—sorry, he isn't Jewish."

Often, the circumstances of their birth point to the only difference between Jew's and non-Jews in this current wave of immigration. If the State of Israel successfully instills Jewish characteristics in this population, they will belong even to immigrants who weren't born to a Jewish mother. The differences will never be known; the Orthodox thus face another sort of demographic threat—one of identity rather than of numbers—to their claims to political legitimacy.

Alongside the question of how to absorb non-Jewish immigrants, another question is expected to arise very soon. What is the status of those immigrants who are Jewish by birth, name, and national identification, but whose religious practices are Christian? In the past the Israeli supreme court ruled that a Jew who has converted to another religion cannot be considered Jewish anymore. But now Israel is preparing for the arrival of an immigrant community of converts to Christianity that numbers in the thousands; this prospect will doubtless renew the public debate about the connection between religion and the nation's Jewish identity.

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This isn't the first time that the State of Israel has coped with a huge wave of immigration. In the first years after the founding of Israel, the population doubled in a period of only three years. The minutes written during meetings of the secretariat of the historical Labor Party (MAPAI) with representatives of the Jewish Agency in April of 1949 could easily be mistaken for reports from today's press. The minutes report a host of potential remedies: raising taxes, loosening the bureaucratic strings tying up the building projects, importing mobile homes from Sweden, settling immigrants in tents in Army camps. And the meeting's participants still expect twenty thousand *olim* to arrive every month in the coming six months. "In Israel people are living in worse conditions than in Cyprus or in the American camps in Germany, and that is frightful," Zalman Aran tells the meeting. "By the end of the year," says Pinchas Lavon, "there is liable to be enough material for a counterrevolution in Israel. The calm is an illusion. One day there can be such an explosion that it will sweep away the government, the Knesset, and the military police." There was no explosion, and there are people who refer back to the state's founding to argue that things will work out this time too.

However, the current situation is different. Tens of thousands of the immigrants at that time were housed in buildings abandoned by the Arabs. The compensation funds that began to arrive from Germany in the beginning of the 1950s made it possible to build an economic base for absorbing immigrants. During that time, the general standard of living was much lower and most of Israel's inhabitants lived on a tight budget, with limited economic aspirations. Although many of the original settlers maintained a condescending attitude toward the new immigrants of the 1950s, tensions were tempered by the awareness that these immigrants were the basic material of the developing Israeli state, and that there was no other alternative.

It is hard to recast today's Israel as a similarly "mobilized society." The decline of ideologies, mistrust of the political establishment, and a general sense of exhaustion have diminished the Israelis' willingness to suffer. The world of the nineties offers possibilities which were nonexistent during the first years of the state, and the media make these options appear readily accessible. "I fear," says Dr. Dahan, "that Israel will become a revolving door. People will go in and out. And among those exiting will be lots of Israelis who couldn't stand up to the Russian competition, when the economy is at a standstill and the employment opportunities are few."

The wave of Russian aliya will likely serve as a catalyst for all of the deepest conflicts in Israeli society: the

religious against the secular, the Sephardim against the Ashkenazim, the Jews against the Israeli Arabs who have been deprived of services all along, the Jews against the Arabs of the Territories, the poor against the rich, the Zionists against non-Zionists and anti-Zionists. All of these tensions within Israel are gaining attention even before we have a chance to deal with the specific problems arising from the contact between Israeli culture and that of the new immigrants. The immediate result is a feeling of chaos. The optimists among us think that we are witnessing the chaos before creation. The pessimists see it as the end.

What will happen in places like Netivot? The dilemmas facing this town are, after all, not significantly different from those facing the entire country. "I don't see any possibility of integration in Netivot," says Yoram Bilu. "The gaps between the populations are too wide, and there aren't enough possible meeting points where integration can take place."

"Maybe because of the Russians there will be some investment there," says Dahan. "But I tend to think that the Russians will settle there, and then get out quickly."

