

Tikkun

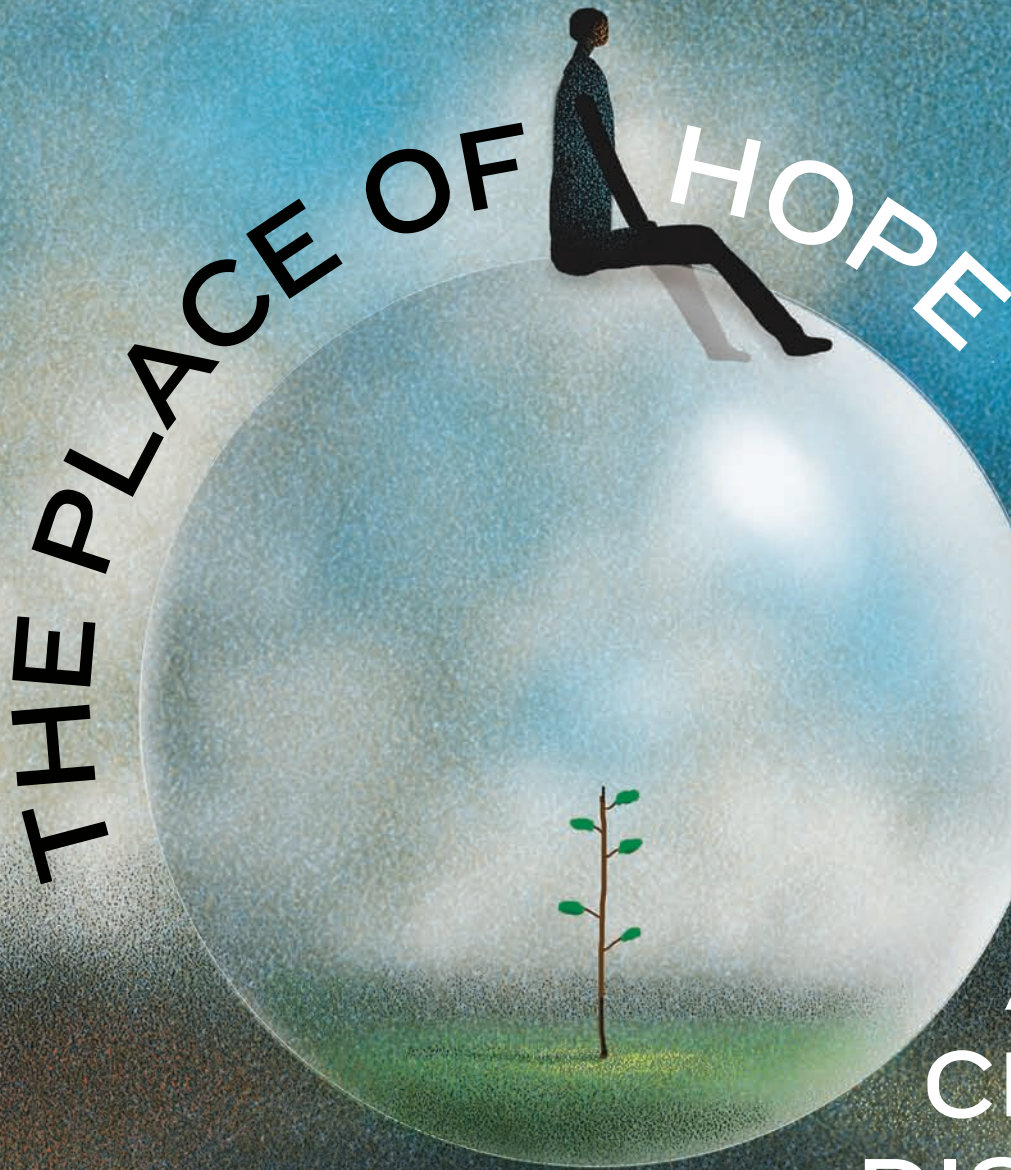
POLITICS + SPIRITUALITY + CULTURE

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

SPRING 2015

VANDANA SHIVA ON
INTERCONNECTEDNESS

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IN AN
AGE OF
CLIMATE
DISASTER



\$5.95 U.S.

Israel/Palestine: Regrouping in the Absence of a Two-State Solution
Mindfulness and Social Justice Work | Raising the Minimum Wage
Human Evil | A Christian Pastor on Preaching from the Hebrew Bible



Alzheimer's: A Growing Threat

There are currently 5.4 million Americans with Alzheimer's — a number that is expected to triple over the next decade. American families and taxpayers spend 200 billion dollars per year caring for those with Alzheimer's, and in ten years' time, the total spent will top 2 trillion dollars. Yet the research budget for Alzheimer's is slight — one billion dollars per year.

Dementia
by Candice Bohannon

Trish Vradenburg, former copublisher of *Tikkun* and now cofounder of USAgainstAlzheimer's, points out:

Although there are 500,000 deaths a year from this deadly disease — the third leading cause of death — it is barely mentioned in the obituaries. . . . No one wants to admit that their parent, wife, or sister has Alzheimer's because they want people to remember their relative as a strong, vital person. It was only when the HIV/AIDS community came out of the closet about their disease, when they demanded to be heard and called this disease what it was — a National Emergency — that people and, ultimately, Congress had to act. . . . It is time for us to come out of the shadows.

The Network of Spiritual Progressives advocates two immediate steps:

1. Raise the research budget to 10 billion dollars a year, an action that Congress could take immediately. Imposing higher taxes on corporate profits would provide more than enough money to fund this increase and also enable

the United States to devote billions more to controlling Ebola's spread in West Africa and fighting tuberculosis, malaria, AIDS, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and other health threats worldwide.

2. Help caregivers. Caregivers face financial hardships and interrupt their careers to care for loved ones. In 2013, 15.5 million family members and friends provided 17.7 billion hours of unpaid care. This threatens livelihoods and takes critical money out of our economy, but people do it because someone they care about needs them. We need to build financial support for these caregivers into our health care system. At the very least, we need to make sure they get Social Security retirement credit for the time they've left their jobs to provide support.

If you want to help, we at *Tikkun* urge you to join the USAgainstAlzheimer's campaign at usagainstalzheimers.org.

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Environmental harm intensifies structural violence, so acting for justice in an age of climate change means fighting all forms of oppression.

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Online Exclusives

Tikkun is not just a print magazine—visit our blog at tikkun.org/daily and our web magazine site at tikkun.org. Each has content not found here. Our online magazine is an exciting supplement to the print magazine, and the daily blog brings in a range of voices and perspectives.

Visit tikkun.org/climate to read the powerful web exclusives associated with this issue, including contributions from Michael Carolan, Mijin Cha, Kate Davies, Ron Feldman, Chris Fici, and Sumeet Kaur.

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A NOTE ON LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We welcome your responses to our articles. Send letters to the editor to letters@tikkun.org. Please remember, however, not to attribute to *Tikkun* views other than those expressed in our editorials. We email, post, and print many articles with which we have strong disagreements because that is what makes *Tikkun* a location for a true diversity of ideas. *Tikkun* reserves the right to edit your letters to fit available space in the magazine.

