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Israel Update: *Akiva Eldar*

Fiction: *Edith Pearlman*

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1993 $6.00

Memos to Clinton

Resisting the Pressure of Politics As Usual

Michael Lerner, James Atlas, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, Thomas Cole, Jay Rosen, Sharon Kleinbaum, Jim Wallis, Thomas Cole, Charles Derber, Herbert Gintis & Samuel Bowles



Blood & Purity
Rachel Adler

Jewish Bohemians
Paul Buhle

Neo-Nazis
Elliot Neaman

Evil
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Back To Basics
Svi Shapiro

Psychoanalytic Update
Michael Bader & Kim Chernin

Plus:

David Kraemer on Abortion

Nessa Rapoport on Child Care

Arnold Eisen on God Talk

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A Childhood Around 1950

Sometimes a horse pulled a wagon down the street.
A knife-grinder sometimes knocked at the back door.
Airplanes passed over. Put to bed in the poignant
half-thereness of summer twilights, we followed their long wobble
into Midway, rare and slow as dragonflies.

New kinds of safety. Our parents held their breath,
though sickness, for us, was the vile yellow powders
that burst from the capsules we had to gulp, and couldn't...
The new danger quiet in the milk and air.

The electric chair troubled no one. Good and evil
were stark things, as grainy movies made the dark.
But the city stopped if one of us was stolen,
and found thrown, days later, in a Forest Preserve.

It was what was. A childhood always is.
Fathers came home at noon and took off their hats.
Later, streetlights... But who was that *lamplighter*, in the stories?
And we went on living it, like a wave, that doesn't know
it is at every moment different water.

Alan Williamson

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY — VOLUME 8 NUMBER 1

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As he assumes the presidency, Bill Clinton's got a battle going on within and around him. His idealistic, visionary impulses are at odds with the voices urging him to play the presidential game by the old rules. TIKKUN has asked a number of writers to contribute memos to the new president, suggesting to him that a more visionary strategy will also be his most practical course.

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Letters

CLINTON'S VICTORY

To the Editor:

I'm a Republican who has long admired the insightfulness of TIKKUN magazine even while disagreeing with its fundamental commitment to liberal causes. In the November/December articles on Clinton's victory by Michael Lerner ("The Sixties Generation Returns: The Lifting of America's Psychological Depression") and Peter Gabel ("Clinton and the Id"), you outdo yourself, reaching new levels of insight, and in the process providing the real answer to why Bush lost. But although we on the Right may have lost a presidential election, we are far from defeated, and one consolation is that most of your colleagues on the Left don't really understand what you at TIKKUN are saying, while my friends on the Right may learn from your insights.

If, as you say, Clinton won because he embodied a politics of meaning that infused every specific policy suggestion with a connection to a larger ethical and spiritual vision, if he did this in ways that promoted a spirit of optimism about the possibility of the world being fundamentally changed, if he rejected the special interests and spoke to a general interest, and if he tapped into libidinal energy that had been repressed in the 1980s, then the simple explanation of Bush's defeat is that he did none of these things.

The import of this for those of us on the Right is this: just as you correctly intuit that the majority of Americans did not study Clinton's economic policies and then decide, after careful reflection, that they had made more sense than those that we conservatives have been endorsing, so too Americans did not really reject a conservative president.

The fact is that Bush betrayed the conservative legacy and he betrayed the

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energy and excitement and vision that had originally animated the Reagan revolution. Bush had no politics of meaning—that is, he could not tie his specific policy programs to an animating moral and spiritual vision. The reason: he had no such vision, and was surrounded by technicians who similarly lacked that vision. Bush came into national office in 1980 because he provided centrist cover for a right-wing revolution symbolically headed by and articulated by Ronald Reagan. He won the presidency in 1988 because the Democrats fielded an even less visionary candidate who shied away from defending liberal principles when confronted on them (not that they are so easy to defend!). But in 1992, Bush was at a loss to articulate a conservative agenda or to give Americans a sense of what remains vital in the Right's politics.

Take, for example, the failed attempts to make "pro-family" politics work for the Republicans. The reason is very simple: Dan Quayle is a bumpkin whose stupid attack on Murphy Brown obscured our conservative message, and George Bush could barely get "pro-family" ideas out of his mouth without choking on them. Had someone from the Right focused on the ways that liberal politics undermines family life and explained it in a way that could be understood, we would have done far better.

The same is true for the range of programs developed by us in the conservative movement (what the media called the New Right of the early 80s). Our problem for the past four years is that we've had a president who didn't believe in our programs and yet who was presented to the country as the champion of those ideas. This shouldn't be hard to understand for TIKKUN readers you've been complaining about the same thing when it came to Eastern European communist elites discrediting the idea of socialism.

Luckily for us on the Right, and despite your credible claims that Clinton reads TIKKUN, Clinton has not appointed either Lerner or Gabel to the transition team, and they are unlikely to play prominent roles in a Clinton administration. Instead he is surrounding himself with people who don't understand a politics of meaning, and this, I hope, will make it likely that he will be a one-term president. I know you don't share that hope, but I think you'll discover that a Clinton presidency strays as far from the ideals and vision that

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Interning at TIKKUN is a perfect way to make a real contribution to social change—and a perfect entry into the world of professional publishing. Unfortunately, we can't pay our interns, but we can offer you intellectual excitement and the opportunity to make a real difference in the world. In the past, some interns who have worked for us for nine months have been hired at New York publishing houses and major newspapers, and some have been hired by TIKKUN.

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To apply: Write a self-revealing letter telling us what turns you on about TIKKUN, describing your skills, and specifying what time you have available. Write to TIKKUN, 251 W. 100th, 5th floor, New York, N.Y. 10025.

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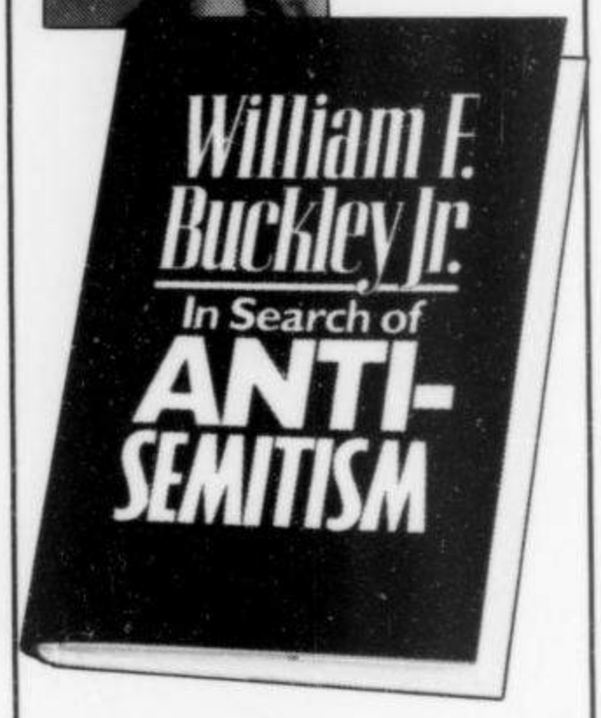
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you've articulated in TIKKUN as Bush did from the politics of the New Right. And when he does that, we will have Jack Kemp and others ready to provide new leadership in 1996. So before you guys have too big a celebration about "the return of the generation of the sixties," let me assure you that Clinton's presidency may well sound the death knell to all your transformative visions and once again your "generation" will be consigned to the well-earned oblivion that was imposed upon it after its first disastrous appearance in the late sixties and early seventies. From all that I can see as I follow the transition process, Clinton's administration will be just as dominated by visionless policy people like Lloyd Bentsen who are more interested in showing that they really are not too far from the American political center (and hence, just like Bush, will avoid programs that actually seem to embody the vision that originally brought them into power). It was this same desire that crippled Carter and Bush and that will ensure a speedy end to this latest resurgence of liberalism, opening the doors again for a resurgence of a more openly ideological New Right that will soon recover from the problems we've faced in the Bush years when, out of loyalty to a Republican president, we submerged our voices and went along with the boring and ultimately hapless accommodations of a principle-less centrist.

Kenneth Blair, III
Washington, D.C.

To the Editor:

Michael Lerner claims in his editorial on the Clinton victory that "Now the sixties generation is up at bat." I'm part of that generation, and somehow it doesn't feel like that is what is happening. I was an activist who risked my life and ruined what would otherwise have been a financially successful career in order to stand up for my anti-war and anti-racist principles in the late sixties and early seventies.

But the people who are coming to Washington with Clinton are the opposite—they are the very members of our generation who managed to excuse themselves from taking any serious risks or even sticking up for what they believed in in ways that might possibly offend others. They were the people who were more interested in how to get into law school or how to get an article into an academic journal or how to please a professor who might write them a good recommendation for graduate school, or for a promotion or for tenure. They were really the people who lived through the sixties, but who missed it, who read about it. They never understood why we wanted to change "the system" they thought that talk like that was mere posturing, because they had never bothered to think out in any systematic way the connection, for example, between the situation of the underclass and the needs of the capitalists to keep labor costs down by relying on a large army of unemployed people, fear of which could "discipline" workers into not taking excessive risks (lest they be fired and find themselves similarly unemployed). Nor could they understand that having the underclass be Blacks made it even easier to keep working people in line, because racism would make their suffering more acceptable to white workers who could always kid themselves into believing that the poverty of these "others" was somehow deserved.

The point is that these people didn't want to understand what we were uncovering about the systematic nature of oppression under capitalism, because to do so would be to ruin their own chances for making it within the system. And isn't the highest principle of the Clintonites just this: "Thou must keep thy viability within the system."

I'm not saying that these are bad people or that they won't do some good things. What I am saying is this: the Clinton/Gore years are no more the test of our sixties ideals than was the Johnson administration, dominated by the need to win the war in Vietnam even as it gave lip-service to a Great Society, the test of liberal principles. Indeed, those of us who remain involved and still know that America's pain will not be relieved until the system of private profit has been dismantled should become a "loyal opposition" rather than the cheerleaders for Clinton that so many others have become. I'm glad to see that in printing Tom Hayden's somewhat skeptical piece ("Working the System: Memo to the TIKKUN Community") TIKKUN is signaling to the rest of us that there's still place within your community for those of us who are not so optimistic about Clinton as Michael Lerner and Peter Gabel seem to be.

Samuel Chapnick
Brooklyn, New York

To the Editor:

We owe a great debt to those who consistently "spoke truth to power" during the Reagan national sleepwalk and the Bush farce-melodrama. Often with minimal funding they exposed the falsehoods coming from well-connected and affluent think-tanks such as the Heritage Foundation and its emulators.

Nevertheless, the intellectual center of gravity for discussions of economic and social issues was shifted significantly to the right. The Clinton rhetoric and strategy demonstrated how much lost ground needs to be regained.

Sumner Rosen
New York, New York

To the Editor:

It has been your subtly nuanced approach to Clinton that got me off my butt and convinced me to go vote for him in the primaries and work for him in the fall election. You spoke to all of my ambivalence about politicians when you described the way that you had gone from a deep skepticism to enthusiasm about Clinton last spring, and this fall you helped me realize that the main thing of importance about Clinton was not the specific policies that he might introduce but rather the climate of hope that he would generate. Your November editorial "The Sixties Generation Returns" spoke to the lifting of the psychological depression that has been shaping politics for the past several decades. I think it was prophetic because all around me I saw happening precisely what you said would happen, a new hopefulness in every area of life. I think Clinton's people must be reading TIKKUN, because their plan for the inauguration seems to pick up on your idea and tries to find a way to send the signal to the American public that we are really in a new period. I don't know if it will work; I'm still a bit cautious, but I sure hope so and I must admit that I've begun hoping that Clinton would be reading TIKKUN on a regular basis.

Wendy Lichtheim
Los Angeles, California

To the Editor:

As much as I enjoy reading TIKKUN, I have a nagging complaint that reappeared when I read the November/December issue. Maybe it's because I was born in 1968, but I find your insistence on interpreting events and reforms through "the ideals of the sixties" extremely frustrating and limiting. While many good changes occurred because of the various movements in the sixties and I have benefited from them, the "ideals" of the sixties neither began there nor will they end there. The civil rights movement in this country began when the first African resisted being captured for the slave trade. The women's rights movement can be traced at least back to Abigail Adams asking her husband to "please remember the ladies" in the Constitution by giving them the right to vote. The Native Americans have been fighting to regain (or retain) their sovereignty since Columbus arrived. Rather than attribute the struggle for justice to one particular era, I prefer to see myself as part of struggle that began at least as far back as Eden and has been embodied by different groups and individuals at different times around the world.

Deborah Gottschalk
Buffalo, New York

Editor responds:

There have been struggles to end the oppression of this or that particular group throughout history. And there have been struggles aimed at the overthrow of a particular social order, some of which have succeeded. In most of these previous struggles the issues as articulated by the leaders and responded to by the masses have been rather limited: the ending of a particular set of oppressions.

What distinguishes "the spirit of the sixties" (as we have interpreted it in TIKKUN) is that it sought a more general liberation that went beyond ending specific oppressions and toward the formulation of a more positive vision of what human beings could and should be, and that it was in the name of this transformation of the human spirit that people struggled. One of the major slogans of May 1968—"Power to the Imagination"—captured in its own way the theme of overcoming the kind of "one dimensionality" that had been generated by contemporary forms of technological organization and materialistic obsessions. In every realm of life, people began to ask themselves "what would a world be like that would offer real human fulfillment, real liberation, real creativity, and loving connection with others?" This was the kind of concern that was revolutionary in an entirely different way than we have seen

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in most of the previous struggles and to the extent that the "spirit of the sixties" pervaded each particular movement they in turn began to translate this question into their own context, nurture it, and generate visions that incorporated their own experience and needs while also worrying about the general interest in liberation.

Though there have been other social change movements in which this same set of issues has emerged, most of those movements had been so obsessed with the immediate material realities of survival and freeing themselves from economic or political oppression that these larger visionary ends could only emerge as afterthoughts. But in the sixties, it was often children of the affluent and the entitled who engaged in struggle, and although they were driven in part by a desire to end the immediate oppression of others, they were also motivated by their own needs for a liberation of the spirit that transcended other more limited needs. What was exciting about the spirit of the sixties—and what made it so dangerous to ruling elites that they did everything in their power to stamp it out and repress it—was that this need for liberation of the spirit was not segregated from other more immediate needs but integrated with them, so that, for example, younger workers in a GM plant in Lordstown or working people generally began to see that they not only needed higher pay (which was all that the AFL-CIO ever seemed to care about) but also a work place in which their creativity and humanity could be nourished and encouraged.

It was this infectious liberatory spirit that was eventually repressed and defeated, because to hold on to it takes a very special chemistry, and what remained was a series of particular social-change movements which seemed to only be interested in advancing themselves and their own constituencies and had lost the larger transformative vision. And having lost it, they also lost the confidence of the American people. After all, if each group was really fighting only for itself, then why should people who were not part of that group care, unless it was in their self-interest to do so? So we got the "coalition politics" of the eighties (remember Jesse Jackson's "quilt"?) that inspired few, because it offered not an alternative but a continuation of the spirit of selfishness that Reagan and the Right were selling. It was only with Clinton that we get back to some of the liberatory themes of the sixties, themes that transcended the particular interests of any one oppressed group and instead linked them all together in a more general interest in liberation that could apply (albeit in different ways) to every group. It's not only because of nostalgia (though I confess to being one of the activists of the sixties who felt more fully alive then than I did in much of the eighties), but because of the need to remain a witness to the possibility that tens of millions of people can be moved to act not only for narrow material self-interest but also on behalf of transcendent ideals whose implementation may even incur a reduction of individual material holdings or success, that I invoke the spirit of the sixties.

Latinos & Jews

To The Editor:

I was looking through a variety of magazines at a newsstand in the Bronx when I came upon the article on Jews and Latinos by Tsvi Blanchard (Nov/Dec. 1992). I'm a Latino myself, so I decided to read it, and was blown away to find someone in the Jewish world sounding very different from the Jews I read about in the *New York Post*. I must admit that most of my attitude toward Jews has been formed by reading the statements of people who say that they are Jewish leaders and who only fight for themselves and their own community. They never seem to care much about the rest of us. Not that that's so different from any other community—it's the same way in my community, and among Blacks, Chinese, Italians, everyone. Still, I never could quite figure out why so many Jews voted for liberals, even for Third World leaders like Mayor Dinkins, if their ideas were so self-centered.

But in TIKKUN I got my head turned around. In your magazine I found Jews who seem to really care about others, and to have ideas that are really different from the selfish ideas that I usually hear from leaders of every community, including my own. When Tsvi Blanchard calls for a multiethnic politics that is "collaborative, not competitive," or when he talks of rewriting the ground rules for politics so that from now on "nobody has enough if somebody doesn't have enough" I simply couldn't believe my eyes. No wonder you people vote in a liberal and tolerant way if you believe the kinds of things that are being said inside TIKKUN. So, I have one question: why don't you take more of TIKKUN's ideas over to Crown Heights where it seems that a section of your community needs to hear them? And why don't we hear more from TIKKUN-style Jews in the media? And why doesn't Rabbi Blanchard become one of the national Jewish leaders?

Jose Rodriguez
Bronx, New York

Nationalism

To the Editor:

I always wondered why internationalism didn't work as a replacement to ethnic nationalism when Eastern Europe was under the control of the communists. From your roundtable ("Nationalism and Ethnic Particularism," Nov/Dec 1992) I learned the answer: though espousing a rhetoric of internationalism, the communist regimes actually played upon and manipulated nationalism rather than attempting to replace it. I knew they hadn't tried socialism, but I didn't know that they hadn't really tried internationalism either.

Marilyn Kaplan
Chicago, Illinois

To the Editor:

I find it difficult to understand how your panelists (in "Nationalism and Ethnic Particularism") draw the line between interventions in the name of human rights that are legitimate and those that are not. We are told that if a society democratically elects a regime that ends up being oppressive, then we don't have a right to intervene unless we are doing so to prevent murder or torture. We are told that we don't have a right to intervene to stop cliteridectomy. But why not?

If, as Elshtain points out, feminists acceded to the claim that women from societies that practiced it told them that this was their own issue which they would deal with in their own way over time, then why not let women in oppressive relationships in America also make the same claim to prevent intervention by the state? The fact is that we have come to defend women who allow themselves to be passive in the face of their own victimization. We've supported the state involving itself to stop wife or child abuse, even if the wife or child says that they accept this brutalization as somehow natural or appro-

(Continued on p. 74)

EDITORIAL

Israel's Choice: Either Transfer a Million Palestinians or Get Out of Gaza

Michael Lerner

When I learned that Islamic fundamentalists in Gaza, members of Hamas, had kidnapped and murdered an Israeli policeman, I was enraged. For a moment I had the fantasy of lashing out against the Palestinians whose demands for national self-determination I have supported over the years. Enough is enough, I felt. When will all this end? Will Jews ever be safe, even in our own land? I even momentarily lapsed into the fantasy of how nice it would be for Israel if all the Palestinians were living in Los Angeles or Queens.

I know that not all the Palestinians supported this action. But there is a war going on against my people, and those who are engaged in that war have some responsibility for how the war is being fought by those whom they are cheering on.

Make no mistake about it, the Islamic fundamentalists are not a decent bunch of people merely struggling for their own liberation. Some of them are coercive thugs who would deny all basic civil liberties and human rights—not only to Jews, but to other Arabs who do not follow their leadership. That's why in every country in the Middle East besides Iran (where they run the show) these people are put in jail by their own Arab brothers and sisters. So I understand why many Israelis supported Rabin's expulsion of more than 400 Palestinians.

But there are three considerations that make my initial reactions inappropriate.

First, civil liberties and human rights should protect those with whom we strongly disagree as long as they do not act in a violent way. The 400 Palestinians rounded up by the Israeli government were not people accused of actually participating in or conspiring in the kidnapping or murder—they were Islamic academics, writers, religious leaders, etc. They were not convicted of (or even charged with) any crime. To point out, as Rabin did, that other states have also violated human rights and gotten away with it is to hope that Israel can protect itself by comparing itself to the most odious regimes in the world.

Second, nobody can reasonably believe that throwing these particular people out of the country will stop Islamic violence. There are close to a million Palestinians living under intolerable conditions in Gaza. It's no wonder that many Palestinians are unmoved by peace negotiations as long as the occupation persists. So the violence will continue to threaten Israeli lives. There really are only two solutions: morally intolerable expulsion of the whole population, or self-determination.

Third, although some Israelis thought that expulsion might preserve the peace process by proving Rabin's toughness, it in fact will have the opposite effect, legitimating a rhetoric and style that will push the Israeli public toward the right. If Rabin convinces Israelis that what is really needed is more toughness, they are likely to be drawn to those forces that advocate greater repression or even a wholesale expulsion of the Palestinian population.

Rabin really has only two choices: either to go the route of toughness (creating a path for the Israeli right to return to power), or the route of withdrawal, leaving Palestinians to work out their own fate in Gaza.

Most Israelis see no point in hanging on to Gaza. It's time to get out. Unilaterally. Israel's borders can be protected, and Gaza can be surrounded by the Israeli army and navy and prevented from receiving any arms. But within that constraint, Israel should announce to the United Nations that it is giving Gaza to the U.N. for protectorship, and if the U.N. doesn't want it, that Israel will nevertheless withdraw all troops in three months.

Unilateral withdrawal can be sold to the Israeli population as an act of strength and even retribution—"If the Palestinians would prefer to live in a Lebanon-type situation, that's their problem. Better to kill each other than to kill us. We've had enough!" Though I'd prefer a more compassionate tone, and believe that Jewish interests are better served when the state that claims to speak in the name of the Jewish people uses a language of reconciliation, peace, and caring for others, in light of the present legitimate Israeli anger it may take this tougher language for Rabin to insure that unilateral withdrawal would get popular support.

Far from being seen as a sign of weakness, unilateral withdrawal, if coupled with effective demilitarization of Gaza, would reduce pressure on Israel, increase security, and strengthen Israel's negotiating position with Arab states.

Even many center-right politicians in Israel agree that Gaza is a source of unending trouble for Isreel, with no intrinsic value or security significance. Ultimately, they agree, Israel must withdraw. If not now, when? □

Memo to Clinton:
Our First Hundred Days

Michael Lerner
Editor, Tikkun *Magazine*

Dear Mr. President:

Four years ago you read an article I had written in the L.A. Times. *In it I argued that liberal struggles for economic entitlements and political rights, while deserving our support, must be reframed within a larger context that recognizes an equally central set of psychological, ethical, and spiritual needs—most important, the need to be part of a larger community of meaning and purpose that lets us transcend the self-interested materialism of the competitive marketplace and situate ourselves in an ethically and spiritually grounded vision of who we are and who we seek to become. The social change movements had been successful precisely to the extent that they seemed to be reaching for such a larger framework of meaning and purpose. But when those movements had become identified with the narrow economistic reformism embodied in Jimmy Carter's presidency, or in the lifeless and narrow reforms proposed by a Walter Mondale or Michael Dukakis, or when they had narrowed their focus to serving the needs of their own group at what was perceived by others to be the expense of everyone else, they had lost popular appeal. So I urged liberals and progressives to adopt a politics of meaning that would emphasize the larger ethical vision that informed and guided each particular idea that they held—certain that the meaning,, not the policy details, would be decisive in generating support.*

I had not sent you my article, or solicited your comments. But I was delighted when, quite out ot the blue, you wrote me the letter I've reprinted on the opposite page.

I was happy to hear that my ideas had "helped clarify your own thinking" and that they had helped "convince you to say what you feel." I watched as you proceeded to weave your message with a politics of meaning, and I'm convinced that it was precisely the extent that you did that that separated you from the other candidates in the primary and made it possible for you to touch something in the hearts of ordinary Americans that was not being reached by other Democrats whose specific programs might have been equally intelligent but whose framework seemed one-dimensional.

I wondered if I was reading things into your perspective, but when we met this past spring, I asked you about your underlying philosophy and in your own words you restated to me much of what I had articulated in the politics of meaning article that had moved you years ago. Of course I know that it wasn't my article or my ideas that shaped your approach—the perspective of the politics of meaning really reflects the experience of our entire generation and that's why it had so much resonance with your own thinking—but I couldn't help feeling excited to realize that your letter to me had not been just a formal statement. It revealed a real intention on your part. And when you told me that you were reading Tikkun, and even cited specific articles that you had been reading, I began to feel that it would not be too presumptuous to address you directly in these pages.

So I decided to ask some people I respect to write you memos, imagining themselves sitting opposite you and saying directly to you what was in their heart. In this issue of Tikkun and the next we will be running some of these memos.

I'm well aware that you'll be getting a flood of advice. But what I asked these people to do was something different: not to address the details of policy, but to address the question of what kind of cultural and political climate you must seek to create. You have plenty of policy people surrounding you. We seek to address you on a different level.

I'll be so bold as to start by talking about how we can be your most effective allies.

How We Can Help You: The New Democrats

You need help. You told us that throughout the campaign. You went out of your way to emphasize that you needed the participation of the American public in your plans to change things. You understood that you couldn't do it alone.

When you were in touch with us on a daily basis, we could communicate directly to you what we liked and what we didn't in what you were saying. You met with us, listened, and modified your own thinking at times in response to what you heard. Often, what you found was

that you could go with your most idealistic impulses—that far from turning people off, the more visionary you became the more people responded to you.

But in Washington, things are different. You are surrounded by people who will necessarily be limiting who you see and talk to, and many of those who will be working with you are people who "know how to get things done," which is to say, they know how to reframe issues in terms that will appeal to the established interests that have run this country in the past. Many are veterans of the Carter administration, but few understand what had caused America's dissatisfaction with Jimmy Carter. They failed to notice that while the policy experts surrounding Carter managed to generate hundreds of smart programs, all these programs were dismantled under Reagan and Bush because the Carter programs were not infused with a mobilizing vision for which people would fight.

STATE OF ARKANSAS
BILL CLINTON
GOVERNOR

December 13, 1988

Michael Lerner
Editor
TIKKUN Magazine
5100 Leona
Oakland, CA 94619

Dear Mr. Lerner:

I read your article on "the crisis in the meaning of life" and the problems it poses for the Democratic Party in the November 14th article of the Los Angeles Times. It's a fine statement that goes to the heart of why the recent campaign left so many people cold. You have helped me clarify my own thinking and to feel a little more convinced to say what I feel. Thanks.

Sincerely,

Bill Clinton

BC:sc

Office of the Governor • State Capitol • Little Rock, Arkansas 72201 • 501-371-2345

Much of the problem will come from the media. Every time you try to frame a program in terms of a larger ideal they will attempt to reduce it to a narrow, self-interested goal on your part. The media are filled with people who at one point in their lives yearned for the possibility of morally transcendent order, became disillusioned about its possibility, and now feel threatened by anyone who seems to rise above their own cynicism. They will do their best to misconstrue every attempt you make to reach beyond "politics as usual."

You will only succeed if you can build a politics of meaning, a politics based on a sense of shared purpose and moral vision. What will drive America's economic recovery is a sense of hope and optimism. The moment you were elected, that hope and optimism began to generate a new willingness of consumers to spend, and so even before you began to implement programs it was this collective perception that changed economic realities. America's economic recovery depends on how much people are willing to assume that others will act in accord with some higher principle than immediate self-interest, or, to put it in language that might be acceptable to the "tough-minded," how much they can see that it will be in their self-interest to act on a principle of mutual caring and community-building.

Knowing how to build that hope and that way of looking at the world is not what your advisers learned in graduate school, in writing for policy institutes, or in strategizing about how to get programs approved by a not-yet-reformed Congress. So you need to recruit some other kinds of advisers to supplement your current crew—advisers whose expertise is in developing programs to regenerate idealism and hopefulness. Otherwise you'll find that programs formulated by you with

the intention of speaking to a politics of meaning will be framed by your administration's bureaucrats in ways that make them sound "practical," hard-nosed, and deficit conscious, and all too often that way of selling the programs is going to undermine their political and moral significance for the country.

Let's take one example, your "national service" idea. When proposed originally, by Sam Nunn and by various people in the communitarian and "politics of meaning" circles, it was part of a conception that everyone in our society has a special obligation to serve the community. To create a sense of mutual obligation and caring seems to me to be the most important cultural goal for your administration. If you can break the cycle of selfishness and cynicism that reached its extreme in the Reagan-Bush years but which in fact has dominated American public discourse since the end of World War II, you would have made the most important contribution you could to the future of America.

But lately people close to you have begun to reduce national service to a pay-back option for people who received government college loans. By reframing it in these terms, you would more likely obtain the speedy passage through Congress of a plan that would help people who could not yet afford to go to college—a noble goal. But look at how "service" and "responsibility" have been redefined: now it would be the economically disadvantaged who have a special responsibility for service, while the rest of us, because we don't have the same economic vulnerability, don't have a corresponding "responsibility" to national service.

Don't expect people to make sacrifices for their country if they think that lots of others are getting away with something. National service will generate little idealism if it is only for those who can't afford to pay back college loans. And if you don't generate an ethos of "giving" for the sake of the common good, then in every specific program area you'll find that relevant constituencies are resisting, looking out for themselves because they perceive that that is what everyone else is doing. Labor unions will resist national service workers doing anything but make-work, fearing that they might replace hired workers and lower wages; health care professionals will resist cost containment at hospitals; teachers will resist innovative methods to accredit new teachers; business leaders will resist environmental regulations; and the list will go on endlessly. Your administration must generate a new paradigm of communal responsibility, and embody that paradigm by appearing to insist on equal responsibility and equal sacrifice from all sectors of the population. If it appears that you are going to do little but tinker with the system, Americans are going to look after their own interests and the resistance to each specific part of your program will be overwhelming. Nobody is going to be moved by speeches alone if the reality of your programs seems to be a continuation of the self-interest logic of the past.

If this dynamic takes hold, there will be a part of you that quickly despairs of changing anything very deep, and that gets drawn toward the logic of "realism," the logic of sticking with the status quo and making only the smallest changes.

What could possibly help you resist all of these forces that will push you toward narrowing your programs to what seems "realistic"? What can stop those around you from reframing your programs in the narrow language of productivity, deficit reduction, and cost-effectiveness, while abandoning or devaluing those aspects of your program that depend on or aim to foster a sense of community, caring, and ethical and spiritual senstivity? What can we do to convince you that the more radical you become in challenging the logic of self-interest, the more you will actually build your mass base of political support and energize people to act as your allies?

The answer is one that you gave us during the campaign: you need us. You gave us the challenge. Now it's our responsibility to respond.

You have to use your first hundred days to push aggressively for your economic programs. But the American people have to use our first hundred days to organize a response to your challenge.

Here's what I propose to do, if you want us to do so: Try to create New Democrats, a grouping of people who will weigh in to support the most visionary and idealistic side of Bill Clinton.

New Democrats would issue policy statements, propose programs, and would critique some of the proposals being considered by your administration or by Congress, all from the standpoint of articulating the politics of meaning in which you believe. We would take the logic of your speeches during the campaign, your acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention, the inspiring words that you uttered the night of your electoral victory, your inaugural address—and we would try to show how to translate them into policies and programs expressive of your highest vision.

And we would try to mobilize others to support this side of Bill Clinton. We would organize town meetings around the country so that ordinary citizens can remain involved in the political dialogue that you began. We would ask you to send official White House representatives to these meetings and to hold well-publicized weekly meetings with these representatives so that you get a first-hand report of what people are saying and thinking—because they won't stay

(Continued on inside back cover)

Memo to Clinton: **Intellectuals**

James Atlas

The Democrats are the party of intellectuals and always have been—Franklin Roosevelt had his Brain Trust, Kennedy had his fabled White House salon where the New York intellectuals came and went, /talking to the President. "Kennedy's style was superb," testified Norman Podhoretz, the editor of *Commentary*. "He was a man who was post-Freud, post-Marx, post-Einstein." Norman Mailer even called Kennedy an "existential hero." Whether Kennedy actually read books—or wrote them—is irrelevant. He endowed an otherwise marginal (or "marginalized," as it is now fashionable to say) class with importance simply by recognizing its existence.

Make your interest in our endeavors known and give us a public voice.

In your first Hundred Days—indeed, throughout what I hope will be your eight-year tenure—you will no doubt find yourself besieged by special interest groups pleading for attention, even within our modest constituency; the community of intellectuals is as divided as any other (probably more divided, given its argumentative tendencies). The debate over multiculturalism—should college and high school curricula reflect the nation's ethnic diversity, or should we insist upon a more traditional and universal identity—will continue to rage under a Democratic administration; the lines are too clearly drawn now for either side to retreat.

In the public sphere, you will be called upon to mediate between these factions as they struggle to express their will through the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts. Who should be in charge of these influential and controversial government agencies? Should they have an explicit ideological direction? Should they exist at all? These issues are certain to be the subject of heated debate. But how much do such questions matter? The truth is, the politics of culture is all about politics and has very little to do with culture. The health of a nation's literature and art is determined more by artists and writers working independently and often far from the centers of power—by some intangible spirit of enthusiasm or energy—than by who is in charge of dispensing the very limited funds at the disposal of our official bureaus of culture. If one gives any credence to the notion that artists are the antennae of the race (and I'm not sure I do), the signals they pick up are highly idiosyncratic; they're notoriously unresponsive to the directives of any state, however benevolent.

Artists, like journalists, are overwhelmingly Democrats; they think of themselves as liberal, tolerant, egalitarian by nature (in their politics if not in their personal conduct). They rightly perceive the Republicans to be philistines, proponents of the hostile attitudes delineated in Richard Hofstadter's classic *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*. Dan Quayle's diatribes against the "cultural elite" confirm a long tradition—though I suppose one could point to William Kristol and William F. Buckley, Jr. as emblems of a countervailing influence within the GOP.

But does art necessarily flourish under Democratic administrations? Repression is tonic: Robert Lowell published *Life Studies*, which transformed American poetry, when Eisenhower was President; the great efflorescence of American fiction in the late sixties *(Portnoy's Complaint, Myra Breckenridge, Couples)* occurred under Nixon's watch. The fact that we have a sympathetic President, a famous reader and friend of intellectuals, is no guarantee that we're in for an interesting time.

How can you make it interesting? In the most obvious way. The Kennedy White House was a place of great intellectual activity. "One of the surprising things which President Kennedy did—surprising certainly in its results and its impact—was the simple act of inviting a hundred and fifty or so intellectuals and scholars and artists to his inauguration back in January 1961," recalled August Hecksher in A. Alvarez's informative chapter on "Kennedy and the Intellectuals" in his book *Under Pressure*. "That simple deed was an affirmation that the intellectual doesn't stand anymore at the fringe of the national life, an odd and perhaps dangerous person, but is one of the crucial figures in the whole democratic community." Kennedy's Thousand Days were crowded with such events. The illusion of cultural ferment is not very different from the reality.

Kennedy "thickened things up and gave people a certain sense of our actuality in the social structure," observed Lionel Trilling. Simply by acknowledging us, making your interest in our endeavors known, and giving us a public voice, you can thicken things up. The rest we'll do ourselves. □

James Atlas is an editor at The New York Times Magazine. *His most recent book is* The Battle of the Books: The Curriculum Debate In America *(W.W. Norton), and he is working on a biography of Saul Bellow.*

Memo to Clinton: **Aging**

Tom Cole

It is already a truism that your administration represents the political ascendancy of us baby boomers. Political generations come and go. But never has an American generation come of age with the opportunity—even the obligation—to plan for its own aging in a graying social order. Our generation that never trusted anyone over thirty is now the forty-something generation taking center stage. We will be old in the blink of an eye.

Will our old age (we will constitute at least 20 percent of the population in 2020) be an intolerable burden on our children and the smaller cohort of workers paying into the Social Security system? I doubt that our future will be either as grim as the Cassandras of intergenerational warfare predict, or as rosy as some magicians of molecular biology would have us believe. It will surely be characterized by limited economic resources, increased medical needs, and by new possibilities for intergenerational solidarity, social productivity, compassion, and spiritual growth. But to shape our future wisely, we will have to accept a difficult truth: We have met the aged and they are us.



Filled with middle-aged power and pressed by immediate economic and social problems, you may feel that aging is a peripheral issue. On the contrary. It presents a range of paradoxical challenges that demand genuinely innovative and proactive leadership. The challenges of an aging society require what Max Weber called "trained relentlessness in viewing the realities of life, and the ability to face such realities and to measure up to them inwardly." Your best advisers will tell you that we must learn to work longer, save more, be healthier, die less expensively, and make progressive reforms in the Social Security system. True enough. But these changes alone will not help our generation escape the fate of Coleridge's Ancient Mariner: wandering alone through the cold postmodern landscape, when the whole world will no longer be watching.

For our own sake and that of our children, we must address the moral and spiritual dimensions of our aging society. If the "New Covenant" is to become more than a forgotten campaign slogan, it must be given content across generations as well as within them. Now is the time to initiate public deliberation about the ethical ideals that should guide the reshaping of our institutions and policies.

This opportunity will be squandered if you believe that aging is relatively unimportant, that old people's problems are basically settled, and that they are separate from the increasingly desperate needs of children and families. "Aging" is not simply about the problems of old people who compete for resources with young people. Longevity is no longer a rarity but a mass phenomenon; growing—up and old—is perhaps our most universal experience. Your administration has a perfect opportunity to begin rethinking the assumptions, images, and policies embedded in the Older Americans Act and the Medicare and Medicaid legislation of 1965. Unfortunately, when Americans begin to think about these issues, we are often stuck: in anxiety about growing old; in ageist stereotypes (old people as worthy poor or greedy geezers); nightmares of medically protracted dying; dreams of medical salvation; and inflated fears of competition between young and old.

Many of our most troubling dilemmas are linked to the fact that our culture no longer provides satisfying answers to questions about the meaning of aging and the integrity of the life cycle. Why do we grow old? Does aging have an intrinsic purpose? Is old age the culmination or the dreary denouement of life's drama? Is anything important to be done after children are raised and careers are completed? Is wisdom an illusion that disguises illegitimate power or a real possibility to be pursued over

Thomas R. Cole is author of The Journey of Life: A Cultural History of Aging in America *(Cambridge, 1992). He is Professor and Graduate Program Director at the Institute for the Medical Humanities, University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston, Texas.*

a lifetime? What are the rights and responsibilities of older people? What are the virtues of old age?

Rather than face these questions, most of us view aging as one of life's problems to be solved (or at least managed) through science, technology, and expertise. Accumulation of individual health and wealth passes for "successful aging." These beliefs have debilitating effects on medical ethics and practice, mental health, adult education, research on the biology of aging and the prolongation of human life, intergenerational relations, aging policy, and religious ministry for the old.