"Nothing has happened there up until now, and nothing is going to happen," Yamin Suissa declares. "But in the big cities it is going to be a big mess." "New opportunities will be created," says Yehiel Zohar. "That will discourage the young people of the town from leaving, which is what they are doing now. When Netivot, Sderot, and Ofikim will be cities with 50,000 *olim,* we can develop, and we can also make demands. But in the meantime we need investments." For the present, Simion the tailor lives in a small two-bedroom apartment with four other families, and Ina Azarov is dreaming of coming home from work at the building site to her own apartment. "Afterwards," she says, "maybe I'll get married, and maybe I will have another child." "Get married first," says the mayor of Netivot, "to a Sephardi, so you will have Israeli children." The children of the future, however, will be children of an Israel largely transformed by the present immigration. □

WELLSTONE

(continued from p. 30)

his son was there, and he told me, "If there's a war, my son could die," and there were tears in his eyes. "Senator, if my son dies, I have to believe that there's a reason." Then he looked me in the eyes and said, "Senator, don't take away that reason from me." So that is what makes it difficult to question this war. Still, by the same token, there's still a lot of merging of jingoism with patriotism.

So this is what it has been like—suddenly facing life-and-death questions that I didn't think we'd be facing so quickly in my time in the Senate.

Let me tell you a humorous story, though. I went to the State of the Union address, and for some reason I didn't go with any great sense of excitement. I sat next to Carl Levin, a really fine senator. There were these moments when everyone was standing up to applaud the president, and Carl kept on yanking my pants to stand up! So Carl was my coach, and with a little prodding he got me to stand up when appropriate. But there was nothing about the domestic needs—and that's another cost of the war.

So this is a difficult time. I'm trying to move carefully, but I intend to make a real difference while serving in the Senate. I think one can make a real impact here—one has a wide forum. But to get other senators to be part of the discussion in a serious way, that is a matter of timing. Right now what I'm hearing from almost everybody (there may be some exceptions to this in the House) is that people here are not ready for this debate. They won't listen to it, and they'll hate you for it if you try to provoke it. What I agonize over is, "When is the time?"

TIKKUN: I guess they think that it's after the ground war begins.

WELLSTONE: That's right. And I don't want anybody to say that I didn't speak out before and honestly and openly express my views, whatever the heat. I've had people tell me, out of love and friendship, "You have expended so much political capital on this." I say to myself, I think they are right in one way, but on the other hand, this must be the slippery slope because this is what people always face that keeps them from speaking their minds. And it's not like this is just another political issue!

So this is what I've been facing my first month in the Senate. □

BOOK OF J

(continued from p. 46)

fact, there is not even a word for "man," since the Hebrew *adam* may denote a human being of either gender; before the human is divided into two, there is no sexual differentiation, no gender, no man. They are caught in the facticity of sexist biblical interpretation by which genderless humanity is defined as male.

Bloom imputes irony to J's narrative voice by virtue of Rosenberg's translation, as well as Bloom's own cynical reading between the lines of the text. Bloom claims that Rosenberg's new translation only accentuates the

irony that is already present in J's text: Rosenberg's signal achievement as a translator, by Bloom's lights, is the way that "he has preserved the Yahwist's ironic tone and stance, while remembering throughout how individual her irony is." But any competent examination of the "translation" will show free invention, distortion, and just plain error at every turn. Why, for example, does Rosenberg render the offerings brought by Cain and Abel, *minha*—"presentation"—in Hebrew with "holocaust" (which he correctly uses elsewhere to translate the Hebrew *ola,* as an offering that [all] "rises up")? Although the Hebrew of Genesis 4 says that the earth "opened its mouth to take in the blood" of the slain Abel, that is a far cry from "your brother's blood sticks in its throat," which is Rosenberg's equivalent. When YHWH condemns Cain to be a "wanderer and meanderer on the land," Rosenberg would have him be "homeless ... on the land, blown in the wind." The land of Nod, which does indeed pun on "meander," Rosenberg translates as "a windblown land." Perhaps Bob Dylan was more of a biblical prophet than he ever realized.

Sometimes the mistranslation misses the sense of the original altogether. In the Tower of Babel story, the narrator makes the point that the builders constructed their edifice out of brick and bitumen, the manufactured materials routinely employed in Mesopotamia, instead of stone and mortar, the more natural materials used in the stony land of Israel. Rosenberg fancies that the image symbolizes the unity that the builders seek, "like stone on stone." To reinforce this theme of binding, Rosenberg introduces the word-stem "bound" into his text three times. The biblical Hebrew offers no basis for this interpolation. Rosenberg translates the builders as exclaiming "without a name we're unbound": this is sheer invention. In the Garden story, Rosenberg sprinkles "touching" all over, but it occurs in the original only when the deity forbids the man and woman to touch the Tree of Knowing. Again, the author translates a story of ideas into one of the flesh.