BEYOND A CEASEFIRE, WHAT'S NEEDED IS COURAGE

Two years ago, when the Palestinian Authority and Hamas agreed to form a unified government, Israel had a golden opportunity to lay out a lasting blueprint for peace. Finally, they had a true partner. No such luck. In Israel's mind, why back a peace process? It is far easier to keep Hamas as an enemy than to give up land to the Palestinian Authority, uproot settlers, deal with Jew-on-Jew violence, and even risk a civil war. The whole notion of giving up something tangible, such as land, for something abstract, such as peace, just doesn't compute.

As a Jew—a Zionist—it pains me to see what Israel did in Gaza and then what happened at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Again, Palestinians were being singularly criticized for killing Jews when, while not for a second condoning those killings, we have to ask ourselves what Jews were doing there in the first place. After the 1967 war, no one less than Defense Minister Moshe Dayan clearly laid out the boundary lines: Jews would pray at the Western Wall and Muslims at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Chief rabbis honored these boundaries for years and forbade Jews from entering the mosque compound. With the rise of the religious Zionist movement, all of this has changed. And sadly, the cycle of violence continues. What next?

Until the United States is willing, in earnest, to put pressure on Israel, little if anything will change. Our uneven support for Israel and the Netanyahu government, with its disingenuous efforts for peace, is doing little to change the dynamics in the region. With our leverage, we are the only ones who can help bring about change.

Let's urge Congress and the president to exercise the strength—and the courage—to stand up to Israel instead of blindly standing behind it.

—Ron Ovadia, *Irvine, CA*

AN ABUSIVE GOD

Walter Brueggemann writes with stirring eloquence in his contribution to *Tikkun's* Summer 2014 issue. As his former colleague, I remain inspired by his faithful, virtuoso attention to texts on their own terms and in dialogue with our world. Yet after years of friendly debate, I remain entrenched in my resistance to his view that God actually punishes and abuses. If this is so, those shattered by abuse, oppression, and affliction have no recourse, for God becomes the agent of dehumanizing anguish. It is undeniable that biblical texts say God abuses, but are these texts to be taken as ontological statements about divine character or agency?

In my work on Jeremiah, I have argued that the prophet's fire and brimstone is a form of contextual theology. The abusive God functions to mirror experiences of trauma, to create narrative frameworks for chaotic destruction, and to show that the Holy One is not impotent against the gods of Babylon. Such theology is a survival strategy, a way to move toward the future, or as Robert Frost said about poetry, "a momentary stay against confusion." To recognize that biblical views of God are as historically conditioned as the cultures that produced them does not turn God into a figure of "sweetness and light;" it points toward the Holy One, who is all the more wild and mysterious and other.

—Kathleen M. O'Connor, *Decatur, GA*

FEMINIST VIEWS OF GODDESS AND GOD

I deeply enjoyed reading "Two Feminist Views of Goddess and God" (Summer 2014) by Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ, two scholars whom I admire greatly. As a spiritual feminist, I resonate with Christ and Plaskow's shared commitment to supplanting patriarchal images of God with more immanent and

egalitarian concepts of the Divine. I also would like to offer a third feminist view, drawn from my own standpoint as a Hindu woman raised in the West.

I was intrigued by Christ and Plaskow's debate around whether God/dess is personal or impersonal, as I found myself agreeing with *both* of them!

When Plaskow writes, "I see God as the creative energy that underlies, animates, and sustains all existence," I thought YES. And when I read Christ's description of a personal Goddess who "is always with us, encouraging and inspiring us to love and understand each other and the world more fully," I also thought YES. From a Hindu standpoint, there need not be a contradiction between these two views because the Godhead is infinite—it has the infinite power to produce infinite forms, including personal gods and goddesses who take an active role in our lives. However, because personality necessitates finitude, the Ultimate Reality must be vaster than any personalized concept.

My view on Divine gender also differs somewhat from both Plaskow's and Christ's. I wholeheartedly agree that "symbols matter," and that feminine symbols of God are needed to empower women and bring a much-needed balance to society. Nonetheless, I find the concept of Goddess, if understood in monotheistic terms, to be incomplete. Western feminists coming out of Abrahamic traditions have focused on the importance of Goddess symbols for women; while this has been an important move, it can lead to a type of spiritual segregation wherein the patriarchal God is left intact to serve men, while the Goddess empowers women. Further, those who are gender nonconforming may then find themselves adrift as the Goddess exemplifies traditional feminine traits. Rather than having to choose between a monotheistic personal Goddess or

MORE LETTERS

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an abstract neutered God, I propose that men, women, and people of all genders need images of the Divine that are multiply gendered—and we also need nature deities, animal deities, and nongendered, “transcendent” concepts such as Divine Love, Justice, or Peace.

Reclaiming Goddess images has been an important part of my own spiritual disengagement from patriarchy, as it has for countless other women. Ultimately, however, I believe that the Divine Mystery is ineffable. While we need language and symbols to relate to it, any one symbol can become totalizing. I thus advocate a broader concept of the Divine that holds both sides of the personal/impersonal paradox, as well as a plurality of images that can help support our efforts for full spiritual and social equality.

—Alka Arora, *San Francisco, CA*

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Tikkun magazine is . . .

. . . a vehicle for spreading a new consciousness. We call it a spiritual progressive worldview. But what is that?

What Do You Mean by “Spiritual”?

You can be spiritual and still be an atheist or agnostic. To be spiritual, you don’t have to believe in God or accept New Age versions of spirituality. You don’t need to give up science or your critical faculties. We use the word “spiritual” to describe all aspects of reality that cannot be subject to empirical verification or measurement: everything pertaining to ethics, aesthetics, music, art, philosophy, religion, poetry, literature, dance, love, generosity, and joy. We reject the notion that everything worthy of consideration to guide our personal lives and our economic and political arrangements must be measurable.

What’s a Spiritual Progressive?

To be a spiritual progressive is to agree that our public institutions, corporations, government policies, laws, education system, health care system, legal system, and even many aspects of our personal lives should be judged “efficient, rational, or productive” to the extent that they maximize love, caring, generosity, and ethical and environmentally sustainable behavior. We call this our New Bottom Line.

Spiritual progressives seek to build “The Caring Society: Caring for Each Other and Caring for the Earth.” Our well-being depends upon the well-being of everyone else and also on the well-being of the planet itself. So we commit to an ethos of generosity, nonviolence, and radical amazement at the grandeur of all that is, and seek to build a global awareness of the unity of all being.

If you are willing to help promote this New Bottom Line for our society, you are a spiritual progressive. And if you are a spiritual progressive, we invite you to join our Network of Spiritual Progressives at spiritualprogressives.org.