Modern democratic governments, thankfully, are not in the business of answering questions of meaning and morality. Nor can we expect satisfying answers to emerge from science, medicine, and the helping professions—those authorized by modern culture to speak definitively about health and sickness throughout the cycle of life. Science and the professions possess no common language for articulating issues of meaning and morality. Their cultural dominance creates a double bind: Our aging society cannot express its most troubling problems without such a language, yet our commitment to pluralism forbids privileging any one religious or spiritual language over others. The solution to this double bind lies in facilitating public dialogue that addresses concrete issues.

How, for example, should we grapple with the possibility (let alone hyped-up reports in the popular press) that manipulating genes that may control human aging will increase the life span dramatically? Or the bizarre phenomenon of Dr. Jack Kevorkian, the black knight of physician-assisted suicide, offering strangers a quick and painless death? What does the growing public interest in taking control of the dying process mean? These wide swings between false promises of immortality and easy, do-it-yourself death manuals suggest the need for public debate, responsible research, and careful discussion. Funding broad-based research on such topics at the National Endowment for the Humanities in coordination with the National Institute on Aging, would be an effective, inexpensive way to generate new knowledge with potentially far-reaching effects on public understanding. The time is ripe for creating a new generation of scientists and caregivers influenced by the humanities and a new generation of humanists knowledgeable about gerontology and geriatrics.

There are many possible inexpensive forums to stimulate public dialogue while tying it to concrete problems in health care or social policy. I believe that you, or the Congress, should authorize another highly visible, bipartisan Commission (such as the President's Commission for the Study of Ethical Issues in Medicine and Health Care, initiated under Carter and completed under Reagan) to conduct hearings, commission studies, publicly deliberate, and make recommendations about such issues as active euthanasia, physician-assisted suicide, the uses of genetic research, allocation of scarce medical resources, and the duty to treat AIDS patients as well as the conflict between privacy of AIDS patients and the public health role of the state.

We need another White House Conference on Aging (the Bush administration postponed the WHCOA scheduled for 1991 because of its traditional liberal affiliation). A Clinton White House Conference on Aging should center on creating a new vision of aging, on intergenerational relations, and on families. A new, pluralistic vision of aging will have to affirm the positive features of growing old, show compassion and care for its painful losses, and inspire people of all ages to live with rather than against the flow of time in their middle and later years.

Our politically ascendant sixties generation must break through its collective denial of aging.

"Love and Death are the great gifts given to us and mostly passed on unopened," wrote the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke. A Clinton White House Conference on Aging could help Americans open the gift of old age by nurturing the search for ideals of spiritual maturity, self-transcendence, and wisdom originally envisioned by Rabbi Abraham Heschel in 1961 at the first White House conference.

A White House Conference on Aging could also begin renewing the vision of Social Security as this nation's foundation for guaranteeing adequate financial support for all Americans. Social Security is the only nationwide federal program that covers virtually every worker or worker's dependent. It is the logical place to begin building not a safety net, but an adequate floor of income security for all, regardless of age. Its social insurance features—helping Americans achieve security against the risks of a modern economy—should be extended to more people and its stigmatizing welfare features eliminated.

The "New Covenant" theme plays neatly into the mission of Social Security as an intergenerational compact (not a contract) that must be renegotiated as historical circumstances require. We need to continue raising the ceiling on earned income paid into the system and taxing the benefits of upper income recipients.

Better coordination of Social Security with voluntary groups, churches, banks, insurance companies, and families would extend a wide range of options and individual choices at successive stages of life, without large increases in spending. Rethinking chronological age (a useful bureaucratic trigger but a poor prognostic indicator of health or productivity) as the primary variable in policymaking would create considerable flexibility.

W. Andrew Achenbaum has suggested two specific changes that would go a long way toward strengthening the family and reducing the unfair financial burden on many women. Both merit careful consideration. First, consider a policy of earnings sharing—in which spouses are entitled to half the assets earned by their working partner. This policy would promote security for the career homemaker without being unfair to the working wife. Second, devise a system of "care-giver" credits that would count toward the average earnings used in determining social security benefits. The credits would be earned not only for elder care, but for child care, AIDS care, or care of any family member with long term needs. Such a system would improve the financial security of women who generally provide such care as an unpaid service. It would strengthen the family, cost less than total reliance on private sector or government provision, and help reduce the ballooning Medicaid expense of nursing home care.

Last year, the federal Patient Self-Determination Act took effect across the United States, requiring health care institutions to ask all adults admitted as inpatients whether they have an advance directive and to inform them of their right to refuse treatment. Institutions failing to meet the new federal standards risk losing Medicare and Medicaid funds. This act, sponsored by Senator John Danforth, aims at strengthening individual autonomy, preventing unwanted treatment at the end of life, and reducing the costs of medical care for the dying.

It is too early to determine the effects of this act, which took effect in December 1991. But why wait until people enter the cold and forbidding terrain of the hospital to confront them with such difficult and frightening issues? Your administration should consider initiating the same procedures much earlier—at the time people sign up for Medicare and Medicaid, when they are presumably healthy and able to think about their preferences under less duress. The Social Security system is also a natural place for a badly needed national educational effort about living wills and choices at the end of life.

We need to formulate policies that eliminate the surplus dependency imposed on many older people, policies that strengthen their ability to solve their own problems and contribute to their own communities. As Harry R. Moody has suggested, this will require a life-span approach to human development. Just as public investment in health care and education of children is essential to their future productivity, so too are policies for older people that stimulate self-help, lifelong learning, and social participation essential for maintaining independence.

Without any additional long-term expense, for example, the federal government could permit people to borrow against their Social Security benefits in order to finance retraining or enroll in new educational programs.

The Administration on Aging is one place where innovative programs can be tested and implemented. In the last issue of TIKKUN, Tom Hayden suggested a new Service Corps to engage idealistic energies and counterbalance interest group politics. As part of such an effort, the AoA, for example, could establish an Elder Corps to mobilize and coordinate the already impressive volunteer work of older people. AoA might propose a partnership between government and the private sector by inviting various groups (the American Association of Retired People, the National Council on the Aging, Older Women's League, Children's Defense League, etc.) to establish goals and priorities for the Elder Corps and devise programs matching various local needs (for example, in schools, universities, nursing homes, hospices, libraries, day-care centers, or hospitals) with the available skills of older volunteer workers.

In short, our politically ascendant sixties generation must break through its collective denial of aging to shape a responsible future. We need to envision growing old both as an opportunity for human development and social contribution and as a time of increasing need and preparation for death. There are already signs that the constructive passions of the sixties are flowing in this direction. Various impulses to move toward something as one grows older—community service, renewal of innocence, expiation of guilt, God, wisdom, a good death, a deeper sense of one's place in the cosmos—are becoming more apparent. These impulses should be nourished by an imaginative aging policy that takes account of the human needs for love, growth, and meaning at every age of life.

Who knows what possibilities for social productivity and spiritual growth can be achieved by our politically mature generation willing to face both its own place in the cycle of generations and its potential for longer life—its finitude as well as its power? □

Memo to Clinton: **Gays and Lesbians**

Sharon Kleinbaum

Your election has caused a palpable sense of anticipation in the gay and lesbian community—a tremor of excitement, widened eyes of possibility. There are those who confidently slap one another on the back and say, "You see, of course change is going to happen." But there are more of us whose optimism is tempered by years of abuse, hatred, and fear, not always of a distant enemy, but often from our own families. We have been forced to lead lives of modern day *marranos*, hiding from both the hostile dominant society and, perhaps even more tragically, from those we love the most.

I counsel gay and lesbian Jews and their families every week. I see lives that are contorted with pain because of the hatred they alternately absorb, fight against, and to which they sadly sometimes resign themselves.

We gay and lesbian Jews relate better than most to the theme of exile that runs through and has shaped the theology of our people. Exile in the wilderness is not just a literary metaphor for us. We live it every day, confronted with the very real dangers that life in a hostile landscape poses. While we know that in some ways we in America of 1992 are out of Egypt, there are still many reminders that we have not yet reached the promised land:

• 35 percent of all teenage suicides, according to a 1989 federal government report, are gay and lesbian youth.

• Hate crimes against gay and lesbian people constitute the fastest growing recognized category of hate crimes.

• The AIDS virus continues to decimate our community. While it is not only a gay disease, it has deeply affected us, with 65 percent of American cases found within the gay community. According to the National Commission on AIDS, more than one hundred people die in the United States alone every day, one every fifteen minutes, and the pace is accelerating. The World Health Organization predicts that by the year 2000, there may be 15–20 million HIV-infected adults and 10 million infected infants and children in the world. There is still no cure in sight.

• There are no legal protections for gays and lesbians in most states in this country. At this time, twenty-four states and the District of Columbia criminalize certain private sexual contact among consenting adults.

Your election creates considerable expectation in our community. It is a community out of the slavery of Egypt, sitting in a vast expanse of the wilderness wondering, struggling, looking for leadership to bring us to some kind of a promised land. While we know that no one person can do it, it is clear that this country needs the leadership that you indicate a willingness to accept.

Gay and lesbian people want to live their lives without fear—without fear of losing their jobs, without fear of losing their children, without fear of losing their apartments, without fear of losing their homes. Your administration must support all legislative attempts to protect gays and lesbians from discrimination based on sexual orientation. You must take leadership and emphasize that these are not "special needs." The civil rights that extend to other Americans must be extended to gays and lesbians. That civil rights agenda includes:

• rescinding the Department of Defense directive that institutionalizes anti-gay discrimination;

• signing an executive order barring discrimination based on sexual orientation in federal employment;

• vigorously endorsing the Civil Rights Amendments Act when it is reintroduced in the 103rd Congress and working closely with congressional leaders to insure its passage;

• immediately eliminating sexual orientation discrimination in the granting of government clearances;

• deeming discrimination, including executions of homosexuals, in other countries as a human rights abuse to be dealt with by the State Department, as it does with all other human rights abuses.

While AIDS is certainly not exclusively a gay disease, it is a top priority of our community. Civil rights mean little when you are dead. Presidential leadership in the fight against AIDS has been sorely lacking in this country. While we know that you cannot pull a cure like a rabbit from a hat, your leadership during this public health crisis can work magic. Guarantee adequate care for the sick and vigorous education programs to prevent further infection.

We must actively work on several different levels at once, and you, Mr. President, must be the one to set the pace and the agenda. We must fight on the level of civil rights and legal protections for which there are now none in all but a few states, and we must fight to shatter the myths and the stereotypes that exist about gay and lesbian people. Nothing will do that more than for gay and lesbian people to come out and be visible—to their families, to their neighbors, to their workers, to

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their co-workers, to their teachers, to their students, to their doctors, to their lawyers, to their cashiers in local supermarkets. And yet it is impossible to achieve that visibility with the kind of fear that exists in the hearts of all gays and lesbians about the risks that such visibility now incurs.

We know all too well from the example of African Americans that discrimination is not eliminated by legislative fiat. You must send a clear message that gays and lesbians are normal human beings deserving of the same respect as others. You have an extraordinary opportunity in the first one hundred days of your administration to address what will be the largest civil rights march in the history of this country. On April 25, the ninety-fifth day of your administration, close to a million gays and lesbians and their non-gay supporters, friends, and family will gather in Washington. If you were to address that gathering, the signal would be clear.

In addition to your visibility on this issue, I suggest to you some strategies to increase the visibility of gay and lesbian Americans:

• It is essential that you appoint gay and lesbian Americans to appropriate positions throughout your administration. The visible presence of gays and lesbians doing their jobs, contributing to society, and supporting the work of the larger community will do an enormous amount to dispel the myths and shatter the stereotypes that surround gays and lesbians.

• Meet with local, openly gay and lesbian Americans when traveling through the country. Introduce them to their communities.

• Have town meeting-style events with gay and lesbian Americans. Allow our voices to be heard and our questions to be asked. Give Americans a chance to realize that the person sitting next to them might be gay or lesbian.

• Carefully study the Children of the Rainbow curriculum that is now being suggested for the New York City school system. Urge school systems across the country to adopt such curricula. To eradicate anti-gay hatred we must start with the young. Call a summit meeting of educators to prepare educational materials that will demystify homosexuality and teach our young people that respect, not hatred, is the American way.

You can do for gay and lesbian liberation in this country what President Kennedy did for African American civil rights, and more. You can provide leadership in this direction, not only on a political level, but on the level of culture and social attitudes. The struggle for the civil rights of gays and lesbians will be *the* great civil rights battle of the 1990s and into the twenty-first century. Provide a moral compass to the American people, and indeed to the entire world, on this test of American commitment to democracy and rights for all of its citizens. There are an estimated twenty-five million gay and lesbian Americans, and we are looking to you, Mr. President. There is no substitute for presidential leadership. □

Memo to Clinton: Economics

Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis

We will have reason to be grateful if your first term is remembered for ringing down the curtain on right-wing economics and focusing the nation's attention on the need for adequate health care, quality education, and expanded public infrastructure. And economists may remember you for finally putting Keynesian economics in its place—a useful guide to stabilizing the economy, but irrelevant to the real task of achieving environmentally sustainable productivity growth.

Such a roster of achievements is nothing to sniff at. But if that is all you accomplish, your administration will fail at its primary economic task: the development of a new policy paradigm.

The collapse of Soviet centralized economic planning and twelve years of Reaganomics should have taught us a simple lesson. The lack of competition is a recipe for inefficient production and delivery of services, but competition on unregulated markets with a playing field sharply tilted by inequalities in wealth and by racial and sexual discrimination is a prescription not only for waste but for rampant inequality as well.

This suggests a new approach to public policy: Level the playing field by redistributing wealth and ending discrimination and then enhance competition and accountability by ending government monopolies in the delivery of services.

In many areas competition—not government monopoly—is the way to empower people and deliver social services efficiently and responsively. Competition may be among public bodies, as might be the case if public schools competed for students' publicly funded vouchers redeemable in any public school. Or competition might be among public and private bodies (as could be the case in the delivery of the mail). Private individuals or organizations meeting government-regulated standards could

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compete to deliver services paid for with public funds, such as in the Canadian health care system.

Responsiveness and accountability can be encouraged in two ways: Give people the ability to walk away from a bad deal in favor of something better, and the effective means to participate in or at least influence the organizations with which they deal. The political philosopher Albert Hirschman calls the first approach to accountability "exit" and the second "voice."

Progressives generally favor government accountability through voice-based democratic procedures rather than through exit-based competition among public and private alternatives. The Left is particularly suspicious of market competition. But this stance stems more from a concern about inequality than any objective reason to favor the public over the private sector in principle. The Right, of course, favors exit, which, at least for the well-to-do, offers empowerment through market choices.

Neither voice nor exit works very well alone. Market competition and electoral competition are equally essential to accountability and efficiency in the delivery of services. But electoral competition is often a blunt instrument at best. If you don't like the way your kid is being treated at P.S. 381, casting a vote against the mayor in the next election is not going to solve your problem. Similarly, your comments at a democratically elected parents council meeting would carry a lot more clout if your powers of persuasion included taking your child and her voucher to another school.

Are we advocating privatization? No, we want accountability through competition on a level playing field. Effective competition need not be among private firms; prices and other conditions may be highly regulated. The important thing is that people should have choices and that service providers pay a penalty when dissatisfied clients switch to other providers.

Competition is no panacea, and in some areas free-market ideology has prevailed over common sense in promoting markets. One such area is environmental protection, where more, not less, state intervention is needed, and where markets are bound to work poorly because of the impossibility of defining and enforcing liability for pollution and other environmental damages. Another is insurance, where competition among private providers allows insurers to pick and choose their risks, skimming the field and leading to a version of Gresham's Law whereby those most needing insurance are unable to purchase it. Mandatory universal coverage is the most efficient solution—witness the popular and cost-effective automobile-insurance programs introduced by New Democratic Party provincial governments in Canada. In this case, a government monopoly is what works.

We should stop promoting competition where it does not work and create the conditions for competition to promote both efficiency and fairness where it can. Competition, particularly market competition, can be either a faithful servant or a cruel master. Which it is depends on whether the game is fair. Competition often reproduces or even magnifies whatever inequality existed at the start of the game. And worse, it even sanctifies it. Conversely, lack of competition means failures can survive forever: survival of the flops, for example, nuclear power, many public schools, and U.S. auto makers before German and Japanese imports prodded them to shape up.

You may balk at our idea, because a level playing field means tackling something you have been very quiet about until now: the distribution of wealth. As long as the distribution of America's wealth is so skewed, nobody committed to fairness could sensibly advocate a greater reliance on markets or other forms of private/public sector competition to distribute our goods and services.

Unless you are willing to change the way you and other candidates finance your campaigns, you may be right to balk. The redistribution of wealth is a frightening prospect to many of your well-heeled supporters. It sounds old-fashioned, but in reality, redistribution of wealth is the only way we can develop the kinds of incentives to work and innovation that foster the real forms of public-sector accountability we need to make it into the twenty-first century. And we think wealth redistribution could be done in such politically palatable ways that you'd earn your place in the history books. Here are four concrete steps to redistribute wealth in ways that would enhance our economic performance.

Step One. Education is wealth. A high-quality education will be an increasingly valuable asset in tomorrow's information-based economy. Break the link between parental wealth and a child's educational opportunities. Start by extending the public high school model to colleges and universities: Eliminate fees and tuition for public higher education (the price tag: less than the cost of one aircraft carrier). Then guarantee—at a minimum—equal funding of schools independent of local income levels or property values. If equal opportunity to acquire educational assets requires compensatory inequalities in spending, develop the necessary standards and provide the necessary funding. But because free higher education is unfair unless there is broad access, open enrollment is important: Higher education in some form should be available to everyone. Critics will dismiss this idea as a waste of resources but studies clearly show that the rate of return to education is as great for low achievers as for high.

Step Two. Abandon the failed policy of public own-

ership of low-income housing as a means of solving the housing crisis. Create federal credit programs with favorable interest rates that promote home ownership. For families in public housing projects, supplement this with a subsidized rent-to-buy option. Use the receipts to finance the construction of new affordable housing. We need strong public-sector leadership and resources to solve the housing crisis but public ownership of housing is part of the problem, not the solution. Maggie Thatcher was right on this one: Home ownership gives people a stake in their homes and communities.

Step Three. Studies of existing worker-owned firms show that worker ownership will equalize the distribution of wealth and increase both the quality of work and productivity per hour. End the Cold War at work. Give employees an ownership stake in their workplaces by providing subsidized credit for worker buy-outs of firms. Let workers watchdog their managers rather than trusting it to absentee owners or the stock market. (Goodbye to golden parachutes: We suspect workers wouldn't vote their managers $10-million-a-year pay packages.) Credit, technology, and training subsidies are now afforded to the family farm. Extend this model to the democratically managed workplaces with majority ownership in the hands of those who work there.

Step Four. Parents lovingly help their children make their way in the world. But some forms of help, like nepotism in employment, are immoral. Extend this reasoning to estate taxation; wealth in excess of three times the price of a single-family dwelling should either be donated to a private nonprofit charitable or educational organization, known as a 501(c)(3), or taxed at 100 percent. Tax revenues from estates should be earmarked for the more equal distribution of wealth in education, housing, and work outlined above.

These steps would go a long way toward making accountability through competition on a level playing field the guiding principle of your economic program. But a consistent application of the principle requires policy initiatives in other areas.

Effective private/public sector competition bids us enrich the now impoverished menu of choices facing many communities, particularly those with low incomes. The range of choices available would be greatly expanded by increased support for private nonprofit charitable and educational organizations. Because the private contributions on which these organizations depend come primarily from the well-to-do, their funding priorities tend to reflect their interests. To level this playing field, you should enact a tax law according to which we can deduct from our taxes (not just from taxable income) any amount up to $100 given to a registered charitable organization. Charitable contributions in excess of $100 would continue to be deducted from income. Federal government tax receipts would fall by less than one percent, and the effect would be the flowering of a rich network of social service, recreational, and other institutions giving our communities greater choices and stronger identities.

We need a broader menu of choices, too, in the area of work. You should take steps to eliminate the bias against part-time work built into most companies' pay and benefits policies. For example, you could legislate the hourly pro-rating of job benefits, a half-time worker receiving half the benefits of a full-time worker instead of none. We need these choices so that both parents can care for their children. Many workers would prefer a thirty-hour work week but cannot forgo the job-related benefits presently available only with full-time positions. And, when jobs are scarce, it makes more sense to share the work than to tax those who work to support those in forced idleness.

If a level playing field is to be your principle, you have some tough choices in the area of combating racial and sexual discrimination. The necessity of overcoming historical disadvantages cannot compromise the principle of equal treatment and the irrelevance of all morally arbitrary distinctions. In particular, biased selection procedures should be addressed not by preferential treatment but by eliminating the biases.

Toward this end, you should take two steps. First, aggressively prosecute unfair employment practices such as the use of I.Q. tests and other racially biased selection procedures when, as is frequently the case, they are unrelated to job competence. Second, implement the principle of equal pay for comparable worth, refusing to do business with any firm using sexist or racist pay practices. Many major employers, including the federal civil service you are about to inherit, use job evaluation methods that unfairly discriminate against women to determine levels of pay for different jobs. Since the public sector is less prone than private business to racial and sexual discrimination, its implementation of fair employment practices is even more important if the delivery of public services is to be increasingly subject to competitive accountability, and hence to increased private sector participation.

The electoral process itself is far from a level playing field, and any administration committed to active public-sector involvement in the economy cannot tolerate the tilted political priorities that result. Institute public funding of all election campaigns and referenda and place strict limits on private contributions to candidates—no more than $100 per campaign. Full public funding of



campaigns for the presidency and the Congress would have added to our tax bills less than the cost of a single meal out—at McDonald's.

An accountable government requires a well-informed public debate on the issues. As long as measures of performance are inaccurate and inaccessible, public debate in this area will be closed to all but the cognoscenti and will continue to support failed policies. Two examples are particularly egregious. Our measure of national product should include the results of work and production done by wives, mothers, and others in the home. Further, we should treat environmental damage as asset depreciation, subtracting it from our measures of output, as a consistent accounting framework demands. We need these measures to avoid being hoodwinked into thinking that things are getting better when all that's really happening is that the environment is being trashed and jobs once done at home are now done for pay outside the home (and some of them are not done at all).

Second, we have paid dearly for public misunderstanding of the deficit. The problem with the deficit is not its size but the fact that it was incurred to finance military expenditure and tax cuts for the rich, neither of which creates the future productivity that allows the debt to be repaid. Conservatives are fond of saying that the government, just like households and businesses, should run a balanced budget. But households and businesses both borrow for capital purchases (education, houses, plant and equipment, and the like). The same is true of the public sector. You should institute a responsible system of capital accounting, in which debt is incurred only for expenditures whose expected return is sufficient to allow repayment of the debt without imposing tax burdens on the next generation. Immediate health care, social security, judicial, correctional, and military expenditure are current account items that should be financed by taxation, while contributions to public infrastructure, research and development, preventive health care, as well as investment in education and training, are capital account expenditures.

Leveling the playing field between workers and owners could go a long way toward increasing productivity, the amount a typical worker produces in an hour. The reason is that the key to productivity is not so much to be found in hardware as in incentives for high productivity work and innovation. Workers with no job security have little incentive to develop those skills specific to their firms which are crucial to high productivity work, and they have every reason to resist productivity-enhancing changes in technology and work rules. And despite the potential productivity gains, employers subject to the vagaries of the business cycle have little incentive to grant employment security to workers as it would mean bearing the cost of keeping idle workers on during a recession.

In this area, getting the rules right means that businesses will have to abandon the stick of unemployment

as their favored enforcer against workers, and government will have to adopt more aggressive macroeconomic stabilization policies against the business cycle. Note that with unemployment rates averaging two percent for the past two decades, both Sweden and Japan have outstripped the United States in productivity growth. Removing the credit market biases against worker-owned firms would also help, as these firms tend to foster stable employment relationships with their built-in long-term incentives for productivity. International competition has fostered productivity growth in the U.S. economy by pressuring domestic firms to shape up or go under. But here the playing field is far from level, and we will pay for the resulting biases if they are not corrected. You should renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement to ensure that trade and investment with our American neighbors are based on promoting competition on product markets and taking advantage of real productive differences among countries rather than exploiting unfair labor practices and a ruinous lack of environmental protection standards.

If you endorse the use of international competition as a means of insuring flexible adaptation to change in the domestic economy, you must adequately fund trade adjustment and other policies to insure that workers and communities hit hard by adjustments to the changing global competition and the possibility of military cuts do not bear the brunt of the costs of common sense national security priorities and economic flexibility.

You should aggressively implement the labor standards provisions of our international trade agreements so that U.S. workers do not see their jobs evaporate out from under them due to imported products produced by workers who are routinely denied the right to join a union or to vote in a democratic election. Protectionism should never be used as a permanent shelter for inefficient sectors of the economy. But trade agreements should be used to foster long-term cooperation on environmental standards, product quality, distributional equity, citizens' and workers' rights, the regulation of financial institutions, and macroeconomic policy. In particular, the new General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) has become a weapon wielded by special interests against environmental regulation. You should join with other heads of state to implement tough environmental regulations as part of the new GATT agreements.

A final point. If unregulated market competition on sharply tilted playing fields makes little sense for the United States, it makes no more sense elsewhere. You should abandon U.S. imposition of a naive and outdated free-enterprise shock therapy on the formerly communist countries and the poor nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This is little more than policy dumping, unloading Reaganomics on the rest of the world after it could not be sold at home. U.S. policy in this area has not promoted development, threatens to aid in the restoration of dictatorship in the previously communist world, and has a devastating effect on Third World economies.

We hope you still have time to read TIKKUN. If not, pass this on to Chelsea. □

MEMO TO CLINTON: **The Middle East**

Letty Cottin Pogrebin

Let me begin with the bottom line: The Arab-Israeli peace process needs you. It needs your personal attention, your judicious activism, but especially your immense powers of empathy. Policy wonks from all points on the spectrum have proffered hard-headed advice. The organized Jewish community has petitioned you to support Israel's position whatever it is. Arabs have leaned on you to lean on Israel. But I'm not going to clutter your briefing book with yet another political tract. What I am asking is that you revolutionize the whole diplomatic enterprise by dealing with the feelings and fears undergirding the politics of the Middle East, particularly the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which contains the most emotionally volatile issues. I want to persuade you that "the politics of meaning"—elaborated in TIKKUN largely in connection with the domestic agenda—has also been missing from foreign affairs and that your talent for experiencing another's pain could greatly enhance the pragmatics of peacemaking.

I became convinced of the efficacy of empathy through my experience in the charged crucible of a dialogue group composed of Jewish and Palestinian American women leaders. Since 1988, we have spent eighty hours in talk and tears that finally succeeded in getting 123 Jews and twelve Palestinians to put themselves in each other's shoes—not to surrender, not to coerce, but simply to understand how The Other views the history we share and the troubled land we love.

Almost immediately, our group encountered the Rashomon phenomenon—the emergence of two versions of "reality" as contradictory as Yes and No. Pales-

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tinians heard Jews speak bitterly of pogroms, the Holocaust, and Arab terrorism. Jews listened as Palestinians told of bombings by the Irgun and Lechi, the massacre at Deir Yassin, the brutality of life under occupation. Then each side disputed the other's narratives. We found their story simplistic, distorted, and hopelessly one-sided; they found ours the same. One might think such scalding disputation would defeat dialogue, but, in fact, it justified it. There was anguish in the room but also relief. The unspeakable had been said and no one had slammed out. When all was said and done, each side had heard The Other's truth.

One dictionary definition of empathy is "the capacity for participation in another's feelings or ideas." The word is participation, not acceptance. Ultimately, our group had to concede that we would never see history the same way, never agree on who suffered more, or who has the greater claims, or who wronged whom most, or even where to begin the reckoning. (Should grievances date from the Balfour Declaration, or Isaac and Ishmael?) Eventually, we decided to leave the past to the historians and move on to the future where other epiphanies emerged.

It became clear to us, for example, that the idea of Palestinian autonomy was profoundly disturbing to the Jews not because we were invested in Israeli political hegemony but because any rise in Arab power seems to trigger Jewish feelings of vulnerability and threaten Israeli security. It also became clear that the Palestinians' tough rhetoric stemmed from their frustration with lost opportunities, their rage at Arab betrayal, and their hunger for respect, not necessarily their realistic aspirations. After airing our fears, we were ready to tackle the hard issues, like boundaries, settlements, aliyah, the Palestinian "right of return," the question of Jerusalem.

Dialogue utilizes "both/and" rather than "either/or" thinking. It allows a Jew to say to a Palestinian, "I understand and I don't agree," or a Palestinian to say, "I can see how you feel and I still don't believe you are right." The peace negotiators would do well to take their cue from dialogue participants who have learned to listen with a heart that hears even what the mind cannot accept. In eighty hours, we discovered that it is not necessary to deny another's pain in order to affirm one's own.

In general, female socialization equips women more than men for "both/and" thinking. But you, Mr. President, have the gift. Unlike men who approach the world with a relentless win/lose orientation, you seem predisposed to a win/win way of life. You often appear to be searching for a solution that gives each party some reward, something to claim as a comfort if not a victory. Because of this, you've been accused of wanting to have it both ways and trying to reconcile impossible extremes. During the campaign this was posited as a weakness, an unwillingness to bite the bullet and make hard choices. I think it's your strength.

You tend to see many sides of an issue. You appreciate how individual needs and interests can lead decent people to differing conclusions. While some characterize you as a please-'em-all kind of guy, I find your emotional style authentic but I also see it as a brilliant strategy, for it opens minds, heals wounds, and speaks to the soul issues, not just the facts.

I suspect this style is the by-product of a childhood making peace in your family. Undoubtedly your empathic skills were honed when you were a teenager protecting your mother's safety while sympathizing with your stepfather's rage. Perhaps your youthful need to present a smooth front to the neighbors has helped you understand shame and the passion for personal dignity. And certainly, the dark times in your marriage, its subsequent repair, and the vibrant devotion now evident between you and Hillary, have proved to you the perfectability of human relationships. In any case, these psychodynamics have prepared you well to serve the American people whose lives have been as complicated and troubled as yours. Moreover, your sensitive, compromise-seeking approach is ideally suited to end the 100 years war called the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

I offer you our dialogue experience as a microcosmic paradigm to stimulate your own ideas on advancing the peace process. As the catalytic agent in that process, you can model empathy for the world. Rather than attend to geopolitical issues like the regional power balance or the arms race, you might fashion a delicate, even-handed way to communicate your gut-level understanding of the national and personal yearnings at issue in the talks and the suffering that roils beneath each negotiator's diplomatic demeanor. By honoring this subterranean distress, you make it less necessary for the parties to assert their own righteous anger. You help them to transform their anguished longing into an active striving for peace.

Until recently, anyone who saw light at the end of the tunnel in the Middle East was probably going in the opposite direction. But since Madrid, the Arab-Israeli negotiations have been pregnant with possibility. The birth metaphor offers an apt summary of America's role if you posit Middle East peace as a developing embryo and the United States as a New Age midwife. Certainly the gestation process must be properly nourished and monitored, and artful mediation, like vital nutrients, must be introduced at regular intervals. At the first sign of stress, extreme measures must be taken—not through pressure but with incentives—to prevent miscarriage or stillbirth and to bring the baby to term. A successful birth requires the help of a midwife who can act quickly when the preg-

nancy is in mortal danger, recognize when the labor pains have progressed from agony to readiness; sense when to assist, when to coach, and when to just stand at the sidelines and celebrate.

Peace midwifery would suit you, Mr. President, but if the demands of Somalia, Bosnia, Russia, and a trillion dollar deficit prevent you from assuming the day-to-day job yourself, I hope you will assign it to a top level envoy who has your complete confidence and is fully empowered to act in your name, someone who commands the respect of all parties and can lead them to unimagined compromises and new plateaus. This special envoy should have cabinet status, routine access to the Oval Office, and a clear mandate to use his or her life experience as an empowering tool and as a means of making connections with other national representatives at an emotional level—and to encourage others in the diplomatic corps, especially men, to express themselves in real words, not "bureaucraspeak," when they talk about real people's aspirations, disappointments, and dreams. He or she should not negotiate for the parties but should facilitate their negotiating with each other. She or he should not oppose final status arrangements but should mediate and offer bridging proposals that help the parties overcome their stalls and impasses and keep their eyes on the prize: peaceful coexistence, political self-determination, economic cooperation, and a safe, secure future for their children.

Even if you are not involved in the minutiae of the peace process, you can put your mark on it. You might begin by inviting the parties to Camp David for the fifteenth anniversary of President Carter's meetings with Sadat and Begin. You could meet with heads of state to explore how they could help. Put your top brain trust to work mapping alternatives to the conventional settlement formulas. Encourage the parties to risk as much for peace as they have been willing to risk for war. Be prepared to underwrite the risks with economic incentives and military guarantees and to gather Arab and European partners in this enterprise under U.N. auspices.

What you do matters, but so does what you say. Speech is power. I hope you will use the Presidency as a bully pulpit to set a new tone and change the terms of public discourse. Last August you said you support Israel "by instinct and conviction." You told the New York Jewish Community Relations Council, "I want you to feel I will be there at the end of the day." By that I hope you meant that you will never let harm befall Israel. But I would be troubled if that "feeling" statement—plus your gratuitously expressed opposition to a Palestinian state—signals a plan to adopt the AIPAC line as U.S. policy. This would be a disaster, as it would alienate the Arab interlocuters who are sitting at the table with Israel for the very first time, and deligitimate the Palestinian moderates who must start bringing home some concessions or face a rising fundamentalist challenge in the Territories.

May I suggest that your best policy guideline can be found in the Middle East plank of your own party's platform: "Direct negotiations between Israel, her Arab neighbors and Palestinians, with no imposed solutions, are the only way to achieve security for Israel and full peace of all parties in the region. "No imposed solutions" means not predetermining what final status might follow the period of Palestinian autonomy. "No imposed solutions" means not foreclosing any options.

The parties need every option they can get. And we need you to widen the discourse, not shrink it. We need you to clarify that American support for Israel—whether in the form of foreign aid or security guarantees—does not prohibit honest recognition of the suffering of Palestinians under occupation and the statement of our preference for negotiated settlement over continuation of the status quo. We need you to explain why the interests of both Israel and the United States are best served by regional stability, secure borders, and an end to the hostilities. Above all, we need you to make it okay to have feelings about the impact of politics on their lives. □

Memo to Clinton: **Religion**

Jim Wallis

"What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)

Your walk up Georgia Avenue during your first post-election visit to Washington, D.C., created quite a stir around here. You weren't far from our little Sojourners Neighborhood Center located just twenty blocks away from the White House. Outside, on cold D.C. mornings, hundreds of families stand in line for a bag of groceries. Inside every day, the place is alive with the activity of children who have been written off by this society. Our neighborhood infant mortality rate

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is higher than that of Honduras, and we've already lost a lot of our kids to the violence on the streets. Their national government hasn't much cared; at least that's how most people feel. Folks here aren't used to presidents (or other politicians) showing any interest in their lives, and your visit was quite dramatic and gratifying.

The populist symbols you've chosen for your inauguration also seem designed to send a message. I hear people wondering whether the substance will follow the signs; whether a week of opening things up to the masses will only be a great symbol, or be a new beginning to an entirely different approach. I think that depends a great deal upon whom you listen to, and how willing you are to put yourself in places where you can hear the voices that, otherwise, will never reach your ears.

Presidents live at the top, yet the most important voices to listen to are at the bottom. Although that's an absurd idea to the powerful who run this city, it is what the Bible says. The prophets boldly proclaimed that nations will be judged primarily by their treatment of the poor and vulnerable, and by how much attention they give to the requirements of justice. Yet nothing could be more foreign to the Washington political reality you are about to enter. Welcome to town.

I hear that some of our most prestigious churches are already vying for your attendance. I'm a pastor too, but that's one fight from which I'll abstain. I would, however, invite you to visit and spend some time in the churches of our poorer neighborhoods. Why? Because that's where the struggle for authentic religion is now joined.

The country has become used to religion being a kind of cheerleader for one side or another. Religionists line themselves up along ideological lines in the pitched battles for political and economic power. They do the blessings and share in the spoils. The Republicans now on their way out of town had their chaplains, and you'll probably have yours. But there is also religion of a more prophetic kind. You may sometimes find the prophetic voice uncomfortable, but it will prove a more trustworthy and reliable guide than the messages from the religious sanctifiers of the status quo in their diverse political stripes.

This less comfortable but more authentic religion can be found in the faith of the prophets and in the good news of Jesus. It asks different questions, such as, "Where can God be found in this world?" and "What does God require of us?" The poor and oppressed have always found refuge in the prophetic biblical faith.

How does a president listen to a religious perspective that emerges from below? How will the Christian faith that is important to you and Hillary, and to Al and Tipper Gore shape your political decisions? Will your choices be mindful of the world of the poor, from which Jesus comes?

Jesus is not a blue-eyed right-winger, as some have implied. Nor is he a guilt-ridden liberal, nor a compromising centrist. Jesus is the one who entered the world among the dispossessed and the outcasts to announce an entirely new way of thinking and living. The way of Jesus and the prophets isn't just a welfare program; it calls for a change of heart, a revolution of the spirit, a transformation of our consciousness. It moves us beyond the familiar options of abandoning the poor, controlling the poor, or even "helping" the poor from places of isolation and comfort.

Instead, it leads us to a new relationship with one another, a deep reconnection, a restoration of the shattered covenant.

When you speak of a "New Covenant," my heart resonates and wants to believe that it comes from a deeper place than the pens of clever speech writers. A national political reporter who covered your campaign recently told me that he thinks biblical language and images mean something to you. I hope he's right, because biblical imagery could help us a great deal at this moment, as we try to find what I would call a "politics of community."

Hope is a fragile and precious thing. Without it, we begin to die on the inside. With it, almost anything is possible. A lot of people in this country are on the edge between hope and despair. I'm working with young African-American men from the streets who are trying to negotiate a national gang truce and begin to rebuild their own communities in the aftermath of Los Angeles. I'm often out on the road, speaking to students or pastors, grass-roots people and church leaders, all of whom long for a change. You could offer some signals and substance of hope to all of these people, or just further confirm their cynical view of our nation's political leaders.

Some of us believe that a religious, moral, and ethical perspective on politics could help shape a new and more fruitful political discussion. For years, the Religious Right has controlled the discussion about politics and morality and given the country the impression that our only choices are either to be totally secular or religious bigots. Fortunately, those aren't the only choices. Many people are longing for an alternative to the Religious Right, but one that takes seriously the fundamental question of values which lies beneath the political discussion. There is a culture war going on, and the conservatives have tapped the energy around such questions.