Such mistranslations also change our perception of character. After Esau sells his birthright to Jacob for a meal, the narrator uncharacteristically comments: "Esau despised the birthright." That is not the sense one gets from Rosenberg's "a blessing slighted by Esau." Rosenberg's rendering is in some ways at odds with Bloom's efforts to escape the facticities of postbiblical readings of J—the translation is riddled with modernist, Anglo-American associations and idioms. His additions to the text mislead Bloom, too. Bloom finds irony in the name of Enosh, "sweet mortal" in Rosenberg's version, but there is nothing sweet about the name, which means only "man." The "fond calling" of YHWH by early humankind strikes Bloom as "curious." It strikes me as curious, too, because there is no basis in the Hebrew for rendering "fond." Rosenberg not only chooses to translate freely; he makes some fundamental errors in Hebrew, as one can discern from his transcription of *vayhi* or *vayehi,* "it was," as *v'yhi.*

Yet, Rosenberg cannot be blamed for all of Bloom's excesses. The God of Bloom's J has the personality of an impetuous, playful child. The language of YHWH's creation of the first human in Genesis 2, the beginning of *The Book of J,* does indeed describe a molding of clay, such as might be worked by a potter. For Bloom, the deity unceremoniously slaps together the human being "rather like a solitary child making a mud pie." While the J source makes no specific mention of a potter's wheel, as one Egyptian myth does, it never implies anything less than careful crafting either—except in Bloom's head. Any reader is entitled to interpret according to a subjective frame of reference, one's own network of associations. But Bloom attributes his book to a tenth-century B.C.E. Israelite author; he establishes for himself an Iron Age context. That the ironic perspective on the divine was original to early Israel, and that succeeding generations of pious Judeans entirely misread it and adopted it as the foundation document of a zealous monotheism are presumptuous propositions for which one would have to argue through the discipline of history. Bloom relies instead on his own instincts, the way he hears the Hebrew—but even this narrower ground is quite shaky. Who can trust a literary critic who doesn't know the difference between *gevura*, "courage, might," and *gevira,* "lady"?

Speaking of lady, it is instructive to see how Bloom figures that J was a woman—the thesis that has most fascinated the media. It is possible that an Israelite woman did compose J. Considering the complex and sympathetic portrayal of Tamar in Genesis 38, Richard Friedman has already suggested that hypothesis in *Who Wrote the Bible?* Bloom, who had in his earlier essays assumed that J was a man, is now impressed with J's representation of formidable female personalities such as Sarah, Rebecca, Tamar, and Zipporah. This contrasts, he contends, with the unheroic depictions of the Torah's men and the characterization of the masculine deity as immature. Undaunted by the negative reaction he expected from feminists, Bloom applies an essentializing sexist perspective in justifying his perception of a woman's psychology in J's narrative voice. "J's Yahweh has a tormented relationship with his chosen prophet, Moses.... Possessiveness, rather than affection or even regard, is the stance of J's Yahweh toward Moses."

To make his case, Bloom must gloss over such unsympathetic episodes as the rape of Dinah. In fact, I am surprised that, in light of his identification of J, he does not propose that she is David's daughter Tamar, who was raped by her half-brother Amnon (2 Samuel 13)—and thus might have been expected to visit narrative retribution on the opposite sex. But Bloom's idiosyncratic reconstruction of the source and his often fanciful misrepresentation of the Hebrew's sense, combined with his chronic inattention to historical context, render his hypothesis on J's authorship improbable. Bloom's supporters may feel that to present an alternative possibility is a scholarly service. But when one goes to the doctor, one expects to receive a probable diagnosis, not a possible one. Knowing that we are in the dark about much ancient Israelite history, responsible scholarship must propose what seems to be a probable reconstruction, not simply another possibility that, for lack of sufficient evidence, cannot be convincingly refuted.