Tikkun

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Human Evil

NOW THIS IS REAL EVIL," a close friend told me after reading an account of the beheadings of two American hostages by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The hostages had been tortured before they were killed. ISIS has openly celebrated its murderous and at times genocidal intentions and actions, particularly aimed at Sunni Muslims but also at Christians and others whom they deem not "real" Muslims. Young women are captured and forced to "marry" ISIS fighters, who then repeatedly rape them. Meanwhile, a continent away, members of Boko Haram, an Islamic fundamentalist group based in northeast Nigeria, have been kidnapping and raping young girls as well. The stories about both these groups have intertwined to form a picture of fundamentalists on a rampage of evil intent.

I too have been horrified by these accounts. The willful infliction of pain and murder on other human beings, an act that denies the humanity of the "other," rightfully evokes outrage and a desire to stop the violence. To the extent that anyone is motivated by this desire, they deserve praise and support.

Yet when this motivation leads people or countries to engage in counterviolence, I confront a difficult truth: that the reactions to this kind of evil are often wildly disproportionate and result in the deaths of many more civilians than were caused by the original evil that was committed. And I also confront the reality that we Americans participate, both directly and indirectly, in a complex of societal and economic relationships that cause incalculable suffering, pain, poverty, illness, starvation, and death. That we willfully ignore, repress, and deny the evils committed in our name does not exempt us from responsibility.

I certainly do not mean to suggest that the activities of ISIS or Boko Haram are one bit less horrendous in light of the atrocities committed by the implementation of American foreign policy, but we don't live in an ahistorical vacuum (despite what the rabid twenty-four-hour news cycle would like us to believe). And, in the case of ISIS, its members indicated that they are killing Americans and Britons because of our direct involvement in the war in Iraq and our holding and torturing of prisoners at Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo. To underscore these links, ISIS members even put their victims in orange suits when beheading them, as a mirror image of the orange suits worn by prisoners at Guantánamo. What goes around, some people say, comes around.

Evils Committed by the United States Government

I first became aware of the evil committed by our government in the 1960s as I watched the United States intervene in country after country in Central and South America to establish dictators who supported our corporations, and I protested as the United States engaged in a near-genocidal war in Vietnam, in which we eventually were responsible for the deaths of over one million Vietnamese people.

Though the antiwar movement of the 1960s and '70s had a lasting impact in forcing our government to stop drafting young people to serve its militaristic agenda, the movement did not succeed in uprooting the military-industrial complex or diminishing its power to convince Americans that the best solution to foreign problems is to bomb first and ask questions later. To be fair, there are some in the Pentagon who resist military interventions because they fear a reawakening of antimilitary sentiments that might impose severe cutbacks of the Pentagon's huge annual budgets, and there are some who genuinely worry about the cost in human lives caused by war. But the overwhelming role of the military in American life has nevertheless been to legitimate force and violence as a solution to problems. This attitude has been adopted wholesale by most mainstream movies, television shows, and video games, which in turn provide the backdrop for the high rate of violent activity in the United States. This attitude is particularly evident in violence toward women, but it also manifests politically in the willingness to follow leaders of both major parties into wars or warlike interventions, whether in the form of drone attacks or massive bombings, as long as these attacks do not involve the loss of American lives.

The U.S. intervention in Iraq, launched for the manufactured reason of wanting to eliminate nonexistent weapons of mass destruction, proceeded in spite of the millions of us who marched in protest against such a war. In overthrowing the Sunni leadership, the intervention disempowered a large swath of Sunni Muslims who would later become the mass base for the emergence of ISIS as a significant military force (armed with the sophisticated weapons that the United States had brought to Iraq). Over a million people were killed in the subsequent civil war, and several million more were made homeless.

Of particular relevance to this discussion are the U.S.-created prisons in Abu Ghraib, where Iraqis were systematically tortured, and in Guantánamo, which continues to function today, force-feeding prisoners who attempt to commit suicide by starving themselves. Nor are these the only torture centers. The United States worked out covert deals with a variety of other countries to send suspected terrorists to them for incarceration and torture. Though some of the details of the torture were revealed publicly and others became known when whistle-blowers like Chelsea Manning revealed classified documents, the United States has never brought President George W. Bush, Vice President Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, or any of the other officials who ordered or supervised torture to trial for human rights violations. The United States has also failed to prosecute the perpetrators of the war in Iraq for crimes against humanity, just as it failed to prosecute Henry Kissinger for his role in overthrowing the government of Salvador Allende in Chile and installing the murderous Pinochet regime in its place. Instead, these criminals continue to publish books, give high-priced lectures, and shape public opinion on contemporary foreign policy issues.

But all of this pales when compared to the global impact of Western corporations and the effects of the economic, political, and cultural conditions they impose on the rest of the world. In countries across the globe, corporations concentrate wealth in the hands of local elites around the world, who in turn prevent democratic processes, resist environmental measures, and use brutal and murderous force to produce maximally at minimal cost, often through the use of sweatshops and slave labor. The Western parent corporations that profit from these sweatshops often hide behind subcontractors, refusing to take responsibility for what these subcontractors do to workers or to the environment in order to enable Western corporations to pay dirt-cheap prices for goods. The corporations then sell these goods

in Western stores at a cost much lower than the lowest cost at which domestic workers can produce them (because Western workers demand closer to a living wage, safer working conditions, and less pollution of the environment). Many Western corporations also do everything they can to sustain a global economic system in which the UN estimates that some 1 to 3 million children die each year of malnutrition or related diseases (at least 1,200 children a day). This tragedy could easily be avoided if we had a set of priorities other than propping up the ultra-rich and the largely Western corporations that benefit disproportionately from this oppressive system.

A fuller essay on the topic of evils committed by our government would have to discuss the immense suffering caused to the millions of Americans who are currently incarcerated (mainly for nonviolent crimes), as well as the suffering caused by our global economic treaties, which undermine subsistence-level farming, forcing millions into megacities in the Global South and forcing others to live in fear of deportation as economic refugees in Europe and the United States.

Defining Evil

Evil must be understood as the inability to see the humanity of the “other.” Once we are unable to see the humanity of the other, we are capable of great harm and violence. This inability is the key to understanding racism, sexism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and every other form of hatred, which in turn enable people to engage in emotional or physical abuse, torture, and murder.

“OK, sure, there’s lots of this horrible treatment going on,” you might object, “but isn’t there something more barbarous and disgusting about the face-to-face torture or raping that these Muslim fundamentalists impose?”

Well, I agree that there is something particularly repulsive about these acts because it is harder for those engaged in them to gloss over the pain they are imposing on other human beings. So yes, the torturers of ISIS and the rapists of Boko Haram see what they are doing and the pain they are imposing, making their experience different from the experience of President Obama and his crew of drone operators and pilots dropping bombs that quite frequently kill noncombatant civilians. Similarly, the Hamas operatives who launched rockets last summer onto a known-to-be-effective Iron Shield in Israel and the Israeli bombers who flattened thousands of apartment buildings, in the process killing over two thousand Palestinians and wounding thousands more, did not experience their own cruelty as personally as did the American allies in Saudi Arabia who beheaded eighteen civilians in the weeks before ISIS so brutally murdered their American captives, or as did the two Palestinians who butchered with hatchets and knives four orthodox Jews at prayer in the over-the-Green-Line settlement of Har Nof, which Israel claims to be part of Jerusalem.