Now that those on the Religious Right have fallen from power, they are regrouping for another takeover. Their preoccupation with power is their primary religious failing, and it will keep them from taking the opportunity to re-examine their own agenda. They will be coming after you and Hillary, and it's probably going to get nasty. Your temptation may be to seek support from the established bastions of liberal religion and make your

own alliances there. But such institutional religion will never be an alternative to the Religious Right. To quote the editor of this magazine, such establishment religion is too often "dry, lifeless, and Godless." To put it most painfully, much of liberal religion today lacks faith and, like its conservative counterpart, has a primary preoccupation with power.

If you choose to, you could listen to other voices. Over the last few decades, a real alternative in American religious life has begun to emerge, although the media have failed to recognize its significance. It seeks a religious perspective that is progressive rather than repressive; inclusive and respectful of pluralism, instead of exclusive and sectarian. It speaks both the language of social justice and that of personal responsibility. In economics, it takes us beyond the "bottom line" of profit and the stagnation of bureaucracy to the ethic of community. On the environment, it transcends old notions of exploitation and protection and proposes a theology of relationship. In foreign relations, it puts human rights over national self-interest and seeks alternatives to war as a solution. It sees racism and sexism as spiritual as well as social sins and calls for repentance. And it insists upon the vital connection between politics and morality. It's a perspective that South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu is now calling "the spirituality of transformation."

Those of us who seek this new moral discourse on politics will not be chaplains to your administration or any other. We won't provide the pious phrases of easy religious affirmation, but we will offer relationship in an atmosphere of hope and accountability. We won't convene prayer breakfasts in your honor, but we will pray for you in the difficult choices you will have to make.

After many long years of suffocation by the political and religious Right, we hope that the change in government provides some "space" for new possibilities. We invite you to do what your best self knows is right, push you to take your own ideals seriously, and pull you along to the deepest meaning of the populist symbols you have already so meaningfully employed. We will offer personal support when we believe what you are trying to do is consistent with the religious values you espouse, engage with you in mutual dialogue if you seek it, honestly challenge you when we disagree, and yes, mount principled opposition if you compromise things that are too important for political expediency.

In other words, we will try to be faithful to the role that religious communities are supposed to play in any society—an independent voice for spiritual renewal and social transformation that can break down barriers and bring people together. Perhaps as you try to be faithful to your own public vocation, and we try to be faithful to our prophetic vocation, a constructive and creative relationship may be possible. If so, we would look forward to it.

May God bless and guide you and Hillary Clinton. □

Memo to Clinton: The Media and "Character"

Jay Rosen

It is commonly said that you have the toughest job in the world. But the American presidency is actually two jobs: One is to embody the glory of the republic as symbolic leader of the nation; the other is to oversee the federal government as chief of state. Of course, America's glory is its government—a vital fact for presidents to recall. Your dual responsibilities reflect the historical truth that our founding myths and common bonds are political in nature. Americans were (and still are) constituted as a people by the same Constitution that "we the people" created two centuries ago "to form a more perfect union." There is no other mystical source for this union. As president, you will therefore represent not only the government contemplated by the Constitution but the original act of self-constitution by which the inhabitants of the land became (and yet become) a "people."

This is one reason the "character" issue tends to erupt into presidential campaigns—including the last one. The president re-presents the American people to themselves. He sums up what we're all about, the point we've reached in our evolution. Intuitively we know that this summing up depends, not only on us but on the sort of person the president is and has within him. "Character" thus remains an issue after the election, and the primary arena for its display is the media.

The media cannot be equated with the Washington press corps, nor are they simply conduits to the nation's living rooms. It is helpful to think of the media as a manufacturing industry—our biggest—producing our images and understandings of the public world. The media will use you and your office to anchor their portrayal of politics, which means that you not only represent yourself, the government, and the American people. You also embody the political dimension of public life, the claim

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that politics exerts on our attention. When you travel, "politics" travels with you, and this includes your travels across media space.

Your campaign appearance on the Arsenio Hall show, understood in the press as a ploy to woo young voters and prove your hipness, was another kind of action entirely. It transported "politics" into a cultural space ordinarily devoted to comedy, celebrity, and the celebration of youth culture, particularly the culture of urban black youth. The value of such action rests in overcoming the isolation of politics from those cultural spheres in which ordinary (and forgotten) Americans find personal meaning.

By demonstrating on "Arsenio" your familiarity with the signs and rhythms of popular culture, by donning shades and blowing a sax, you dismayed some people and amused others. But you also pushed politics a little closer to the subterranean center of American life, where a saxophone is heard far more often than "Hail to the Chief." Critics worry about the "dignity" of the presidency if you continue these unconventional media appearances. What should concern you, however, is not the majesty of the office, but the reputation of politics as that dimension of the public world where we can (and do) face our common problems. You represent this dimension and the hope that it can work for all of us. The more human you make it seem, the more "popular" and meaningful politics may become.

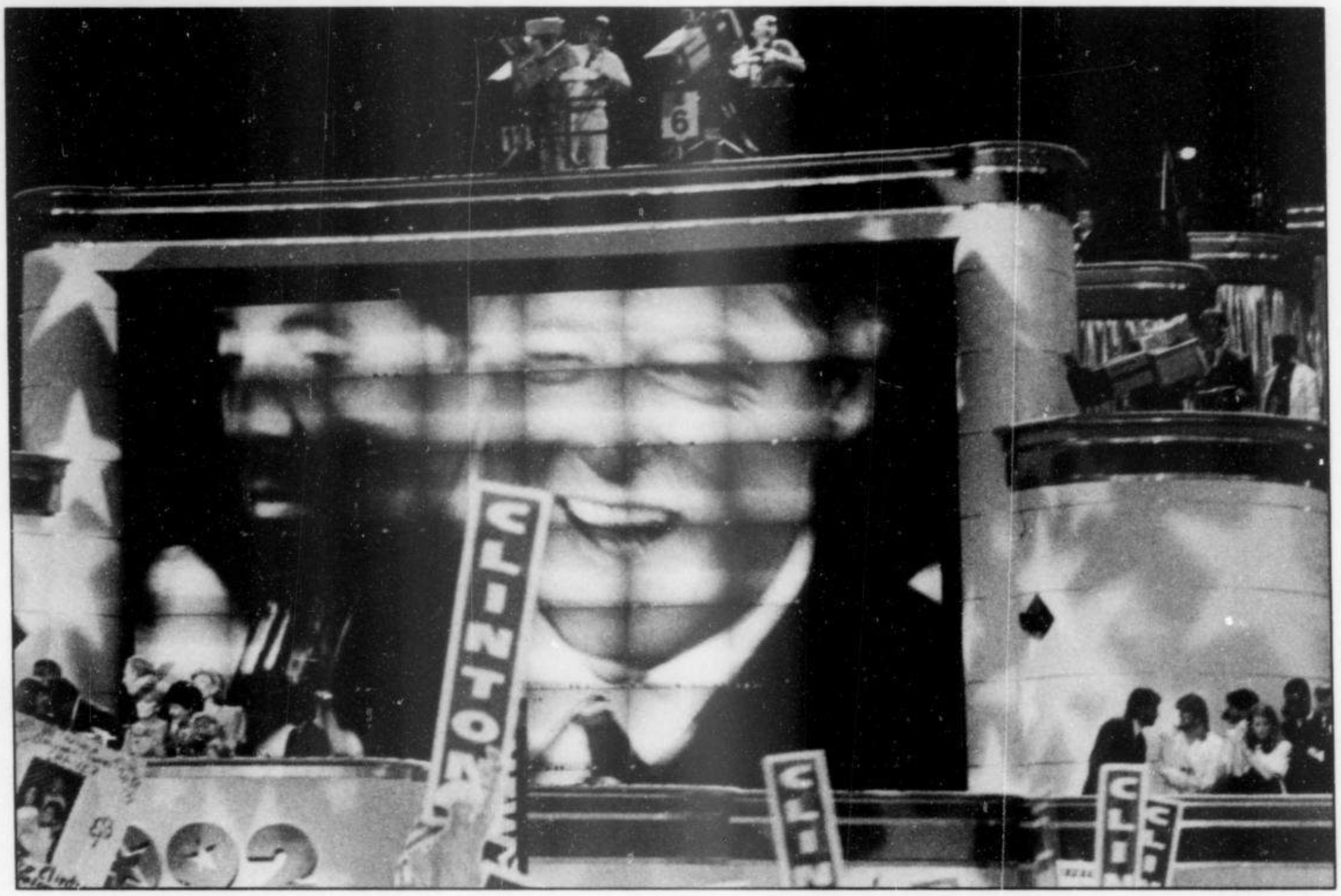
The danger, of course, is that you will humanize yourself in a false, trivial, or condescending way—which happens routinely on commercial TV. But television also provides the opportunity for a potent form of truth-telling, in which you cut through the phony sincerity and manufactured emotion familiar to every member of the audience. You should plan, then, to make an occasional appearance on programs such as "Oprah." There you can show you recognize that more is missing in American life than good jobs, a healthy economy, and decent health care. People also worry about the brokenness of family life, the thinness of their communal attachments, the inner violence of a culture devoted to competition and material gain. These are proper subjects for a president to discuss, even if they do not translate easily into legislative priorities. You can demur when Oprah asks you about family pets or sex in the White House. But do speak about family strain and what you know of it from your own experience. Rather than simply unburdening yourself and confessing your pain, as her guests are wont to do, you should emphasize that personal troubles always have public dimensions—and that these are the proper province of politics.

The public display of private detail is the "thrill" Oprah tries to exploit. You should decline to provide this thrill and make a point of declining. Americans need to see you protecting your privacy in public; it is part of your job as the embodiment of "politics" to emphasize what should properly be excluded from that sphere. Your attempts to expand the zone of privacy around you and your family are legitimate and should continue. Since the assassination of President Kennedy, the media have decreed that the president shall be accompanied by cameras and reporters whenever he steps out into public—a macabre ritual known as the "body watch." Previous presidents have accepted it as a permanent part of the job. Equating publicity with power, they perhaps saw the ritual as daily confirmation of their exalted status as "leader of the free world." In reality, the obsessive focus on the president's body is degrading and disempowering.

Appearing on "Arsenio," you transported "politics" into a new cultural space—one ordinarily devoted to comedy, celebrity, and the celebration of youth culture.

To "appear" in the literal sense is to rise to visibility from a separate realm in which you do not appear. It is essential then that your activities in this other realm not be televised. The more we see you jogging and sweating, playing golf, or relaxing at home, the more difficult it will be to make your other media appearances count for something. You cannot rise to visibility from a realm in which you are continuously visible, and in this sense the body watch is a drain on your power. By insisting on respect for your own privacy, you encourage us to respect the public realm as the place where politics is supposed to "appear."

During the transition period, the suggestion arose that you plan to dissolve the distinction between governing and campaigning. Televised town meetings have been floated as a way to generate a continuing mandate for change. In thinking about the value of such events it is not enough to focus on current political objectives. For there is another drama occurring whenever you appear on the public screen. Consciously or not, you'll be selecting those traits in us you want to re-present to ourselves. The process is an extremely delicate one. You cannot reflect back what is not within you; over time the cameras will expose such attempts as insincere and calculating. (Recall Bush's attempts to present himself as a down-home Texan.) Still, it is not as simple as "be yourself," since part of your job is, in a sense, to be us—



the "us" you want us to be. At the same time, of course, you must try to win support for your programs, deal with critics, and meet the various crises that come your way.

But to concentrate on these alone would be a mistake. You must try to project through the media a "character" the rest of us can recognize as truthfully yours and potentially ours. This character, a performed self, can be your greatest political asset, if it embodies virtues the country needs to summon from its own conflicted character. Devotion to work and family, love of country, the imperatives of freedom, democracy, and opportunity are wisely invoked by all presidents. During the campaign you placed an admirable emphasis on personal responsibility, spoke of a "New Covenant" among Americans, and asked for a "new spirit of community" to assist you in meeting the difficult challenges ahead. All are important themes worth emphasizing in a town-meeting format. But equally important are the values you project as the one person who best represents "politics" to the rest of us.

It is apparent that since childhood you've created yourself through diligent practice of the political arts. Accommodation, compromise, networking, public speaking, listening and responding, handling yourself in a crowd—these have clearly been constitutive experiences. In pinning the adjective "slick" on you during the campaign, some of us were recognizing not only a perceived excess in you but our own distaste for specifically political skills such as the formation of consensus or the ability to speak in the other's vocabulary. Americans often want political leaders to display non-political virtues—to be faithful husbands, good Christians, hard-headed businessmen. But in 1992 we voted for politics as a way out of our present predicament, rejecting the do-nothingism of Bush and the anti-political appeal of business wizard Ross Perot.

You must show us that our vote was a wise one, not only by succeeding as president but by demonstrating that politics can succeed as a way of addressing common problems. Here you will be subliminally opposed by the press. To most journalists, politics gets interesting when it's about conflict, not commonality. (Watch for a succession of "disarray" stories early and often during your tenure.) At its best, politics means war, for the more neatly divisive the terrain becomes, the easier it is for the journalist to step into the center, give vent to opposing sides, and speak the truth from an "objective" position. The discourse of the press aims to place the rest of us outside politics as savvy spectators, cooler and wiser than the struggling partisans on the floor below. Truth is as-

sumed to emerge through a process of emotional withdrawal. High up in the announcer's booth, disengaged from the issues, unimpressed by the rhetoric from either side (but ready to recognize a shrewd move or clever feint)—the journalist distills the truth by removing it from "politics."

As president you can counter the appeal of this posture by taking the floor and "making" a kind of truth that can only be had through politics. Here your patient practice in the political arts will serve you well. If you can show us what it truly means to listen and respond, to accommodate a range of legitimate views, to hear a consensus amid the noise of conflicting positions, to argue a case with conviction and emotion; if you can be seen connecting with others, in order to persuade them to redefine their interests, expand their notion of community, speak a language of obligation, and moderate their sense of entitlement—if you can do these things on television (and appear to be in your element doing so) then your true "character"—your love of politics—will reflect back to us our own latent desires to understand each other, trade ideas, work together, and come to agreement about the community's common concerns.

Another way to think of it: If your call for a "New Covenant" is to appear convincing, then it should be seen in motion on television—in the way you step toward others and accept the task of persuasion. To these eyes, your finest moment of the campaign came during the second televised debate, when an audience member asked for the candidates' views on term limits for Congress. Looking directly at the questioner, you were able to say, "I know they're popular, but I'm against them. I'll tell you why." Here was a hint of a new speech covenant between the president and the public, in which it's our duty to accept that you're not always going to agree with us, or be able to do what's popular. In return, you pledge to explain yourself and address in a serious way the legitimate concerns we have. Don't pretend to agree with us when you actually do not. But don't pretend there's no merit in our position unless you truly think so, in which case you must show the courage to explain why. We will not hold back in our demands and criticisms when we feel them justified but we also won't assume that there is nothing you can say to change our minds or get us to see the question differently.

"Address our needs, not your needs," said another questioner in the second debate. He was correct but so were you in the implicit reply you gave during your best moments of the campaign season: "I'll try to address your needs, for I think I know what they are but you'll have to listen carefully to the way I see the problem, and what I've proposed to do about it." Careful listening, plain speaking, an assumption of mutual goodwill, an effort to imagine the other's position, a commitment to further dialogue—these are some features of what might be called the "new civility," which would attempt to put the New Covenant into practice as a conversational style. If you can become the leading exemplar of this style, you might help redeem the political promise of television, which is to create a new kind of public space where we actually see democracy working and learn what its practice involves.

Vote our hopes, not our fears, you said repeatedly during the campaign. Enough of us responded to make you the new communicator-in-chief. Hope now demands its own television character, a role for which you are distinctly well cast. □

Memo to Clinton: **Social Responsibility**

Charles Derber

Here are three virtually cost-free approaches to a politics of community attuned to America's number one problem: the economy.

Start with symbolism and words—your forte. For the past twelve years, Presidents Reagan and Bush inundated the country with a rhetoric of radical individualism which has had a devastating impact. As the sociologist Robert Bellah has written in *Habits of the Heart*, Americans now lack even the most basic vocabulary to think beyond themselves and develop a vision of the common good.

You must lead a revolution in our symbolic paradigms. Revive the language of the New Covenant you introduced at last summer's Democratic Convention and inspire people with your new communitarian dream. Speak boldly to our collective hunger for connection and common purpose, and to our anguish about the breakdown of the social fabric. Use your speeches and media access—starting with your Inaugural—to advance your new paradigm of moral obligation and community service. Select cabinet and other leading advisers—your principal allies in this symbolic struggle—who will "talk the talk" as well as "walk the walk" of the New Covenant.

Your revolution in discourse must target our national

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codes of meaning and values. Conduct a four-year seminar on how greed and selfishness fueled "trickle down" and other economic and social policies of the 1980s. Show how "free market" morality brought us the Savings and Loan crisis and the largest rise in poverty and inequality in half a century. Prove by example and policy that you are dedicated to enforcing social responsibility in all sectors of society—among business and political elites as well as the poor. Demonstrate your new values by celebrating a different set of heroes than the 1980s Wall Street entrepreneurs, such as the grass-roots community organizers who are helping to revitalize the public school system in Chicago, or those promoting community-owned businesses in South Central Los Angeles. Bring them to the White House and award them community medals of honor.

Moving from discourse to policy, create a Social Council of Advisers—to be cochaired by a pre-eminent social analyst such as William Julius Wilson, the University of Chicago sociologist, and a distinguished social advocate such as Hillary Clinton—which will parallel your Council of Economic Advisers and serve as your institutional apparatus for the advancement of community. It should prepare the data for your new annual "State of the Community" speech, which you should present to Congress and the American people with the fanfare of the State of the Union Address. The Council of Social Advisers will prepare a set of "social indicators," similar to the one proposed in the late 1970s by then-Senator Walter Mondale in his Full Opportunity and Social Accounting Act. Based on these data, the council should issue highly publicized "social reports" on the changing health of our families, neighborhoods, and other communities. The council should also be responsible for monitoring proposed federal legislation for "community impact," which, like environmental impact statements, will offer you data for determining whether programs meet the New Covenant test.

Your council should move beyond traditional social indicators to help institutionalize New Covenant values of participation and social responsibility. "Social audits" of corporations—already conducted in some of our leading businesses—measure success in meeting social goals and could help to increase employee involvement and improve environmental performance and community relations. Social audits of schools—partly designed and administered by parents, teachers, and students alike—could encourage parental participation, cooperative student learning strategies, and neighborhood citizenship and service.

As you seek to harness the spirit of community to rebuild our economy, don't lose sight of the great economic importance of community in the workplace—one of the secrets of the Japanese economic miracle. You have recognized the economic imperative of rebuilding our cities and neighborhoods, but implementing a New Covenant in the workplace itself is just as important—and will cost you a lot less money. You can get the job done by taking seriously your stated commitment to employee participation and ownership. Feeling the heat of global competition, more than half of our big corporations have begun to implement "employee involvement" (EI) and about 10,000 companies have instituted employee stock ownership plans (ESOPs). But EI and ESOPs, as foundations of a New Covenant workplace, are badly flawed. They have not provided workers with either real participation or a significant share of the pie. One knowledgeable observer described most EI and labor-management cooperation as "shotgun marriages, with corporations holding the shotgun." Corporations go ESOP to get the tax breaks or avoid takeovers, giving workers non-voting shares and so little new employee involvement that many remain unaware of the existence of their own ESOP.

In "autonomous teams," a more genuine participatory innovation at such companies as Corning Glass and Shell Oil, where groups of workers design and "self-manage" their own tasks, schedules, and evaluation procedures, top management has expressed "culture shock" at the new enthusiasm, while workers tell researchers there are nights they won't "stay home" because of the new excitement and responsibility. At GM's Saturn auto plant, founded on the philosophy that "all people want to be involved in decisions that affect them," joint worker-management consensual decision making is mandated on everything from each worker's job description to top-level marketing, training, and strategic investment decisions. Encouraging such real participation through symbolic and economic incentives is, arguably, your most potent, cost-effective, and under-discussed tool for boosting productivity. You should also lobby hard for basic changes in ESOP legislation, along the lines proposed by Joseph Blasi, an industrial relations expert who helped craft the original laws in 1973. Create incentives to insure that ESOPs include participatory job redesign, profit sharing, and labor management cooperation, as well as distribution of voting shares to all employees on a one person/one vote basis.

I hope you have the courage to live up to your rhetoric of "empowerment." In the end, the most enlightened policymakers don't create community; people do. Your task as covenant-builder is to work your way out of a job. Get ordinary Americans to take the New Covenant into their hearts and make it their vocation rather than yours. Support their community activism with money, talk, and maximum access to information and power. It is the only path to the New Covenant. □

Israel is Waiting for Clinton

Akiva Eldar

The election slogan of the Labor Party was "Israel Awaits Rabin." The election results show that the Israelis, like the Americans, want change. When Israelis talk about change, they are referring, first and foremost, to a new approach regarding the peace process. The Israeli public is beginning to understand that a peace settlement with the Arabs, primarily with the Palestinians, is the key to change on other issues on the national agenda: security, immigration, economics, and prosperity.

Six months have elapsed since the elections and the most conspicuous change wrought by the Rabin government can be formulated in a new slogan, "Israel Awaits Clinton." In contrast with the previous government, which rejected any attempt by the Arabs to drag the Americans into the peace negotiations crawling along in Washington, the Rabin government is counting the days until Bill Clinton moves into the White House. In a public appearance, the Prime Minister said that he envisions a key role for the new American president in the peace negotiations. In a private conversation, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres noted that the negotiations begun by the Likud are not taking place face to face, but back to back—rather than each side speaking to the other, each side speaks outward, to its own constituents.

A short time after the 1967 war, Sheikh Jabri, the mayor of Hebron, requested from Shlomo Gazit, then Israel's military governor, that Israel supply his city with electricity. Gazit approached Moshe Dayan, then minister of defense, and got his approval. Gazit went back to Jabri and asked him to send a formal request to Dayan, assuring him that the request would be approved. Jabri smiled and explained that the only way to handle this was by coercion, otherwise he would be accused by his people of collaboration with the government of occupation. He asked that Dayan announce unilaterally that, from now on, Israel will supply Hebron with electricity from Jerusalem. Jabri said that he will strenuously object and even lodge a protest with the Security Council of the United Nations. Only following all this will Hebron be able to enjoy Israeli electricity. More than ten years later, during the Camp David peace talks, Moshe Dayan appeared before U.S. President Jimmy Carter and suggested a compromise regarding one of the sticking points in the negotiations between Israel and Egypt. Dayan asked Carter to adopt the proposal and present it to the two sides as an American idea. Dayan explained that if the compromise offer would come from him, the Israeli public would never put up with it. "If you present the formulation and, at the same time, obtain concessions from the other side," explained Dayan, "we'll have an easier time getting this through at home."

"Direct negotiations" is an attractive slogan but a formula for paralysis. The history of the Israeli/Arab conflict shows that the intervention of an American mediator is a necessary condition for an agreement. It will take direct American involvement to get Israel to make the territorial concessions necessary for a peace agreement that could be acceptable to the Arab side, and it will take that same American involvement to get the Arab states and the Palestinians to move beyond their expansive rhetoric and accept a compromise solution. It was precisely this process of American pressure and then compromise on the part of Israel and the Arabs that was central to the creation of every previous agreement: the withdrawal from Sinai, the separation of forces agreement, and later the Camp David accord. Rabin understands this, and when he talks approvingly of American involvement he is signaling a willingness to make territorial concessions on many issues, as long as he doesn't have to appear to be making those concessions in response to Arab demands, but rather in response to American pressure. Moreover, because both the Israelis and the Arabs believe that the United States is likely to reward them for concessions made in response to American pressure, they are unwilling to make too many compromises in direct negotiations for fear that in so doing they will lose the opportunity to be compensated by the United States for the flexibility they would show at this later stage of negotiations when the United States is more deeply involved. For that reason, negotiations dur-

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ing the final months of the Bush administration were uneventful, because both sides were waiting for Clinton who might be able to reward them for concessions.

Clinton would be making a big mistake to assume that the peace negotiations can make much progress without his direct involvement. And this involvement must be more than simply showing concern or sending a high-ranking envoy. The Americans have to take a more serious step by being ready to propose their own ideas at critical moments in the process. Negotiations will go nowhere without American pressure and without America being willing to make substantive proposals. The reason: It will be far easier for Rabin to sell territorial compromise to the Israeli public if he can say that it was made in response to American pressure than if he has to say that it was made in response to Palestinian or Arab proposals. Similarly for the Arab states—concessions to America will be easier to live with than concessions to Israel itself.

The process of making these proposals is a delicate one, and could be similar to that which happened at Camp David. At times, the role of the United States will be to bring to each side proposals that the other really already accepts but, because of domestic pressure, is not yet ready to propose publicly. At other times, the role will be to pressure each side to make concessions and to consider new ideas. Clinton will need to have his own ideas about what a settlement could look like and to push for those goals, even using pressure and rewards to achieve them.

There is some reason to believe that Rabin understands the need to make significant concessions. What is less clear is whether he is willing to provide leadership to the Israeli public to help shift their attitudes and prepare them for such concessions. Rabin shows extraordinary sensitivity to the nuances of public opinion, and even set up a team in his office whose job is to analyze public reaction to government actions. A minister close to Rabin told me that the prime minister was ready to offer the Syrians withdrawal from the Golan Heights in the first round of talks carried out under his leadership. He decided to save this for the second round, however, and to begin with a more ambiguous formulation, according to which Israel agrees to negotiate with Syria on the basis of U.N. Resolution 242. Perhaps Rabin is taking advantage of the interim period between the outgoing Bush administration and the incoming Clinton administration to prepare public opinion for the concessions that will come.

Sources close to Rabin say that he is willing to make rather far-reaching territorial concessions, but so far he is not revealing the extent. There are those who say that Rabin himself has not fully thought it through. Several public declarations of the prime minister can be cited to show his intention to be flexible and forthcoming and to demonstrate that something has really changed since he came to office with the Labor victory in June 1992:

- Rabin's statement, made a few weeks after taking office, that the strength of a nation is not measured in centimeters alone.
- Rabin's statement to the residents of the Golan Heights that Syria will not give us peace in exchange for peace, and that therefore if we want peace we must be prepared to offer land. Rabin pointed out that by conceding two kilometers (given in the separation of forces agreement in 1975), Israel has had ten years of quiet on the Syrian border—implying that it wasn't really such a bad deal.
- Rabin has agreed to rescind the law prohibiting Israelis from meeting with P.L.O. members. More important: In his words to the *Sunday Times* of London (12/6/92), Rabin said that the P.L.O. in Tunis has more credible members than Arafat, such as Abu Mazen and Nabil Sh'at. This was a strong hint that he doesn't rule out the possibility that in the future he might talk to the "more responsible" leaders of the P.L.O. whom he distinguishes from Arafat.
- In the same interview, Rabin stated that he does not negate the concept of a federation between a Palestinian state and Jordan.

These would be cause for celebration if Rabin had not also made other statements that seem to indicate an inflexibility and unwillingness to follow through on the implications of these remarks. Rabin has declared that he will never repeat the precedent set in the peace accords with Egypt, i.e., that Israel must pay with "all the territory" for "all the peace."

This position is hard to understand. First of all, testimony from the negotiating table with Egypt indicates that efforts failed to convince Sadat to forego a part of the Sinai, so the accord that was reached was the only one that could have been reached (and is Rabin saying that he would have preferred no accord to the one that was actually reached?) Secondly, it's not clear what Rabin finds so flawed about relations with Egypt; Israel received "all the peace" in exchange for "all the territories." After all, we have had peace with Egypt for the last fifteen years. Not a single Israeli soldier has been hurt on our southern border. The peace may not have brought the tourism, cultural exchanges, and warm relations that people had hoped for (though Begin's war in Lebanon and Shamir's treatment of the Palestinians may have had some impact on that), but it did bring military security to Israel's southern border, and that's nothing to belittle.

Rabin's promise that he will not withdraw from the

entire Golan may put him in a very difficult political situation as the negotiations unfold. If he is not willing to withdraw in exchange for a real peace accord that is well-supervised, he is likely to miss the opportunity to create a permanent peace with Syria (and without that, the rest of the peace process might be undermined), and history will judge him harshly. But if he does accept withdrawal, he will pay a political price and a loss in credibility because he has gone out on a limb by making this kind of categorical statement about never withdrawing.

Another troubling sign is Rabin's refusal to meet with any recognized leader of the moderate P.L.O. camp in the territories. The prime minister has access to a variety of tools for strengthening the hand of the moderate Palestinians in opposition to the Hamas, whose power grows as the P.L.O. fails to deliver the goods to the residents of the territories. Even those very close to Rabin are disappointed that he rejects their advice to give Husseini and his colleagues some concrete concessions, such as releasing prisoners or reunifying families. P.L.O. officials warn us that a weak P.L.O. will strengthen elements more extreme than the Hamas. The time element is crucial here—the longer the Palestinian moderates seem to be delivering nothing, the greater the credibility of Hamas and other extremists who reject all compromise with Israel, and whose recent kidnapping and murder of an Israeli policeman shows what may be in store for Israelis if the more moderate P.L.O. loses its credibility with the Palestinians.

That may already be happening in reaction to the deportation of 400 Hamas members. While a year of negotiations has achieved no visible gains for the Palestinian people, Hamas's action is perceived as having had a real impact, shaking the Israelis out of their complacency and bringing about the first condemnation of the Rabin government by the Security Council, the Euro-

(Continued on p. 80)

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ZEALOTS FOR ZION

Inside Israel's West Bank Settlement Movement

Robert I. Friedman

"...the mystical mythology, yuppie yearnings, willful naivete´ and raw prejudices of those staking a claim to what they consider to be 'Greater Israel' have rarely been this revealingly and comprehensibly documented."
— *Newsday*

Robert I. Friedman, the author of *The False Prophet: Rabbi Meir Kahane,* won the Smolar Award for Excellence in North American Jewish Journalism and was awarded an Alicia Patterson Fellowship to chronicle the rise of the radical right in Israel.

Illustrated with maps



RANDOM HOUSE

* *Publishers Weekly*

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The Escalation of Terror in Germany: Is It Time to Leave?

Elliot Neaman

What is happening is not Germany 1932/1933. But is it Germany 1922?
– Israeli writer Uri Avnery, November 30, 1992

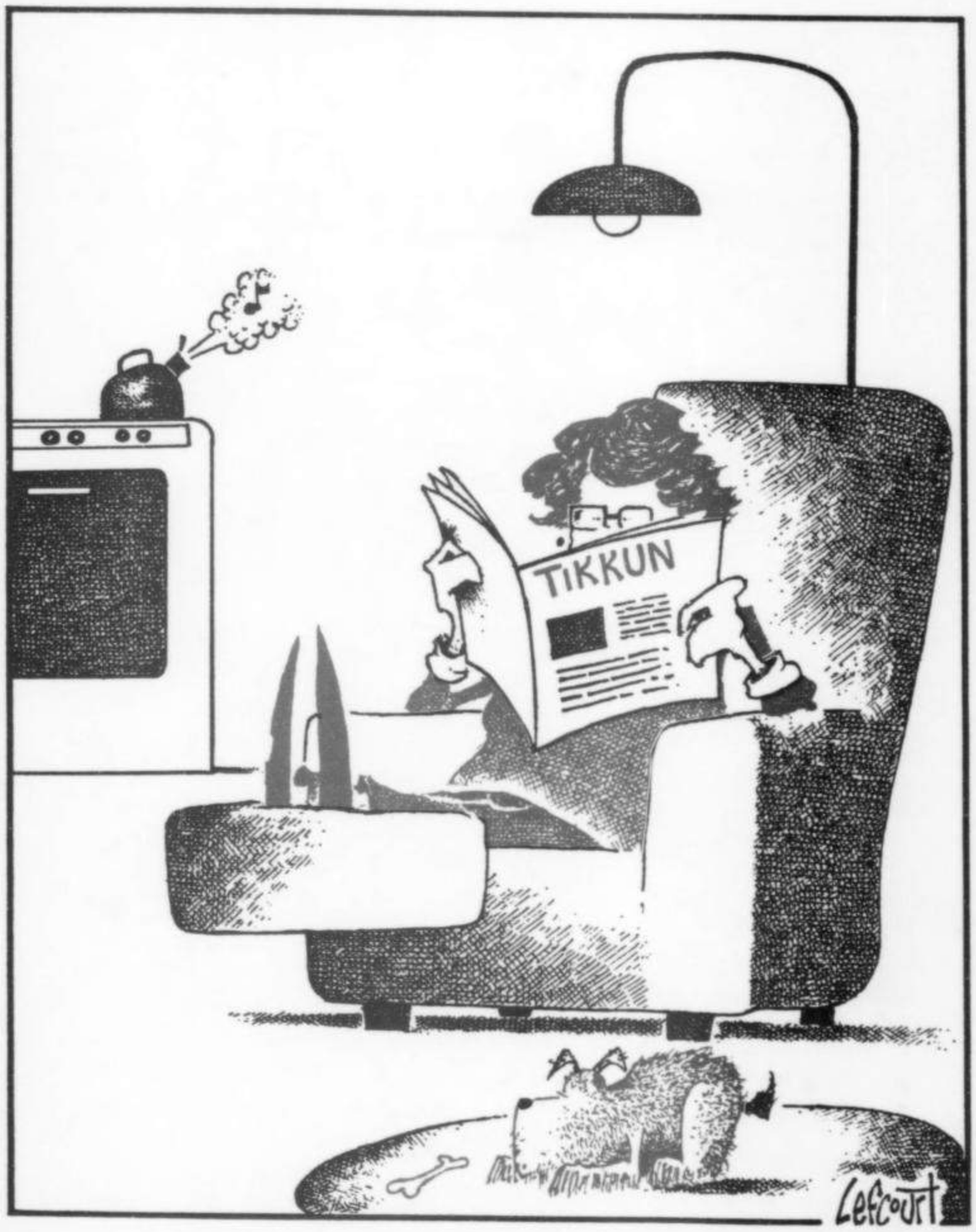
On the cold morning of November 10, 1989, I stood with my Jewish-American friends at a freshly carved passageway in the Berlin Wall as thousands of East Germans crossed into the west side of the city in their tiny, noisy plastic cars. They were greeted by exuberant West Germans with flowers and bananas (icons of wealth in those days). Some people in the crowd held up tiny flags of the Federal Republic and once in a while someone hollered: *"Wir sind ein Volk"* ("We are one people"). The atmosphere was festive and relaxed. We felt happy with and for the Germans. We had always despised the hypocrisy and paranoia of the East German state and shed no tears over its demise. The experience of living in the stable, wealthy, and pluralistic democratic West Germany gave us no reason to fear a united Germany. And yet on that day I, like many others, felt an indistinct uneasiness when I thought about the future. It was clear that Germany was about to throw off the last shackles of Cold War imprisonment. How would the suddenly freed prisoner-of-war behave?

Three years down the road we are increasingly less happy with our ex-prisoner, whose parole cannot be revoked. By all accounts, the unification of the two Germanys has been miserably managed by the Kohl government. Exactly one year ago, in the pages of TIKKUN ("German Roulette," Jan/Feb 1992), Hajo Funke and I explained the escalation of violence directed against foreign workers and political refugees in Germany as the result of a calculated gamble by the Kohl government, which consciously avoided seeking a political solution to once manageable problems in order to placate voters and political parties on the right and allow pent-up frustrations to be unleashed on visible scapegoats. The government believed that right-wing violence could be kept at a politically advantageous level. In other words, Kohl tried to play the nationalist card to hold together the right wing of the party and put the screws to the Social Democrats to force through a long-sought reform of the constitution that would tighten the conditions of access for political refugees. In this way Kohl believed he could buy time to implement his hapless economic schemes.

The gambit has not worked. The economic performance of the East is miserable, and the pressure on the federal budget is slowly but surely pulling Germany into a recession. Much worse, 1992 has been a year of escalating terror on the Right, with seventeen recorded deaths of foreigners and vagrants at the hands of extremist skinheads, and more than 2,000 injured. The justice system was slow to react, refusing to recognize the organized nature of right-wing activity. It took the fire-bombing of a home in Mölln in Northern Germany, as a result of which three long-time Turkish residents were killed, before the police and Justice Ministry were finally shaken into action. While left-wing terror is routinely probed with legendary Teutonic thoroughness and sensationalized by the mass media as a lethal danger to democracy, right-wing hooligans have been treated with leniency and compassion by the courts —poor misguided youths!—and their actions trivialized by the press. As in Weimar, justice is blind on the right eye. In another alarming development reminiscent of the 1920s, foreigners no longer trust the police to defend them and are beginning to arm themselves. Along with left-wing extremists, they have been taking the law into their own hands and regularly assassinating the leaders of the neo-Nazi movements. The number of clashes in the streets between red and brown is rising weekly. Another disturbing development, painfully reminiscent of Nazi practices, has been the sustained attacks by extremist skinheads on defenseless vagabonds and handicapped persons, whose lives they consider "worthless" to the German nation.

For the Jews in Germany, alarm signals have been go-

Elliot Neaman was recently granted a Ph.D. in history from the University of California at Berkeley for a dissertation on Ernst Jünger. He is currently an editor at TIKKUN. *The author would like to thank Professor Hajo Funke of Berlin, who was consulted during the writing of this article.*


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ing off all year. As the following horrible example shows, the skinheads are not content any longer just to deface Jewish cemeteries, synagogues, or Holocaust memorials (although the number of such attacks has doubled since 1982). On November 12, 1992, after a disagreement in a Wuppertal bar, a fifty-three-year-old pensioner, Karl-Hans Rohn, was trampled to death and burned because two members of the "National Front" were told by the bartender that Rohn was a Jew. Outside the bar the thugs poured high-percentage schnapps on the body, lighted it, and yelled "Jews must burn."

Jewish public figures experience anti-Semitic threats regularly. Prime Minister Rabin's wife found her car smeared with swastikas on her most recent trip to Bonn. Jews often find their tires slashed and receive threatening phone calls. According to Charlotte Knoblauch, president of the Israeli Cultural Society in Munich, her members receive death threats in the mail and on the phone "on a regular basis." The Jewish writer Ralph Giordano has called upon German Jews to "arm themselves." Just as alarming as open terror is the fact that more subtle forms of anti-Semitism are becoming acceptable in mainstream society. A notorious example occurred in September 1992, when the head of the Central Jewish Council in Germany, Ignatz Bubis, came to Rostock after a widely reported firebomb attack on an asylum residence. At a press conference, Bubis criticized the police for reacting too slowly to the presence of skinheads in the city. Karl-heinz Schmidt, a city alderman, replied that Bubis should be more concerned about the treatment of Palestinians in the occupied territories since, as a German citizen of Jewish faith, his "real" homeland was Israel. When Schmidt was asked to resign from the city council after a public outcry, he clearly did not understand the explosive nature of his question, the racial definition of citizenship he had unreflectively applied.