In my own pragmatic view, every reader relates to the text in a manner that affirms one's own position. One may adapt the meaning to one's own world view, as in rabbinic midrash, for example. Or one may define the meaning in opposition to one's own view in order to attack or subvert it. Bloom has read the Torah in a manner that affirms not only his own position vis-a-vis postbiblical tradition, but his theory of literary creation as a sort of Oedipal struggle between the author and the author's influences. Rather

than allow his interpretation of some biblical narratives to stand on its own, Bloom has attempted to enhance its authority in the same way that the Woody Allen character in *Annie Hall* summons Marshall McLuhan into a movie line from out of nowhere.

In the absence of painstaking historical reconstruction, Bloom's identification of J is no more convincing. By setting J in a specific historical situation, Bloom and Rosenberg ironically contain the narration's meaning rather than liberating it from the burdens of facticity. □

MUTTI

(continued from p. 58)

toward conversion and confirmation. The secretary we spoke to was not sympathetic, however, and did not suggest we might discuss the matter with someone else. Unbaptized, that was my trouble, she said. Apparently—at least according to her—you couldn't be converted without being baptized and you couldn't be baptized without being converted.

From long ago—from the time before England—I recalled the soft, secret smell of anti-Semitism. It could be said, in fact, that in her way the secretary of the archdiocese did baptize me after all: and when the bishop of Ripon wrote me a kindly note a few months later, suggesting we might soon be one in Christ, I wrote back to inform him that Christ was a Jew and as far as I was concerned what was good enough for him was good enough for me as well.

He died, the bishop of Ripon did, a few months after that—I hope from causes unrelated to our correspondence. The bishop's letters and a copy of mine turned up, years later. I was helping my mother clean out her closets—she was moving from the bad side of East 19th Street, where there was not much closet space, to the good side, where there was considerably less. On a top shelf I found several boxes filled with reminders of my growing up: school reports, essays I'd written, copies of French exams, abysmal attempts at poetry throttled in rhyme. There, too, were the bishop's letters. And, finally, a manila envelope containing a mass of correspondence to Liebe Mutti. Almost every crumbling page had been crayoned-in with garlands of flowers unknown to botany and hearts with leaves and berries fountaining forth like blood.

"What do you want me to do with these?" I asked my mother. We looked at each other. She didn't say anything. Both of us seemed to accept the idea that what we did with the letters would be highly significant, though what it would highly signify was unclear. "Should I throw them out?" I asked.

"It's up to you," said my mother. "You might find them interesting later on."

I wonder if even at that late date I wanted her to make one final Liebe Mutti gesture and seize these relics to her bosom? Or would I, to the contrary, have been grateful to have their pathetic evidence of my aberrant lapse into sentimentality destroyed by her orders? But she insisted I was the one who should decide, and in the end I did throw them out, reluctantly. I was immediately sorry, of course, but by then it was too late.

When my mother died, some years after that, a few odd pieces of the past surfaced once again. She had kept six or seven things back for herself, after all, hidden away in a photo album: a Valentine's Day card, two birthday cards, two letters of excruciating sweetness. These I have kept; but whenever I come across them, either in fact or in mind, I get a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach, that almost thrilling wave of nausea that overwhelms those discovered in some daring moment of deceit and shame. □

LETTERS

(continued from p. 2)

then who shall be for me? And if I am only for myself, then what am I? And if not now, when?" On the march in Washington, I was not for myself; and if, as a Jew, I endorse the war unequivocally, ignoring my fervent belief in pacifism, then what am I? I feel caught in an irreconcilable bind, and the only solution I can live with, as a pacifist and a Jew, is to speak out and hope that others will join me.

Fia Lehmann
Berkeley, California

To the Editor:

Despite the slogans at many peace rallies demanding that we not "trade blood for oil," the real issue is not access to oil. The energy industry has already compensated for the missing Iraqi oil. If access to oil were at stake, the U.S.'s "allies" would be playing a much more active role in the effort to push Iraq out of Kuwait. In terms of oil, the only issue—and it is a relatively minor one—is the degree of control that the U.S. government has over the distribution and pricing policies of Middle East governments. This is not an issue that deeply excites most other governments, which explains their otherwise confusing reticence.