No Exit Strategy by Khalil Bendib.

Yet the question remains, why should we not apply the term “evil” to all of us who have supported governments that engage in these kinds of practices, when they result in massive human suffering and death?

I do not mean to create some kind of “moral equivalence” here—the very notion of moral equivalence is morally offensive. Every act of violence, every imposition of hurt on other human beings, is a distinct act or set of actions that should not be treated as subject to mathematical ideas like “equivalence,” because they involve the violation of the sanctity of human beings who themselves should not be reduced to numbers. Every experience of suffering is unique. When a family finds its infants, or young children, or teenagers suddenly murdered by a bomb falling on their apartment in Gaza or in Syria or in Iraq or in the Israeli city of Sdeyrot; or when parents realize they must force a child into prostitution to raise enough money to prevent the starvation of a younger child; or when ten-year-old boys are kidnapped and forced into an army to fight in a civil war—these instances of suffering all result from acts of evil, and those who perpetuate these realities are to that extent evil.

But who among these people (including you and me, to the extent that we participate in one of the systems that perpetrate these evils) can be reduced simply to this dimension of our realities? Were any of these people born “evil,” with an evil gene or a personality that was automatically attracted to hurting others?

Hatred for the “Other”

My experience as a therapist and a social theorist leads me to see a much more complicated reality of hurt, pain, poverty, hunger, and violence. In this context, alternative ways of thinking are forcibly closed off, loving emotions are quashed, and loved ones meet untimely deaths. Or perhaps there is the systematic experience of being demeaned, disrespected, and treated as though we don’t really matter. These experiences lead some into communities where they are finally given the respect they’ve been denied within the capitalist marketplace or within the communities in which they grew up. Denied the human recognition that almost everyone needs to flourish, many people become depressed, dysfunctional, or criminal, seeking some other way to meet this need.

No wonder, then, that others who have been similarly denied will find emotional nurturance in fundamentalist communities—whether they be Christian, Islamic, Jewish, or associated with another religious or national group. However, most of the communities that offer this recognition do so at a price—the demeaning of some “other” as the cause of all suffering. In some places this other is a Jew, a Christian, a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Hindu, or an atheist or “nonbeliever.” In other contexts the other is a communist, a capitalist, a Western imperialist, a Zionist, a Palestinian, an undocumented immigrant, a homosexual, or a suspected terrorist.

The list goes on. It has worked this way for thousands of years and the list of maligned groups grows rapidly in the modern world. And it is in this context that the continuum of violence-producing behaviors exists, including everything from passive participation in global capitalist arrangements to videotaped beheadings.

This is not meant to reduce our outrage at all this violence, but it is meant to get us off our high horses, to help us recognize how deeply we are also implicated in a world of violence, and to encourage alternative responses to violence. It is in this context that I invite you to read two pieces on the Network of Spiritual Progressives website: the essay “Our Yearning for a Loving World” (tikkun.org/covenant) and our proposal for a Global Marshall Plan (downloadable at tikkun.org/GMP). While these pieces do not of course provide a full strategy for creating a different kind of world, they offer some important steps in that direction.

Responses to ISIS and Boko Haram

It is true that there is a pressing need for immediate intervention. Perhaps by the time you read this, ISIS will have been militarily neutralized and many lives will have been saved. But I doubt that any approach relying primarily on violence and led by the United States, with its long history as a human rights abuser, will do more than temporarily stop the killing. New killing fields will emerge in Syria and Iraq, other forms of fundamentalism will emerge, and the story of evil will continue. The violent folks—be they ISIS or the Israeli settlers in Hebron or Hamas militants or the militarist-oriented sections of the U.S. ruling elites—will breed more violence.

ISIS and Boko Haram are best understood as the consequence of the dehumanization of whole populations, but they are nevertheless manifestations of a ruthless, intentional violence and madness that is different from the dispersed alienation that produces the dehumanization of liberal capitalism, including its wars. The vast majority of people within capitalist culture are good, caring people lost at sea, struggling to connect and to get to land somehow.

Many of the young men in ISIS and Boko Haram, however, have become serial rapists and killers, reinforcing each other’s insanity. Their violence is less similar to the violence of the U.S. politicians who send our troops into battle or to the violence committed by the many U.S. voters who allow our government to continue waging wars, and more similar to the sexual abuse, torture, and murder committed by U.S. military personnel at Abu Ghraib. In both cases, the violence is a staged display crafted to assert power through a kind of brutal spectacle. The behaviors of ISIS and Boko Haram fighters also seem more consistent with the behaviors of U.S. soldiers who—deranged by their own personal experiences of trauma and violence in war—start to rape or kill indiscriminately. The murder and mutilation of sixteen civilians

in Kandahar, Afghanistan, in 2012 by U.S. Sergeant Robert Bales is a recent example of this.

The psychological process that has distorted the sensibilities of the young men in ISIS or Boko Haram is distinct of course, occurring through a different set of cultural lenses (Islamic fundamentalism as opposed to the Islamophobia of the Abu Ghraib personnel, etc.), but these young men are still best understood as fighters so broken by violence that they are engaging in psychopathic behaviors. And such people must be stopped.

Only a Global Response Can Stop the Cycle of Violence

I don't fully know how to stop ISIS, but I know some of the necessary conditions:

1. Assemble, either through the UN or outside it, representatives of most of the people of the earth (including representatives of China and Russia, as well as representatives of all the major world religions, including Sunni Muslim religious leaders) to develop a plan to intervene as a world community.
2. Let the United States take the leadership with the other richest countries of the world to launch a Global Marshall Plan, following the lines presented at tikkun.org/GMP, to validate a nonviolent approach to world problems through generosity and genuine caring for the well-being of everyone on the planet and the well-being of the planet itself.
3. Use all means available to the United States to reassure Israel of its safety (e.g., making it a member of NATO) while simultaneously requiring it to immediately conclude an agreement with the Palestinian people that ends the Occupation of the West Bank and the blockade of Gaza. The details of what that accord could look like are presented in my book *Embracing Israel/Palestine* (see tikkun.org/eip). As long as Israel is involved in denying millions of Palestinians their fundamental human rights, both through Occupation and through refusing to acknowledge and find ways to repair the incredible pain caused by the de facto expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians during the 1947-49 struggle that led to the creation of the State of Israel, and as long as Israel refuses to engage in serious negotiations to create an independent and politically and economically viable Palestinian state, many Arabs and Muslims will feel sympathetic to any force that can match or top Israeli violence with Islamic violence.
4. Reform the United Nations so that it is no longer controlled by the five veto-empowered powers that were the Allies in World War II, and simultaneously require the UN to rely primarily on nonviolent interventions around the world, except in cases of imminent genocide such as we see with ISIS.