Although there are only 40,000 Jews in Germany, and most Germans have never met a Jew, old anti-Semitic attitudes simmer close to the surface: According to a 1992 poll by *Der Spiegel* magazine, 36 percent of the respondents agreed to the statement that "Jews have too much influence in the world." Jewish jokes, many with references to Auschwitz, long a taboo, are back in style. A right-wing intellectual scene is burgeoning as well, fed by so-called "revisionist historians" who lend a semblance of respectability to the gutter-level productions of Holocaust-deniers.

All of these developments might lead one to conclude that Jews in Germany should not wait around a second time to find out how the story ends. In fact, over 150 Jews left the country in 1992, double the number from 1991. One can well understand their fear and disgust. One can also, however, sympathize with the vast majority of Jews who are staying and willing to fight anti-Semitism, confident that they are confronting a very different society than the one that embraced Nazism. In recent telephone interviews, Ignatz Bubis and Micha Brunlik, a sociologist at the University of Heidelberg, both stated that, as serious as the situation appeared in Germany, they were confident that the country would be able to solve its problems. They also stressed, however, that foreign pressure was very important, since the German people and in particular the German government are very sensitive about the image of the country abroad. Although the situation does not call for a boycott, or breaking of diplomatic ties, as had been discussed recently in the Israeli cabinet, both of these leaders in the German Jewish community voiced their support for the proposal currently being discussed in the TIKKUN community for an international group of Jews to go to Germany next summer in order to demonstrate against the rise of the the right wing and to make the Jewish presence felt in the current public debates.

Although international pressure is certainly an important factor, the real litmus test for post-war Germany will be the extent to which the current crisis can be mastered internally and a viable multicultural, nonhomogeneous community can be constructed on German soil. None of the western or eastern European countries is having an easy time adjusting to the new migrations of the post-Cold War period. The rich countries of the west cannot seem to deal with the fact that the hungry and dispossessed are coming back to the center of Europe, knocking on the doors, or with the fact that erstwhile "guest workers"—as they are euphemistically called—have now become dissatisfied de-facto citizens waiting for equal political rights. But Germany has a special responsibility because of its past to prove that it is capable of transcending the centuries-old particularistic concept of what constitutes a nation.

German society is already a multicultural society. In every major city, there live large numbers of Turkish, Yugoslavian, Italian, Spanish, Greek, Vietnamese, and many other minorities. But the resistance to accepting multi-culturalism as a way of life is enormous. "Guest workers" generally live in self-imposed ghettos, wary of the limited tolerance accorded to their customs and languages. They are expected to conform to German "values" and norms publicly and live out their culture in private. But the idea of what constitutes "Germanness" is bogus. Consider the wooing by the German government of so-called "ethnic Germans," those foreigners, mostly East European, who can prove some vestige of German ancestry. Last year alone nearly 220,000 of then came to Germany, attracted by an array of taxpayer-paid

benefits. These immigrants often speak no German and, other than having perhaps a German grandmother in the family tree, are no closer to German culture than their "un-German" counterparts. The terminology beautifully discloses this prejudice: If you are an "ethnic German" you get transferred "over" to where you belong (*Übersiedler*) but if you are "non-German" and just want to emigrate, you come from "out" there (*Aussiedler*). Meanwhile the sons and daughters of "guest workers" who have grown up in Germany, speak the language, and are virtually indistinguishable from other Germans must go through a bureaucratic nightmare in order to receive citizenship.

The resistance to multiculturalism in Germany is clearly visible in a position paper written in the fall of 1991 by Eckart Schiffer, the CDU's chief expert on foreigners in Germany. Schiffer outrightly rejected the idea of a cultural mosaic as an ideal type that countries such as Canada and Australia strive to attain. He argued that if all cultural practices were accepted as equal, Germans would be forced to abide by non-Western norms such as the Koran as a basis of law.

Schiffer unabashedly declared that foreigners in Germany must acculturate themselves according to the laws and norms of the land. His reasoning is that German citizens are justified in defending their familiar surroundings (*Heimat*) as a "collective human right." Besides the notorious ambiguity of this phrasing and its ideological proximity to *völkish* thought, Schiffer's romanticized view of German life shows how that resistance to the modern reality of shifting identities in a world of global cultural interchange remains deeply ingrained. A good starting point for the kind of change that the Greens and the Social Democrats might initiate in German society would be to re-affirm their commitment to breaking down these deeply entrenched but potentially dangerous ideas of cultural homogeneity and concentrate on the positive, enriching aspects of pluralistic culture. A first order of business in a new Social Democratic government should be to change the citizenship laws that are still based on the Roman *lex sanguinis*, that is, the principle that identity is defined by birth, not by society. (In contrast to the United States and England, in Germany children born to legal residents are not considered German citizens.)

The recent debates about changing the German constitution demonstrate how difficult it is for the Left in Germany to take a clear position in favor of multiculturalism. The object of dispute is whether or not article 16 of the Basic Law should be changed so that it will be more difficult for political refugees to enter the country. This fairly liberal, curtly phrased clause ("All politically persecuted persons have a right to asylum") was incorporated into the German constitution as a way of making retribution to the Western countries that accepted exiles fleeing from Nazism in the 1930s. After a long struggle among members of Kohl's coalition and with the reluctant participation of the Social Democrats, a settlement has been reached in regard to changing the Basic Law. The compromise between those who wanted to abolish article 16 and those who did not want to touch it will differentiate between political refugees who are deemed to have "political" in contrast to those who supposedly have "economic" motives. But this distinction is, at bottom, based on a grand illusion. As long as the current vast and interrelated imbalance remains between the financial and industrial centers of the West on the one hand, and the struggling post-Communist, as well as dilapidated "Third World" economies on the other, it will become increasingly difficult to draw this distinction. When a civil war erupts because economic deprivation and foreign meddling causes famine and tribal warfare, are the people who flee economic or political refugees? Furthermore, the amendment will allow rejection of asylum applications for refugees from certain countries that are deemed "free of persecution." It will be interesting to see how the "experts" in the Bonn bureaucracy determine these restrictions, since Amnesty International has found abuses in just about every country, including Germany. Finally, and most important, it is arguable that the asylum laws had to be changed in order to create conditions under which fair assessments of the cases of political refugees could be ascertained. But the manner in which this reform has come about, after over a year of virtual neglect of the problem, has certainly given the right wing a victory which will strengthen its position in future confrontations.

In Germany and elsewhere, the problem of political asylum has barely been faced except in terms of its most obvious symptoms. Migration experts warn that in the coming decades vast numbers of displaced and dispossessed peoples are going to be on the move searching for means to survive ecological and economic catastrophes. Instead of dealing with the underlying causes of this coming global migration, the western countries, including the United States, are burying their heads in the sand. Walls are built, borders are patrolled, and immigration laws are tightened, as if these measures are really going to stop desperate, hungry people with nothing to lose from fleeing the chaos. The problem is compounded by the fact that the rich industrialized countries preach a hypocritical capitalist ideology that says, in effect: "Open borders for goods and services between our and your countries, but please don't send your people." Don't Third World countries have a right to demand that capitalism be con-

sistent? If all artificial boundaries are bad for the growth of world trade, as Milton Friedman and the World Bank insist, why do capitalist countries close themselves inside privileged walls?

In Bonn, the Greens and the left-wing Social Democrats have insisted for a long time that Germany become more active in spreading its wealth and engaging in constructive developmental policies in the poorer regions of the world. Although Germany spends more per capita than most other countries on foreign aid, the total is still well below 1 percent of its total Gross Domestic Product. But the majority of Germans insist that they cannot be responsible for feeding the world, especially now that they face the formidable task of rebuilding the eastern states. One can only respond by pointing out that as far as the current crises in Eastern Europe and Russia are concerned, the "chickens are coming home to roost." That is, Hitler's invasion of Russia and the defeat of Germany sealed the fate of Eastern Europe for forty-four years. Now that the system has fallen apart, it seems only fair that Germany engage in its own form of a Marshall Plan. In regard to the impoverished countries of Africa and Asia, it is in the long-term interest of all to bolster these economies before their populations are forced into migration.

The attacks on foreigners in Germany are, in the final analysis, also the end result of these underlying global developments that are not being properly addressed. Still, one must try to fight symptoms now that preventive medicine has been neglected. What can be done to alter deep-rooted prejudices against foreigners and cultural minorities in Germany? The old liberal answers are found wanting. Liberals demand, for example, that more work be done in German schools to inform students about the German past. In the fall of 1992, the German government responded by printing 110,000 new history manuals for teachers and 500,000 pamphlets for pupils. But almost all education experts complain of the limited effect of these measures. In a world of violent video games and non-stop action television, the children of the 1980s and 1990s are fairly resistant to horror scenarios. The obligatory school trips to concentration camps and Holocaust museums don't seem to reach the desired goal either. In fact, one result of the constant bombardment of images of the Holocaust in German classrooms can be that children develop emotional walls as a reaction to projected guilt which itself can lead to anti-Semitic defensive-reactive feelings.

The preaching and moralizing of liberals in the public sphere can have similar effects among the adult population. Many Germans freeze internally when they are confronted with the sins of their fathers. Unsure how to react, they close their emotional windows. The other options of liberal society—more police enforcement and tougher laws—are equally problematic. To a certain extent, the right-wing scene in Germany is thriving because of the attention it now receives from the media and the police. Growing up in a world of broken families and gray suburban tenements, as do most of the youth who become skinheads, clashing with the police and going to jail become a badge of courage.

If a liberal democratic society wanted truly to solve the problem that foreigners and minorities are the only visible scapegoats left for people who have been abandoned by a ruthlessly uncaring, individualistic, and ultra-materialistic culture, it would have to structurally transform its own basis of economic and social power. Just as on the global level, where the imbalance between rich and poor states causes pressures to build that result in destructive forms of nationalism, vertical economic imbalances inside countries also place the weakest elements of society at risk of xenophobic backlash. In other words, attacks on foreigners are a sure sign that a consensus about how to deal with social problems has broken down and the dispossessed react by searching out victims on which to vent their rage. The stability of all western liberal societies depends on the ability of the economic and cultural elites to use their cultural hegemony to convince the top two-thirds of society that they have a stake in the liberal order so that the discontents of the bottom one-third never have a chance to turn into rebellion. In fact, the dire conditions below the increasingly porous social net of capitalist society serve to tighten the reins and the blinders on the middle-class workhorses. In Germany, the pervasive feeling that the "boat is full," that Germany is under siege (which is contrary to all sober, statistical analysis), signals a deep crisis of trust, a collective suspicion that the state will not be able to master the economic challenges of the future.

Given these economic facts, it is not surprising that all sociological studies come to the conclusion that xenophobia is most widespread among the "bottom" third of German society (with plenty of exceptions in the other milieus). Since a fundamental re-structuring of society is not in sight, it is easy to see that the long-term goal of creating a socially harmonious multicultural society is not going to be easily achieved. This is especially true as long as the current CDU-led coalition remains in power. Chancellor Kohl shocked the German political establishment when he suggested, at the beginning of November 1992, that the German state was in an "emergency situation" as a result of the wave of asylum-seekers. He intimated that the government might have to suspend civil liberties in order to control the rising violence. Kohl has since backed off from this threat, but the mere suggestion points to a bankruptcy of leadership and an arrogant misuse of power, particularly considering how both Bismarck and Hitler abused emergency decrees

(Continued on p. 75)

Current Trends in Psychoanalysis: Social Constructivism

Michael J. Bader and Kim Chernin

Conceptions of universal truth are under attack everywhere. The validity of teaching the "canon" in academia has been challenged by those who argue that the particular interests and experience of ethnic and racial groups, women, and homosexuals are ignored or distorted by the dominant—usually white and male— cultural and academic establishments. Deconstructionist critics have made us aware of how fundamental conceptions such as gender, sexuality, race, or personal autonomy are cultural and linguistic conventions that, upon analysis, reveal hidden purposes relating to authority and power.

This broad assault on authority and "truth" has found its way into the theory and practice of psychoanalysis. Since Freud, analysts have had an uneasy relationship to their own professional authority and the truth of their theory. On the one hand, psychoanalysis has been revising itself since its inception. Freud's qualifying footnotes to his own texts, his continual rethinking of his original ideas, have established within psychoanalysis a tradition of radical self-revision. His disagreements with Carl Jung about libido, with Sandor Ferenczi about the role of interpersonal persuasion, and with Alfred Adler about repression, can be understood as a tribute to the complex richness and ferment within psychoanalytic thought.

On the other hand, these struggles were also about Freud's need to retain his unquestioned authority as the "father" of the psychoanalytic movement. Wave after wave of critics and dissenters were expelled from the "family" by Freud and his heirs and discounted as oedipal sons or envious daughters who were diluting the purity of Freud's received wisdom. These rebels went on to found their own schools or sects, each mining its own cherished vein of thought, without any meaningful relationship with each other or with the mainstream.

Since Freud, the tension within psychoanalysis between truth and skepticism, between the need to question received wisdom and the need to rely on and use it in therapeutic practice has contributed to its vitality. It has also spawned factions, sectarian tendencies, and authoritarian pronouncements.

Some of this rich tension of ongoing self-revision that questions central tenets and evolves new schools is apparent in the recent psychoanalytic debates over the role of the analyst. The classical theory of the psychoanalytic process posits that the patient experiences his or her relationship with the analyst through the lens of earlier familial relationships. The analyst, through a stance of relative neutrality and the technique of interpretation, helps the patient to understand these distortions in perception and gradually to acquire the capacity for more authentic forms of relatedness, undisturbed by neurotic intrusions from a troubled past.

The classical stance of the analyst as a relatively neutral adjudicator of psychic reality with the authority to distinguish what belongs to the patient's past and what is actually happening within the current analytic situation has always been subject to critical debate. In the last ten years, this critique has broadened and the classical position is no longer hegemonic. An increasing number of psychoanalytic authors have taken pen in hand to argue that the analyst's psychology and behavior deeply affect the patient's current experience, that "transference" always contains a kernel of truth, and that the analyst's alleged privileged capacity to interpret what is "inside the patient" is actually a pathological fantasy shared by patients and analysts alike.

These authors have argued for an intersubjective view of the analytic process, with both parties making conscious and unconscious contributions. They have also urged analysts to focus their analytic attention on how the patient's perception and experience of the analyst might be "right"—or at least constitute a plausible and subjectively meaningful interpretation—before they analyze it as a pathological distortion based on childhood repetitions and projections. In general, this current of psychoanalytic thought tends to eschew the role of the authoritative analyst who knows best in favor of a more

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democratic, less tilted, view of the analytic relationship in which the analyst is a co-equal participant. The proper object of study is, therefore, not the intrapsychic life of the patient but the psychological interaction between two co-equal parties, neither of whom has a monopoly on irrationality or reality.

One of the more articulate strands of this mounting critique of psychoanalytic authority is "Social Constructivism." Its leading theorists include Irwin Hoffman, Donnell Stern, Louis Fourcher, along with many kindred spirits in the Interpersonal School of psychoanalysis (such as Harold Searles and Stephen Mitchell). They argue that the child's experience of reality is always an interpretation of reality and never the "thing itself." Likewise, the reality that the analyst sees in his or her consulting room is never objectively inside the patient but is constructed by the analyst and patient together. The analyst can't know what is, in reality, going on inside the patient because the analyst's knowledge is filtered through his or her own unconscious. That which the analyst sees "inside" the patient is always being influenced by the analyst's personality. Thus, psychic reality is constructed in a social relationship, both in our lives and in our analyses.

In this model, the analyst's interpretations have to be imperfect and incomplete hypotheses, simultaneously expressive of the analyst's expertise and unconscious mental life. The analyst doesn't ever "discover" what is "there" in the patient's unconscious but rather creates meanings through language out of many unarticulated possibilities. Doubt, ambiguity, self-reflectiveness, and humility replace authoritative interpretative analysis as the proper psychic stance of the analyst. The analyst's knowledge is always imperfect and incomplete.

Clinically, this heightened interest in how the analyst and patient jointly create meaning has had various methodological consequences. Many analysts now believe that reconstructing the patient's childhood development and familial traumas is much less important than focusing on the here and now of the current analytic relationship, in part because the analyst's authority to define the patient's reality is no longer assumed. Analysts are being urged to consider the reasonable basis for the patient's complaints and perceptions about the analyst and not to interpret them away as simply transference.

There has come to be an increasing acceptance of the fact that the analyst inevitably has complex and deep emotional reactions to the patient. These reactions, in turn, are often seen as valuable sources of information about what is going on with the patient and in the analytic relationship. Overall, the sharp critique of analytic authority presented by the social constructivists and kindred theoretical voices has had a significant impact on contemporary psychoanalytic theory and practice.

The social constructivist view of the limits of analytic authority and omniscience may be understood as part of a larger intellectual movement that rejects the ideal of an objective, scientific rationality, subsuming deconstructionism, hermeneutics, and even those modern theories of physics that posit that reality is not fixed and independent of the effects of its observers. Together these schools represent a broad attack on traditional authority and the ways in which particular interests—often political, vested interests such as class, race, privilege, or gender—are hidden behind the disguise of rationality. The social constructivist critique of the psychoanalytic process argues that the psychological and social needs of the psychoanalyst are continually being gratified and expressed but not acknowledged because of the ideology of analytic neutrality and the assumption that the patient's transference represents distortion of the reality of the analyst. Psychoanalytic authority is under attack, just as academic, moral, and aesthetic authority is being undermined in modern intellectual circles.

While casting a jaundiced eye on the analyst-as-authority, however, the psychoanalytic constructivist has a tendency to eschew her responsibility to offer some kind of vision of health and possibility to the patient, just as kindred attacks on authority in other disciplines can rob the critic of any moral center or vision with which to judge which "truths" might help people feel more human and which might increase their sense of powerlessness and alienation. If the truth discovered in the psychoanalytic situation is only mutually constructed, then it is unclear how the analyst decides among multiple narratives which ones offer the most promise of therapeutic help for the patient.

In its critique of the illusory and self-serving nature of analytic authority, social constructivism ignores the potential caretaking functions of benign authority. There is a tradition of care and responsibility that accompanies the classical role of the analyst that can get lost in the constructivist attempt to democratize the analytic relationship. The expression of calm and supportive authority in the form and content of one's interventions and interpretations can be crucial to establishing the conditions of safety and support some patients need to explore their inner lives and work through their inner conflicts. Idealization of the analyst may be necessary to enable some patients to weather the storms of their analytic work.

The assumption of responsibility and parental authority by the analyst does not necessarily preclude an analyst's openness to being wrong, to acknowledging the

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In Your Blood, Live: Re-visions of a Theology of Purity

Rachel Adler

Twenty years ago, as a young Orthodox woman, I began what became an influential essay with the words "All things die and are reborn continually." I was wrong. Sometimes we cannot repeat ourselves. We can only transform ourselves. Yet our moral responsibility for that earlier self and its acts lives on. Twenty years later, as a feminist Reform theologian I continue to be faced with an an essay I wrote, an essay that continues to be quoted, cited, and reproduced, promulgating opinions and prescribing actions that I now cannot in good conscience endorse.

My essay, which was published both in the first *Jewish Catalogue* and in the first Jewish feminist anthology, *The Jewish Woman*, was called "Tum'ah and Taharah: Ends and Beginnings." It dealt with the ancient laws of purity whose major surviving form is the powerfully valenced body of law and custom concerning women's menstruation. Because this legislation governs sexual and social behavior and attitudes so pervasively, it can be said that menstrual impurity is constitutive of the religious selfhood of women in Orthodox Judaism. I undertook to justify this legislation by constructing around it a feminist theology of purity.

Confronting my essay, I have had to ask myself what is the responsibility of a theologian when she no longer believes what she taught to others as Torah? Merely to recant is insufficient, because theologians are not just theorists. They exemplify ways to live out Jewish commitments with integrity. What I owe to those who read and were persuaded by my theology of purity is not merely to outline abstractly my revised conclusions but to tell a richly detailed story about a particular process of rupture and transformation in a specific time and place.

My task is complicated by the fact that the earlier essay itself represents a kind of transformation—a reframing. Even the title of that project is eloquent: "Tum'ah and Taharah: Ends and Beginnings." It signals that I had defined my topic as a theological understanding of the entire ancient category, and not just the part of it pertaining to women. The title evades the words woman, sex, *niddah* [menstrual impurity], menstruation, and mikveh [the ritual immersion by which purity is achieved]. It also eschews the common euphemism *taharat ha-mishpacha* [the purity of the family], in which women are reduced to a nameless function whereby families are produced and maintained in purity.

In the essay I attempted to reframe the meaning of women's menstrual impurity [*niddah*] by reintegrating it with the other purity regulations stipulated in the book of Leviticus rather than focusing upon it as a unique phenomenon. I interpreted all these regulations as ritual expressions of a single theology of purity equally relevant to women and men. I see clearly now how this generalized reframing reflected my awareness of and hopefulness about egalitarianism as a value in secular society. Probably, it was the discrepancy between my sense of self-worth and entitlement as a participant in secular and in traditional Jewish contexts that heightened my experience of *niddah* as a source of gender stigma. Egalitarianism seeks to normalize women by stressing their similarity to men. That is how I sought to neutralize the stigma of *niddah*: by emphasizing its kinship with the purity laws applicable to men. I maintained that all impurity ritual enacted a common set of meanings. Implicitly, this was a denial that any special "women's meaning" distinguished menstrual impurity from impurities contractable by men. The strategy I chose has been used extensively by secular jurisprudence to neutralize discrimination: Obscure or ignore the differences on which discrimination was predicated and stress instead the commonalities all are presumed to share. That the laws of pollution had once applied to men was therefore indispensible to my argument, even though men had not observed them for many hundreds of years.

It is important to understand that my concerns were as much theological as social. Existing theological justifications of menstrual impurity did not help me to make sense of myself as a God-created creature. They treated

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me, to use Kantian terminology, as a means to someone else's end, rather than as an end in myself. To have the observance of *niddah* and mikveh justified to me as the instrumentality whereby my husband was entitled lawfully to cohabit was both inadequate and insulting.

Indeed, the otherness and the instrumentality of women were foundational presumptions of the men who wrote about these laws. What was significant about menstruation for them was that it made women uniquely capable of causing men to sin by transmitting pollution to them. They never asked themselves how it would feel to be someone to whom such a capacity had been assigned, or whether menstruation might have other meanings to those who menstruated. Their one educational goal was to persuade or terrify women to keep their pollution to themselves.

Some sources threatened nonobservers with death in child-birth or deformed children.[1] Others promised observers a honeymoon every month in compensation for the estrangement of *niddah*, on the dubious assumption that sex is most satisfying when the participants are unfamiliar.[2] The only rationale the sources did not offer was the rationale that motivates all sincere piety, the one held out to men: that observing the commandments would make one holier and bring one closer to God.

I required an explanation which acknowledged my personhood as intrinsically important and affirmed my capacity for spiritual growth. Even more urgently, I needed to understand how a body that menstruates, a body that pollutes, could be a holy body. The male writers were concerned about how women were to comport themselves in their impurity. I wanted to know what it might mean to be pure.

Intuitively, I sensed that the classical texts by themselves would yield no answers. The topic had not interested their creators because women as spiritual subjects had not interested them.[3] I took my questions into fields of secular learning: anthropology, literary criticism, comparative religion. These areas provided perspectives to focus upon the Jewish texts. They offered forms of discourse in which I could view myself as a subject and participant rather than as an object to be passively defined. The classic anthropological work of Mary Douglas taught me a new way to understand the categories of purity and pollution. Douglas argues that the body may be viewed both as a symbol and as a mirror of society. Upon it are inscribed the categories that make sense of the universe. Protecting the demarcation lines of those categories protects us from chaos or meaninglessness. Pollution is the punishment for violating those boundaries, and thus endangering the coherent world. Supplementing Douglas' theory of pollution with a literary reading of the texts in Leviticus, I theorized that the boundary crossed by all those who incurred impurity was the boundary between life and death. I maintained that all of the forms of impurity were regarded as encounters with death and were associated with conditions imaged as death-like or life-diminishing, such as the erosive skin diseases the Bible calls "leprosy" [*tsara'at*], menstruation, and seminal emission, or from nexus situations that bridge the passage between life and death, such as childbirth and the purification ritual for corpse-impurity.

The comparative religion scholarship of Mircea Eliade provided me with an understanding of water as an ancient and universal symbol of regeneration and renewal and of cycles as markers of sacred time and affirmations of return and restoration. Using his formulation, I depicted the mikveh as the womb or the watery chaos from which Creation is elaborated, a life-giving fluidity in which forms can be repeatedly dissolved and made new.

Drawing on these sources, I formulated a theology of purity in which menstrual impurity and mikveh were relocated within a universal cyclical process in which all creation endlessly rehearses its death and rebirth. In the context of this theology, menstruation was not only normalized, it acquired powerful spiritual significance. While the theology justified the laws of menstrual impurity and supported their observance, it sought to reframe their meaning, to remove their stigma and to discover their spiritual value.

The sources I brought to my theology of purity, however, built their arguments upon assumptions very different from my own. In fact, some of the implications of these assumptions were incompatible with Orthodoxy: that diverse religions have comparable or analogous symbols, myths, and practices; that valuations such as pure and impure are socially constructed and not divinely proclaimed; that religious meanings are derived not merely from texts, but from how the words of the texts are lived out in communities. Rabbis who viewed my work as merely an effective apologia for getting educated women to use the mikveh had no interest in pursuing these disturbing implications. They regarded secular sources much the way they regarded women, as instruments, rather than as ends in themselves. But the more I came to understand the scholarly sources I had utilized, the deeper and more troubling were their implicit challenges to the work into which I had incorporated them.

What did it mean to formulate a theology of purity that was blind to gender difference and silent about gender stigma, when the only kind of impurity with behavioral consequences in Orthodox communities is gender specific—menstrual impurity? What did it mean to claim that the theological meaning of *niddah* had to do with sym-

bolisms of life and death, when its impact on women's lives was obviously and concretely sexual? What did it mean to describe *niddah* as part of a cycle when, in the public life of the communities in which it was observed, women were always treated as if they were impure?

Human bleeds.
Human births its worlds
in agonies of blood and
bellyaches... I tear your Torah
verse from verse until it is
broken and bleeding
just like me.

The social facts about impurity in living communities are about the impurity of women. Sexual relations with a *niddah* are forbidden. Also forbidden are physical contacts and expressions of affection, on the grounds that they could lead to sexual relations.[4] In all but the most left-wing Orthodox circles, the general presumption of *niddah* status is a reason for excluding women from conventional social courtesies like shaking hands, and for denying them access to the Torah.[5] In contrast, men experience themselves socially as pure. Although they may meet the qualifications for biblical impurity (having had a seminal emisssion, for instance, or contact with a corpse), there is no behavioral consequence. The only men who have to contend with impurity laws at all are *kohanim*, descendants of the priestly clan, who may not expose themselves to corpse impurity. *Kohanim* who obey these laws, although they probably bear some second hand impurity from polluted others, experience themselves as utterly pure. Socially, then, purity and impurity do not constitute a cycle through which all members of the society pass, as I argued in my essay. Instead, purity and impurity define a class system in which the most impure people are women.

Even a more rigorous literary analysis would have called into question my reading of Biblical purity law. The word *niddah* describes a state which is neither socially nor morally neutral. *Niddah*, from the root NDD, connotes abhorrance and repulsion. In a recurring prophetic motif, it is associated with adultery, idolatry, and murder.[6] The icon for sinful Israel wallowing in its corruption is not the corpse-handler or the leper but the exposed *niddah*, her skirts stained with menstrual blood, shunned by passersby.[7]

I explained that imagery away, interpreting it as an expression of prophetic despair and loathing at societal impurity that refuses to be cleansed. *Tum'ah* [impurity] is a stigma, I argued, only when it is divorced from the purification cycle. At some earlier time in Israel's history, I believed, there had been a Golden Age when the cycle had revolved smoothly and blamelessly for both women and men, and gender had not been a source of stigma. This belief informed my reading of the purity texts of Leviticus. But this belief is untenable.

In his cross-cultural anthropological study, *The Savage in Judaism*, Howard Eilberg-Schwartz argues convincingly that the stigma upon menstrual blood enables ancient Israelite religion to draw a crucial distinction between men's and women's capacities for holiness. The uncontrolled blood flowing from women's genitals is blood which has the power to contaminate. Its antithesis is the blood of circumcision deliberately drawn from men's genitals, which has the power to create covenant. Eilberg-Schwartz emphasizes that the symbolism of the body and its fluids as embedded in categories and rules does not merely reflect but is constitutive of the social structure within which it applies. The Israelite purity symbolism which associates masculinity with fertility and control and femininity with death and disorder constructs a culture in which men dominate women. This polarization of the symbolic meaning of gender is intensified by developments in rabbinic and post-rabbinic Judaism, in which purity laws affecting men become atrophied, while those affecting women are elaborated and made more stringent.

My theology claimed that impurity was universal. The social reality, since the rabbinic period at least, was that impurity was feminine. My theology claimed that impurity was normal and morally neutral. Literary and anthropological evidence, as well as that of contemporary social reality, identify impurity as deviant and a source of stigma and exclusion. In particular, all the meanings of menstrual impurity asserted by my theology are explicitly disconfirmed by historical precedent, by literary analysis, by linguistic usage and by communal practice. And yet women embraced this theology with great fervor and felt transformed by it.

What I had succeeded in creating was a theology for the despised, reminiscent of certain strains of early Christianity, where worldly power went unchecked, the slave remained a slave, the poor stayed poor, the woman subject to her husband, but the meaning of indignity was inverted and transfigured: humiliation was triumph, rejection was salvation, and death, eternal life. My theology upheld the rules and practices that sustained women's impurity by holding out to the impure a never-before experienced sense of purity. For women who

were touched by this theology, mikveh became not merely the water that made one sexually accessible once more, but water that cleansed the soul.

It became acutely painful to me to meet these women at lectures and conferences and have them thank me for a theology I had come to believe both intellectually and morally unjustifiable. It seemed inadequate to tell them I had changed my mind, now that my teaching had been so strongly integrated into their spiritual praxis. I did not know how to be accountable to the people who learned from me. I had never heard a theologian say that he or she had been wrong. In addition, I was left with questions of faith and practice, some of which are still unresolved for me. Is the mikveh usable for women's ritual? Should we ritually acknowledge our menstruation? Can we continue to regard the Holiness Code of Leviticus as sacred text? What does it mean to be pure?

When Jewish women who were not Orthodox appropriated my reframing of immersion in the mikveh to mark occurrences for which no ritual expression had existed, they taught me an important lesson about the possibility of salvage. They began using the mikveh to purify themselves of events that had threatened their lives or left them feeling wounded or bereft or sullied as sexual beings: ovarian tumors, hysterectomies, mastectomies, miscarriages, incest, rape. In waters whose meaning they had transformed and made their own, they blessed God for renewed life. The makers have imbued these rituals with a different understanding of what purity means.

They appear to agree with the writers of the ancient texts that impurity afflicts the embodied human self; it is not a malaise of disembodied soul. But for the feminist Jew, impurity seems to mean the violation of physical or sexual integrity, death by invasion. If purity is the mirroring of God's oneness in human wholeness, it is no less fragile and transitory than humankind itself. Our flesh is gnawed by disease, eroded by age, menaced by human violence and natural disasters. Our minds and our souls are subject to intrusions, exploitations, indignities. We keep breaking or being breached. We keep knitting ourselves together, restoring ourselves, so we can once again reflect God's completeness in our female or male humanity.

When I was Orthodox, I thought that God's Torah was as complete as God: inerrant, invulnerable, invariable truth. I thought that I, the erring, bleeding, mutable creature, had to bend myself to this truth. Whatever I was or saw that did not fit had to be cut off, had to be blocked out. The eye—or the I—was alone at fault. I tried to make a theology to uphold this truth, and as hard as I tried to make it truthful, it unfolded itself to me as a theology of lies.

I do not believe the laws of purity will ever be reinstated, nor should they be. The worlds reflected in such rules are not worlds we inhabit. Neither should we seek to replicate such worlds. They are unjust.

In the mind of God, according to a midrash, is a Torah of black fire written on white fire. In the hands of Jews is a Torah written in gall on the skins of dead animals. And the miracle is that the fire of God's Torah flickers through our scroll. I continue to learn the purity texts, hoping for some yet unglimpsed spark, but that is not enough. I must learn what purity can mean in my own world and in the most human world I can envision. For if ours is a Torah of and for human beings, it may be perfected only in the way that we perfect ourselves. We do not become more God-like by becoming less human, but by becoming more deeply, more broadly, more comprehensively human.

We must keep asking the Torah to speak to us in human, this crude jargon studded with constraints and distortions, silences and brutalities, that is our only vessel for holiness and truth and peace. We must keep teaching each other, we and our study partner the Torah, all that it means to be human. Human is not whole. Human is full of holes. Human bleeds. Human births its worlds in agonies of blood and bellyaches. Human owns no perfect, timeless texts because human inhabits no perfect, timeless contexts. Human knows that what it weds need not be perfect to be infinitely dear.

Sacred need not mean inerrant; it is enough for the sacred to be inexhaustible. In the depths of Your Torah, I seek You out, *Eheyeh*, creator of a world of blood. I tear Your Torah verse from verse, until it is broken and bleeding just like me. Over and over I find You in the bloody fragments. Beneath even the woman-hating words of Ezekiel I hear You breathing, "In your blood, live." □

[1] A traditional source for this view is *B. Shabbath* 31b-32a.

[2] A traditional source for this view is *B. Niddah* 31b. Its most noted modern promulgator is Norman Lamm, *A Hedge of Roses,* 4th ed. (New York: Philip Feldheim, 1972).

[3] I discuss this point more extensively in, "I've Had Nothing Yet, So I Can't Take More" *Moment* 8 (Sept. 1983), 22-26.

[4] Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot 'Isure Bi'ah* 12:18.

[5] Exclusion of menstruants from access to sancta is a matter of folk piety rather than law. See Shaye J.D. Cohen, "Purity and Piety: The Separation of Menstruants from the Sancta," *Daughters of the King: Women and the Synagogue*, edited by Susan Grossman and Rivka Haut. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991).

[6] Lam. 1:8, 17; Ezek. 7:19, 36:17-18; Zac. 13:1; Ez. 7:19-20, 9:11; II Ch. 29:5.

[7] Lam. 1:8, 17.

Stranger in the House

Edith Pearlman

Avigdor never worried about his first wife's faithfulness. Dahlia was pretty in a hot-eyed, half-groomed way; and at parties she'd been openly flirtatious. He remembered her stance, pelvis forward, hand on hip, sleeveless flowered blouse revealing moist dark underarms. He'd shrugged. He knew she preferred him to other men. And he'd had the confidence of his own seductive powers, and of his youth, too, or at least relative youth. He was only fifty when they divorced—a tall man whom women looked at more than once; a French-born Israeli whose slightly accented Hebrew made them listen, made them move closer ...

But he was almost sixty now. And his new wife, Sharon, though (in her own smiling words) no spring chicken, aroused in him a jealousy that flared like ardor. Unlike ardor, it didn't exhaust itself. Some devil kept fanning the flame. It burned now, on an early morning that was still cool, though the day would heat up soon enough—wasn't this Jerusalem in July? The breeze that ruffled the ivy on the balcony seemed to refresh Sharon, to refresh Phil; but he, Avigdor, kept on sweating. He sat like a duenna between them, stiff with his shameful fever. His American wife and his American brother exchanged opinions about American movies across his lap. A code, this?—names like Capra and Cukor and Cary Grant; well, he knew Cary Grant, dead wasn't he? but when alive possessed of a dark smoky glance like Phil's, whose brown eyes were staring right now into Sharon's blue ones. In slightly accented English Phil was making some comment about the pursuit of happiness. Another code? Who was Robert Altman?

Avigdor was not an easy man to delude. But Sharon had muddled him the very night they met, almost two years ago, in Phil's own house in Massachusetts. Phil had introduced his brother from Jerusalem to his neighbor, Sharon Levine. Levine?

Avigdor silently hooted. If this tall, blue-eyed, pearl-haired beauty wasn't an Irishwoman you could cut off his right hand.

But it turned out that Sharon was not only Jewish but halachically Jewish. Her mother—South Boston Irish on both sides—had long ago undergone an Orthodox conversion in order to marry her father, Belkin. The young Sharon Belkin had married a Jewish dentist, Levine, now dead. A kind man, she told him; very possessive, though.

And now she was Sharon Belkin Levine Nathanson. A dragon's tail of Jewish surnames; the face of a Celtic sorceress. And a kind heart too. Monks leaped off cliffs for such women.

"More coffee, Phil?" said Sharon. "Thanks," Phil said, and handed her his cup. "What neighborhood am I looking at?—that far off hill."

"Gilo," Avigdor told him. They could see cars in the distance spurting along the roadway from Gilo. Nearby the Boulevard Herzl pulsed, unseen from their quiet curved street. But Avigdor felt the traffic; it set off an unwholesome thudding in his veins. Automobiles would accomplish Jerusalem's ruin more thoroughly than Arabs or Russians or Ethiopians or Americans. "You're looking over at Gilo," he said again. "Dahlia lives there now."

Philipe had never cared for Dahlia. "I'd like to see your children," he said. He was in town for only two days, on his way home from a cancer convention in Athens.

"Good, call them, they'll want to see you too. They come here a lot. They're crazy about Sharon ..."

"My cooking," she murmured. "... crazy about her, like everybody else. Lucky for us both that I'm not a suspicious man." She gazed at him without smiling. "Call them, Phil," he said, ratcheting his heartiness. "The number's over the telephone. Maybe you'll catch them before they leave for classes. Ask them for ... when, Sharon?"

"Tonight," she said. "Daniel has a lab until five or so."

"Does he." The voice sharp. "He does." The voice mild. Phil got up to telephone. Avigdor kissed Sharon. Her mouth was as jammy as a child's. Her hair, silver

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since the age of eighteen, was swept back from her face and secured by a blue headband. It hung straight and thick almost to her shoulders. He kissed her again. "When will Michael visit us?"

"Next month." Her son was an actor in New York. Her daughter practiced psychology in California. She had a grandchild, too, this enchantress of fifty.

Avigdor was leaving the balcony just as his brother was returning; they had to slide past each other nose to nose. "They're coming tonight," reported Philipe, taking Avigdor's chair. And he was still sitting there fifteen minutes later. His curly head leaned towards Sharon's sleek one. Avigdor, on his way to work, said good-bye to their backs. They turned towards him to echo his words, without apparent guilt.