The fundamental issue is the nature of, and the relative power of the United States in, the "new world order" that will emerge from the ashes of the old cold war. The stakes are very high. Unless the American people can separate their support for stopping Saddam Hussein from the efforts of the nation's leaders to retain the power and wealth they enjoy as the world's policemen, we'll have to wait another half century before we get the next chance to enjoy the benefits of peace. Unfortunately, the situation is complex. A simple antiwar movement is not enough. We need to find a way to oppose the U.S. involvement in the Gulf while also supporting UN action against Hussein's aggression. And we need to make clear that the real issue is not this specific situation but the overall shape of the world we are creating. The decisions we make this year will determine the power relations of the world our children inhabit for most of their lives.

Steven E. Miller
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Circumcision

To the Editor:

The authors of "Circumcision: Gainful Pain" (*Tikkun,* Sept./Oct. 1990), make several erroneous scientific statements that do a great disservice to children. The notions that infants and children are less able to perceive pain than adults and that local anesthesia for circumcision is excessively risky are misconceptions that recent research has disproved. In addition, the authors have misleadingly equated the effects of local anesthesia with those of general anesthesia, and equated the failure of hospitals to mandate or recommend anesthesia for circumcision with lack of support for its use.

We now know that the neural

mechanisms for pain sensation are developed before birth, and that newborn infants are every bit as able to feel pain as adults. Scores of publications show that in many circumstances the stress responses of infants to pain exceed those of adults, and may even cause disruptions in normal physiological functions. Because infants frequently appear to sleep after circumcision, it is often argued that the procedure is not painful. This apparent "restfulness" has been observed after a number of painful procedures in children; experts in development in fact consider it to be a withdrawal response. Compared to infants given a local anesthetic for circumcision, infants undergoing unanesthetized circumcision have large increases in heart rate, stress hormones, and crying, as well as decreases in the concentration of oxygen in their blood—all evidence of severe stress due to the pain of the procedure. This evidence has been consistently reported in articles in reputable medical journals.

Although anesthetics of all types have "known risks," the risks of lidocaine and penile nerve block have been greatly exaggerated by Landes and Robbin. Two recent studies establishing the safety and efficacy of nerve block for circumcision found that only two out of sixty-three infants who received either lidocaine or a placebo experienced complications: 1) a hematoma (bruise) at the base of the penis, which healed without harm or further problems; and 2) an apparent failure of the lidocaine to relieve pain in one infant. The overdramatized claims of a penile nerve block causing "blood clots" and "damaging an artery and causing the blood supply [to the penis] to clamp down" are speculation by the authors and have not been reported as complications of the procedure. They also greatly exaggerate the risk of seizures.

These authors claim that tradition dictates that no local anesthetic be used for circumcision, but cite a passage against the use of a *general* anesthetic. An infant given local anesthesia can still be fully aware of the procedure and can see and hear those around him. The only difference is that he is spared the painful sensation of the blade removing his foreskin.

Landes and Robbin say that because hospitals do not recommend or require the use of a nerve block for circumcision, hospitals do not support its use. The truth is that hospitals, as a matter of principle, do not mandate surgical procedures or anesthetic type, but only general standards of care. Most hospitals do not have a policy requiring anesthetics to be administered to infants (or adults) for *any* procedure. This includes circumcision, labor and delivery, and even open-heart surgery. But it would be a rare parent or health care professional who would consider performing major surgery on a child without anesthetics. In 1990 we do not lack technology or safe medications to treat and prevent pain in infants and children. What we do lack is the willingness to consider pain in children a real and preventable problem.

Linda K. Snelling, M.D.
New Haven, Connecticut

To the Editor:

Circumcision is not just a Jewish question; it is fundamentally about the rights of children, specifically the right of the child to be protected from traumatic pain and to an intact, fully functioning sexual organ. To make those fundamental human rights of less importance than Judaic tradition is to lose the very essence of Judaism: the sacredness and preciousness of life itself, especially very young lives that need our protection from pain, trauma, and deprivation. Pain may occur in our lives, but it is a crime to inflict it, except to save a life.

To hear the age-old fallacy repeated by Rabbi Landes that circumcision, by diminishing the male's sexual feeling, thereby makes men more sexually humane is shockingly ludicrous! Rape and sexual abuse are not caused by overpowering sexual drive—they are caused by strong, sadistic rage toward women. Indeed, many rapists do not experience orgasm during an assault. Are circumcised American men also less sexually abusive toward their women? I am surprised that men are not outraged at being considered to have a "natural propensity" to rape. Sexual abuse is culturally and psychologically rooted and does not depend on the foreskin or lack thereof.