With this kind of response, we as Americans could acknowledge that this extreme situation requires a combination

of non-U.S.-led military intervention and stabilization of the region, coupled with a new peace-oriented policy that brings those responsible for the beheadings to justice while establishing self-determination for the Sunnis and atonement and repair for the way they have been demeaned by the U.S.-supported Shia government that we left in place when Obama withdrew our troops. Even if it were led by the people of the world, not by the United States, military action would be an appropriate response if and only if it were coupled with specific healing actions (including but not limited to a Global Marshall Plan) reflecting a new spiritualized foreign policy genuinely based on recognizing the humanity of every person on the planet.

Only a truly global intervention representing the majority of the people of the world—motivated solely by concern for saving human lives, and unsullied by a record of brutalization, torture, and murder of others (e.g., that of the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan, Abu Ghraib, and Guantánamo) and the taint of serving the interests of big oil companies—could possibly change the existing dynamics.

For us in the United States, the path must be one of internal spiritual and ethical cleansing before we can play a useful role. Maybe this is the value of spiritual practices that say we have to look within first! Maybe the message is to stop lashing out at others and to look at how we are acting and begin there. To stop intervening in other places and trying to stop other people and start cleaning up our own house first.

We might start with genuine atonement for what we have done in Vietnam, Cuba, Korea, Chile, and El Salvador; for the training of torturers in what was formerly called the School of the Americas and which continues to operate at Fort Benning, Georgia; and for our blind support of the Israeli government, which refuses to end the Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. We should continue with atonement for the suffering we caused the Iranian people by our support of the Shah and our failure to support democratic forces there that could have provided an alternative to the Islamic fundamentalists, just as we failed to support the democratic opposition to Syria's Assad dictatorship until the emergence of ISIS. And we should atone for our wrongdoing in Iraq and for engaging in torture at Guantánamo. And, perhaps most important, we need to take democratic control over our corporations and our global capitalist system and, through a Global Marshall Plan and the ESRA (tikkun.org/ESRA), begin to repair the damage we've done to the people of the world and to the Earth, even as we participate in efforts to stop the evil of ISIS and Boko Haram. ■

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Coexistence, Equality, and Universal Principles in Israel/Palestine

Regrouping in the Absence of a Two-State Solution

BY JOEL BEININ

FOR MOST OF MY ADULT LIFE I believed that a majority of Israelis could be persuaded that their own interests required recognizing Palestinian Arabs' right to national self-determination and equality. Therefore, I believed that establishing a Palestinian state alongside Israel was the most politically realistic way to achieve peace and security for both peoples.

In recent years, however, I have come to realize that promoting a two-state solution to the conflict based on the Oslo process when no such solution is likely abets Israel in perpetuating the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Fostering the fiction that the Occupation is temporary allows people of good will to entertain illusions that a substantial proportion of the settlements and settlers will be evacuated. This fiction distracts us from the core reality on which we should be focusing: the concrete and ever-worsening conditions faced by Palestinians in the current moment.

This realization has made me doubt the value of gestures such as the October 2014 vote by the British House of Commons to approve a resolution to “recognize the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel.” Although government and opposition members of parliament alike supported the measure, which passed 274 to 12, it was an exercise in political fantasy. Fewer than half of the 650 parliament members voted, as most Conservatives absented themselves from the vote. And in reality, the parliamentary resolution has no practical consequences because the resolution was nonbinding—it did not change government policy. Junior Foreign Office Minister for the Middle East Tobias Ellwood stated the Conservative government’s position: “The UK will bilaterally recognize a Palestinian state when we judge that it can best help bring about peace.” That is, the UK will recognize Palestine at some point in the distant future when the United States gives permission.

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The construction of the separation barrier and the rapid growth of Israeli settlements are a major problem, but widespread Israeli opposition to a Palestinian state is at the root of what’s making a two-state solution unlikely.

A more substantial reason for the resolution's impotence is that a viable, contiguous Palestinian state with even limited attributes of sovereignty is now very unlikely to materialize. The international community and official U.S. policy nonetheless continue to uphold the creation of such a state as the only possible resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The fiction that enough Israeli settlers will be evacuated to make this possible relies in part on calculations made by the Israeli government and Western media that separate Jerusalem, where about half of the roughly 700,000 settlers reside, from the West Bank.

Two weeks after the House of Commons vote, Sweden officially recognized the state of Palestine. Although this was a formal declaration of state policy, it had no more real consequences than the British parliament's advisory resolution, and it had the same negative effects. By the time this is published, other European states may have followed suit.

These actions do underscore that last summer's Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip, Operation Solid Cliff (more appealingly rendered in English as Protective Edge), shifted official and popular European opinion toward positions more sharply critical of Israeli government policies, although not necessarily critical of their underlying political dynamics. Speaking for Britain's Conservative government, Ellwood pointedly noted that settlement construction makes it "hard for Israel's friends to make the case that Israel is committed to peace." Nonetheless, Europe will not challenge U.S. policy on Israel-Palestine.

The United States, for its part, despite its protracted record of failure (the 1993 Oslo Accords were negotiated behind the back of the administration of President Bill Clinton), continues to view itself as the "sole legitimate mediator" of the conflict and has always rejected European efforts to substantively influence the contours of a Palestinian-Israeli peace. The policy of every Democratic president since 1967 is that Israel should be cajoled, but not pressured, no matter how much Israeli prime ministers have personally exasperated them. Republican presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush did exert minor pressures on Israel. But the presidency of George W. Bush and the ascendancy of the Tea Party excised that option from the Republican policy repertoire.

President Obama has repeatedly demonstrated that he does not have the political will to do what is necessary to bring about a two-state resolution to the conflict. Even though he apparently believes this would be a good thing in principle, Israel's strategic value to the American empire and the campaign contributions of Israel-aligned donors are more important. The Democratic candidates who seek to succeed him are almost certain to come to the same conclusion. So, regardless of who wins the presidency in 2016, we can expect more of the same—happy talk about resuscitating the clinically dead "peace process," but no Palestinian state. Those who continue to call on President Obama or Secretary of State John Kerry to encourage negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government are facilitating, perhaps unwittingly, the strategy of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon, who are seeking not to resolve but to manage the conflict while entrenching and expanding the settlement project.

Israel Has Rejected Two States in Practice

The reason that it is, as Ellwood said, "hard for Israel's friends to make the case that Israel is committed to peace," is that the current Israeli government is not committed to peace, as most people understand the term. It rejects a two-state solution that includes a territorially contiguous, economically viable Palestine state with significant sovereign powers and a capital in East Jerusalem. Prime Minister Netanyahu's widely touted speech at Bar Ilan University in June 2009 did endorse a Palestinian state. But the restrictions he attached in that and subsequent statements render the commitment meaningless. For example, during the 2013 election campaign he told Israel's Channel 2 TV, "When they tell me to return to 1967 lines, I stand against it. When they tell me not to build in Jerusalem, I stand against it. . . . I have to stand firm (*continued on page 52*)

Working-Class Power and Spirituality

Reflections on SeaTac's Minimum Wage Campaign

BY JONATHAN ROSENBLUM

GOD OF MERCY, God of Justice, God who transforms our hearts," intoned Rev. John Helmiere, convening Alaska Airlines' annual shareholder meeting with a prayer. The 200 shareholders bowed in silence, not yet aware that the twelve minister-shareholders before them had assembled to commit an act of corporate apostasy.