Their inclined heads shimmered before his eyes as he walked to the bus stop. They must separate soon, he reasoned. Phil had an appointment with a colleague. Sharon had her part-time jobs. Three mornings a week she worked at the Sheridan Institute for Cultural Exchange, a berth for retired diplomats and literary types. Sharon was the Institute's liason with the United States consul. She earned a small salary which, along with a meager income from her husband's estate, she insisted on contributing to their household.

Her afternoon job was unpaid: She worked at an Ethiopian Absorption Center, euphemistically called a hotel. Sharon helped the visiting nurse, soothed the women, played with the children. She had come to believe in their demons and respect their fears. She trusted their notion of physiology, too. Some pains might really be the work of evil spirits, she'd told Avigdor. And perhaps it was true that a miscarriage did not obliterate the infant's soul, that the child lurked in the womb until the next pregnancy. Mother and newborn thrived best if a midwife performed the delivery, she'd informed him with a serious nod. During the eighteen months that Sharon had lived in Jerusalem she had sometimes assisted in sudden labors; she had become a sort of honorary midwife.

"Like a big city taxi driver," Avigdor told her. "Maybe I could become one for real." "A cabbie?" "A midwife." "You'd have to study nursing first." "I could go to nursing school down at Hadassah. I'd take my lunch break in the room with the windows."

The sun pouring through Chagall's ruby and cobalt panes would pool onto her lustrous head, bent over formulas she'd never understand.

"Classes would be conducted in Hebrew," he murmured. "*Nachon*," she said, looking hopeful. It was as if a ventriloquist had thrown the word into her mouth. Her Hebrew was pitiful; she used it only with the local Yemenite grocer, who spoke very little English. "I just *ohev* your *tapuzes*," she exclaimed one day to Amon, holding the oranges in her cupped hands as if they were breasts. Avigdor wondered if she had ever granted her favors to a woman. Sharon soldiered on. "My *ba'ali* here, he *ohevs* them also." And little Amon smiled—a smile that was one part subservience and nine parts adoration.

There had been no further talk of midwifery. But Sharon faithfully attended the Ethiopians. The Hotel was only a block from their apartment. Hundreds of immigrants lived there. They stayed for months, sometimes a year, before another place was found for them. Busloads of children left for school in the mornings and returned in the afternoons. They played on the roof of a parking garage. Sharon reported that on rainy days they rolled marbles in the echoing lobby.

Sometimes Avigdor would pass a small group of young men on the sidewalk. They wore assorted hoodlum garments—jeans, flannel shirts, knitted caps. They spoke Amharic among themselves. He understood a few words of the soft, genderless language. The verb came last in the sentence. A wag of a newspaper columnist had written that the syntax reflected the temperament of the people: their reluctance to take action until the last moment. (The following week several angry letter-writers reviled the columnist.)

Occasionally Avigdor saw women in traditional garments at the bus stop. There was one such woman today. She carried an infant in a sling; a small child clung to her skirt. Patiently they waited. Meekly they boarded the crowded bus and fitted themselves somewhere—he lost sight of them. Such tolerant beings, Sharon had said. They could squat all day long in the corridors of the Hotel, outside their narrow rooms, doing absolutely nothing. She collected medical details. Very little hypertension. Plenty of diabetes, though ...

"They are Jews, after all," he said. "Some of our friends don't think so." "The Rabbis have spoken." "They are treated as underpeople," she said. "They are made infants of. They are discouraged from studying anything—the adults, anyway. Functionaries do their shopping for them."

"They learn Hebrew so slowly," he said. She reddened. He tried to make amends. "They're not used to cars; our traffic could kill them."

"Their rooms have no kitchen equipment," she said. "They aren't allowed to cook in the communal dining room. Paid workers prepare their meals and they are insulted by that, and insulted by the diet we press on them. They hate our food."

"'Our'?" She shook her head in annoyance, and

rightly; she had adapted to the honey and yoghurt and apricots of the Middle East as she had earlier adapted to the pretentious cuisine of her husband the dentist, abandoning the boiled dinner of her mother the convert. But she still sweetened her underwear drawer with her mother's Christmas trick: an orange studded with cloves. She made a new spice ball every week. "Ethiopians gag on our salads," she went on. "In their villages lettuce is fed to horses. It's as if you and I had to eat raw oats."

And now, swinging off the bus at the central station, loping down the Jaffa Road, Avigdor grinned at the image of himself and Sharon feeding out of nosebags. It was his first smile of the day; the jealous spirit that spoiled his pleasure and ruined his temper had at some point jumped off his back.

He walked the six blocks to his building. Cars and buses grunted by; the narrow road was already jammed. He climbed the four flights of stairs to his office, and sat down at his too-neat desk. He was an honored emeritus here—shown off to clients, not asked to do much designing. But he paid close attention to projects. They were extending sewers for a new development north of the city. He spread out the plans: white lines and numbers on blue paper, white filaments on blue ice. When Sharon leaned forward to hear Phil's opinions on Elia Kazan, a lock of hair tumbled in front of her morning-glory eyes. The new pipes would gleam as if lined with beryl.

Young engineers dropped in on him. Between visits his thoughts followed his wife. She left the balcony, she dressed for work, she boarded the first bus, she boarded the second, she entered the Cultural Institute. Her head illumined the brown corridors. She settled herself in her little office. The Chairman of the Board, former Minister Shmuel Ben Zion, would soon be knocking on her door. Wouldn't he?

"He sometimes pokes his head in," Sharon had acknowledged. "Poor man; he hasn't enough work to keep him occupied."

"Poor man! Shmuel Ben Zion? Murdered his first two wives; I have it on good authority."

"Murdered?" she laughed. "Drove them to death with his philandering. Watch out for that goat."

"Poor Shmuel," Sharon insisted. Then she laughed again. "I got mixed up in the beginning, called him Ben."

Avigdor laughed with her, relieved as always by her mild dysfunctional streak. One day he had come home to find Sharon curled in the corner chair next to the stereo, the better to hear a new Brahms disk, though she knew, didn't she, how couldn't she, that the sound from the two speakers converged perfectly on the couch against the other wall.

She'd be sitting at her old fashioned desk now, her legs wound around each other in the privacy of the kneehole. Philipe must be prowling around some hospital, exchanging dark tales with his fellow oncologists. Dahlia hunched over film in her dirty office. Their children shifted glumly on hard chairs within the fortress of the University.

He left his office in the middle of the afternoon. He got off the bus, bought some irises. Flowers in hand, he stopped at the door of Amon's shop and peered into its dark fastness. The Yemenite was leaning against the shelf of preserves, arms folded across his chest.

"Do we need anything?" Avigdor asked. Amon flashed his professional twinkle. "Your lady purchased potatoes, carrots, squash ..."

"Her famous stew." " ... and oranges. No apricots or figs," Amon added with regret.

She would have bought such delicacies earlier, at the shuk, along with beef for the stew. At the shuk she moved from stall to stall without avarice. Under powerful bulbs her hair gleamed like a rich sweetmeat. Here one thing hid another — the open selling of hashish screened the secret selling of opium; the oily vendor of halvah owned a factory and lived in splendor; a poultry man purchased secrets for the Iraqis. Only Sharon was what she seemed: a tall, wide-hipped housewife on her way home from work, stopping by to pick up a few things. "People stare at you here, too," he'd murmured into her ear one afternoon when he'd surprised her at work, accompanied her on the bus, escorted her into the bazaar.

"They stare at us," she'd corrected, stopping. He had to stop as well. She leaned her head into his neck. He dropped his hand onto her shoulder. "You particularly," she said. Shoppers jostled them from behind, muttered, stomped around them. But Avigdor and Sharon held their pose, gazing ahead like a couple on shipboard. "Your pirate's complexion," she said. "Your Gallic complexity. Your long legs. Your British tweeds."

"My gorgeous wife," he said, not lovingly. "Move!" barked a voice at their backs, and so they drifted forward, bride and wary groom ...

"Did she buy coffee?" Avigdor now inquired of Amon. "No." "We need some." Amon nodded, but turned his attention first to a black child and her grandmother. They asked for powdered milk, the child interpreting the old woman's Amharic. The old woman picked up the milk and put some coins on the counter. Then she thought of something else. "Tapuzim," translated the child, holding up two fingers. Amon gave the

child the oranges. "Bakshish," he smiled, waving away further payment.

Did Sharon get oranges free too? Avigdor sourly watched Amon grind the coffee beans. He walked home, strode up the stone stairs. He remembered the two heads outlined against the pale morning. He banged into the apartment.

He sniffed. The spicy, nutty smell of her stew drifted towards him. He peeked. Languidly she moved from sink to stove. Even at the airport, while Israelis shoved, Sharon merely drifted towards the gate, passively maintaining her position in their midst. He wondered how she'd behave in a fire.

Fresh from the shower, Philipe sat on the living room couch reading the newspaper and listening to Chopin. His shirt of narrow blue and white stripes must have cost a hundred dollars. "You look Parisian," said Avigdor by way of greeting.

"Do I? I feel as American as all get-out." They had both left France after the war, Avigdor for Palestine, Philipe and their parents for America. "I hate Paris, in fact," Philipe added in an amiable way.

Sharon, entering with a bowl of anemones for the coffee table, said, "I love the gardens there. The flowers."

"Oh the flowers," said Philipe, straightening a blossom.

"Mine," said Avigdor, handing her his irises, upside down.

While they were waiting for the kids he made cocktails. He made Sharon's too strong and Philipe's too weak. Each complained. When Daniel and Dinah burst in there was a storm of embraces. Daniel wrapped his arms around Sharon from behind and pulled a pack of cigarettes from her apron pocket. Before dinner Dinah and Sharon disappeared into the bedroom for ten minutes and came out rosy and laughing. Avigdor knew that Dinah never confided in her mother. Poor, shunned Dahlia.

At dinner he spoke French to his brother; Hebrew to both kids; Arabic to Dinah, who was studying the language. He said nothing at all to Sharon. After dinner he took his brandy out onto the balcony and stood glowering down into the street where an old Ethiopian woman and a child were hanging about under the lamp.

The kids whisked Philipe off to a new bar. "Everyone makes use of you," Avigdor said to Sharon.

"You're like this damned city."

"You have a choice, Vig," she said, smoking at him in the bedroom. Her blouse, partly unbuttoned, revealed her fragrant hills. "You can trust me or you cannot. If you choose to trust me, b'seder." She paused. "All right," she translated in a tentative way, as if she was not sure she had properly pronounced the phrase that any wooden-headed tourist could manage. "But if you choose not to trust me," she continued. And then did not continue. Her eyes filled, and she shook her head heavily as if in slow recognition of destiny: The men who loved her would forever doubt her.

She had twice separated from her first husband because of his suffocating attention. Avigdor knew that she was capable of leaving him, too. She would pack up her small wardrobe and her few books; she would remove her unproductive stock certificates from the safe; she would take an airport bus and idle towards the gate and board a plane. She would rent an apartment in the town she came from; she would get a job; she would serenely begin life again. He knew that to keep her he'd have to ignore the lustful eyes of his brother, of his son, of Amon and ben Zion and doddering diplomats and guests at cocktail parties and Dinah and men in the street and Cary Grant. He had to trust his wife.

Two weeks later he came home early again. He carried no flowers. He would have picked up fruit and coffee but Amon's shop was closed. Though unencumbered by packages he climbed the stairs slowly. As he fitted his key into the lock he heard a voice. The voice, he was certain, came from the bedroom.

"You have a choice," she had told him. He chose. He chose not to trust her. He turned the key as softly as he could. He entered on tiptoe. He stood briefly in the little hall. The living room was empty, as he had expected.

The voice—it was Sharon's—rose and fell. He could hear the caress in the tones, but he could not understand the words. Moving closer to the door, which was ajar, he could still not make out the sense. And even when he saw the two of them, facing each other cross-legged on the bed, each pricking an orange with cloves, the words remained unfamiliar, though his accomplished ear recognized sounds of love. The little girl, who was facing the door, saw him, and cried "Ah!"—a syllable of surprise in any language. Then the child reached for Sharon's hair. The small dark fingers grasped at the candescent strands, black fire on white fire. Sharon turned her head, though the movement must have hurt her, for the fist still clung. She smiled at her husband—that blameless, ruinous smile—and then turned back to the child. She gently loosened the fingers and spoke several reassuring sentences. Avigdor, though his brain was whirling, realized that what he was listening to was confident, fluent Amharic.

He experienced a warm inner stirring. A man more easily fooled might have mistaken this feeling for admiration, even for love. But he knew that it was only his old jealousy, implacably expanding. Avigdor would now find room in his heart to suspect Ethiopians, every glistening man among them; and their children, too. □

Back to Basics: A Politics of Meaning for Education

Svi Shapiro

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

Basic Skills: Toward a Curriculum for Survival

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

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

How the public discourse about educational basics came to be so thoroughly identified with the Right is one of the most instructive political phenomena of recent years for those seeking to promulgate a progressive agenda. Throughout the Reagan and Bush years, conservatives championed the position that public education must focus on the acquisition of literacy skills among children. Former Education Secretary William J. Bennett and his minions pilloried liberal educators' policies and practices, blaming them for the decline in kids' ability to read or write. Liberal education practitioners were depicted as hostile to the salience of the basics in school curricula.

There is considerable evidence that the conservative attack on liberal education policy was a misrepresentation or obfuscation of reality. Nevertheless, framing the educational debate in these terms has been disastrous for progressives, since it has cast the long-term struggle for social justice in America in opposition to the more immediate concerns of parents. Literacy as the concern of schooling has been falsely counterposed to the goals of an education that might help bring about a more equitable social order.

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

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survival in a hazardous, fragile, and precarious world.

Parents' desire for their children to master the basics is both understandable and rational, as is their desire for their children to possess the skills and knowledge they need to survive in the world. It is not the reactionary response of know-nothings wishing merely to repeat their own school experiences and stubbornly refusing to try anything new. Yet, if alarm over survival, for ourselves and our children, drives the wish that kids master the basics and become minimally competent, it is a sadly restricted and unimaginative notion of what it takes to survive. While the emotion-laden discourse of basics is deeply rooted in the experience of individuals struggling daily with the crises of survival—material, moral, spiritual, and psychological—in its present, limited form it offers very little to help us cope with existing realities.

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

The basic skills perspective, as it has been defined by conservatives, thus mirrors the Right's orientation to the world: Life consists of isolated acts and events without pattern, structure, or unfolding narrative. The basics approach to curriculum has little interest in making sense of the world, in connecting experience with meaning or meaning in one part of our world with that in another. The knowledge conveyed through such schooling is fragmented and experienced as isolated bits of information. Unconcerned with matters of awareness, insight, or imagination, it supplies, instead, a set of skills and the knowledge needed to simply (if not easily) get by.

A progressive agenda for schools must include the technical skills necessary for economic survival. But we also want to expand the definitions employed in this discourse and attach its concerns to broader, more transformative goals. Schools should indeed instruct students in the skills, knowledge, and abilities that will enable them to cope with the demands of the everyday world. This means that schools must help students learn to think critically about what they read as well as what they receive through the media. Literacy is a necessary but insufficient expectation of schools; it must become a critical literacy, the capacity to penetrate the surface descriptions that commonly represent (or misrepresent) our world. Reading must enable kids not only to read the word, but, as the Brazilian educator Paolo Freire has suggested, to "read the world."

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

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

Work: Powershift and Educational Reform

A resonant progressive agenda for education must deal with the connection between jobs and schooling. Whatever disdain radical and progressive critics may have for the increasing vocationalization of schooling—the reduction of broad educational goals to specialized or technical skills—its importance to people cannot be dismissed. Decent employment stands at the center of most of our attempts to establish the conditions for fam-

ily security and material well-being. And education is the means by which most people hope to attain these goals. But a progressive education agenda recasts training for work, taking it beyond the traditional, narrowly conceived, specialized forms of vocational or technical training.

Support for a broader conception of education for work has begun to grow among a number of influential constituencies. Concern over low or declining productivity has directed attention recently to the problems of human capital formation—the need for an educated, trained, and skilled work force capable of meeting the demands of an advanced industrial infrastructure and defending itself against the effects of low-wage competition from developing countries. Addressing the problems of low productivity, a number of commentators (including Thomas J. Peters and William G. Ouchi) have proposed strategies aimed at wider worker participation such as broader control of investment decisions, a democratization of the structure of the workplace, support for the introduction of "democratic technology," and the need for a more responsive and accountable corporate sector. These analysts have argued that only through such changes will it be possible to address the economic (as well as the social and human) needs of the United States in the coming years. The widely reported—if limited—experiments in decentralized management, quality circles, job rotation, and cooperative decision-making as well as the widespread interest in Japanese forms of corporate management have opened up unprecedented possibilities for an expansion of responsibility and control in their work by workers and middle-level employees. Clearly, we cannot disregard the manipulative nature of many of these changes, which stem from managements' attempts to squeeze more productivity out of workers. Yet they are nonetheless tacit recognition of the need to address the creative and participative dimensions of workers' lives.

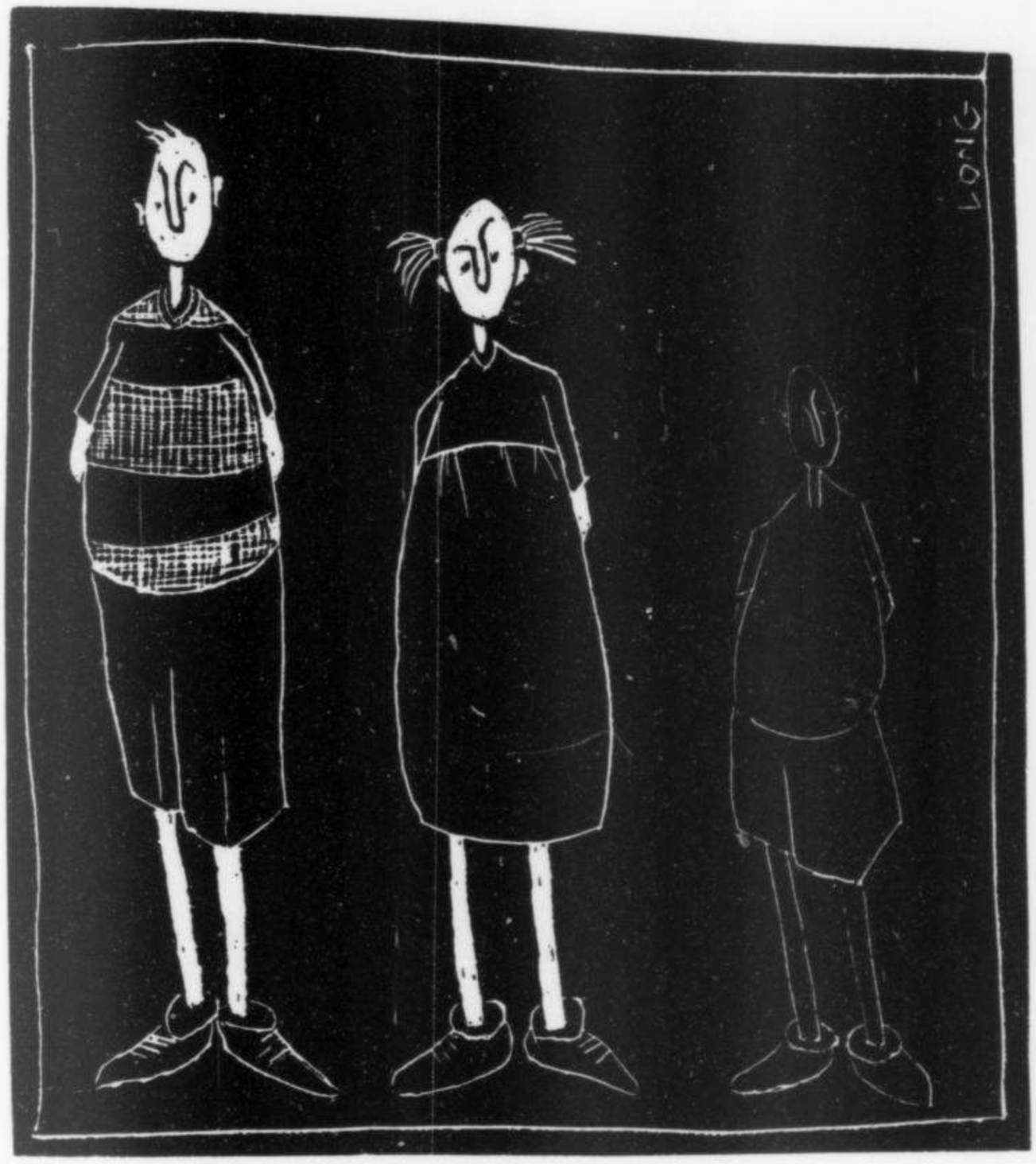
A more flexible, democratically structured workplace requires workers who have been educated more broadly than existing specialized technical training curricula allow. While specialized training will certainly be a component of the new vocational curriculum, it might also include "training" in democratic processes, the capacity to evaluate social needs critically, and the human and environmental consequences of economic decisions. It would have to take seriously the functioning of institutional democracy, the politics of control, the assumption of collective responsibility, the negotiation of priorities, the elaboration of procedures, and the resolution of conflicts—all of which can be learned only through opportunities for genuine democratic participation and governance in our education institutions.

Given the hierarchial and authoritarian character of most American schools, such change would be every bit as radical as the changes proposed for the control of the workplace itself—no less than a democratic restructuring of educational institutions. While a human capital focus implies only the need for an appropriate specialized education, the social restructuring of industry to unite the concern for the execution and conception of tasks requires an education system that allows individuals to understand the broader purposes and ends of production and other activities in their society—an understanding that includes a critical examination of existing purposes as well as possible alternatives. To make popular participation in fundamental industrial planning and investment decisions feasible, workers must have developed awareness of and insight into the interrelatedness of such decisions with matters of social, human, and cultural significance; the effects of the allocation of human and material resources; the consequences of industrial development on the environment; the issue of human needs and appropriate or necessary levels of consumption; productivity and the relation between work and leisure time; the relationship between forms of technology and human experience; and the interconnections of the world economy.

Thus, a more democratic approach to the management of economic institutions requires moving from an education in which a highly circumscribed knowledge is emphasized to one embracing the totality of social concerns and relationships. Specialized training gives way to education aimed at broad understanding of the meaning and purpose of a productive life. In an important sense, education for economic democracy implies a renewed commitment to cultural education—one in which human life, its meaning and significance, and the social order in which these are constituted are central concerns. The questions that are integral to an education for economic democracy transcend those derived from technical criteria. Issues of allocating resources, environmental effects, technology and worker experience, or work and leisure cannot be dealt with through an instrumental rationality, since they are indissolubly connected to wider aesthetic, ethical, and existential considerations.

While the technical training of human capital embodies a rationality in which ends, purposes, and effects of economic activity are, to a large extent, presupposed (the "bottom line" is always efficiency, the minimization of costs, and the maximization of profits), the notion of meaningful economic democracy implies choice among the possible goals of our productive energies. Education geared toward economic democracy would

be likely to raise questions about the wisdom or necessity of centralization and concentration of industrial development; the possibility of forms of technology that enhance rather than reduce craftsmanship and worker creativity; the development of labor-saving technologies versus full employment; and the social need or usefulness of current industrial priorities (for example, the emphasis on private modes of transportation).



Social Responsibility: Schooling for an Ethic of Communal Care

Across a wide and divergent set of social constituencies, there is a sense that American society has become irresponsible. From left to right it is argued that there is a deep moral crisis manifested in selfish, narcissistic, and careless attitudes and a lack of mutuality and obligation to others, although the causal factors of this crisis vary significantly depending upon the ideological perspective of the viewer. For some (most often conservatives), the crisis stems from the spread of an ethos of entitlement and the desire for immediate gratification and pleasure without any concomitant sense of obligation. For others, usually progressives, irresponsibility toward the society takes the form of extreme individualism and materialism exemplified by the get-rich-quick philosophy of the 1980s that seems to have so shaped the industrial and economic decline of the United States in the 1980s and 1990s. Its face is the Savings and Loan scandal, the merger mania and financial double-dealings on Wall Street, and the flight of capital and industrial plants from the United States to cheaper labor markets in the developing world. Other manifestations include the misuse and abuse of natural resources and indifference to the dangerous, hazardous, and wasteful environmental consequences of corporate behavior. Proponents of this view decry the emergence of a society that treats with indifference or callous disregard the growth of homelessness, poverty among children, and degradation of public utilities and amenities. The language of individual responsibility toward society thus resonates within many sectors of the national culture. This is a function of the strength of its appeal, but therein also lies its weakness: it can become all things to all people. "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country" lends itself as easily to militaristic patriotism as it does to concern for the social ills of our nation. Yet the risk is worth taking. The moral imperative to cultivate a concern for the welfare of the larger community among the young is the underpinning for any progressive agenda for the schools.

While most of us might agree that there is a greater need for social responsibility, ensuring that it takes the form of compassionate concern for those in our community who are poor, excluded, and victimized rather than mindless flag-waving will require public debate. It will help to keep in mind that the intensity of emotion surrounding the question of the flag and other expressions of patriotism reveals the desperate desire for a strong sense of community in a highly fragmented, atomized, and egotistical culture.

There is potentially great support for a dimension of schooling that seeks to inculcate in youngsters a sense

of the importance of service to the community; the development of an attitude of care and stewardship of our natural environment; the value of aiding the sick, the elderly, those who are alone; the importance of doing for others and not simply taking for oneself; the value of addressing the consequences of social injustice whether among the poor, immigrants, the homeless, the handicapped, the sick, or those subject to discrimination and racism. How these impulses might be addressed, developed, and nourished in schools is best left to local educators and institutions. The particular emphasis will depend on the place and character of their school and the community of which it is a part.

Linking education to the individual's responsibility for society requires addressing a widely perceived crisis in citizenship. The degeneration of active, meaningful, and involved citizenship is most readily discernible in voting behavior, although it is also apparent in the now well-documented apathy and disinterest among young people toward national and international events and affairs. In emphasizing the need to take citizenship education out of the textbooks and into the community, a progressive educational agenda might find allies among those who have long advocated mandatory community service as high school and college requirements. Such community service expands democratic participation, deepens civic awareness and understanding, and enhances the concern for social justice. The crisis of electoral apathy and civic disaffiliation might provide an important opening to an education for greater political empowerment.

Discipline: Unlearning the Culture of Narcissism

The question of discipline in schools ranks very high among the concerns of parents and other members of the public, cutting across races and classes. Survey after survey demonstrates that Americans expect schools to teach disciplined behavior to the young. Parents and other citizens consistently have voiced alarm about the failure of schools to ensure that young people develop sufficient respect for authority and appropriate attitudes and behavior.

Predictably, this concern has been a central element of conservative discourse about schools and a focal point of the Right's educational agenda throughout the 1970s, '80s, and '90s. And, for a number of compelling reasons, the Left has been hostile to these widely supported public demands. For example, the call for order and discipline often has elements of a deeply rooted psychological interest in squelching children's playful, erotic, and anarchic impulses.

However, the widespread concern, even panic, about the lack of discipline among the young may also be a response to other aspects of our society and culture. It is time to re-examine this position with more care and sympathy. We live in an era characterized by cultural relativism; few elements of our moral and normative world remain unquestioned or sacrosanct.

Notwithstanding the periodic efflorescence of "traditional" patriotic, family-centered, career-oriented values, the pervasive influence of disbelief and cultural/moral flux is simultaneously at work in our culture, arguably making cynicism the characteristic attitude of our time.

Whatever its reasonableness, the concern for inculcating discipline and restraint is usually expressed through coerciveness and demands for conformity and a blind submission to power. The usual inflection of the public discourse on discipline remains narrowly focused on behavior, and "discipline in schools" translates into keeping kids under control, managing their behavior, and exacting compliance with the rules of the institution—whether or not there is any real comprehension of why the rules exist, or whom they are intended to benefit. As a response to the need to promote thoughtful self-regulation and reflection on the effects of one's actions on others, our present approach to discipline is self-defeating and futile. Its demand for mindless restraint and conformity brings into further disrepute and contempt among the young the real value of discipline as a dimension of human conduct.

Our agenda for education must affirm the validity, and indeed the dire necessity, of discipline as a way of being human in the world. The Left's inability to incorporate the importance of human discipline into its education project has allowed the Right's monopolization of an issue of enormous public concern. Yet our condition as a national and international community cries out for an alternative, socially sensitive, humanly transformative notion of discipline—not the rejection of discipline among the young as an educational goal, but its redefinition. Discipline as a practice concerned with an unreflective, unthinking obedience toward authority is to be rejected. To insist on such behavior among the young is, for obvious reasons, antithetical to the education of citizens for a thoughtful, questioning democratic culture where individuality and dissent are valued and prized.

Yet in a society rife with unbridled egoism, greed, excessive consumption, the misuse of limited resources, and indifference to the impact of how we live on the lives of others, a discipline that might instruct the young about the need to moderate one's demands and to act

(Continued on p. 75)

Joseph : A Study in Assimilation and Power

Daniel R. Shevitz

The Joseph stories at the end of the Book of Genesis bring us deep into Egypt. It is an uncomfortable, even unnerving story, with none of the familiar landmarks—geographical, historical, or literary—of the previous patriarchal narratives. The story begins as a brief excursion, a detour from the narrative of the Hebrews of Hebron, much like other digressions such as the stories of Judah and Tamar, or of the line of Ishmael.

So we assent to the detour and go with Joseph into Egypt. But this detour seems without end. What are we doing here in this God-forsaken country of Egypt for so long? By the end of the *parasha* (section of the Torah read in the synagogue) we realize that we're not going back to the Land of Israel for a long time. This is "home" now. The reader, like the family of Jacob, has been captured and exiled to an alien nation.

It is fitting that we make this journey with Joseph, who is anomalous among the early Israelite ancestors. His ambiguity is not incidental to his role in the Genesis narrative. In fact, the Joseph story is precisely about ambiguity: It reflects a venerable Jewish ambivalence about power and assimilation.

Who is this Joseph, this first-generation Egyptian who has broken the family traditions of three generations and forged a successful life in the New Country, this presumptuous and self-absorbed brat who tradition will later dub Joseph the Righteous? Is he part of the story of the Patriarchs, God's chosen family, or is he part of the story of the enslavement? Although Scripture suggests the former, the Rabbis decided to date the beginning of the enslavement from the moment Joseph is brought to Egypt.

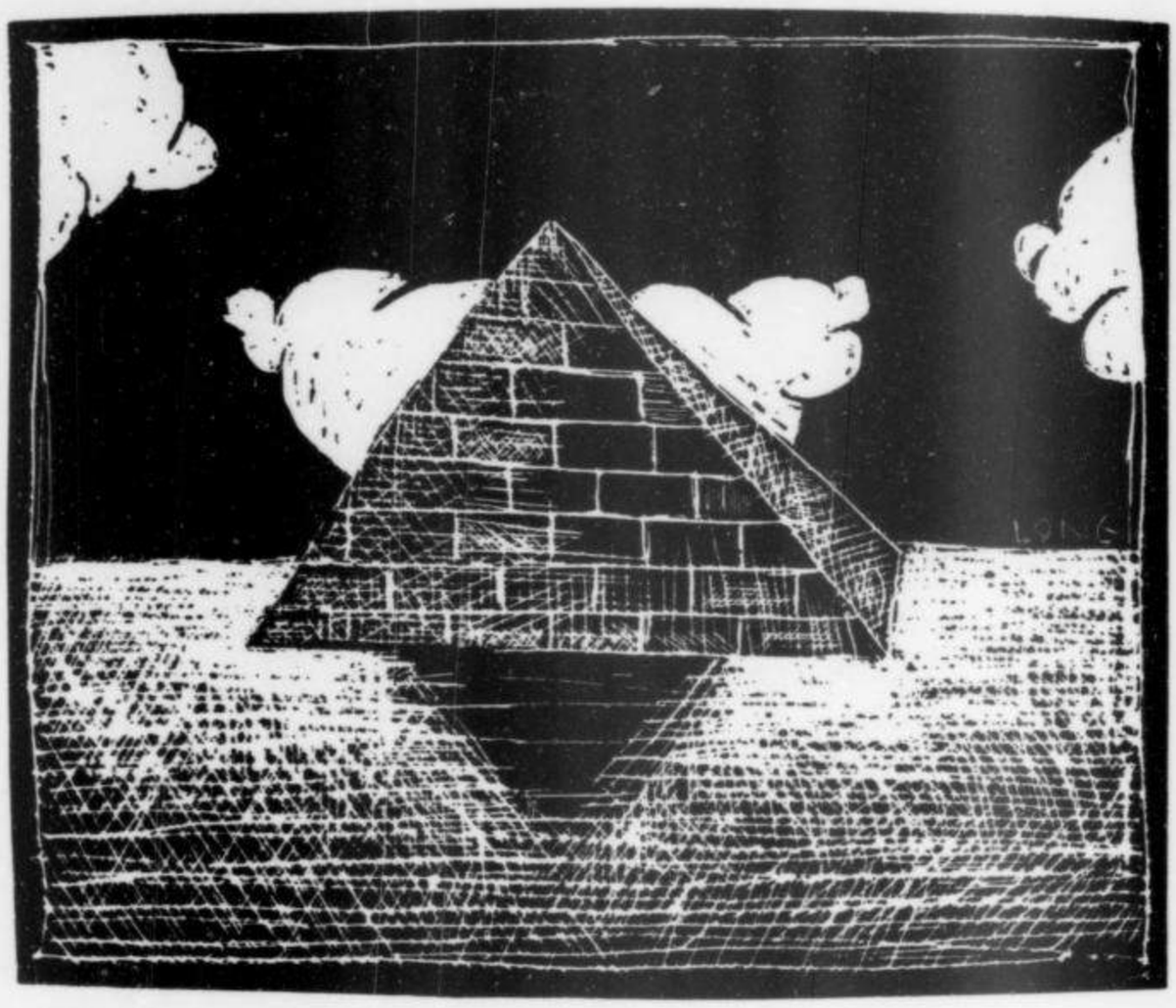
In fact, Joseph is part of both stories, part of Canaan and part of Egypt. He is the center of a transition and a transformation that will move from the personal crises and triumphs of Genesis into the political and national drama of Exodus. Yosef ben Yaacov (Joseph son of Jacob) and Tsafnat Panech (the Egyptian name bestowed upon him by Pharaoh): Joseph is the liminal intersection of two stories, one uniquely Jewish, and one that juxtaposes two politically competing cultures.[1]

Genesis is the story of a family, the Hebrews of Canaan. How did this family of seventy souls turn, by the beginning of the Book of Exodus, into a people of 600,000, ready to be drawn out to independent national identity? A famous rabbinic legend suggests that in fact the conditions of slavery in Goshen made for enhanced fertility, with the resulting multiple births accounting for this rapid population explosion. But other traditions more plausibly argue that the miserable conditions of the enslavement destroyed family life. This suggests that something other than natural biological increase was at work.

Egypt is the first exile, and although he does not know it, Joseph was the first diaspora Jew.

The only way to understand this phenomenon is to see the story of Israel in Egypt as a political story as well as a religious one. Living in Goshen, participating in the commercial life around them, the Hebrews found that their foreign traditions, both repugnant and fascinating to the native population, did not succeed in insulating them from Egyptian influences. As the period of their residence lengthened and their participation in Egyptian society increased, rather than experiencing the loss of Hebrew identity, the Hebrews prospered through these contacts. The nation grew by accretion, by the inmigration of Egyptians. Thus, Joseph's religiously questionable intermarriage with Poti-fera (upon which the Scripture does not comment) becomes the prototype of a natural, predictable social and political process. It is more than a bit ironic that what Shechem and Hamor proposed in Genesis 34—political and social merger—

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rejected by Jacob's family as unthinkable, now becomes inevitable, the well-spring of Israel's eventual strength. The mixed multitude that will accompany Israel out of Egypt has its beginnings with Joseph's almost total assimilation into Egyptian social life. In this way, Joseph unwittingly inaugurates the Jewish polity.

The earlier Patriarchs are firmly tethered to the land promised to Abraham; although they may leave in hard times, they always return, and they are vouchsafed divine promises of the land that they and their generations will possess. Not Joseph: He leaves as a young man, never to return in life except to bury his father. But he is more than the first Israeli emigrant; his is not so much a transplanting from one country to another as a movement from rootedness to transience, from landlord to guest, from sacred history to realpolitik.

Egypt is the first exile, and although he will never know it, Joseph was the first diaspora Jew. The Joseph narratives are unlike all subsequent exile stories because we do not yet have an awareness of, and consequently have no theory of, exile. There is no prophetic denunciation or consolation; there is no national commemoration of destruction. This is one of the most frightening aspects of the story for the contemporary reader. Do we see our own complacence in and acceptance of a splendiferous exile anticipated in the insouciant emigration of Jacob and his family?

What methods does Joseph the Viceroy of Egypt use to survive? He relies on the centralization of power and the deracination of the populace. Propelled by his self-conscious status as a foreign import and ever wary of the charge of disloyalty, Joseph despoils Egypt and delivers to Pharaoh the land and very bodies of the Egyptians. Should we be surprised, then, when a new Pharaoh uses this same method to enslave Joseph's descendants? Joseph has stepped out of the sacred history of his Israelite family and entered the world of politics and power.

A most compelling commentary on Joseph's realpolitik comes from Aaron Wildavsky, a political scientist who has branched out into biblical studies. In "What is Permissible So That This People May Survive? Joseph the Administrator," Wildavsky portrays Joseph as totally reprehensible. He points out that Joseph belongs among a group of foreign-born rulers who, in their new land, are nationalistic in the extreme, including Napoleon, Hamilton, Hitler, and Stalin.

Even in his dreaming, Joseph has assimilated to Egyptian culture. He learned his dreaming from his father, to be sure; Jacob too was a chronic dreamer. But Jacob dreamed mainly of God and sheep, two staples of the Land of Israel. Joseph has diversified considerably, dreaming of Pharaoh's court, of power, and of authority. Unlike any of his famous ancestors, he alone has no vision of God. Although he may invoke the Divine Name in pious language, it rings hollow. Joseph is more comfortable serving Pharaoh than serving God.

Is this view of Joseph unnecessarily harsh? After all, his actions do allow for the survival of the Jewish people in an alien land. While Scripture admires Joseph's accomplishments, it also offers a compelling answer to Joseph in the person of Moses. Joseph embraces a life of power in Egypt; Moses disdains it. Joseph wants his brethren to settle in Egypt; Moses routs them out. Joseph creates the circumstances that favor slavery; Moses overturns them. And while Joseph must go along to get along, Moses follows only the divine command, wherever it may lead.