Unfortunately, there are traumatic effects from circumcision. We know that infants do feel pain. In certain psychotherapeutic situations, even adult men have relived the painful trauma of their circumcision—the memory is still there. When the memory is blocked, as it is in most men, the trauma manifests itself by *blocking awareness of infant pain,* i.e., creating a defensiveness vis-à-vis circumcision. This blocked awareness also creates doctors who continue to be blind to infant pain. And what about death and disfigurement as the result of circumcision? One Jewish woman has told me of at least ten cases of hemorrhaging, infection, and death from both, within her family and among her friends. There is also the disfigurement known as the "bent penis" in which too much skin is removed, pulling on the penis during erection. If one child risks death or disfigurement, circumcision should be forbidden according to Jewish law. Now is the time to re-examine this practice. Like many Jewish traditions, this too was adopted from another culture. Circumcision is actually antithetical to the supreme Judaic commandment to do no harm. There will be no harm in stopping it.

Theirrie Cook
El Cerrito, California

To the Editor:

There's a hidden but very deep anti–Jewish-male bias in the writing of most of those who wish to eliminate or radically transform the circumcision rite. Their basic supposition is that somehow the pain in that rite has lasting negative psychological consequences. To make this point persuasive, one has to assume that in some way Jewish men, who have been subjected to circumcision are less psychologically sound or healthy than those non-Jewish men who did not undergo circumcision. If there is no such distinction psychologically, then there can be no grounds for arguing that circumcision has lasting negative consequences. So the anti-circumcision crowd has to assume that somehow Jewish men are in less healthy psychological shape than non-Jewish men.

This, of course, is what anti-Semites throughout the ages have been saying about Jewish men. It would be intriguing to speculate on what constellation of forces—assimilation, feminism, humanistic psychology?—now makes it possible for some Jewish women to join in the chorus of Jewish-male-bashing. Whatever it is, I think it is fundamentally misguided. The fact is that throughout much of history Jewish men have been less violent, less oppressive, and more sensitive to others than many of the men in the cultures around us. I don't attribute that to circumcision or to any essential feature of the Jewish psyche—but I at least must recognize that circumcision

did not make these Jewish men more damaged than the men around them. I doubt, in fact, that it would be possible to establish in any rigorous way what precisely the lasting consequences of circumcision really are. But I find it preposterous to assume, as many anti-circumcision women do, that it is simply obvious that the infliction of this amount of pain has lasting negative effects. Rather, I suspect that many of these Jewish women are, in some covert way, doing their best now to inflict pain on Jewish men by suggesting that some terrible and lasting damage has been done to their psyches.

Hannah Bat Miriam
Jerusalem

To the Editor:

Lisa Braver Moss ("Circumcision Decision: A Painful Case," *Tikkun,* Sept./Oct. 1990) asks why Jews who don't feel bound by Halacha do, on occasion, treat the business of strict, traditional observance with utmost concern. How come moderate and nonobservant Jews turn *frum* (observant) at birth and death?

I figure the explanation most often delivered from the pulpits is this: that at remarkable rites of passage, we are moved to affirm our continuity with the Jewish people. And if we won't embrace continuity with the Jewish people of the land of Canaan and Babylonia, then at least we can hook up with the particular *mishpoche* we trace back to Montreal, or the Lower East Side, or Russia. "This is what our people do, and have always done. This is what it means to be Jewish."

This may have been the logic that convinced "thirtysomething"'s Michael Steadman—the quintessential unaffiliated Jew—to circumcise his infant son. Ancestor worship, aside from being a source of strength and identity, makes for a cozy, pull-at-the-heartstrings TV moment, drawing in guest stars of the older generation to personify "roots."

But in real life? I think birth and death frighten us out of our shoes. Somehow, we have to tame our amazement at them. Neil Gilman puts it this way in *Sacred Fragments*: "Whenever we are overwhelmed by natural events and feel powerless to control our destinies, we intuitively seek some device that we believe will enable us to regain control and bend nature to our will."

Does fear truly turn us into bona-fide short-term believers? Do we really believe that a nod to God will increase our good luck? We couldn't be that dopey. OK—the rituals of birth and death, if observed traditionally, can be a Jewish version of crossed fingers. We get out the powerful magic of our people to usher us through the threatening thresholds. Call it superstition, call it paganism. Still, I don't think we believe some hocus pocus we perform can coerce God into giving us what we want.