The prayer veered sharply: "God, we ask that you give our leaders the wisdom to do right by their workers, do right by their community. . . save us from the snares of selfishness." Corporate executives sat stunned, not quite comprehending how the annual showcase of their company's record profits had just been hijacked.

And that was just the start. For the next ninety minutes, airport workers led chants demanding recognition of their union. Community activists interrupted the proceedings to lead a debate about poverty wages at the main airports used by Alaska Airlines. A church leader led a rousing spiritual song: "Solid as a rock, rooted as a tree, we are here, standing strong, for airport workers!" And ministers peppered Alaska's CEO with challenges to change course and respect workers' rights.

What Alaska Airlines executives experienced that afternoon in May 2013 was an emerging coalition of airport workers, faith leaders, and community leaders who had come together to challenge the prevalence of low-wage jobs in and around SeaTac Airport outside Seattle, Washington. Baggage handlers, cabin cleaners, wheelchair attendants, parking lot workers, and rental car workers joined spiritual leaders and community activists to occupy the Alaska Airlines shareholders meeting and claim the space for a spirited, and spiritual, call for justice.

Over the next six months, this remarkable coalition launched the small community of SeaTac into the national spotlight by passing a bold voter initiative to raise airport wages to at least \$15 per hour. Naturally, however, business didn't give up. A coalition led by Alaska Airlines went to court to block the new wage level. A lower-level state court barred enforcement of the wage inside the airport but ordered it be applied at



Ministers, imams, airport workers, and community allies march to demand a \$15 per hour minimum wage at SeaTac Airport near Seattle, Washington, on April 28, 2012.

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covered businesses outside airport boundaries. Both sides appealed this split-decision to the Washington State Supreme Court. (At press time for *Tikkun*, a High Court decision was still pending.) But even while waiting for the court, workers were beginning to reap benefits from their fight: Alaska Airlines and the Port of Seattle, facing widespread pressure, agreed to worker pay increases of up to \$2.50 per hour—more modest than the initiative, but significant nonetheless and a recognition of the workers' growing power.

The immediate story of SeaTac's ballot campaign has thus come to a temporary resting place, but its ripple effects continue to spread. Since the 2013 SeaTac wage initiative, \$15 minimum wage struggles, many inspired by the SeaTac campaign, have taken root in cities across the United States. In focusing so much on \$15, however, many of these minimum wage campaigns are failing to make the most of the deep-seated passions that fueled the Occupy protests and that have the power to attack not just the symptoms of injustice (low wages and income inequality) but also its root cause: power inequality.

Fighting for More than a Minimum Wage

Under the surface of current minimum wage efforts is a vital struggle over whether the fight is about lessening income inequality to create a "fair economy"—an issues fight—or about building real power for workers and realigning societal priorities—a values fight. "Most of us who are in this particular struggle need to be pushed a little beyond that fifteen-an-hour wage," said Rev. Dick Gillett, an Episcopal priest and social activist. "It's easy to leave the discussion right there . . . but the issue is more about the dignity of people. Giving people a sense of control—of power over their own lives—that's a moral issue."

I was centrally involved in the SeaTac struggle from its inception in 2011 until last summer, serving as director of the coalition effort that brought together unions, community groups, and faith groups. SeaTac was about more than \$15. By looking deeper at this campaign, I hope that leaders and supporters of other minimum wage struggles will be emboldened to fight not just for raises, but for social transformation.

In particular, there are three aspects that made SeaTac powerful: First, it was framed as a community campaign to build worker power—a qualitatively different goal from raising the minimum wage. Second, we did not see our fight for a ballot initiative to raise the minimum wage as an alternative to traditional workplace organizing. The SeaTac struggle, funded and staffed largely by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), with significant support from the Teamsters Union, the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, and UNITE HERE (the hotel and restaurant workers union), required a laser focus on fundamental worker power building: identifying and developing workplace leaders who would speak in their own voices and lead. And third, the SeaTac campaign was a spiritual progressive struggle: it drew much of its strength from interreligious coalition-building, led by the community group Puget Sound Sage. Faith leaders consistently introduced a broader moral framing decrying the fundamental injustice of corporations holding disproportionate power over the conditions of our lives. So even though we were focused on raising the minimum wage, we did not forget that building worker power was essential to attacking the root problem that produced income inequality.

How It All Started

The number fifteen wasn't on anyone's mind when the SeaTac campaign began. Rather, the organizing began as a broad community effort to build power and voice for thousands of low-wage workers—largely immigrants and refugees—in and around SeaTac Airport.

In March 2013, two months before the twelve minister-shareholders protested at the Alaska Airlines' shareholders meeting, a delegation of eighty airport workers, faith leaders, and community allies went to the major airport contractors to announce that a majority of workers had signed union cards and had formed unions; they called for

negotiations. The delegation also went to the corporate headquarters of SeaTac-based Alaska Airlines, the airport's dominant carrier.

Not surprisingly, all of the employers refused union recognition. And at the prayer-led Alaska Airlines shareholders meeting that spring, the CEO turned aside calls for negotiating with the workers' representatives.

Two weeks later, airport workers and community leaders responded with a bold plan: Since the employers refused negotiations, the workers and their unions would ask voters in the City of SeaTac to impose a solution. They submitted enough signatures to put on the ballot SeaTac Proposition 1, an initiative that would ensure at least \$15 per hour, full-time work, paid sick leave, and strong job protections for every airport worker.

The battle pitted workers, unions, community groups and faith organizations against Alaska Airlines, the Chamber of Commerce, the National Restaurant Association, and other big business interests. In the ensuing six months the community of SeaTac, population 25,000 with 12,000 registered voters, endured the sharp glare of national and international press attention.

Most reporting on SeaTac's \$15 initiative campaign defaulted to the common frame of institutional battle: labor unions on one side, big corporations on the other. "SeaTac is now center stage in a national push for a \$15 minimum wage," NBC News reported, noting "a costly initiative campaign in which the two sides combined to spend \$1.8 million."

Worker Organizing in an Age of Private Contracting

The contest over the minimum wage at SeaTac was about much more than just paychecks—it was about whether workers can still wield collective power in industries ripped apart by anti-union legislation. To fully understand the stakes of our campaign, it's necessary to look back at the history of union-busting and deregulation that created the current working conditions at SeaTac.

To operate a large international airport, you need a lot more than the pilots, flight attendants, ticket agents, and security officers we see whenever we travel. You need thousands of people to fuel and service airplanes, clean cabins, escort passengers who require wheelchair assistance, mop floors, clean bathrooms, maintain equipment, operate the air traffic control system, and load baggage. There was a time when the vast majority of these airport jobs were good jobs. Rep. Adam Smith, the congressman representing SeaTac, recalls how his father supported their family by loading and unloading baggage. "My father was a member of a union—so he got decent wages and benefits at his blue-collar job," Smith said. "That enabled me to pursue my hopes and dreams."