But apart from Moses, Scripture offers an even more damning evaluation of Joseph: the response of the Book of Esther. The two story lines parallel one another: A secret Jew finds him/herself in a high place in the royal court where Jews are a minority and a perceived threat and, through cleverness, works a political coup for the Jewish people, saving them from disaster. Mordechai is well placed at court but refuses to compromise his religious

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Five Words For Jewish Leaders: *You Still Don't Get It*

Nessa Rapoport

In 1992, "Jewish continuity" became the obsession of American Jewish leaders. Confronted with the results of the widely discussed 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, showing that intermarriage has reached an unprecedented 52 percent nationwide, and that the children of such marriages are far less likely to identify as Jews, leaders of the major organizations in Jewish communal life are urgently seeking the means that will most effectively insure the perpetuation of the American Jewish community into the coming century.

Despite all the rhetoric generated by the survey, however, no one seems to be confronting the central issue: Jewish continuity equals, quite literally, the bearing and raising of committed Jewish children. If Jewish leaders fear a loss of continuity, why aren't they doing more to help Jewish families? Judaism is supposed to value a strong family life but the organized Jewish community has not made a serious commitment to child care and support services for the parents of young children.

American families are raising their children in the least supportive society in the industrialized world. The United States lags far behind Europe and Israel in such necessities as quality subsidized day care and affordable health care, as well as in the less quantifiable manifestations of our attitudes toward children apparent in the provisions made for them in many arenas of public life—transportation systems, restaurants, and communal events.

Jewish families bear additional burdens. As the population survey makes clear, formative childhood experiences that correlate with a strong Jewish identity in adulthood include education in a Jewish day school, synagogue attendance, Jewish summer camping, and travel to Israel in adolescence. You don't need to be an economist to understand that providing children with these experiences requires a disproportionate amount of money and logistical support.

A study by the American Jewish Committee, "The High Cost of Jewish Living," estimated that a middle-class Jewish family of five in 1992 would need an annual income of between $80,000 and $125,000 to pay for day school education, summer camp, and synagogue and community center memberships. In 1986, however, even before the recession began, almost 90 percent of Jewish households had incomes of less than $80,000.

If these figures are accurate, they signify that in most committed Jewish families the women will have to work full-time. Yet because the practice of Judaism is home-centered, requiring preparation for fifty-two Sabbaths and thirteen days of Jewish holidays, some of which inevitably fall on work days, committed Jewish women are under tremendous pressure. Shopping, cleaning, cooking, table-setting, bathing and dressing children in holiday clothes: How does it all get done when mothers are rushing home from full-time jobs and are also primarily responsible at home?

Although their work days are as long as their mates', women are still chiefly in charge of cooking, laundry, playdates, homework supervision, sicknesses and emergencies, festivals and funerals. American women who work full-time spend the equivalent of one month of twenty-four hour days more than their husbands running their households, "the second shift" that sociologist Arlie Hochschild chronicled in her book of that title.

Any society that is not suicidal recognizes that it has a stake in its children. Since only women can physically carry, bear, and—if they choose—nurse children, European countries regard it as enlightened self-interest to support mothers and their families by mandating the payment of women's salaries for the first three months after childbirth and guaranteeing their jobs for a fixed amount of time thereafter. Not only does this policy benefit the family at a point of financial stress, but it also acknowledges that pregnancy and childbirth are physically demanding, and that the first weeks after childbirth are both physically and emotionally consuming.

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Most American women, in contrast to their European counterparts, will return to full-time work between six weeks and three months after they give birth, because most jobs offer minimum "disability" pay for six weeks (under New York State law, for example) and unpaid leave only at the rare discretion of the employer.

Despite their public distress about shrinking Jewish birthrates, Jewish organizations proffer no more enlightened family employment policies than do non-Jewish employers. To my knowledge, most Jewish institutions offer their employees no paid maternity leave, no job guarantees, and no willingness to allow a new mother to return to work part-time. Recently one of my friends was fired by an international Jewish organization devoted to saving Jews for the effrontery of having two babies within two years; another was denied her request to return to work part-time—at a Jewish women's organization.

Contrast our situation to the lives of our Israeli peers. Israeli mothers receive their full salaries for the first twelve weeks after childbirth and have a guaranteed job for up to one year. Not only is quality day care readily available but nursing mothers are permitted by law to work one hour less a day in order to feed their babies.

The more enlightened American employers are beginning to realize that, with the decline in the educated labor force, it is good business to create a workplace hospitable to working mothers so that they can retain these women's talents. Given their professed goals, Jewish organizations have an even higher stake in encouraging Jewish women to use their skills and experience on behalf of the Jews while they are raising Jewish children.

Jewish leaders should be worrying about the third children that committed Jewish women aren't having. While just over 17 percent of white American women have an undergraduate college degree or higher, the figure is over 50 percent for American Jewish women. These Jewish women tend to have children later in life, after they've garnered the training they need in today's extremely competitive marketplace, and so have fewer. It is no wonder that most Jewish women stop after two children—they face the constraints of complex, demanding work in a society that doesn't value children, a workplace structured without consideration for family needs, and a Jewish community that pays lip-service to children without providing the services they require. And if Jewish women can afford to take part-time work, enabling them to devote more time to their children, they are nevertheless unlikely to be able to find it, since the number of part-time jobs in America has remained static since the 1950s.

Who, then, is taking care of young children when both parents must work? And who is paying for it? The extended family, geographically intact and available, is no more. We baby boom parents are raising a second baby boom in numbers, and we are spending a good part of one salary paying private babysitters who are unregulated, usually untrained—and yet the best we are able to find. American tax law allows only a modest deduction for the expenses of caring for children while their parents contribute to the GNP. (In New York City in 1992, for example, a full-day babysitter begins earning a minimum of $300 a week and, within four years, may be paid $425 or more a week—more than $22,000 a year after taxes—should a family be fortunate enough to find a babysitter who will stay that long.)

Jewish families are utterly dependent on reliable childcare when both parents are working full-time. And yet the National Jewish Population Survey revealed that Jewish institutions are failing to meet the needs of our children from birth to age five. The Walt Disney Company has figured out that's where its new audience is. Why haven't the Jews? Instead of filling the childcare gap from which American society suffers, the organized Jewish community has abandoned us.

Even if the Clinton administration is far more successful in advancing the agenda of child care than past administrations, we cannot afford to wait for public policy to catch up with the needs of Jewish families. Within ten years, the second Jewish baby boom will be too old to benefit from the childhood experiences considered optimal for enhancing Jewish identity.

Although Jewish tradition sets a very high value on the rearing and educating of children, our child rearing remains privatized and impossibly onerous. For all the pieties from pulpits and organizational soapboxes, we do not have child-centered communities in which young children are not only properly and consistently cared for as an institutionalized communal value, but are given in the course of that care exciting and enticing Jewish experiences that encourage them to love their heritage from the beginning. The current reality forces every Jewish family to fend for itself. Rather than setting a communal agenda that eschews American individualism in this most essential sphere, our leaders have assimilated the worst of American social norms.

What can Jewish leaders do to best insure Jewish continuity—and support Jewish families in the enterprise of having children?

• Demand that synagogues, Jewish community centers, or other appropriate institutions offer affordable high-quality day care based on Jewish values to their em-

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Jewish Ethics and Abortion

David Kraemer

Contemporary Jewish commentators have written repeatedly on the question of Jewish law/values/ethics and abortion, some supporting it and others voicing condemnation. But virtually without exception, even when they have claimed to be speaking of values or ethics, their discourse shows that they have really meant Jewish law (Halacha). For those who are primarily concerned with ethics as such (henceforth: "ethicists"), there is no reason to grant that the two are the same—and considerable reason to argue they are not.

The crucial differences between Halacha and ethics are fourfold. Halacha defines a narrow canon, ethics should not. Halachists believe "Torah" (broadly defined) is eternal, contemporary; ethicists will understand the tradition contextually. Halachists submit to the final authority of their sources, ethicists exercise their judgment. Perhaps most crucially, halachists prefer clear, definitive conclusions, whereas ethicists will understand that complex ethical questions often do not yield univocal, overarching answers. It is obvious that the two are radically different enterprises, and the standards and assumptions of Halacha are obviously not appropriate for the ethicist.

At the same time, rejection of halachic discourse does not require the abandonment of traditional Jewish sources; it is possible to do ethics with traditional sources without accepting the ways of Halacha. In what follows, I hope to show how this can be done, first by reviewing and critiquing the common halachic approach to abortion and then illustrating the alternative.

The biblical text most often cited in connection with the abortion question is Exodus 21:22-3. The verses describe a case of two men who, in the course of a scuffle, unintentionally strike a pregnant woman, who then miscarries. The text continues: "If there be no catastrophe, he shall be punished according to what the woman's husband shall exact from him, it shall be determined through adjudication. But if there be catastrophe, then you shall give life for life...."

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Rabbinic tradition understood "catastrophe" to mean harm to the mother. Thus, if the mother's life was lost, so too should the life of the perpetrator be taken. But if the fetus was lost, no such "life for life" penalty was demanded. On this basis, halachists have argued that the fetus was not valued as a life; feticide is not a capital crime.

Citations of rabbinic literature relevant to this question begin with *Mishna Ohalot* 7.6:

> If a woman has difficulty in childbirth, we cut up the offspring in her womb and remove it limb by limb, because her life comes before its life. If most of it [the child; the Talmud's version is "most of the head"] has come out, we do not touch it, because we do not push aside one life for another.

This Mishna clearly teaches that, at least at certain times, the fetus's life must be taken in order to save the endangered life of the mother. Based upon the Mishna's stated reason ("her life comes before its life"), it may even be argued that this applies to any point in the pregnancy. The direction of the law as delineated here is permissive at least in cases of therapeutic abortion.

The Talmud suggests a new and possibly crucial justification for the mishnaic law quoted above. At *Sanhedrin* 72b, the text proposes that, even if most of the baby (or the baby's head) has already emerged, it should still be proper to save the mother's life by taking the baby's life because the child would be in the category of "pursuer"—according to rabbinic law, if one pursues another with intent to murder, a Jew is required to save the pursued even by taking the life of the pursuer. (The Talmud rejects the proposed reasoning, claiming that in this case it is actually "Heaven" that is doing the pursuing.) Maimonides and others understand this to suggest that, in the earlier mishnaic case, where the child is still mostly in the womb, the child is indeed categorized as a "pursuer" and for that reason its life may be taken. Following this reasoning, the conclusion regarding therapeutic abortion suggested above would appear unim-

peachable and, indeed, most halachic authorities have ruled that such abortion is legitimate.

A final discussion always quoted in connection with abortion is the Mishna and accompanying Gemara at tractate *Arachin* 7a. According to the Mishna, if a pregnant woman is convicted of a capital crime, she should be executed before she gives birth; only if she is already in labor should the court delay the execution. Regarding this law, the Gemara comments:

> What is the reason [we wait if she has gone into labor]? Since it has been separated [from her womb] it is considered to be an independent body [and no longer part of the mother]. R. Judah said that Samuel said: A [pregnant] woman who is on her way out to be executed, they strike her [on her belly] opposite her womb in order that the child die first, so that [at the time of execution] she not be brought to disgrace [through the spontaneous birth of the child].

The procedure R. Judah describes in the name of Samuel suggests the permissibility of abortion even in certain cases where the mother's life is not threatened by the fetus. Furthermore, the tradition at hand unambiguously assumes that fetal life, at whatever stage before pregnancy, does not merit the full protection of the law. Based upon this text, many authorities have justified abortion for reasons other than the mother's physical health. Critics of that interpretation have countered that the text deals with unusual circumstances and should therefore not be deemed normative.

The halachic authorities of old were not asking our questions about abortion. Can we justify using them as a guide?

The problem with this whole discussion, from the perspective of modern ethics, is that none of these sources has been subjected to the necessary critique. For example, there are several problems with the verse from Exodus. First, its reference is ambiguous. While it is possible that the "catastrophe" it speaks of is the mother's death, it might also be the death of the child; if this were so, of course, radically different conclusions would be required. Second, even assuming that the ambiguous term refers to the mother, it is not clear that this text is relevant to the abortion debate. It speaks, after all, of the unintentional taking of fetal life, not of direct intervention to terminate such life. At best, the text implies that the killing of a fetus is not considered murder and even this is not clear since murder is intentional, and the killing described in the passage is unintentional.

The relevance of *Mishna Ohalot* is also questionable. In fact, the Mishna speaks not about danger to a mother's life early in pregnancy, but rather about danger to her life during childbirth. If by "abortion" we mean taking the life of a fetus mostly during the early months of a pregnancy, then this text has no direct bearing on the abortion question.

It is not surprising that classic rabbinic sources contain scant reference to abortion and focus instead on the dilemmas of childbirth. Danger to a mother's life in childbirth was extremely common in premodern society. For a variety of reasons (children were a financial asset; infant- and child-mortality rates were extremely high; medical procedures were dangerous or unreliable), abortion must have been uncommon. For related reasons (children as a financial liability; low infant mortality; safe and effective medical procedures), abortion is a common and reasonable option for us. What this all means, of course, is that the halachic authorities of old were not asking our questions about abortion. Can we justify deriving instruction when the analogies are so inexact and the circumstances so different?

For these same reasons, the talmudic discussion of *Mishna Ohalot* is also not substantively relevant. Nor, however, is its theoretical extension of much use. To begin with, it is not clear that Maimonides is correct in applying the principle of "pursuer" to the fetus before birth. But even if Maimonides is correct, we learn nothing about abortion in general. As stated, according to rabbinic law, even an adult "pursuer" may legitimately be stopped through the taking of his life. Thus, it is possible that the fetus could be judged a legally protected life and still be subject to the law outlined in the Mishna. In fact, there are multiple reasonable interpretations, and while these sources speak clearly about a common problem (danger in childbirth), they convey nothing unambiguous about abortion as such.

The fourth quoted text (*Arachin*) does, finally, speak of what we would call abortion. But its reasoning is so troubling from an ethical perspective that we should hesitate to regard it as instructive. The Talmud's justification for abortion before execution is that such a step will avoid disgrace to the body of the woman at the time of her death? Actually, her humiliation would be even greater if Samuel's procedure were followed, for she would be alive to experience it, along with great physical pain. Does the avoidance of possible humiliation at

death justify causing considerable pain during life? Furthermore, who should be making this decision? No one has asked this woman what she would prefer. Should Samuel have the right to impose his concern for disgrace at death and ignore the woman's welfare during the last moments of her life?

Finally, the fundamental assumption of this source is troubling. Even if the fetus technically merits no legal protection, would it still not be better to await birth and then execute the woman? The Greeks and Egyptians judged the potential value of the fetus as greater than the value of swift execution (see Plutarch, *De Sera Numinis Vindicta,* 552). Should Jews not do the same? I think it is safe to say that we should avoid using it entirely. Undoubtedly, it is possible to extract halachic rulings from this talmudic debate. But doing so requires that we read with ethical blinders, an approach we should shun. If such traditions provide our lone justification for abortion, we build on dubious ground.

Considered from the perspective of modern ethics, the conventional, halachic approach to abortion leads to a dead end. But what is the alternative? If the task is not primarily deciding what is permissible and what prohibited, but discovering fundamental values embedded in the tradition that pertain to a given question, then our approach must change in several essential respects.

First, we must frame new questions—questions that relate not only to the former concern, Halacha, but also to the latter, ethics. Naturally, different questions will sometimes lead us to different texts—to precedents whose relevance is not simply in the analogues they offer but in the values and attitudes they assume. Second, we must look beyond the canon as defined by Halacha. Third, we must feel free to critique and question the teachings that the tradition records. And, finally, we must insist that general conclusions are not always possible; we must be open to ambivalence where the complexity of an issue so warrants.

In the case of abortion, our questions must include, but not be limited to, how Jewish traditions view the life or potential life of a fetus, the relationship of the fetus to the mother (and father), and the prerogatives of a mother (and father) with respect to the fetus. These questions will lead us back to some of the texts reviewed above, but other texts will also suggest themselves. More important, we will find that the nature of discourse and analysis changes. What follows is intended to illustrate the alternative for which I am arguing.

We begin with two traditions commonly cited in connection with the question of abortion, the first because of the light it sheds on the status of the fetus. The Talmud, at *Yebamot* 69b, declares that "until the fortieth day, the fetus is mere water." The attitude of the author is clear: During the earliest stage of fetal development the fetus is not yet considered human life in any genuine sense.

For the halachist, the consequence of this statement may be obvious; "mere water," after all, should not be protected by the law. Nevertheless, we recognize that this "mere water" will soon be far more; how do we factor in our concern for the ultimate potential of this primitive substance? Is such potential irrelevant (to my mind, an unreasonable position), or does it call upon us to respect this water more than other "mere water?" And, if we judge that potential is an important consideration, how does this balance against the mother's wishes and needs? Thus, this talmudic precept enables us to begin formulating essential questions. Despite its relative clarity, it does not direct us to a singular answer.

The second much-cited tradition, scattered through a related cluster of texts, relates to the question of the relationship between a fetus and its mother. The tradition records a dispute concerning whether a fetus is considered "its mother's thigh [limb]" or not. Certain texts seem to prefer the view that a fetus is indeed considered a limb of its mother, but this position is not clearly supported by the Talmud as a whole. On the contrary, what distinguishes these discussions—and what has gone unnoticed (or, at least, unnoted) by halachists—is that both opinions persist and that neither is deemed obviously superior to the other. The talmudic deliberations tend to explore the consequences of each without privileging one over the other.

From the ethicist's perspective, the Talmud's inconclusiveness in this matter is its most notable feature. The inability of the sages to support one position firmly shows their dilemma in assessing the status of the fetus vis-à-vis the mother. If the fetus were "its mother's limb" it would be judged to have no independent existence and therefore no independent rights. But the talmudic sages are not willing to grant the necessary correctness of that opinion. Nor, however, are they confident of the opposite opinion.

This indecision is evidence of ambivalence—an ambivalence with which we readily identify. The fetus is not quite a person; it is (for most of a pregnancy) unable to survive independent of the mother's body. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that its life is in no significant way separate from that of the mother. On the other hand, there is no doubting the fetus's essential personhood, at least *in potentia*. The fetus, for a large part of its development, looks like a person and, one day soon, it will be a person. (Remember, each of us began as a fetus.) Thus, we also feel strongly that at some stage—a stage

earlier than birth itself—the fetus has attained at least existential personhood. The positions recorded by the rabbis mark the two poles of our own confused reflections on this matter. If I understand them correctly, the rabbis support such confusion, confirming that there are no simple answers to these questions.

Considered from the perspective of modern ethics, the conventional, halachic approach to abortion leads to a dead end.

A text that has, to the best of my knowledge, never been cited in this connection is the Talmudic deliberation (*Bava Batra* 141b-142b) that considers whether one may give a gift to a fetus. The issue is the degree to which a fetus may be considered a legal entity: If it is such an entity, then it should be possible to give it a gift; the more distant it is thought to be from real personhood, the more difficult it should be to support the validity of such a gift. The discussion begins with the opinion that a fetus may not acquire property, but the Mishna which this deliberation accompanies suggests the opposite. In fact, although the first stated law is supported to the end, the deliberation goes out of its way to review the many parties who support the contrary opinion, believing that a fetus may acquire property.

Most interestingly, for our purposes, is the last-minute modification of the first tradition by R. Yohanan: Yes, he agrees, a fetus may not acquire a gift, but there is an exception for one's own fetus (in the womb of one's wife), for "a person's feelings are especially close to his own child." In other words, while it might generally be true that a fetus is not "person" enough for another to have full and proper intent to give it a gift, one's own baby, even before birth, is certainly person enough. There are differences in our feelings for our own fetus and that of another—differences which have real consequences.

This Talmudic text is important to our deliberation for several reasons. First, it again records and gives credence to two contradictory views, suggesting that the question of a fetus's personhood does not yield unambiguous answers. Perhaps more important, it recommends that the personhood of a fetus may change as a function of our emotional connections to it; our own child, *in utero,* is indeed a person as far as we are concerned. It has a reality—a presence—that creates a genuinely human relationship even before birth. The relationship just described is not, in the estimation of the Talmud, limited to the mother. The deliberation speaks from the perspective of the father, showing that, in the opinion of its authors, the father as well as the mother may relate in significant ways to the fetus before birth.

The few texts reviewed here merely serve to illustrate an approach. But for this method to yield as much insight as possible, we ought to consult a wide variety of texts. For example, it is essential to examine those midrashim that describe the development of the fetus in its mother's womb. If, as in tractate *Niddah* 30b, the fetus is believed to study Torah from beginning to end, what does this tell us of the valuation of that fetus? Even if we assume that the midrash is projecting the child's potential value as a future student of Torah, surely this tells us how highly prized potential human life is in the rabbinic mind.

At the same time, we should not ignore the question of the mother's well-being and her prerogatives as (partial) life-giver. Surely, the *Arachin* text discussed earlier—however perverted in its attempt to protect the honor of the mother—at least shows that concern for the mother's well-being is a significant factor, sometimes coming before the life of the fetus. Other traditions might contribute to an exploration of the abortion question. However difficult and imprecise the exploration might be, and whatever lessons additional investigations might yield, we can nevertheless begin to draw certain conclusions.

The exploration we have initiated leaves an ambivalent legacy. It is unquestionable that prominent voices in the tradition support the belief that, subsequent to the first forty days of pregnancy, the fetus, in significant respects, is human life. Those who support that view would undoubtedly denounce abortion in most cases. At the same time, it seems clear that one who performs an abortion is not guilty of murder. But we should not make too much of this conclusion. Neither did the rabbis consider there to be liability for murder if one took the life of a terminally ill person; the limit defined by the law is sometimes not identical with its fundamental values.

In fact, this distinction between the law's technical limits and its ethical soul may well offer the key to formulating a Jewish ethical response to the abortion dilemma. It seems to me that the traditions reviewed above, in combination, recommend a distinction between legal proscription and what we might call ethical imperative.

It is difficult to build a case for actually outlawing

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ROUNDTABLE

Beyond Crown Heights — Strategies for Overcoming Anti-Semitism and Racism in New York

Tamar Jacoby is a journalist currently writing a book on the recent history of race relations in America. Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz is executive director of Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ). David Lazerson is director of Project "CURE!" a Crown Heights community organization founded after the August 1991 riots in Crown Heights to improve race relations and foster mutual cooperation and understanding. Marshall Meyer is rabbi of Congregation Bnai Jeshurun in New York City. Gary Rubin is director of national affairs for the American Jewish Committee. Michael Meyers is executive director of the New York Civil Rights Coalition and former assistant director of the NAACP. Betty Ehrenberg is executive director of the Institute for Public Affairs of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, a network of more than 1,000 North American Orthodox synagogues. Balfour Brickner is rabbi emeritus of the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue in New York City.

TIKKUN magazine recently opened an office in New York—just at the moment when New York newspapers were filled with fierce charges and countercharges about whether the David Dinkins, the mayor of New York, had responded adequately to the violence that rocked the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn some fifteen months before—events that were described in TIKKUN as having the feel of an American-style pogrom against Jews by some African Americans. For three days, many Jews in the Hasidic community of Crown Heights lived in fear as crowds of Black youths roamed the streets, attacking stores, cars, and homes of Jewish residents. Yankel Rosenbaum, a Hasidic student, was murdered during the first night of the rioting—but the violence was not quelled until several days later.

The subsequent debate, some fifteen months later, erupted in the wake of the acquital by a largely Black jury of a Black suspect in the murder who was identified by Rosenbaum and who had in his possession a knife with blood stains of the same type as that of Rosenbaum. The debate that ensued took a very peculiar turn, however, focusing on Mayor Dinkins's alleged failures—to act decisively at the time of the rioting or to order the police to act more forcefully to quell the rioting. He was also faulted for his alleged insensitivity in his public statements, including his failure to condemn the jury verdict acquitting Lemrick Nelson, the accused slayer of Rosenbaum, although he had condemned the acquital of police accused of beating motorist Rodney King in Los Angeles last spring.

In focusing on the mayor, the conversation missed the larger and more important issue: namely, the widespread anti-Semitism that had shown its ugly face in the rioting in Crown Heights. We have therefore convened this roundtable not to talk about Dinkins and recent events in New York, but to think about the larger problems of racism and anti-Semitism—why these problems persist, and what kinds of strategies we could adopt to combat and undermine them.

Jacoby: We ought to resist efforts to explain the problems facing Blacks in America solely as a product of racism, just as we ought also to guard against exaggerating the impact of anti-Semitism. Both Blacks and Jews are thin-skinned people who, because of their histories, tend to define themselves by their enemies and to blame others for their problems and look to others for the solutions. The pattern is not exactly symmetrical, but I don't think it's good for either community. I start with some dissent from your premise.

Kaye/Kantrowitz: Looking at this problem in context, we should acknowledge that Jews are such a strong minority in New York City that they can barely be called a minority. When you look at anti-Semitism in other parts of the country or the world, you see a phenomenon much closer to that of racism than when you look at anti-Semitism in New York City.

Black anti-Semitism and Jewish racism against Blacks

play out within the context of the larger racism and anti-Semitism in the larger society. Both racism and anti-Semitism take the heat off an economic system that is very problematic. In the past twelve years some people have gotten very rich while others are barely surviving. Jews are blamed for this as they have been for many decades in Western societies. Meanwhile, there is the reality of urban crime, despair, and chaos, and Blacks are blamed for this. Both racism and anti-Semitism take the heat off those who are really responsible for this development.

Traditionally, the alliance between Blacks and Jews in the United States has been a progressive alliance, and at times it has been the progressive alliance. The emphasis on the rupture between the two is a way for some to celebrate the difficulties that progressives are having in every arena to build successful movements for change.

Lazerson: I have lived in Crown Heights for the past ten years. I've seen how the media function to keep the Black minority and the Jewish minority apart from each other. It's almost as if the larger society has a "divide and conquer" mentality. Let me give you an example. In the past week two things happened: We had an event at Medgar Evers College at which Cornel West spoke and a Black-Jewish rap group performed and there was no one from the media there; and we had a man in Crown Heights arrested for an alleged bias attack on a Black, and that has dominated the media. We send out press releases for our programs of cooperation, but the media only focus on people who come across as hot-heads and fuel the fire. There are some significant problems here, to be sure, but the fact is that by and large people have gotten along with each other here in Crown Heights.

Rabbi Meyer: The problem of economic and social injustice in the society as a whole forms the basis for the problem of anti-Semitism. The message of "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" that continues to resurface is that the Jews are the bankers and the Jews are the power brokers. On the other hand, there is the Jewish self-perception of us as having the monopoly on suffering.

It's no surprise that we might expect a problem with anti-Semitism after twelve years of Reagan and Bush in which social inequalities have grown. We Jews have difficulty acknowledging others' suffering—yet the suffering of Blacks is real and for some parts of the Black community the suffering has grown.

On the other hand, there are Black leaders who have irresponsibly ripped into the Jewish community_and Blacks have to take responsibility for that. And Jews, on the other hand, have to take responsibility for some of the irresponsible and incendiary remarks that have been made lately in New York. There is tremendous anti-Black sentiment in the Jewish community and tremendous anti-Semitism in the Black community.

Gary Rubin: In Crown Heights, both Blacks and Jews have legitimate complaints about police protection, housing and health care, etc., and we need to start with what is in the guts of the people there. If people in the neighborhood are saying that they are frightened by what happened we need to listen to them.

I don't believe the anti-Semitism we are seeing is an economic epiphenomenon fronting for something else. The hate and anger against Jews is deeply ingrained.

Acknowledging the hate as real leads us in two possible directions. One direction says that because the hate is real, we should have nothing to do with the others, and hence leading to a separatist mentality. Or you can say, if anti-Semitism is really a serious problem out there, it inheres in others, so the only effective way to combat it is to be out there, affecting the relevant community who have this disease if you're going to have a fighting chance of dealing with it. So we have to try to affect those communities. And this means addressing questions about police protection, the fairness of the criminal justice system, the health system that let Yankel Rosenbaum and countless Blacks die in emergency rooms—these problems could be worked on together, and in so doing we could build coalitional relationships that would be the most effective way to lessen hostilities.

Michael Meyers: We need to have memories of how the racial rhetoric that is polluting the atmosphere got legitimated. I remember in the Black community signs that called for a boycott of Jewish businesses, I remember shouts of "Heil Hitler" and people who said that Hitler had not killed enough, I remember the polarizing speeches. Too many of our Black leaders have acknowledged and empowered demagogues; I remember the phrase of "Hymietown" and I can't get away from it, political conversions notwithstanding.

I think we have to face these and other tough realities. It's true that Jews and Blacks have been allies, but we've also been rivals. To many Jews racial quotas are anathema, for many non-whites affirmative action must be distinguished from exclusionary quotas. We have rivalry about housing given the scarcity facing our communities, particularly in Crown Heights and Williamsburg. We have disagreements about how and where there are double standards in the criminal justice system.

What is particularly disturbing to me is that recent studies indicate that better educated Blacks have more anti-Semitic attitudes. Among young Blacks on college campuses and young Black "intellectuals" there are strains of Black nationalism, demagoguery, and vicious anti-Semitism.

So the question is how to deal with this. I think some people in the Black community have made a mistake in how they've responded. They've responded with appeasement, embracing demagogues. The media have been irresponsible and have sought entertainment rather than serious discussion. There has been a tremendous failure of leadership in all of the communities. New York is not a mosaic; the mosaic is broken here. Across the nation there has been a rising tide of racism against Blacks and of anti-Semitism.

In New York, the issues have been complicated by the way that they have been introduced into the forthcoming mayoralty race. Many Blacks are concerned that the city's first Black mayor is being driven out by "the powers that be." So a lot of scapegoating and irresponsible dialogue is going on on all sides of these issues.

Betty Ehrenberg: Ironically, each group thinks that the other group is more powerful than it really is, each envies the other. Blacks don't understand the reality of Jewish poverty and Jews exaggerate the success that Blacks have experienced in the past decades.

We talk about the need to build ties to the Black community, but how many of us have even been willing to build unity in the Jewish community? Orthodox Jews often have to be reminded that non-orthodox groups and mainstream Jewish institutions are not gentiles; and non-orthodox Jews often have to be taught that Hasidism is not made up of "messianic cults."

You fight anti-Semitism through alliances and through acts of kindness. We Jews have to look at our own behavior to see if in ethical terms we are living up the standards that we assert for others.

During the Crown Heights riots and afterwards, the president of Brooklyn College worked closely with the Black student group and the Jewish student group to avert any disaster, and both developed projects to work together, such as helping the homeless. There's harmony and cooperation there that could be duplicated on campuses around the country.

TIKKUN: There may be a difference between trying to keep the lid on things, which may be very important during moments of crisis, and on the other hand actually trying to uproot the basis of anti-Semitism in each community.

Jacoby: There's a conventional wisdom that has grown up in this country in the past twenty years that may be part of the problem. It was different in the mid-sixties. Then we thought, "On the surface we are different, but underneath we're all the same, we're one community, not several communities." But what has happened in the past twenty years, in part with the sanction of the liberal establishment, is that we've come to think that we owe our primary allegiance to our particular small communities, that the big community is ill-defined, hard to get our hands on, and that underneath we are really different. We have a benign idea of a mosaic, but it never remains benign. It inevitably degenerates into "us vs. them." There is a basic polarization and distrust that leads to friction on every issue. One wouldn't want to end all particular allegiences, but the pendulum has swung too far.

Even more troubling, the situation isn't symmetrical—this kind of thinking is more pronounced on the Black side of the equation. The idea that one's Black identity is more important than one's community identity is encouraged and that is inevitably going to lead to the kinds of tensions that we are now witnessing.

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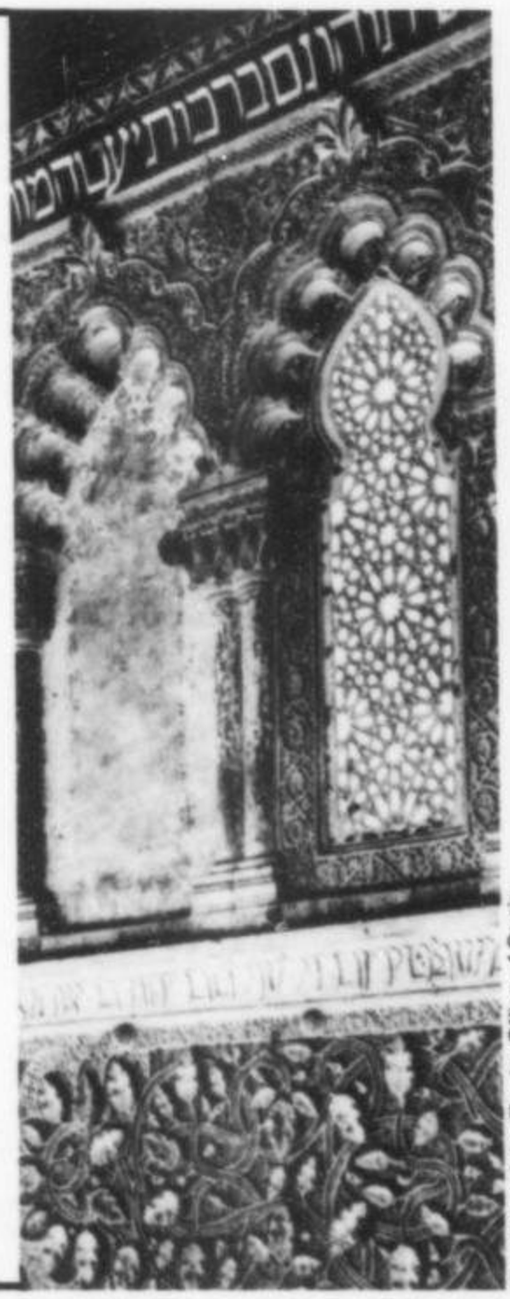
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Michael Meyers: There are many specific steps that need to be taken. Human relations committees should be holding public hearings and developing community-wide strategies. There should be more prosecution of crimes of ethnic or racial violence. And we need to train people in community relations. My organization has pioneered programs in twenty-five high schools to do this kind of training, and more of that is necessary.

Brickner: There is a Black isolationist movement, and it has its counterpart in the Jewish community. Black isolationists have gone askew in a distorted Afrocentrism. There are a few people who've dealt with this in the Black community, like Henry Louis Gates, Shelby Steele, and [roundtable participant] Michael Meyers. The desire on the part of some Blacks, particularly Black intellectuals, to keep their own identity by creating a separatist reality, has a familiar ring for many traditional Jews who have withdrawn from the larger community (and their withdrawal, an attempt to preserve their own identity, gets perceived and stigmatized as separatism and arrogance by some Blacks).

There is nothing fundamental in Black or Jewish identity that requires antagonism between the two communities. The tensions that do exist are driven by competition for turf, for power. Economic disparity, lack of jobs, inadequate housing and health care—these are the real enemy, not David Dinkins and not each other.

Rubin: It's true that we have a separatist problem, but we should acknowedge the legitimacy in group identities. Group identities may be the only way we can form real coalitions. Nor is it correct historically to talk, as Tamar Jacoby seemed to suggest, about a time of national unity in which there really was a great mosaic from which the pendulum is moving away. It's moving away from a time when we didn't have intergroup conflicts because minority groups were suppressed. The positive side of conflicts that we are seeing today is that Jews, Blacks, gays, women, and other groups whose views were suppressed in the national discussion now have the ability to express themselves.

The issue is not how do we get back to a golden age that never really existed. Rather we need to build a world of legitimate group interests that work together in coalition, rather than conflicting with each other.

There are two very specific things that we should do within our own Jewish community as part of this effort. First, any expression of racism, anti-Semitism, anti-women, or anti-gay sentiments have to be condemned in the most vigorous and clear terms, and our community has to police itself. For example, only a small group of voices in the Jewish community have said clearly that the current attacks on Dinkins are obscene. Second, we need to dedicate ourselves to dealing with issues like poverty, health care, criminal justice, etc. From my perspective, the organized Jewish community makes good statements but doesn't really expend its resources on them, and hence is correctly perceived as not really caring about these issues, no matter how good its official positions are. On the other hand, those Jews who do play a role in combatting poverty, fighting for better housing, and struggling for social justice often do it outside the context of the Jewish world, so that their actions, which actually flow from Jewish values in many cases, don't come back to influence the Jewish community because they act outside of it. We've got to capture the social justice energy that exists among Jews and get that put within Jewish institutions and organizations.

Brickner: Organizational Jewish life is not structured to encourage that kind of participation.

Lazerson: I do think that we should not discount the strategic importance of the kind of dialogue now taking place among young people in Crown Heights. We have hundreds of Blacks and Jews meeting together every month. There is no institutionalized hate—it is largely based on misunderstanding and myths about each other, and this can be dispelled, and is being dispelled right now in Crown Heights, through people actually sitting down with each other and talking to each other. We've organized some of that among young people in Crown Heights, and I think we need to pay attention to this model.

Kaye/Kantrowitz: There's significant work taking place outside of New York City: the anti-hate coalitions in the Northwest and in the South, in which Jews work alongside people of color because all are targeted by white supremicist activity. Or the defeat of the anti-gay measure in Oregon by a coalition led by lesbians and gays, in which a united Jewish community worked along with spokespeople from the African American community, the Native American community, and the farmworkers union, which is primarily Chicano. At a victory rally, the farmworkers' representative was asking the other groups to join their upcoming struggle, and people were pledging to do this. There's campus activity—for example, at SUNY-New Paltz, where Black and Jewish faculty took leadership to organize a campus speakers series on Black-Jewish issues. There's the question of democratizing leadership in the Jewish community, where leaders are mostly well-to-do men who tend to represent the interests of well-to-do men. If Jewish leaders truly rep-

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BOOK REVIEW

Does Power Flow From the Op-Ed Page?

Jay Rosen

Sound and Fury: The Washington Punditocracy and the Collapse of American Politics by Eric Alterman. HarperCollins, 1992, 352 pp.

This is a sharp, funny, sometimes savage book about the world of Washington pundits, written from an insider's perspective. Those who resent the way the media "got in line" during the Reagan era will find their suspicions confirmed in clever detail. Eric Alterman, a Washington journalist with a left-liberal bent, has tried for a gossipy, satirical tone, and his book can be enjoyed as an entertaining put-down of the know-it-alls who inflict their views on us during Sunday morning talk shows.

But *Sound and Fury* is also about a serious subject: "The collapse of American politics," as viewed from the embittered perspective the Left often took during the 1980s. By embittered, I mean the tone of those who saw the Reagan years as a moral and political disaster but who did not believe in their ability to persuade Americans of this fact. Media critiques are a natural resting place for this sentiment, for the belief in the omnipotence of the media permits the Left to see its own marginalization as the work of a force other (and larger) than itself. If the Left can't get a decent hearing there is nothing essentially wrong with its message. The message simply can't get through the media filter.