We who reach out for amulets and ceremonies that will protect and keep a newborn life—and we who structure our funerals and our mourning according to tradition—are reaching for assurance. Everything we can do for our newborns seems insufficient to protect them from their fragility. It's not enough to have engaged the best obstetrician in the most well equipped hospital and the most respected pediatrician, or to have purchased the crib whose safety research has sanctioned. Even keeping a cribside vigil to make sure the baby is still breathing is not enough. Our powerlessness is overwhelming. By turning to ancient ritual we turn wisely to a road map to safety. The ceremony steadies us, and we regain some control.

Vanessa L. Ochs
Madison, New Jersey

To the Editor:

Some of Rabbi Daniel Landes and Sheryl Robbin's arguments supposedly *for* circumcision (*Tikkun,* Sept./Oct. 1990) seem to me pretty good arguments against it—especially the Maimonides quotation about its muting effect on adult sexuality.

In pre-Hebraic culture, circumcision was most likely an initiation ritual into adulthood, as it is today in almost all of those cultures that practice it. On the basis of his anthropological study and observation of sociosexual development in children Bruno Bettelheim speculates that circumcision developed from male envy of a dramatic female initiation into adulthood, first through menstruation and then childbearing. A boy would be taken into a secret society of men, put through a series of rituals (often involving drawing of blood from the genitals), and then "birthed" back into the tribe as an adult. For adolescents, perceived social benefit—adult status, sexual acceptability—helped balance the pain and the risk of circumcision.

With the development of pre-patriarchal, polytheistic culture into patriarchal Hebraic society—with its single all-powerful, sometimes violent and vengeful, male God—circumcision changed to reflect the new relationship of absolute submission of humans to deity. This rite occurred during the totally vulnerable preverbal stage of development when the child could not comprehend the trauma as socially desirable.

Still, even after infant circumcision was given scriptural sanction as divine mandate, Hebraic circumcision removed only part of the foreskin. Then, that which patriarchy instituted, anti-Semitism made worse. In response to pressure to assimilate into dominant and conquering cultures—those with partially exposed glans were laughed at in nude Greek games, and taxed by the Romans—Jewish men developed various ways to stretch or blister the remaining foreskin until it covered their glans and they could pass for gentile. In response, rabbis began dictating that circumcision be radical, complete. By making foreskin restoration far more difficult, cultural integrity was maintained, but at considerable cost to the men.

We circumcised men, both Jews and gentiles, have had a healthy, functional part of our bodies removed against our wills, as well as our sexuality compromised. Surely we're entitled to fully know why, so we can decide whether to continue the practice or let it end with us.

Billy Ray Boyd
Amsterdam

Relationships

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draw from their own experience ought to be legitimated. But this is also why I oppose Farrakhan and black nationalists of his stripe—because even though blacks have been oppressed in this country by whites, I don't think it appropriate to generalize that experience to a distrust of all whites. But neither would I turn around and say something like, "These Blacks who support Farrakhan are nothing but racists." The fact is that their feelings derive from a long history of oppression. I think that most people on the Left can understand this about Blacks—but they refuse to see how it may also be true of the majority of those who support the Israeli Right—the refugees and children of refugees from Arab lands.

The failure to tell the truth about reality is deep in the soul of the Left. This is in part because the anti-Semitism in this society and throughout the world is so deep that the Left has been willing to recognize the national liberation struggles of every other people, but has refused to recognize Zionism—the national liberation struggle of the Jews.