But airport jobs began their precipitous decline after a Democratic-led Congress passed the 1978 Airline Deregulation Act, thereby freeing airlines to compete against one another and permitting companies to freely contract out work. In the succeeding decades, in an effort to maximize profits, airlines outdueled one another to see who could cut costs the most by busting unions, forcing worker concessions, and offloading work to minimum-wage, low-bid contract companies.

Alaska Airlines was slower than its competitors in the contracting-out game, but in 2005 they made up for lost time. The airline was in negotiations with its baggage handlers, members of the machinists union, for a new union contract. The company demanded deep concessions from the workers; union members were willing to make some accommodations but not as many as the executives demanded.



The fight for a minimum wage spread beyond SeaTac to Seattle as well. Here, Seattle City Council Member Kshama Sawant calls for \$15 per hour at a rally on March 15, 2014.

Yemane Gebremicael (right) urges SeaTac residents to support local businesses that endorsed the ballot initiative aimed at raising the minimum wage and guaranteeing full-time work, paid sick leave, and strong job protections for every airport worker.



It was still dark on Friday morning, May 13, 2005, when Alaska's baggage handlers began showing up for their day shifts only to be handed pink slips. Their jobs were gone—given to a low-bid contractor. Overnight, 472 jobs with union rights that paid at least \$16 per hour with health care, paid vacation, paid sick leave, and retirement benefits became poverty-wage jobs without benefits or rights. Alaska executives boasted to the business media that the move saved the company \$13 million in annual costs. Other airport businesses took heed and followed suit, if they hadn't already done so.

By 2011 the baggage handling jobs, along with other contracted-out work—about 4,000 jobs in and around Sea-Tac Airport, or one-quarter of the workforce—paid close to or at the state minimum wage. Leading the way in contracting out was Alaska Airlines, with 1,000 contracted poverty-wage jobs. And the airline was even beginning to contract out entire flights—pilots and flight attendants included. Few had any benefits, or at least any benefits that workers could afford. Almost none had union protections.

As the contracting scheme tightened its grip, the jobs fell increasingly to recent immigrants and refugees. Their nationalities map the civil strife and natural disasters of our times. Somalia made up the largest single contingent of airport workers. Then Ethiopia and Eritrea. Bosnia. Iraq. Ukraine. The Philippines.

Wheelchair attendant Evelyn Olano offers a window into the working conditions at SeaTac: "I used to make minimum wage for thirty-two hours, but under the new manager I only work three days," she said. "So I have a second job at the airport, also minimum wage, for Olympic Security Incorporated. Neither job has to give us benefits."

The poverty conditions lock workers into a cycle of dependency and desperation. "I'm paid minimum wage by Bags," said wheelchair attendant Yusur Adan, referring to her employer, an Alaska Airlines contractor. "We have no paid vacation, no paid sick leave, and no holiday pay. . . . There is simply not enough money coming in to pay for even the basic necessities of my life."

A Grassroots Effort to Get Out the Vote

While the population of SeaTac is composed largely of immigrants and people of color, many residents were either not citizens or not registered to vote when the initiative was placed on the ballot. Fully 62 percent of the registered voters were white, and overall more conservative than the airport workers and their allies.

To pass the voter initiative for \$15 per hour, a door-to-door persuasion effort was required. SEIU and other unions provided significant expertise and resources to bolster an already motivated base. Residents urged their neighbors to register to vote. Workers hosted coffee table discussions. Churches and mosques staged voter registration drives. High school students signed up newly eligible voters. All told, the campaign registered

more than 900 new voters, mainly from immigrant communities. Their votes would prove decisive.

The leaders of Abubakr Islamic Center, the largest mosque in the area, helped distribute a Somali language video to congregants, encouraging a "yes" vote and giving instructions about the all-mail voting system in Washington State. Puget Sound Sage sponsored a shop-in at local businesses that had endorsed the initiative, underscoring the point that workers with larger paychecks would boost the local economy.

When airport workers took part in a citywide canvass, they found that while most of SeaTac's voters are working class, many didn't immediately understand or empathize with the plight of immigrant workers. Abdirahman Abdulahi, a Hertz rental car worker, said voters were surprised to learn that his minimum-wage job lacked sick leave. But after hearing his story, "they came to see *(continued on page 55)*

Grounded in the Movement

Developing a Mindful Orientation Toward Social Justice Work

BY KATY FOX-HODESS

I RECENTLY RECEIVED an infuriating email from a man I used to organize with in my labor union. The email had all the hallmarks of his habitual way of interacting with other organizers (and especially women organizers): arrogance, condescension, and a steadfast belief in the superiority of his own opinions. This time, I simply clicked the delete button and moved on with my day. But it got me thinking about how, a few years ago, an email or interaction of this kind would have set me off on a cycle of intense anger, frustration, and exhaustion that sometimes verged on burnout, before I became more committed to developing a mindfulness practice.

Mindfulness as a secular practice draws from Buddhist teachings and encompasses a range of activities—from meditation to breathing exercises to therapy—meant to help practitioners develop greater insight into themselves and the world around them. In the San Francisco Bay Area, mindfulness practice has become very popular among a wide range of left movement activists, helped in no small part by the work of organizations like the East Bay Meditation Center in Oakland and the Buddhist Peace Fellowship in Berkeley, which share an explicit commitment to radical social justice work.

While mindfulness practice has recently received media attention for its increasing use in corporate and military circles to sharpen concentration, far less mainstream attention has been paid to its use by radical social justice activists seeking ways to make their movement work more personally sustainable. What follows is a short and by no means comprehensive list of some key mindfulness concepts that have helped me develop a more sustainable relationship to movement work over the past ten years.

1. Don't turn away from suffering.

Many social justice activists have already taken on one of the central tenets of Buddhist mindfulness practice: a willingness to recognize the enormous amount of pain and suffering in the world and a refusal to turn away from it. Rather than distract ourselves with all of the sensate pleasures that surround us in this intensely materialistic society, we've chosen to sit with realities that are deeply painful and disturbing—realities of economic inequality, racism, misogyny, heterosexism, xenophobia, war, imperialism, transphobia, ecological disaster, and more. This is not an easy thing to do, and so the other aspects of mindfulness practice can serve to help sustain activists through the difficulties that arise from our refusal to turn away from pain and suffering in this world.

KATY FOX-HODESS is a doctoral student in Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley. She has worked in the labor movement since 2006 and most recently served as Guide on the Executive Board of UAW 2865, the UC Student-Workers Union.



Protesters engage in a “meditation blockade” to pressure the Marriott Hotel to stop hosting Urban Shield Oakland, a weapons expo and training conference aimed at militarizing police forces nationwide.

2. As much as possible, try not to let anger consume you.

It almost goes without saying that anger is a healthy emotional response to all of the systemic injustices we encounter on a daily basis. We feel angry when our dignity or the dignity of people we care about is affronted or when those we care about are harmed; this anger is often the initial spark that leads us to become involved in social justice struggles in the first place. Anger can also be a healthy self-protective measure to make us feel a bit more powerful when we are being made to feel vulnerable, as we so often are when we confront systems of entrenched power and privilege.