This conviction is usually accompanied by a dismissive view of the people who actually voted Reagan and Bush into office. They are generally made to disappear—at least as conscious agents capable of rational choice. Thus, Alterman writes:

Our shameful education system turns out so many illiterate citizens that intelligent political participation is all but impossible except for a decreasing minority. And political corruption, individual alienation, general laziness, and a pervasive sense that everything in America seems to be getting worse has led large numbers of Americans—perhaps even a majority—to remove themselves en masse from political life. Finally, the omnipresent influence of television, coupled with the increasingly short attention span of the viewing audience, has reduced much of the discourse to a kind of semiotic shorthand, designed to trigger the emotions without disturbing the mind.

In the absence of leaders who will speak honestly and wisely about the nation's fate, serious discussion has become the exclusive province of the media.

Under these conditions, Alterman argues, the words spoken by American politicians have become so empty and cliché-ridden that they no longer have any relevance to the problems they seem to address. In the absence of leaders who will speak honestly and wisely about the nation's fate, serious discussion has become the exclusive province of the media. "Nothing else remains," he notes. Political parties, civic and labor groups, and the larger public have all fled the field. But the press cannot conduct a useful discussion of the nation's interests. It is hampered by commercial pressures—especially the production demands of television—and by the rules of "objectivity," which straitjacket journalists and prevent them from making sense out of the current scene.

But there is one elite group within the media that is allowed to render judgment on the meaning of events and the direction the country should take. These are the pundits: a handful of highly visible columnists and talking heads who get paid (extremely well) to give their views on the issues of the day. George Will of *Newsweek*, the *Washington Post*, and ABC; Pat Buchanan, until his presidential bid, syndicated columnist and a fixture on CNN; Morton Kondracke and Fred Barnes, both of *The New Republic* and "The McLaughlin Group"; William Safire of the *New York Times*; Charles Krauthammer of the *Washington Post* and *Time*; Jack Germond, columnist and "McLaughlin Group" member; Michael Kinsley of *The New Republic* and CNN's "Crossfire"—these are some of the prominent names in what Alterman calls the "punditocracy." He asserts that it is "their debate, rather than any semblance of a democratic one, that determines the parameters of political discourse in the nation today."

Alterman does not believe the average American is much influenced by "The McLaughlin Group" or *The New Republic*. "The public at large does not possess the means, nor apparently the inclination, to interfere in Washington's policy apparatus in any but the most exceptional cases," he writes. Rather, it is within the insider culture of Washington that the pundits hold sway. Precisely because most

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Americans aren't paying attention, the debate among insiders determines the drift of public policy. He writes:

> Just as the Reagan crowd came to power, views that had been considered Cro-Magnon just months earlier became sophisticated. While a tiny cadre of stalwarts managed to hold fast to their liberal instincts during this period, most professed to see new wisdom in cutting taxes for the rich, threatening war with the Soviets, and cracking down on Vodka-guzzling welfare queens. The punditocracy hardly required a weatherman to determine which way the political winds were blowing.

Alterman's dismissal of politics is so extreme that it eliminates the importance of his chosen subject, a curiously self-defeating tactic.

This passage illustrates one of the difficulties Alterman creates for himself as a press critic who leans left. Clearly he resents and mistrusts the conservative ideology that triumphed during the Reagan era. That's fair enough—I feel the same way. But what, exactly, is the point of criticizing right-wing pundits for holding right-wing views? If I wish to register my disgust with the policy decisions of the Reagan-Bush years, then my argument is not really with the columnists and talking heads who applauded (or even rationalized) those decisions. It's with Reagan, Bush, the Republican Party, Congress, the American voter—maybe even with history itself. A pundit who gave aid and comfort to my political opponents doesn't necessarily deserve my scorn, even if I utterly reject the views he advances. Consider, for example, the "Reagan Doctrine," which justified American intervention in Latin American and other places around the globe. According to Alterman, the doctrine was virtually invented by Krauthammer in pieces he wrote in 1985 for *The New Republic* and other venues. "On the basis of a few throwaway sentences in the President's State of the Union address," Alterman writes, "Krauthammer created a concept that brought coherence to what had previously been just an amalgam of rag-tag drug runners, terrorists, Islamic fundamentalists, Maoist revolutionaries, and a few hapless democrats pacing the Capitol hallways for taxpayer handouts." Krauthammer's phrase-making became a "rhetorical umbrella" under which supporters of Contra aid could win funding from Congress. This the author presents as an example of the punditocracy's odious influence in national affairs.

My own interpretation would be somewhat different. Krauthammer, it seems to me, was doing exactly what an opinion columnist—who, after all, is a rhetorician—should be doing. By giving a catchy name and a coherent structure to a hazy tendency in Reagan's thought (and what tendency wasn't hazy?) he tried to clarify what this President stood for: a militant anti-Soviet impulse, willfully expressed though military means. That Krauthammer may have seen more consistency in Reagan's policies than did Reagan himself is precisely the function of a good rhetorician: to realize at the level of language a clarity that messy events may lack. Done well, political rhetoric gives names to vague perceptions and permits conflict to proceed at the level of public discourse, rather than in the subliminal field of the latent impulse or the cumulative effect of a policy drift.

Like many others, including Alterman, I thought the Reagan Doctrine was a disaster. But as a "doctrine," the disaster became easier to see and warn against. This was good for political debate and good for someone like Alterman. He might have argued in his own op-ed piece (he's published many) that the Reagan Doctrine was not, as Krauthammer contended, support of freedom-loving democrats around the world, but the reduction of the word "democrat" to something like "anyone who makes trouble for the Soviets and needs guns." He might, in other words, struggle with Krauthammer over the proper way of understanding Reagan's policies, which is what political debate is supposed to be about.

But suppose you don't believe in your ability to prevail in such a struggle? Suppose you're convinced that the media are in the hands of hostile powers (so that your lonely op-ed piece doesn't matter), that the public is sleeping through this debate, (or worse yet, too stupid to understand), that arguments on op-ed pages and talk shows don't really matter anyway because political discourse is just a distracting spectacle, behind which lies the power of corporate interests, or the secure grip of a ruling class. Holding these beliefs, you might well react with contempt at even a principled display of your opponents' views, for the display reminds you of a marginality you've already accepted as permanent.

Such an attitude goes hand-in-hand with a cynical view of political possibility, a closing down of hope that pre-empts any demand that the Left rethink its message. Thus, Alterman concludes that the debasement of political discourse in recent years is so advanced that "the game is already won or lost by the time the punditocracy has named the players and determined the playing field." This dismissal of politics is so extreme that it eliminates the importance of Alterman's chosen subject, a curiously self-defeating tactic. The pundits' power, so heralded in the beginning of the book, more or less disappears by the end. Alterman notes that if the pundits were to disappear "through a meticulously placed earthquake or a one-way shuttle launch," corporate money would still dominate on Capitol Hill, TV sound-bites would continue to eviscerate political discourse, the regime of corporate ownership would hold sway in the media, Americans would still demand to be entertained rather than informed, prejudice and tax fever will remain in place, and alienation and withdrawal from politics will be unabated. In other words, "the system" is so screwy and so self-reinforcing that real change is virtually unimaginable. This bleak assessment is lightened by the author's snappy, snarling humor, in evidence throughout. But the bleakness, for me, outweighed the many clever lines and amusing asides.

Alterman does make a vague call for a "coherent political language" to replace the "pseudo-lan-

guage" that now prevails, but his pessimistic analysis seems to preclude any possibility that a better discourse might find support. He is right to promote a "journalism of engagement" that, by combining political commitment with serious reporting, might undermine what he calls "the prestige of ignorant opinion." But he does not say what journalists should commit themselves to, beyond destruction of the "pseudo-language, pseudo-events, and pseudo-environments" that dominate American politics. This is not the attitude of someone who expects to join in a public drama of persuasion. But it is a compelling form of spectatorship, in which the critic becomes a close chronicler of political deception and a connoisseur of the public's bamboozlement. There are many on the Left who enjoy this game, and I suspect they will heartily enjoy *Sound and Fury*.

Here, in fact, is one of the media's most dangerous "effects." It invites those with a critical temper to see through everything and to mistake this seeing through for an adequate vision of politics. If this mistake was dangerous during the Reagan and Bush years, it will be self-defeating in the extreme during Bill Clinton's presidency. For our current challenge is not to see through Clinton's rhetoric but to take it more seriously than he has himself. Phrases such as a "New Covenant" are not to be dismissed as campaign blather but seized upon and redefined in a creative and progressive manner. That means battling it out with Clinton and his advisers over the proper meaning of the covenant, the manner in which it can be seen as "new," and the actions that would demonstrate that the phrase is being taken seriously. But before we can do this important political work, we have to believe that politics works this way—that the drama of political persuasion makes a difference in the end, and that the public, in the end, might be persuaded to participate. Alterman does not seem to share these beliefs, which makes this a puzzling book for the political moment now upon us. □

BOOK REVIEW

Telling Stories About Faith and Unfaith

Judith Plaskow

The Spirit of Renewal: Crisis and Response in Jewish Life by Edward Feld. Jewish Lights Publishing, 1991, 191 pp.

When I was a graduate student in theology and obsessed with the problem of evil, it occurred to me one day that virtually every purported solution to the problem presupposes the premises it claims to prove. Augustine, for example, in the course of his many explorations of the question, repeatedly begins sentences, "Given that God is perfectly good...," a beginning that is hardly designed to generate the opposite verdict. Analytic philosophers, on the other hand, seem to start from the conviction that belief in God is absurd and contradictory—a conviction that the contemplation of evil is unlikely to refute. I concluded from this evidence of circular reasoning that it would probably be more fruitful to reflect on the religious experiences and narratives underlying various formulations of the problem of evil than to address the problem formally.

Many years later, this conclusion still seems to me essentially just. The problem of evil considered as a philosophical question—rather than as a profound existential dilemma or as a cry of pain—quickly gets mired in a series of intellectual dead ends or tricks and becomes rather arid and boring. How can a supposedly good and omnipotent God permit evil in the world? We don't know; we shall never know. Perhaps God is not all good; perhaps God is not all powerful. Perhaps there is some deep reason in things that eludes our limited perspectives. The question is not so much how we solve this problem as how we live with it—how and where it arises for us, *if* it arises. The proper question is not how we can justify God in the face of evil but, given the reality of evil, what are the stories individuals and communities tell themselves to sustain and justify faith and unfaith?

For contemporary Jews, it is the Holocaust, more than any other event, that is likely to send us searching for narratives that make sense of suffering. Yet as Edward Feld's rich and evocative book, *The Spirit of Renewal,* makes amply clear, Jews, over the course of centuries, have felt the need to tell stories in response to many different evils. Writing with poetry, erudition, and passion, Feld (who spent nineteen years as the director of the Hillel Foundation at Princeton University and recently became rabbi of the Society for the Advancement of Judaism in New York) examines a number of the central stories Jews have developed in struggling to deal with personal and communal crises. Some of these stories have been clear and straightforward; others have been complex and ambiguous. Some have been direct, grappling with evil head on; others have been indirect, struggling with evil while appearing to

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speak of something else, weaving responses to evil into the very fabric of our self-understanding. Some of our best-known stories, while they are about other things too, are also attempts to come to terms with evil.

Genesis 3, for example, is easily recognized as a story about the origins of evil and suffering. The snake, mysterious symbol of temptation and imperfection, suddenly appears in the midst of an earthly paradise, precipitating human disobedience and alienation from God and self, laying the basis for punishment and exile.

But Feld points out that, even before the snake appears, Genesis 1 and 2 already represent contradictory statements about the relationship between God and the world. In chapter 1, creation unfolds with ordered harmony by the grace of God's speech. God enjoys and finds satisfaction in creation; creation is "very good," and reaches transcendent perfection in the Sabbath. In chapter 2, however, Adam is no sooner created than he finds himself lonely and unfulfilled. In imitating God's primal act by naming the animals, he discovers his difference from the rest of creation; he places himself "outside the ecological whole."

There are tensions within the creation narratives, then, that leave us with an ambiguous picture of the human situation: Our lot entails harmony and joy, dissatisfaction and alienation. The storytellers do not ask why this should be. They simply tell it like it is; they describe the ideal and the reality of our existence.

Other biblical authors appear less satisfied with this strategy of indirection. Compelled by the pain of exile or the exigencies of their own or their people's existence, they need to understand how the God who had taken their ancestors out of Egypt on eagle's wings was now letting Israel suffer. The historical books of the Bible have a clear, hortatory tale to tell: for our sins, we were punished. Their authors find it easier to blame themselves for evil than either to blame God or face finding themselves in a world without meaning. Not so with the authors of Job and Second Isaiah. Job would rather confront the void than tell what seems to him a lying tale of his own disobedience. Second Isaiah also questions the connection between sinfulness and punishment. It is the innocent person, the one most pious and closest to God, who is asked to suffer on behalf of others. For these writers, the memory of God's care and redeeming action does not point inevitably to their own guilt; rather, it makes it unbearable that God has now hidden God's face; or it explains why God has chosen *Israel* to bear others' suffering.

Perhaps the story about evil most surprising to the contemporary Jewish ear is that told by the rabbinic generation after the Bar Kochba revolt. Here Feld is especially powerful and interesting in showing how the spiritual crisis caused by the Bar Kochba defeat led to a new theological self-understanding that was remarkably otherworldly. The rabbis of this generation could not see suffering as atonement, either for their own sins or those of others. Their friends and teachers had given up their lives for Torah, yet the teaching of Torah had been banned, the practice of Judaism outlawed. How could the students discern God's presence in the events of the world or in human history? Instead, they came to see suffering, and especially martyrdom, as signs of piety that would be rewarded in another life—the reward to be gained through the study of Torah. The Torah, given by God at the central moment of history, now replaced history as the sphere of divine/human encounter.

The Bar Kochba generation's new elevation of Torah was decisive for the Jewish future, because its system of thought was institutionalized through the publication of the Mishnah. The passion for Torah that has characterized Jewish life, the escape into Torah that so often has been the Jewish answer to the world's hatred and violence, was itself originally a response to crisis. The primacy of Torah is the product of the interweaving of narratives of election and covenant with narratives of martyrdom and evil.

If engagement with suffering shapes and informs so many central Jewish narratives, how is Jewish storytelling changed for those of us who lived through or live after the Holocaust? It is this question that led Feld to contribute to the small but growing body of Holocaust theology by writing *The Spirit of Renewal.* Experiencing the Holocaust as "a shattering and overwhelming event" that cries out for a theological response, Feld turns to Jewish texts from the past to see how earlier generations dealt with crisis and from it wrested spiritual renewal. His point in looking at historical sources is not to find some past interpretation that can be imported as the solution to our own crisis, but to show how each generation finds a new religious vocabulary—a new story—that speaks to the situation of its own time.

Feld tells us that God does not control evil and will not redeem it at the end of time.

As Feld sees it, no past response to catastrophe could be adequate to the needs of this generation because the Holocaust profoundly alters the Jew's relationship to God, to Jewish identity, and to the rest of humanity. In terms of the metaphor of story, the Holocaust undermines and makes a mockery of the central narratives of modernity, forcing us to find a new religious vocabulary. Belief in progress, belief that culture is necessarily humanizing, belief that scientific advancement goes hand in hand with a better and more humane world—all these were turned to smoke in Hitler's ovens. The problem, as Feld sees it, is that the Holocaust did not happen despite these things: The Nazis turned all that was most worthy in human life to the purposes of mass destruction. They took the values of culture, of science, of modern technology and efficiency and made them servants of evil.

In the face of a catastrophe from which the fruits of modernity could not save us, the stories of past generations lose their power to sustain and console. Are there any sins we might have committed that deserved so dreadful and overwhelming a punishment? Can the millions of unwilling dead, systematically deprived of their human dignity, possibly be considered martyrs? For what could Jews have been atoning? What possible dream of a world to come could make us accept this horror? It seems that the Holocaust has undermined traditional narratives of faith precisely at the point that we need them most desperately.

In the end, it is a particular kind of

story that gives Feld hope: stories of simple acts of humanity, of dignity maintained against all odds, of the preservation of life as a "revolutionary act of opposition." It is the repetition of such stories in the accounts of many survivors that enables him to move toward a tentative theology of humanity, God, and Israel for our time. If the Holocaust reveals the horror and cruelty of which all human beings are capable, it also provides glimpses of holiness, of a sense of beyondness most directly encountered in relationships with other people. If it deprives us of a Lord of history who will make all right in the end, it gives us a God "found in the midst of the muck of this world," at the heart of everyday existence. If it ends the possibility of the Jewish *luftmensch,* living outside of history, it gives us a people returned to land, to power, and the body, faced with the dilemma of balancing survival with the need to be faithful to a reality larger than the self. The theological vocabulary of our time, Feld says, is a vocabulary of immanence, embodiment, and ambiguity, of seeking sanity in the midst of madness and holiness in a messy admixture of good and evil.

Surprisingly, given Feld's emphasis on ambiguity, the understanding of evil he draws from the narratives of human dignity is in essence dualistic. Evil is a "power" or "domain," ultimately independent of God, that repeatedly surges up in individuals and societies. God does not control evil and will not redeem it at the end of time. While in the world as we know it, evil appears thoroughly intermingled with the holy, the holy itself is morally pure, a fragile light seeking to assert itself in the greater darkness. It manifests itself in those everyday acts of generosity, compassion, and justice-seeking that so surprise us when we find them in the midst of the Holocaust, and that signal the presence of God at the center of ordinary life.

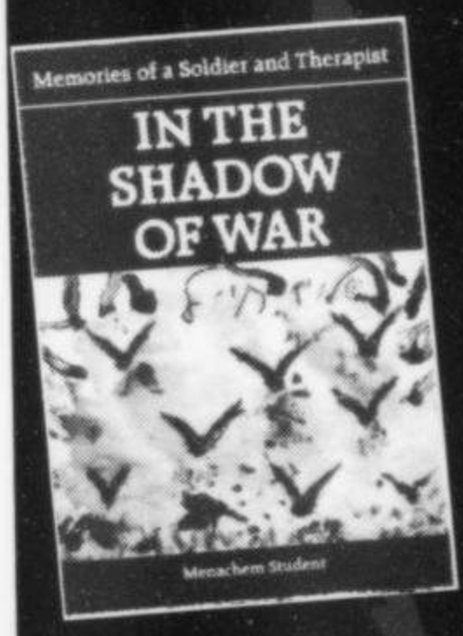
It is in relation to Feld's constructive proposals that I find the metaphor of story particularly intriguing, for I partly agree with his vision of what constitutes an adequate theological vocabulary in the contemporary world—but not entirely, and not just because of the Holocaust. On the one hand, I would extend the language of ambiguity into the sacred itself (see my "Facing the Ambiguity of God" in TIKKUN, September/October 1991). On the other hand, I see many contemporary theologians using the language of immanence, embodiment, and ambiguity, whether or not their thought is framed in the context of the problem of evil. The prevalence of this language leads me to ask whether there is not some larger contemporary narrative, fed by many sources, that can be brought to bear on the Holocaust, but that is not simply generated by it. It is impossible, of course, to separate the terrible knowledge forced on us by this event from our larger responses to the contemporary human situation. But just as after the failure of the Bar Kochba revolt, the rabbis put their faith in Torah, both because they despaired of the world and because they loved Torah, so we seek the holy in our everyday lives today, both because everything else has been stripped away and because nonetheless, there are many positive currents in contemporary life that foster an awareness of the sacred.

As I reflect on where I find the holy in my own experience, I do not see it always as completely aligned with the moral. For example, last summer I visited the magnificent Iguassu Falls on the border of Brazil and Argentina. As I stood looking into the "Devil's Throat," the mouth of all the falls, I felt myself gazing on the wellspring of life in all its power, terror, energy, and sublimity. It struck me at the time that this was a revelation of the sacred that was consonant with the Holocaust precisely because it had no obvious moral dimension, yet at the same time it was utterly other in its profound fascination and beauty. Such experiences of the power of nature are one source of a theology of immanence, embodiment and ambiguity—a theology of ambiguity that sees the creative heart of the world as itself bearing within it possibilities of destruction. Another source of such a theology are the concrete struggles of oppressed peoples for freedom and dignity, struggles that are rooted in and witness to the reality of the holy, yet that also can lead to new forms of oppression. Here, I completely agree with Feld that seeking justice in the face of the knowledge that it can be perverted weaves "a carpet for the entry of God."

It seems to me that any theological vocabulary we use today must be faithful to the realities of experience as we have seen them through the Holocaust, or it will ultimately appear

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to us as lying and shallow. But a vocabulary that comes to us simply through the Holocaust also cannot sustain us, unless it is confirmed and rooted in continuing encounters with the sacred in our history and contemporary experience. The stories we tell about what threatens and supports our deepest sense of meaning are woven from many sources. In grappling with catastrophe in relation to the narratives of tradition and the larger context of our experience, we create new stories about God, the world, and also ourselves. □

BOOK REVIEW

Jews and Other Bohemians

Paul Buhle

1915, The Cultural Moment: The New Politics, the New Woman, the New Psychology, the New Art and the New Theatre in America. Edited by Adele Heller and Lois Rudnick. Rutgers University Press, 1991.

Abbie Hoffman: American Rebel. Martin Jezer, Rutgers University Press, 1992.

The Best of Abbie Hoffman. Edited by Daniel Simon with Abbie Hoffman. Four Walls Eight Windows, 1990.

It is impossible to recall the 1960s counterculture without Abbie Hoffman, equally impossible to think about the Beats without Allen Ginsberg (or his half-Italian, half-Sephardic Jewish publisher, fellow poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti), or even to imagine free love and birth control in the early twentieth century without Emma Goldman. Something suspiciously familiar lurks here: the kernel of truth in those anti-Semitic 1930s cartoons with Jew and Negro together plotting to spread jazz music and radical ideas so as to overthrow the WASP moral and political order. Not that all Jews are, by any stretch of the imagination, bohemians (ask the Hasidim, or William Kristol, erstwhile chief of staff to Dan Quayle). But just about all gentile American bohemians, like gentile American writers and/or radicals, become at least a little bit Jewish: It comes with the territory.

Paul Buhle is a frequent contributor to TIKKUN.

We could trace the lineage of American bohemians to Walt Whitman and even further back, of course. But considering the phenomenon more as social milieu than heroic individualism, we should look to the outburst of cultural energy in the last fin de siécle. Here we find, for instance, the Weltschmerz sophistication of 1890s Jewish immigrant intellectuals such as Leon Kobrin ("the Yiddish Zola"), writing melancholic, one-column short stories for the *Forward* about hopeless romances in the tenements. Or the wild anarcho-libertarian poetry of Joseph Bovshover, who went mad only a few years after reading Whitman in the Yale Library and trying to translate Whitmanesque ideas into a ghetto patois. In the audience of these writers could be found intellectuals who furiously argued aesthetics over glasses of Russian tea, plotted theatrical productions of Ibsen, and denounced mere didacticism.

Later on, with the new generation of the 1910s, hungry poets hung out at the edges of East Broadway coffee houses known for Jewish literary and theatrical personalities—but felt more at home in the low-cost and no-prestige neighborhood kosher dairy restaurants. Blue-collar workers themselves, these young artists saw hopelessness all around, from the perilous condition of their European relatives to their own drab daily lives. Disbelieving almost everything about bourgeois society, they granted no respect to Victorian morality or old-fashioned "uplifting" art.

Looking back, it is easy to understand how they kicked up such a literary fuss in the ghetto. The Jewish literary world, far more than now, was intensely inner-directed, with sanctions against those who broke the rules and placed themselves outside accepted ranks. The paradox of *di Yunge* (the young ones, as they were called) was that they could claim to be at once more Jewish, more deeply Yiddish, than literary veterans who expected cultural assimilation; and simultaneously more American, more eager to be part of an endlessly multicultural, even multilingual culture. If their often startling talent won them admiration, their aestheticism and their occasional eroticism were intentionally transgressive, provocations behind which beat a committed heart.

They were, so to speak, establishing the pattern for all their bohemian successors. Rebels from both gentile society and Jewish bourgeois society, they were claimants to something indefinably American and Jewish.

For all their literary accomplishments, the rebel Yiddishists remained invisible to the excited observers of the new scene just a few subway stops away from East Broadway. During the 1910s, young intellectuals and artists from America at large suddenly discovered Greenwich Village. The German Jews among them, uneasy about their relations with the heavily ethnic Eastern Euro-

pean newcomers, persuaded themselves that they had become part of an assimilationist movement on the verge of revolutionizing the society at large. It was a hubris others would share a half-century later.

1915, The Cultural Moment (portentiously subtitled "The New Politics, the New Woman, the New Psychology, the New Art and the New Theatre in America") offers a broad canvas for the first major creative era of the century. Edited with great skill by Adele Heller and Lois Rudnick, this product of a 1987 conference at Provincetown, Massachusetts brings together some of the outstanding young scholars of American modernism. The casual reader will find dozens of wonderful illustrations, drawings, and photographs, including a startling nude shot of Louise Bryant on the beach. Color prints of painter Max Weber's "Chinese Restaurant" (1915), and Georgia O'Keefe's "Blue and Green Music" (1919) are alone worth the price of admission.

The intellectual-artistic explosion introduced subjects and approaches to the general educated reader during the 1910s, leaving future generations to develop psychoanalysis, experimental theatre, and the idea of women's emancipation beyond mere enthusiasms. This was an advance with an underlying disappointment, for which the fate of the *Masses* magazine speaks eloquently. As art historian Rebecca Zurier traces the story, the first (and perhaps still the most) beautiful radical magazine of the century unsettled authorities and excited readers with its Ashcan School realist drawings, its dry-witted cartoons (the *New Yorker* later borrowed their style), and red-hot journalism by the likes of John Reed. But the example could not be sustained. The government suppressed the magazine as anti-war, and then the Communists finished off the bohemian-left legacy by bending art to a narrow political line. In a deeper sense, the mood vanished when the belief in the power of the artistic experiment to revolutionize society faded into the mass graves of World War I. Radical optimism has never really recovered.

All this seems rather familiar, if especially well done and illustrated in *1915*. But now look at the same images through distinctly Jewish spectacles. Assimilated Jews such as literary modernist Waldo Frank, *Masses* artist Maurice Becker, and modern painter Max Weber—to take only three examples—each made his individual mark upon the emerging modernism. But characteristically in this otherwise fine volume, the "ethnic theatre" (we "read" this as Yiddish although of course drama took place in other immigrant cultures) with its important avant-garde element becomes only a long footnote to the background of the Provincetown Players, the premier goyishe avant-garde theatre of the 1910s.

The fault of *1915* as a broad sweep of modernism, then, is its unthinking assumption that high-class American intellectuals always lived within an almost exclusively white, English-speaking world. The masses are more heterogeneous by far, and some of the liveliest cultural impulses can usually be found among recent immigrant groups or rural in-migrants to the cities, continually remaking American culture for their own delight. People at the margins, in linguistic or other terms, are compelled to devise their own engagement with mass culture; thus, they often search out the avant-garde and make themselves part of it. This is, indeed, the biggest story in twentieth-century cultural innovation. The most interesting part may be the interconnections. We could draw a chronological parallel from the theatrical impresarios of the Village avant-garde to the German-Jewish entrepreneurs who helped invent Tin Pan Alley and extend these lines in time to the Eastern European Jews who ran many of the early jazz clubs and others who invented Hollywood. Immigrant entrepreneurs, themselves fascinated by new styles, discovered in mass entertainment a vehicle for diluted but still recognizable avant-garde impulses. After 1920, for better and for worse, Greenwich Village reached Main Street via the popular press just as New Orleans reached the local jazz clubs. Admittedly, "free love" (a principled opposition to legal marriage that was common among Jewish anarchists and others) thereby turned into promiscuity while jazz became something that white, particularly Jewish, men appropriated to make their fortunes—or at least the decent living that few black musicians ever enjoyed. Still, despite all the imbalances, Jews and bohemians of all races created and perpetuated cultural breathing space in middle America.

The explosive mixture of Jewish artistic innovation and moneymaking still fueled the furious generational rebellion and cultural conflicts that broke out everywhere in the United States after World War II. Film noir, uncontestably American cinema's most bohemian-experimental genre, and the political blacklist against the Hollywood Left, could be described as artistic stroke and political counterstroke carried out largely between warring Jews before a gentile audience of moviegoers and government agencies. Abe Polonsky, who grew up with his grandmother's Yiddish stories about Huck Finn on the Volga, wrote the script for *Body and Soul*, the ultimate boxing film about the dark side of sports—i.e., capitalism—a few years before the studios and the investigative committees ran him out of pictures. (Happily, Polonsky got his revenge as a pseudonymous writer for early television's anti-McCarthyite classic, "You Are There." As he quipped recently, some weeks on the show, Socrates denounced the witchhunt, and other weeks Galileo did it.) Such recent backstage films as *The Way We Were* and *The Front*, and books about the blacklist, have likewise only scratched the surface of this particularly Jewish tale.

Driven temporarily out of mass culture, the bohemian impulse settled into the literary/musical underground of the 1940s and 1950s: a definitely post-Marxist but also anti-war, anti-capitalist and (among other things) sexually off-beat scene. Diane DiPrima could write movingly about her Italian anarchist grandfather and Jack Kerouac about his Irish Catholic selfhood, but a head count on any given day at the jazz and poetry readings in North Beach, San Francisco, to say nothing of New York's Village Gate, would turn up a whole lot more Jews than anyone else. They had both the enthusiasm and the alienation. Naturally, their younger counterparts would, at the first moment of opportunity, join civil rights and anti-war marches, later the be-ins and the counterculture. What else could they be expected to do?

Abbie Hoffman is, in retrospect, the generational mediation personified. The person who coined "Never trust anyone over thirty" was ironically the senior role model, almost father figure, to the political culture of the New Left. One of the many pleasures of Marty

Jezer's biography is the way the author, an anarcho-pacifist veteran, traces Hoffman to his Worcester, Massachusetts bohemian boyhood. Son of a druggist, Abbie was expelled from public high school and ended up, competing impulses seemingly reconciled, at Brandeis University. There, Hoffman ran into Abraham Maslow, founder of a humanistic psychology linked with such contemporary rebels as Paul Goodman, Eric Fromm, Lewis Mumford, and Rollo May (also linked, in the long run, indirectly to Michael Lerner and TIKKUN). In its time a psychological liberation from Freudian fatalism, Maslow's vision—along with an excursion into Beat literature—enabled Hoffman to follow his own unique path. He became, in his own words, "the jock who was a bohemian who was also a jock"—an upbeat hipster who captained the tennis team and played the horses while idolizing Lenny Bruce.

Jezer notes parenthetically that a fellow Maslovian, Betty Friedan, wrote her own way to fame and movement-founding through a mixture of radical critique and self-help psychologizing (i.e., *The Feminine Mystique*). Jezer is onto something here, because Hoffman's greatest power was to offer a therapeutic or pseudo-therapeutic ethos for the mass-bohemian younger generation. Passing through Berkeley at the dawn of the sixties, Abbie began to discover himself as an organizer while making a living as a psychologist and a salesman, identities not totally at odds. As the civil rights movement grew, he could put his various personalities to work simultaneously. The rest is, as they say, history.

Abbie's masterstroke came in 1967, when he founded the Youth International Party—Yippies, or politicized hippies. It was a freewheeling response to the be-ins and the emergence of a radical, marijuana-smoking milieu in the East Village and elsewhere. Yippie was the perfect tool for fictive press releases, media events hatched in Hoffman's own fertile brain, which was then undergoing continuous shocks if not actual chemical changes through considerable doses of LSD. Constantly frenetic with new ideas, he was far from responsible (or democratic) about distributing them. Critics accused him of being a political huckster, in it for the celebration of his own personality. Friends suspected (and doctors later confirmed) that Abbie was actually a manic-depressive, and his illness increasingly took its toll on him as time went on. Meanwhile, he burned the candle at both ends, hurling dollar bills from the visitors' gallery onto the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, promising to lead an "Exorcism of the Pentagon" during a mass anti-war demonstration. He didn't disrupt the stock market for long, and he obviously failed to lift the Pentagon from its foundations. But he created some helpful chaos on Wall Street and provided some laughs among heavy-spirited demonstrators. (He also made Old Lefties even grumpier.)

The power and the risk of Hoffman's creative energy showed itself most spectacularly in the "Festival of Life" held at the time of the 1968 Democratic Party convention in Chicago. While moon-faced Hubert Humphrey supported the bloodshed in Vietnam and embraced Mayor Richard Daley, the cops went wild against longhaired kids. Hoffman nominated a Humphrey-looking porker, Pigasus, for president and led the demonstrators into the streets. The resulting publicity did wonders for Abbie's literary efforts, including *Revolution for the Hell of It* (1967), *The Woodstock Nation* (1969), and *Steal This Book* (1971). Abbie successfully outraged the authorities and the stuffed shirts on the Left, but it was never clear what strategy, if any, he had in mind beyond the next protest.

This limitation—of his effort and thus of Abbie himself—was obvious early on. As Todd Gitlin reflects in *The Whole World Is Watching*, Hoffman made himself the ultimate self-elected leader whose influence rested solely upon his allure to the mass media. He could not move toward creating a viable political alternative to Humphrey and Nixon (although his more slow-witted compeer, Jerry Rubin, ran for veep on the Peace and Freedom Party ticket in 1968) or offer any better alternative to capitalism's waste-and-spend lifestyle than to take drugs and make love. His critics called him irresponsible, and they were not entirely wrong. But I call it a post-1914 hangover, the brain-pain of a struggle to regain a vanished optimism in a world where class-conscious internationalism had long since failed and where "liberation," even with a utopian cultural overlay, offered no antidote to Empire as an effective world system.

Hoffman had other, more personal reasons for his ultimate collapse. He must have enjoyed the Chicago Eight Conspiracy Trial (during which he jokingly claimed to be the illegitimate son of Judge Julius Hoffman), but his 1973 bust for cocaine sales to an underground cop was a sobering experience. Whether or not he really made the sale to finance political activity, he spent the next six years underground. In his most purely productive moment, he became an environmental activist in upstate New York and Pennsylvania. He was still a master at publicity and had learned to bring diverse people together around a shared opposition to the destruction of their beloved turf. He reemerged from outlaw status, two nervous breakdowns weaker, to another decade of political activism. This time he was an avuncular, senior wise man to yet another generation of college kids, and by and large a very positive one. But he captured few headlines.

At the time of his possible suicide (more likely, an inadvertent drug overdose) in 1989, Hoffman had become an anarchist for our age, always against the State and unwedded to any alternative hierarchy. Unlike the old Yiddish anarchists who urged reason and quoted Kropotkin, Hoffman found his métier in the pop-culture vein, far from the consistently rational. He was always more akin to Lenny Bruce than Emma Goldman.

Norman Mailer captures that something in his introduction to the *Best of Abbie Hoffman*, the only anthology that Hoffman is ever likely to get. Mailer calls it "the autobiography of a bona fide American revolutionary," and says a few pages later, "Given his life, given his immersion in a profound lack of security, in a set of identity crises that would splat most of us like cantaloupes thrown off a truck, it is prodigious how long he resisted madness and death." Put aside the style of Hoffman's prose, which is dated and now makes reading his once-popular works an act of will. Forget the nuttiness of the political slogans, the constant "k" in "Amerika." Think about Abbie, American Jew and radical and bohemian. You will see more than Abbie. You will see a little of yourself. □

BOOK REVIEW

Post-Modern Jewish God-Talk

Arnold Eisen

Renewing the Covenant: A Theology for the Postmodern Jew by Eugene Borowitz. The Jewish Publication Society, 1991, 319 pp.

Seek My Face, Speak My Name: A Contemporary Jewish Theology by Arthur Green. Jason Aronson, 1992, 267 pp.

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

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

They may even get it this time around. My assumption is that American Jews in 1992—many of them in shul as I was this year on Yom Kippur, compelled as I was by the liturgy despite or because of frequently futile struggles to make modern sense of it—have given up the automatic aversion to religious ritual and belief nearly universal among highly educated Jews a generation or two ago. A degree of aversion remains, of course. How could it not? Many American Jews went to Hebrew school, after all, and have never entirely recovered. The shuls of their youth were probably full of rote performances and self-righteous struts. They may have fled at bar or bat mitzvah, never to return—and allowed themselves to walk the streets as adults with an adolescent's view of Judaism, something they would never permit in any other remotely important area of life. But then religion is not a terribly important area of life to most American Jews, because we have opted for participation in an elite culture that (as opposed to the fundies who inhabit the boonies) is resolutely secular, and (until recently, anyway), looked askance at particularist commitments of any kind. Face it: we have all learned to distrust hierarchy, exclusivism, authority wielded in the name of tradition—and Judaism has all of these things and more in abundance. Add the fact that it is inevitably associated in our conscious and unconscious minds with parents and hence guilt, not to mention death, and there is ample reason for avoidance even without the concerns for authenticity and intellectual honesty that likewise block our way to belief and observance.

Yet the shuls are full of new vitality these days, and not only on the High Holidays. Such involvement provides evidence not of renewed belief or rigorous observance but of a widespread recognition that the central question facing Jews does not involve specific truth-claims at all (Jews have never agreed on these, thank God) but whether and how they will stand in substantive relation to the family of traditions known to us as Judaism. The access points to Judaism are many and various these days, particularly since the changes wrought by feminism, and American Jews of late, women and men alike, have been drawn in in large numbers (this despite or because of increased rates of intermarriage.) I suspect most have done so without attempting let alone achieving clarity on the Big Questions (e.g., creation, revelation, redemption). The synagogues, happy to have them back and never comfortable with "God-talk" anyway, have let them get away with that evasion. My hope is that books like Green's and Borowitz's may help to change this situation—and perhaps even return quality God-talk to the synagogue.

Arnold Eisen is an associate professor of religious studies at Stanford University.

Not because the authors provide Big Answers or prove God's existence to Jews who by this point in our history—5753—have a skepticism long inbred. Proof is not on any postmodern agenda. Green and Borowitz do something far more valuable: They offer personal witness to God's presence in their lives, with a humility, authenticity, and directness that no thoughtful adult can easily ignore.