And one of the reasons for this refusal has been Jews within the Left, many of whom have internalized the society's anti-Semitism and who desperately try to show their non-Jewish friends how un-Jewish they really are. This internalized anti-Semitism is widespread among all Jews. We've tried to look like non-Jews, shaved our beards or had nose jobs or straightened our hair or adopted the right clothes or tried to endlessly exercise so that our bodies fit the models of the WASPs who are the standards of beauty. Over and over again Jews have tried to show that we really aren't *too* Jewish—that we can be polite and not talk loud and not be pushy and not be too much into our heads or too intellectual: "Now, will you love us please; now will you please not push us into concentration camps?" And this is what happened to many Jews who are on the Left—they know nothing about the details of Jewish history, they know nothing of the classics of their own tradition, they know nothing of the great languages and literatures of their people—instead they are doing their best to convince everyone that they can be more tough on the Jews and on Israel than anyone else can. What perfect cover these Jews provide for the anti-Semitism in the Left—so no one on the Left has ever to ask about the specific form of oppression against Jews. They can say to themselves, as people on the Left frequently do, "The Jews are alright—after all, they have financial security." Of course, if you took that argument and said to women, "Those of you who have relative economic security, those of you who have been born into middle-class families and will get middle class jobs—stop complaining," everyone would understand what was wrong with that, because sexism doesn't just work through economic oppression: it's a whole cultural system. But so is anti-Semitism. The economic security of Jews in Germany in the 1930s did nothing to protect them. The fact is that the way Jews are oppressed is not primarily economic—though there are hundreds of thousands of poor Jews and most Jews are neither rich nor powerful.

Jews have been betrayed by the Left throughout most of the twentieth century. This issue seemed less pressing to us in the 1960s when Israel seemed secure and there was a need for a unified struggle against the outrages of the U.S. in Vietnam. But it can no longer be ignored in the 1990s when some people on the Left are blaming Israel and the Jews for the war, or suggesting that it was Jewish power that influenced the U.S. to enter the war, or that it was love for Israel that shaped U.S. policy. The truth is, as I've argued above, that this war is a disaster for Israel and for the Jews. And a majority of Jews in the Congress voted against taking the military path.

But though the war may be a disaster for Jews, the antiwar movement may also be a disaster if it does not consciously, publicly, and unequivocally engage in a struggle against the anti-Semitism that has recently emerged in its ranks. No wonder, then, that Jews are feeling deeply ambivalent, both about the war and about the antiwar movement.

There may be one very salutary development that emerges out of this: a recognition of the need for a new and deeper exploration of our Jewishness on the part of many liberal and progressive Jews who have thought that this side of our being could have a lower priority. Jewishness is once again in question. We need a new consciousness-raising movement for Jewish liberals similar to that which accompanied the second wave of the women's movement of the late 1960s. Liberal Jews need to join small groups that meet each week to explore the problems we face in a society where anti-Semitism comes at us from both the Right and the Left. And in those groups, we need to begin to rethink our own lives, and come to a deeper understanding of how the particulars of our lives have been shaped by the fact that we are Jews living in a world where forces hostile to Jews still exercise considerable power. It is just such a process that might provide us with the internal clarity and strength to help deepen the perspective of the current antiwar movement and make it more credible to Jews and non-Jews alike. □

Tikkun Teach-Ins on the Gulf War:
L.A.: March 17, Student Center, UCLA
N.Y.: April 14, Student Center, Hunter College
More info: (415) 482-0805

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All the rest is commentary.



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Now more than ever there is a need for this conference—the first international gathering of progressive Jewish intellectuals in many decades. Israel peace activists have told us that they would appreciate a meaningful gesture of international solidarity as well as the opportunity to engage in serious dialogue with activists and thinkers from around the world. The conference will include morning study sessions on a wide variety of topics in Jewish thought; afternoon and evening plenary sessions on the current political situation; and small group discussions with Israelis and diaspora activists to plan strategy and directions for shared action. Speakers include: **Abba Eban, Amos Oz, Moshe Idel, Michael Walzer, Michael Lerner, Leah Shakdiel, Shulamith Aloni, David Grossman, Yishayahu Leibowitz, Yair Tzabam, Yossi Sarid, Avraham Burg, Ze'ev Sternhall, Janet Aviad and many more.**

If you were ever planning to visit Israel, do it this June and attend this conference!

Registration: Incomes greater than $50,000/yr.: $450; Incomes $31,000–50,000: $350; $17,000-$30,000: $275; less than $17,000: $225. Students with no current income: $200. Some partial scholarships are available on the basis of need and in exchange for work done previous to and at the conference. If money is a problem, contact us—we will work something out. Send checksand/or credit card info to TIC, 5100 Leona St., Oakland, CA 94619. Or call (415) 482-0805 for more info.
Travel: For cheap airfare and accommodations, call Ayelet Travel at 1-800-237-1517 and tell them you are part of the Tikkun conference.