Borowitz, a professor at the Hebrew Union College in New York steeped in Enlightenment rationalism despite a healthy appreciation of its limitations, writes with admirable clarity. His book usually welcomes the reader without prior background in theology, although the tours he conducts through the curriculum of modern philosophy and Jewish thought—perhaps intended for just those readers—may tire the uninitiated long before they reach the book's best moments, when Borowitz allows his own voice to speak directly. I recommend skimming the rough parts and paying particular attention to the preface, the afterword, and chapters 8, 10, and 19, where Borowitz's personal voice—and with it his leap into postmodernity after a long and distinguished involvement with Kant et al—are most articulate. American narcissism and selfishness have moderated Borowitz's enthusiasm for the Enlightenment notion of autonomy, and fueled a passionate liberal call for community. Reflection upon the Holocaust and other recent history has deprived all of us, in his view, of any easy certainties, religious, scientific or otherwise. So this "postmodern Jew," drawing upon contemporary theorists such as Jürgen Habermas, seeks to calibrate anew the balance between particularist and universalist commitments, between non-negotiable duties and unwavering openness to multiple Jewish and non-Jewish paths.

I often found myself cheering him on. Recounting his dilemma about whether to say "motzi" in McDonalds, Borowitz provided a lovely metaphor for the countless choices we all find ourselves making. I confess that I welled up in gratitude at sentences such as this one, offered not as self-evident homily but as a hard-won truth after sixty-some years of struggle: "My trust in God for life after death relieves me of the punishing burden of requiring everything to be settled here. But it is not so secure that it eases my hurt at what the good God allows among us." Near the end of the book, Borowitz confesses that his "relationship with God has ripened over the years to a certain familiarity with God's presence—and thus with God's absence as well," and that this intimacy "has become the standard for my judgment of my encounters with things, people, and forms." One wishes he could have said more, but of course we would probably not give credence to more. Even this sentence, for many readers, will be too much—because it recounts an experience they cannot share and may well suspect. I hope that, rather than dismissing Borowitz's perspective for that reason, readers will appreciate the careful, modest formulations that abound in the book—evidence of a mind and soul that have "ripened over the years." Much Jewish thought still lacks Borowitz's humility—and so betrays both our experience of the world and our postmodern commitment to doubt.

Arthur Green—a scholar of Jewish mysticism and the president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College—has been bolder still. He has broken with the usual Enlightenment-dominated agenda of modern Jewish thought on view in Renewing the Covenant and gone back to the kabbalistic and Hasidic sources of his principal teacher, Abraham Joshua Heschel. Readers who delve into the notes at the end of the book will find specialized discussions of major concepts and texts in the Jewish mystical tradition. Those who do not—and one need not, to follow Green's argument—are treated to a poetic and profound challenge to our typical way of seeing Judaism and the world. Green begins with the personal "quest for understanding and awareness, an ongoing quest to know." All of us, he assumes, religious or not, have experiences of transcendence, moments that call our usual organization of reality into question. "We seek within our own inner depths the threads of a fabric that will allow us to join such isolated experiences together." Doing so—ascending to God by penetrating deep inside the self—Green believes we find a unity of Being that exposes the dualities necessary for daily existence as illusion. It is not true that we ourselves are "here" and others, the world, God, Being, are all "out there." Penetrate the veil, he urges. Pursue the unity. Green's entire book is structured by the mysteries that kabbalists believed lie hidden in the four-letter name of God, declared by Jews for three millennia in the "Shma" to be "One." Green finds mysteries there and pulls us into the darkness where he has found hidden light.

The depths opened by the book, the learning that lies quietly underneath every sentence, are truly remarkable. Green knows that he is straining credibility. Nachman of Bratslav, about whom Green wrote a brilliant biography some years back and from whom much of this book's thinking is derived, chose to write in tales and parables. Green, however, faces us directly, in a combination of philosophical essay, rabbinic homily, and brief Torah commentary, always urging us in effect to suspend doubt for a time and let his teaching work for us. We have a need to pray, and so we should pray. We cannot but project a personal Face onto the vast unknowable distances of the cosmos, and so we should—particularly since the imagination we use to do that is not apart from the cosmos which it scans. "Our prayer is a cry and a song to life itself, called forth from our own innermost self, addressed to the wonder and mystery of life that we have dared to call again by this ancient and holy name." Pure Heschel, that; and Green is no less faithful to his teacher in insisting that the way to such awareness, and out from it, leads relentlessly through the world. God's face is visible in human faces of all varieties, as God's name is spoken not only in multiple formulations (all inadequate) but in the acts we all perform in response to our awareness of God's presence.

As in Borowitz's book, there is acute danger that some readers will feel lost in the farther reaches of Green's learning and imagining. They may wonder just what he is up to in arguing that "God" too is only a symbol, and not always a terribly good one, for what he (following earlier mystics) has in mind. I can only urge them to stick with it. Green has no interest in mystical voyages to the heavens, but rather in making earth a better mirror and vessel for their light. Faith in creation, restated by Green, leads not only to Shabbat, community and the mitzvah of "awareness" but to vegetarianism as the "kashrut for our age." A radical reformulation of

revelation leads (p. 132) to a recommendation of "submission to God as a part of religious devotion" that Green concedes he "fought long and hard against" but has now come to accept as essential. This radical theology often leads—as it did among the kabbalists—to a strikingly traditional (albeit not halachic) pattern of observance. "The light that lies hidden within our Torah, made up of the countless points of love and devotion placed there by our ancestors, is also the hidden light of Y-H-W-H." Redemption, as in the teaching of Isaac Luria, a kabbalistic master of the sixteenth century, involves us in the work of putting all of Being back together. We might well begin, Green advises, by restoring the balance among the threefold tasks of Torah, worship, and acts of compassion called for by *Pirke Avot* instead of emphasizing only one to the exclusion of the others, as many of us do, Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike.

The metaphysicians will no doubt give Green a hard time for his daring. I confess to profound doubts about his monism. For one thing, I simply cannot comprehend abstruse speculation about what lies beyond the veil of illusion. It leaves me groping for sense, given that all such talk proceeds on this side of the veil, in language shaped by its illusions. I trust that Green draws upon personal mystical experience here—and has the usual difficulty of the mystic in describing that experience in words others can comprehend. I, as one of the others not privileged with the experience, necessarily remain at a skeptical distance.

But there is another problem, well known to students of monists such as Spinoza and quasi-monists such as Mordecai Kaplan. The essential oneness of all Being seems to preclude identity, responsibility and freedom to the individual. It therefore does not ground morality terribly well. One cannot easily reconcile monism with purpose of any sort, whether for Creation or for us minor creatures. God as the One, the totality of Being beyond all gods, includes good and evil, order and chaos, creation, and destruction, all jumbled together into one, and so cannot guarantee sense to our strivings, let alone to our prayers.

If Green's theology is meant to respond to my needs, it has done so by heightening rather than answering them. I stand before his monistic vision humbled, awed, cowering, terrified, and not terribly comforted by the knowledge that my poor stock of DNA, on temporary loan from the universal bank of matter and energy, is really part of the All which is Nothing. Such a vision would seem to lead fragile humans to cling to each other in desperation and cry out at the emptiness of the All which is Nothing rather than to undertake the regimen of commandments Green recommends, let alone the project of world-transformation served by the commandments. Even Borowitz, firmly ensconced on our side of reality, does not attempt in his book to reconcile his own vision of an orderly creation with the horrors that seem built into Nature no less than into history. I understand that such persuasion might fall into the modernist mode of persuasion and apologetic rather than the postmodern gathering of witness. But I yearn for more signs of the wrestling that Borowitz has gone through, more clues as to how he has emerged with his identity as a member of the covenanted people of Israel intact.

Both thinkers thus seem to know and demand too much at times, and at other moments far too little. Sometimes I wished that Borowitz could have had more of Green's poetic abandon, his willingness to try myth when reason has proven insufficient. At other moments I chided Green for formulations not nearly as precise and careful as those we expect and usually receive from Borowitz. This is the eternal tension in theology, beautifully expressed by Heschel in *Torah Min Ha-shamayim* (which sadly remains untranslated). Neither rationalist nor mystical language is adequate to the description of God. The one says too little and prefers silence to falsehood. The other says too much—yet in that plentitude contains the truth we need. Both are necessary.

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

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LETTERS

(Continued from p. 6)

priate.

In fact, we feminists have been the first to point out that women who accommodate themselves to their own brutalization are living out a particular victim role in which they frequently blame themselves for what is happening to them. So, we certainly do want the state to intervene to stop domestic violence. The only relevant difference, as far as I'm concerned, is that on the international sphere we may not have the power to intervene effectively. However, that is not a conceptual issue but a contingent historical fact that might be changed. I believe that when you are passing someone on the street and they are brutalizing their children it is appropriate to intervene; so too it is appropriate to intervene whereever we find people brutalizing others, physically or psychologically. Some of your panelists seem to be so mesmerized by the value of good boundaries and self-determination of different ethnic groups that they would allow these groups to get away with whatever they want to in the name of defending the right to their own particularism. Here I have to agree with what Peter Gabel has been calling "coercive deference." I feel that it's happening in your discussion of this issue—you are deferring to the right of self-determination even at the expense of allowing higher ethical principles to be abandoned.

Joyce Markowitz
Los Angeles, California

ISRAELI BEDOUINS

To the Editor:

Haim Chertok's article, "Desert Scorn: Bedouin Life Under Israeli Rule" in the July-August, 1992 issue of TIKKUN contains an egregious error which puts Israel in an unnecessarily bad light. On p. 50, Chertok asks, "...who has ever heard of an Israeli judge issuing an order for the demolition of a home belonging to a Jew, let alone of its implementation?" But there have been many cases in which demolition orders were carried out against Jews. To cite just one well-known incident: In December 1982, the authorities demolished an addition to a house in a Tel Aviv slum area which had been built without a permit. Violence broke out, and a family member was actually killed. Widespread vandalism ensued. This incident was very widely publicized and discussed.

It is surprising that Mr. Chertok, who, according to TIKKUN, has been in Israel since 1976 and is a columnist for the *Jerusalem Post,* is unaware that demolition orders are carried out against Jews in Israel.

When something detrimental to Israel appears in the pages of TIKKUN, the perception is that it must be true, since TIKKUN would only print something detrimental to Israel if (a) there were no doubt that it were true, and (b) it were of the utmost importance to air the matter.

Joel S. Grantz
Old Bridge, New Jersey

Editor Responds:

You are right. Israel *has* issued orders for the demolition of a home belonging to a Jew.

To the Editor

Shira Dicker's description of her experience in the mikveh would provide a fascinating case study for an analyst, Freudian or otherwise. Is this the ultimate religious experience for a Jewish woman, to be "relieved of the burden of my sexuality," to feel "protected, more daughter than mother," and to yearn to be "checked" by the mikveh lady in a scenario that lesbian sado-masochist writer Pat Califlia could easily spin a good half-dozen fantasies off of?

It's somewhat disturbing that, twenty years after the onset of the feminist movement, a woman could go to the mikveh and blissfully experience every known negative Western, American, and Jewish stereotype about women. Where has Shira Dicker been all these years? More disturbing, however, from the point of view of reconstructing Judaism so as to be more inclusive of women, is the author's completely uncritical journey into mikveh: Doesn't it ever strike her as a little odd that out of all the possible Biblical forms of impurity , and even after the reason for the distinction between purity and impurity has disappeared (i.e., the Temple), only the rabbinic regulations pertaining to menstruating women have continued and even increased? Even with a small amount of reflection, it seems clear that *taharat hamishpachah* is being used within the rabbinic system to make major cultural statements about the status of women in Judaism. The concept of *niddah* is part of the rabbinic strategy to keep women away from the central legitimating symbols and texts of rabbinic Judaism. But just because the sages of two thousand years ago had a certain ideology of gender roles doesn't mean that they were on to some essential truth about the nature of women, and a dunk in the mikveh isn't really the shortest way for women to encounter the spiritual treasures of Judaism.

We all have times when we want and need to be cared for as children; there's nothing wrong with that. But we find the conflation of a child-like and asexual state with the true Jewish spirituality for women to be highly disturbing. If we're looking for a more integrated Jewish life for both sexes, we'd better not get stalled on the sex-role stereotyping of the Mishnah and the sociocultural context of the relevant Halachah. There are plenty of alternatives available. Here in little Bloomington, Indiana, women are exploring the full range of Jewish spirituality. Some of us are laying tefillin and davening daily. Some of us are studying Talmud, in English, or in the original. Some of us are learning to lead services, chant Torah, or are studying Jewish history and thought. If all of this is happening in a relatively small community, surely there is more happening elsewhere.

Shoshanah Keller
Deborah Reichler
Bloomington, Indiana

Artists

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TERROR IN GERMANY

(Continued from p. 35)

to undermine fragile German parliaments. The time has come for a real change in German democracy. Unfortunately, the uninspiring Social Democrats seem to be doing everything possible to show that they are prepared to do anything except lead Germany in this direction.

Paradoxically, the self-interest of the hard-working and ideologically blind middle classes may subtly force Germany in the direction of change. After all, as much pure destruction as the Nazis unleashed upon the world, the Germans themselves suffered as well for the crimes of Hitlerism. Their cities were destroyed, millions of German soldiers died, and their country was occupied, partitioned, and reduced in size. When "average" Germans speak out against the atrocities being committed by the neo-Nazis, as hundreds of thousands did in demonstrations throughout the fall of 1992, they are not only acting upon a moral impulse. Germans know, if only instinctively and not with clear knowledge, what they have to lose if German society slips off the rails again.

No one has a crystal ball that can guarantee the continuing stability of German democracy. But it appears clear to this author that the trauma of the Holocaust remains so imprinted upon German society that the potential danger of the right-wing will not be underestimated in the future (as so catastrophically occurred in Weimar). This is not a naive hope that they will "learn" from history, because people usually don't. But as a now almost-forgotten Jewish-German philosopher of the nineteenth century once wrote, "Men and women make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given, and transmitted from the past." Already the events in Mölln have sent a shock wave through German society, and all the polls show that the number of people concerned about the situation has drastically increased. Since December 8, over a million people have returned to the streets to demonstrate for tolerance of foreigners and to demand that the government fight the escalation of terror. This increase in public awareness might signal a hope that will carry us farther than fear.

We will keep a watchful eye on the proceedings. □

PSYCHOANALYTIC UPDATE

(Continued from p. 37)

rationality of the patient's perspective, to being modest and respectful in the tone and content of the analysis. At its worst, the social constructivist approach can elevate self-doubt and ambiguity to a hidden ideal. Yet many patients who were deprived of a much-needed experience of responsible and supportive authority look to their analyst for such an encounter.

The therapeutic use of benign authority by the psychoanalyst can thus be likened to the importance to social change agents of maintaining a moral vision of a better world. In the latter instance, the work of social transformation requires that its participants oppose the corrupt authority of the dominant culture with an authority of their own, a set of values and judgments about human nature and possibility that point toward the necessity of social change. For the psychoanalyst, it could be argued that the work of therapeutic transformation requires that the analyst be able to oppose the authority of the patient's destructive internal objects with a more benign, empathic, and protective authority.

Nevertheless, psychoanalysis has been offered a powerful corrective by the social constructivist point of view. It is a viewpoint that cherishes skeptical self-scrutiny in the analyst and validation of the patient's unique perspective. Despite the danger that it poses—the danger to the analyst of denying and undermining her legitimate authority—it determinedly welcomes and supports all challenges to received wisdom. As such, it is productively destabilizing to psychoanalytic theory.

If it can be asked legitimately whether the analyst can know truth or speak with authority, the way has been opened to a host of other radical doubts. One might question the primacy of insight in the psychoanalytic theory of cure, wonder if psychoanalysis has any claim to the status of science, or ask again if libido has anything in particular to do with sex. The self-scrutiny and revision urged upon psychoanalysts by the social constructivists is a vitalizing contribution to a field that should be sturdy enough to receive and make use of it, even as pyschoanalysis's practitioners display the courage to put forth their own authoritative therapeutic vision. □

BACK TO BASICS

(Continued from p. 50)

with restraint and care is urgent. We wish to nurture in our young a discipline that makes clear its connection to the care for and respect of others and of the earth. It stands in opposition to a culture that encourages the profligate, selfish, and unrestrained depletion of our resources, the irresponsible destruction of our air and water, and unbounded consumerism.

To act with discipline is to act with regard to limits: to curtail what one wishes to say, do, or have because of its potentially deleterious consequences for others. Discipline, in this sense, is a crucial element in acting with responsibility to and for others. To transform the mean-

ing of discipline into this sense of self- and collective restraint is to become cognizant of the dangers of behavior when our expectations, desires, or assumptions go unchecked, or without critical moral reflection. It is to become aware of the hurt we inflict on others when we waste or destroy precious resources; when we squander time, energy, or money; when we imperiously assume that everyone around us shares our religious faith, language, history, or culture. Whenever we act without learning to limit our needs, without curtailing our power and prerogatives, without checking our assumptions that everyone is just like us, then we have acted recklessly and without discipline. So it is that progressives can affirm the public's alarm about the lack of discipline among the young—and the importance of schools as agents of change—while insisting that such change does not entail a reflexive capitulation to institutional rules, but rather a relational, morally sensitive, and reflective process of learning to live with others in community.

What has been discussed here represents only a partial formulation of a politics of meaning in education. We have not begun to address other influential dimensions of the public discourse about schools. There is, for example, the pervasive liberal notion of equal opportunity in which school is viewed as the primary arena pitting children against one another in the fierce competition for honors and success. Nor have we explored educators' professional commitment to the illusory idea of education as morally neutral. Here again, the Right may be on to something important; in their emphasis on teaching values, conservatives have shown an appreciation for the inextricable connection between education and society's fundamental ethical, political, and ideological concerns.

Whether or not we choose to recognize it, school is inevitably a place where children learn to understand what it means to be human and how they should live together with others. It is time for the Left to accept this challenge and affirm our own moral and spiritual vision of the meaning of education. □

JOSEPH

(Continued from p. 52)

principles; Joseph, on the other hand, is eager to please his master. And there is no doubt who his master is. As Wildavsky observes, "What is the temptation of administrators? By confusing their patron with their God, they mistake serving their superior with helping their people."

The careful reader of Esther hears echoes of the Joseph story in almost every phrase. It is instructive to note a sampling of the similarities:

Esther	Joseph
Achashverosh's feast, 1:5	Pharaoh's feast, 40:20
Vashti falls from favor, 1:19	Baker falls from favor and is hanged, 40:22
Esther (Haddasah) has a foreign name, 2:7	Joseph has a foreign name, 41:45
Mordechai won't kneel, 3:2	All kneel to Joseph!, 41:43
Haman controlled himself (vayit'apek), 5:10	Joseph controlled himself (vayit'apek), 43:31, then failed to control himself, 45:1
Achashverosh's dream, 6:1	Pharaoh's dream, 41:1
Mordechai rides the royal horse, 6:10	Joseph rides the royal horse, 41:43
Esther prefers slavery to death, 7:4	Joseph "buys" Egyptians into slavery, saving them from death, 47:19-21
Feigned rape of Esther by Haman, 7:8	Attempted seduction of Joseph by wife of Potiphar, 39:14
Royal ring given to Mordechai, 8:2	Royal ring given to Joseph, 41:42
Mordechai's purple gown, 8:15	Joseph's colorful coat, 37:3

Commentators have long puzzled over the absence of any mention of the name of God from the entire Book of Esther. But if we assume that the author intended the story to be a farcical commentary on the Joseph tradition, the mystery evaporates. In a world of power politics, God is pushed out of the scene. There is no time for piety when the demands of government are pressing.

By dressing Joseph in comic garb, the authors of the Book of Esther have pronounced sentence on Joseph and his version of civil religion: It is a joke! In denuding the entire Esther story of reference to God, the text shows what is left of the sacred history of Israel when politics is substituted for piety: a Purim spiel, a Bacchanalian orgy of mockery, and a masquerade. It is not for nothing that on Purim Jews disguise themselves as non-Jews. We laugh at Joseph the professional politician, the assimilated court Jew, by celebrating his story in drunken excess.

But the tradition's handling of Joseph is not quite so simple. The rabbis' decision to include the Book of Esther in the canon, and their wildly contradictory traditions regarding Joseph's piety or lack thereof, are acknowledgements of their ambivalence to Joseph's place in Jewish history. Power properly belongs only to God but in an unredeemed world it is good to have friends in high places. Joseph the Righteous and his spiritual descendants command our attention because they have permitted our people to survive, albeit pre-

cariously, while retaining all of their equivocations about power. Perhaps it is in this quality that his righteousness endures. □

[1]*For a discussion of liminality in ritual, see Victor Turner,* The Ritual Process, *Chicago, 1969. Lawrence Hoffman examines liminality in Jewish thought in* Beyond the Text: A Holistic Approach to Liturgy, *Bloomington, 1987.*

Five Words

(Continued from p. 54)

ployees, members, and to the Jewish community whose dollars pay their salaries.

• Insist that there be suitable child care with special age-appropriate Jewish programming at every conference, lecture, and study group they are subsidizing in their current quest to bring Jewish education to lay people.

• Create, for a reasonable fee, in each Jewish community a babysitter's "club" of adolescents with adequate training to sit at night, or provide employment to older women or new immigrants who are qualified to sit during the day.

• Establish a national network that matches Israelis or other young Jews with American Jewish families for a year of cultural exchange in return for child-care responsibilities.

• Organize in each Jewish community a carpool service to usher children from school to after-school programs, Hebrew school, or lessons if both parents need to work a full day.

• Structure stimulating, content-filled Jewish programming for those days when children are on holiday from school but parents must work.

• Utilize local Jewish institutions to provide emergency babysitters in the unfortunate event that a child is sick and neither parent can negotiate a day off.

Since Jewish women are having their children later, they are often the "sandwich" generation, responsible for the care of young children, the demands of a full-time job, and the needs of elderly parents. We need to insure that there are community institutions to assist by providing people to take an elderly parent to a doctor's appointment, pick up a needed prescription, shepherd a frail parent on a walk, arrange delivery of necessary equipment, or safe, affordable, and conscientious day or twenty-four-hour care when a parent can no longer manage.

Making and raising Jewish children is not a woman's issue; it is a communal priority. Our leaders are trembling about the future instead of drawing upon the past. Judaism has survived because its ideas have been embodied in a unique way of life, one that emphasizes the interdependence of its members and the distinctiveness of its values and behaviors. By being authentically different, Jews paradoxically have changed the countries in which they've lived, challenging the conventions of the larger societies that surrounded them.

The people that gave the world monotheism, a living book, midrash, psychoanalysis, the theory of relativity, and, arguably, feminism can surely come up with a paradigm of communal support for children and the transmission of culture. Rather than wringing their hands over Jewish continuity, let American Jewish leaders reclaim our proud history of creating social structures whose goals are human partnership and transformation. □

Abortion

(Continued from p. 58)

abortion based upon these traditions. In certain cases, they clearly support both the legality and the morality of such an option. Yet we are also meant to recognize and regard at least the fetus's potential personhood, and this requires our personal renunciation of abortion as a ready option. To borrow Bill Clinton's formulation in the 1992 presidential campaign, we should be pro-choice, not pro-abortion. Undoubtedly, there will be limited circumstances in which we will support abortion without hesitation. But hesitation should otherwise be the hallmark of our approach to this difficult issue.

The last of the texts considered also bids us to respect the father's interest in the fetus. The Talmud's conclusion there supposes that even a father can develop a significant relationship with his child before birth. Personal experience tells me that this is so. If we admit the wisdom of this assessment, then we should conclude that a father, too, has the right to be involved in decisions concerning the disposition of the fetus. But all of this comes with an essential caveat—for the Talmud, the father's emotional connection and intent are more important than his biological contribution. Therefore, the committed father should be treated differently with respect to his interests than the mere biological father.

These conclusions represent my personal judgment of what a critical, ethical analysis of traditional Jewish sources will yield; the reader may agree or disagree. But whatever the wisdom of any specific conclusions, there is a compelling ethical voice to be heard in these teachings. In my opinion, the lack of clarity and confidence—the admission that these are complicated, difficult questions—is the most important characteristic of these various rabbinic discussions. This indecision offers us proper advice; we should hear it as a caution.

The religiously concerned person cannot approach the question of abortion without some discomfort. Even if he/she believes that abortion is sometimes moral and proper, it should be a determination that does not come easily. Certainly, the opposite position also has merit. The advice of Jewish tradition, as I read it, is to maintain both opposing opinions in tension, allowing the other always to serve as critique of the opinion one holds at the moment. □

ROUNDTABLE

(Continued from p. 62)

resented the community—including the women, seniors, lesbians and gays, and poor and working-class people—we would see an agenda emerging from the Jewish community that more closely resembled the agendas of communities of color, and coalitions would be easy to forge.

Marshall Meyer: I've heard about the organized Jewish community and its problems. I work in a synagogue that has several thousand people who are involved in many concrete programs of social justice. And we regularly invite people like Jean-Baptiste Aristide, Congressmam Charles Rangel, Mayor Dinkins and others to address our congregation on a Friday night or Saturday morning. Rabbinic leadership in the Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Reform worlds should use the synagogue as an institution that can facilitate communication between different communities. And our programs around AIDS and helping the homeless really deal with the needs of both Blacks and whites. Working on social action is very concrete and something that could be done in every synagogue, and at the same time we can work for national programs that hopefully will be introduced by the new administration to achieve social justice.

Jacoby: We don't want to eradicate group identity, but we want some kind of underlying sense that underneath we are all the same. I speak as a proud and religiously observant Jew and I wouldn't give that up for the world, but group identity can run amok.

Michael Meyers: Group identity is a social construct; people are hybrids who are part of many groups at the same time.

Brickner: We need coalitions of communication between Blacks and Jews in a given geographical area so that information is shared that can help avert crises.

Through the New York Human Rights Commission, of which I am a member, we are monitoring and responding to "hate radio" which does more damage than anyone can believe by taking up fringy people and making them sound like heroes. We don't censor them, but we can monitor and then ask for equal time to respond to the hate that is promulgated there.

Ehrenberg: It's very important to develop a strategy for youth, because unfortunately young people in both communities tend to be most responsive to extremist elements. Particularly new immigrants, whether they be Blacks from the West Indies or Jews from the Soviet Union, have not had a background in community dialogue and need to be introduced to our concepts of inter-community cooperation.

TIKKUN: There's a problem with this conversation. Many of the ideas proposed seem to be based on the assumption that the problem is relatively tame and subject to infusions of energy to deal with localized upsurges of irrationality. In TIKKUN we've argued that creating an evil Other is one way that people tend to deal with the alienation in their daily life, a way that provides an alternative to struggling to change the social order fundamentally. These evil Others, be they racial, ethnic, or national groupings, become the recipients of the anger and frustration that is embedded in the daily life experience of the powerless. The discussion here seems to assume that the problem is much more limited, and that the racism is much less systemic in both the Jewish and the Black communities. Yet from many of the reports that we receive at TIKKUN, the racism is deeply embedded both anti-Semitism in the Black world and racism against Blacks in the Jewish world can be encountered and experienced on a daily basis in both communities. In the Jewish community, for example, Balfour Brickner and Rabbi Marshall Meyer are famous not because they are so typical of what is happening, but because their synagogues and the role that they play is so very different from the rest of the Jewish mainstream, precisely because they do stand up to the racism and do articulate a social justice agenda in sharp contrast to the self-centeredness and happy complacency of so much of the rest of the Jewish community.

Michael Meyers: You are right—there is a real and deep problem of racism in both communities. But the antagonism is born from cynicism. People need real alternatives to racist thinking and race-oriented institutions, and that's why what Marshall Meyer has created is very important. We need not only multiracial coalitions—we need multiracial institutions.

TIKKUN: Despite these very good specific programs, the overall situation in the Jewish world leaves much to be desired. There is no overall organization that brings Jews together to strategize about how to eliminate racism in the Jewish world or to fight anti-Semitism in the larger world. Instead, we have competing fiefdoms, and each organization seeks to cash in on a current crisis by tooting its own horn about how well it has responded, rather than seeking to bring Jews together to develop a coordinated theory or strategy. So, for example, the American Jewish Congress put forward on December 10, 1992, a very impressive full-page New York Times ad critiquing those Jews who were labelling Mayor Dinkins an anti-Semite. Yet there was no reason why a dozen groups might not have signed on to the ad and worked together to develop a common response and common strategy.

Kaye/Kantrowitz: We don't know enough "facts on the ground" to develop an overall strategy. So it's sufficient for us to develop coalitions at this point and to deal with our own racism, while recognizing that anti-Semitism is not something that Jews cause and not something that Jews can fix (though we need to name it, but it's not our job to solve the problem).

Rubin: I share the discomfort of TIKKUN's editor about some aspects of this conversation. What I see happening in the Jewish community itself really frightens me—a dynamic in which Jews are scared for very good reasons, but this spirals into an inward-turning modality which increases the fear and the gulf between the Jewish community and others. I think the Jewish community has turned away from many of its core principles and needs to be recalled to them. We in the Jewish community say, "How come others don't repudiate their bigots when we repudiate ours?" But in the Jewish community we don't repudiate our bigots, and it's extremely rare to see public statements by the Jewish community repudiating obviously racist statements.

There are a minority of people in our community who really care about these social justice issues—and we need to come together and in unequivocal terms call upon them to do what we say we are doing but in fact are not doing, and then to participate as front line players in issues like immigration, urban development, housing, health care, anti-discrimination programs (including support for gays and lesbians). But to do this we need to stop congratulating ourselves about the good work that some of us are doing and instead recognize that in the larger Jewish community our perspectives, though still articulated by community relations groups, are losing in the Jewish community and that we need to do is to call the community back to where it should be.

TIKKUN: There's one other problem in what some roundable particpants have mentioned—the notion that our problem lies in too much group identification. Black nationalists might argue that the promise of the sixties that one could form a larger community transcending all barriers was belied by the reality that racism never was dismantled and that the universal community of America that they were urged to enter proved illusory.

Jacoby: I don't think that direction was ever seriously tried. Steps were taken, there was progress. But it involved more physical desegregation than serious integration. And very quickly we moved into more nationalist ways of doing things. Integration was pushed by a few against the fears of many and it never was given a real chance.

Rubin: I haven't given up on multiculturalism—I think that despite some incendiary rhetoric, on most campuses it is working in a very positive way. Ethnic, religious, or national particularity need not cause hatred and should not be blamed for hatred when it occurs.

Jacoby: The specific way that group identity has evolved in the past few years does encourage an "us-versus-them" mentality, a mistrust of other people. I don't want to deny the need for group identity, but do want to oppose the way it has been fostered in the past few decades. We need more emphasis on what we have in common.

Kaye/Kantrowitz: Some of what has happened in women's studies programs on campus offers some ground to hope, precisely because issues of difference have been pushed forward. Women have brought their own diverse backgrounds and experiences into a common framework, but they have insisted also on maintaining and learning from their diversity, and that is a model for the larger society.

Michael Meyers: From my own experience in the Black community, I support the principle of multiculturalism but not the way it has been carried out on many college campuses. I think that there has been a romanticization of "difference" and a deification of skin color and this has been facilitated by guilt-ridden academics who distort the idea of multiculturalism and promote disunity and balkanization—in the name of "respecting differences" they promote separatism and racism.

TIKKUN: Yet this development might be seen as a product of the defeat of integrationism, a defeat that was not

brought about by Third World people but rather by the strong resistance to integration by whites. That resistance accounts for the electoral victory of Nixon in 1968, the support gathered by Wallace, the victories of Reagan and Bush (have we forgotten Willie Horton?), and even the need for Clinton to campaign so strongly in the suburbs while symbolically disassociating himself from the cities. In TIKKUN we've argued that part of the reason people turned away from the civil rights and Black liberation movements was the stultifying, oppressive, and humanity-denying way that they put forward their demands, and to this extent we would probably agree with Tamar Jacoby that the abandonment of a transcendent universal conception of our common humanity played a causal role in the defeat of these movements. But we would also not want to minimize the role of the continuing experience of racism in the 1970s and 1980s in leading Blacks toward a separatism and nationalism just as similar experiences of actual anti-Semitism (despite a rhetoric of "brotherhood" and "enlightenment") led many Jews to a right-wing form of Zionism.

Jacoby: There was certainly resistance in white America and a decrease in funding for important social programs. Yet the separatist disease was firmly entrenched by the time Nixon was elected. I see what has happened as similar to what happens in a dysfunctional family or a bad marriage. There's a kind of interaction in which each group acts in a way that gives the other an excuse to act its worst. Blacks seem angry and alienated, so whites say, "Why should we go out of our way to help them?" Whites seem closed and hostile so Blacks feel more angry and alienated. To say that it's one group acting badly is to miss the interactive relationship here.

Yes, there has been some closing down of government programs. But the key dimension is how people feel about each other, and it's very hard for legislation or government programs to change that. The Black middle class has quadrupled in size during the last few decades, but most blacks are as alienated as ever.

Marshall Meyer: But don't underestimate the way that the withholding of funds for housing and social programs has caused incredible suffering in some sectors of the Black community. Many of these people are bleeding to death—so don't relegate their anger to some internal pathology. We Jews are relatively in a powered community—this may be a family dynamic, but between unequals in terms of economic and political power. We have to show ourselves capable of empathy.

Jacoby: I entirely agree about the need for empathy. But we have to foster the idea of the larger community. I used to cover criminal justice issues for a magazine, and I visited prisons and spoke to Blacks incarcerated there. What astounded me was that so few of them felt that they had commited a crime against their own community—whether or not the crimes had been committed in the ghetto or against other minority people, they felt they had broken the window on someone else's house. They could commit the crimes they did partly because they had no sense of belonging to a larger community. This is just part of why we must come back to the notion that underneath the differences we are all the same.

Marshall Meyer: I agree not only on strategic grounds but also on theological grounds: that's the consequence of ethical monotheism, that we are all basically brothers and sisters if there is one Creator.

Jacoby: The problem is I don't think that's what most Americans believe today. □

ISRAEL

(Continued from p. 31)

pean Community, and the international media. Faisel Husseini and his fellow Palestinian negotiators have no choice but to condition the continuation of the talks on the return of the deportees as the overwhelming majority of the Security Council has demanded.

In the interest of preserving what has been a sterile peace process, the Cabinet representatives of Meretz, the Israeli peace party, supported the expulsion order. Only after the fact did they learn that Rabin had deported a larger number of Palestinians than they had originally imagined when they voted in favor of the measure. Now, in order to placate their voters, and perhaps to relieve their own consciences, the ministers of Meretz are demanding that Rabin pledge to begin negotiations with the P.L.O. More likely their action may have paved the way for the reentry of the Israeli right into the government.

All the more reason why the United States must get back into the process. If Rabin has any serious openness to peace, he could only move in that direction in response to what appears to be overt pressure from the United States. Many Israelis hope that Clinton will have the political freedom to move beyond AIPAC, the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, and other forces in the American Jewish establishment that will attempt to convince him to rubber-stamp whatever proposals Israel makes. They hope, too, that Clinton will bring the parties to Camp David or some similar setting and personally forge the conditions for peace. One thing is clear: Israelis are waiting for Clinton, certain that we can't achieve peace without him. □

Translated by Gila Svirsky

Our First Hundred Days

(Continued from p. 10)

involved, stay hopeful, or stay connected to the political process if they don't believe that you are listening, caring, and open to hearing their suggestions.

Our first hundred days would be dedicated to building a network so that ordinary people can be there for you. New Democrats would not be an arm of the Democratic Party, or any party, and it won't be a political organization. Rather, it would be an organization of people who support you and support the part of you that is moved by a politics of meaning. We could use TIKKUN magazine as a vehicle for some of our conversation, but we would also sponsor activities and conferences around the country, we would help stimulate op-eds and letters to the editor, and we would find other ways to mobilize mass opinion. Just as the Right created "The Committee for the Present Danger" during the Carter years to offset a trend toward liberalism, we would use New Democrats as a mobilizer of those who wish to support a politics of meaning.

Let me give you one concrete example of something that New Democrats could push for, a concrete proposal that would, if adopted, go a long way toward shifting public dialogue in this country. We will propose the creation of an "Ethical Environment Impact Report" for all proposed legislation or government-sponsored programs (suggested in a slightly different form by Charles Derber in his memo to you below).

Every government office should be required to answer the following questions about its current functioning to justify budget requests:

1. How do our programs foster caring, concern for others, ecological awareness, spiritual sensitivity, and a sense of mutual responsibility?
2. Do the programs only foster caring and concern for others as a supposed "objective consequence" (an argument that might be used by our current welfare system that dispenses money to poor people and hence shows objective caring, even though the impersonal way the money is distributed tends to make the recipients feel that no one really cares about them), or do they consciously attempt to foster a subjective awareness, on the part of service deliverers and recipients, that they are part of a society that values them, values others, and seeks, through this program, to express that mutual caring?
3. Has the program established and tested methods to show that as a result of this program the total level of caring, concern for others, and sense of mutual responsibility in the communities effected by the program have in fact increased?

One way you could help us launch this idea is to create a "summit on ethics and community," much like your economic summit, and bring together people to have a serious discussion of how to translate an ethical and politics of meaning agenda into policy terms. At such a gathering, we could begin to fill in the details of what an "Ethical Environment Impact Report" might look like, how to make it practical, and why America ought to be as worried about this dimension of policy as about those dimensions that get mesaured in dollars and cents.

A summit on ethics, community, and the politics of meaning could also explore ways to constitute your administration as the primary "pro-family" force, and, in addition, could address how to formulate an ethically grounded foreign policy that would go far beyond the struggle for democracy and human rights and begin to conceptualize a world based on trust rather than on competitive self-interest. Such a conference would be a logical launching pad for New Democrats.

I wouldn't be proposing all this to you, Mr. President, if you hadn't yourself responded to very similar ideas when I proposed them years ago in the L.A. *Times*. Now you're in a position to realize them, and we are in a position to help offset the tremendous pressures that could lead you to a much narrower and less visionary way of doing politics.

I wish I could say that we could do this alone, without your support. But the cynicism born of the past twelve years leads many people to doubt that anything that they could do would really matter. So it's unlikely that they would believe that New Democrats or any other citizens' initiative from below could amount to very much without some strong signal of interest from you. That's why I'm proposing that you convene a summit conference on ethics, community, and the politics of meaning—because regardless of what you say in your speeches about citizens' involvement, few people are going to take that seriously, or support a project like New Democrats, until you signal that we will have your ear.

Of course, whether or not you take us up on the offer to create New Democrats, we at TIKKUN will be doing our best to support the most visionary and idealistic side of Bill Clinton, even if at times that means criticizing the other side. I'm sure you understand, Mr. President, that our commitment to building spiritual, ethical, and communal sensitivity stems not from a narrow, tactical interest in advancing a particular political movement, but from our own roots in the prophetic tradition of Judaism. And that commitment may lead us to challenge those aspects of your presidency that do not seem to be leading to a society built on justice, love, caring, and on a recognition of the ultimate preciousness of every human being as well as our shared obligation to heal and repair the world. □

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All the rest is commentary.

תיקון

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