At twenty-one, in my first job as a young organizer, I was responsible for organizing direct actions to confront the CEO, board members, and top managers of a factory where the workers were trying to unionize. My work week moved between meetings with workers, at which I listened to their stories of harassment on the job and struggles to make ends meet, and visits to the affluent communities where the people responsible for the workers’ oppression and exploitation enjoyed privileged lives. Key worker activists who publicly supported the union were illegally disciplined or fired. Many others lived on the brink of poverty.

The anger I felt at their treatment by the company and at the fact that this is permissible in our society was palpable, fierce, and constant. Ultimately my anger came from a place of fear and guilt that I would not be able to do enough to improve their situation. This propelled me to push myself harder than I ever had before, in ways that helped the campaign and helped me grow in the process. But we were in a losing battle against a powerful and intractable opponent. No amount of greater effort on my part alone would have been enough to turn the tide. I’m grateful for the experience, which profoundly shaped my life trajectory, but I can see in retrospect that I did not make enough room to deal with my anger, fear, and guilt in difficult organizing situations. As a result, I ultimately suffered severe anxiety and physical health problems—in other words, burnout.

At the time, I thought that righteous anger and a willingness to give everything one had to the work were what made an organizer great. Now, nearly a decade after my first experiences working in the labor movement, I can see how limited and damaging this view was. I’ve come to see that, though I believe we have every right to be angry—for the systems and individuals we’re fighting certainly deserve our righteous anger—we ourselves don’t deserve to be consumed with anger all the time.

Finding the right balance with anger is not easy, but I’ve learned over time to simply let myself be angry when I’m angry, and then let go of anger when it’s ready to pass. When I was younger and anger was my only shield against feelings of fear, powerlessness, and guilt, I used to try to hold on to it, as I think many young people in social justice work do. But though feelings of fear, powerlessness, and guilt no doubt will always recur for activists, no matter how long they’ve been in the movement, I’ve observed over the years that the best organizers I know and the ones who are least susceptible to burnout—are also the least angry. The remainder of this piece focuses on some of best methods I’ve found for getting beyond anger as an activist to develop a healthier and more sustainable orientation toward movement work. *(continued on page 59)*

Above: Joshua Eaton (Buddhist Peace Fellowship) Facing page: Guy Billout (guybillout.com)



THE PLACE OF **HOPE** IN AN AGE OF CLIMATE DISASTER

As the earth heats up, sea levels rise, and thousands of species face extinction, it's easy to boomerang between denial and despair. What is the place of hope in an era of sweeping environmental destruction? Do we need hope in order to sustain our struggle to transform the political and economic structures that are fueling this devastation? Or can we try to save the environment even without hope—because it's the right thing to do? Contributors to this special section draw on a variety of spiritual, ethical, and political traditions to reinvigorate our creative imaginations in the face of climate disaster.

Don't miss the web-only articles on this topic at tikun.org/climate.

The Sky May Fall by Guy Billout.

It's Time to Get Serious About Saving the Planet from Destruction

BY MICHAEL LERNER

EVER SINCE EARTH DAY 1970 there has been growing awareness of the impending doom that is threatening human, animal, and perhaps all forms of life on this planet: climate change. Environmental science confirms the realness of this threat, and our daily observations do as well. Crisis is imminent unless humanity charts a new direction.

Sadly, the more people learn about the environment, the more frozen most of us are in despair and depression. To some extent this may be a product of our being embedded in the psycho-spiritual despair that the planet itself, long understood to be a living organism, may be experiencing. In other words, as embodied beings made of matter and spirit, we are inevitably connected to the energy and pulse of the planet, and as it suffers, we experience that suffering ourselves.

But to a greater extent our despair results from being part of a class society in which the powerful 1 percent is not willing to sacrifice its extreme wealth in order to make the drastic economic and political changes necessary to address the urgency of the problem. Our despair also stems from the fragmentation of the environmental movement, which has become torn between liberal accommodationists, whose organizations are funded by the 1 percent and who focus on minor environmental advances, and radical localists, who have given up on fundamental social transformation and are instead trying to build local projects in which people live more fully in harmony with nature. We feel despair when we realize that even the few hyper-local projects that succeed in reducing local communities' reliance on global markets have little chance of challenging the fundamentals of the big picture that is threatening the life support system of the planet.

Tikkun's focus, by way of contrast, is to recognize that the destruction of the planet's life support system is the consequence of our economic system's dependence on an ever-expanding consumer market fueled by goods produced by unceasing exploitation of the planet's resources. We recognize environmental destruction as the direct result of a market system that teaches people they must compete with each other to become successful and that they must distrust anyone who believes that love and kindness are as significant a source of human motivation as power and greed. And we see the planetary crisis as an outgrowth of the widely held belief that fulfillment in life can come from financial success and the ownership or consumption of ever more things, gadgets, and electronics. In many ways, environmental destruction is made possible by our culture's belief that frenetic work is morally righteous and that we should feel proud if we are constantly too busy to reflect on the big picture. In such a culture, far too few people find time to actually relax into celebrating the universe.

The task of saving the environment, then, requires a non-violent revolution. We need to replace the current system with one based on love, kindness, generosity. We need to recognize that fulfillment can come through living in a society that supports loving relationships, ethical and environmentally sustainable behavior, and a renunciation of increasing production and consumption of material goods, in favor of a deep and shared sense of "enough." We need to embrace lives of graceful simplicity and harmony with the earth, finding fulfillment by surrounding ourselves with people who genuinely care for each other and who know that their own well-being is intrinsically tied to the well-being of everyone else on the planet. We need to recognize that to craft lives of love and care for ourselves, we must show love and care for all people and beings, even those whom we perceive as our enemies. And we need to reshape our economy to give priority to cooperation, caring for the earth, reducing levels of consumption, and increasing our capacity to experience joy from what we already have, once our needs for food, clothing, shelter, health care, child care, elder care, energy, and basic comforts have been satisfied.

To achieve this kind of a world, I propose the following steps:

- 1. The democratization of the political system.** This in turn requires an end to the influence of the rich and corporations in public life. We can act to democratize our political system by passing the Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment (ESRA), which would require public funding for all major candidates in state and federal elections and would ban all other sources of money in elections (no private

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money, period). The ESRA would also require using the technologies at our fingertips to enable people everywhere to vote on the major issues facing their communities after sufficient public debate.

2. The democratization of the economy. A first step in this direction is requiring, as the ESRA does, that every corporation with an income above \$50 million per year obtain a new corporate charter every five years. Charters would be granted only to corporations that could prove a satisfactory history of environmental and social responsibility to a panel of ordinary citizens. The panels in charge of these judgments would consider testimony from people worldwide who had been affected by the products, services, advertising, or other activities of the corporation being assessed.

Through this process, more people would come to believe that they have the right to make these kinds of decisions and could start to demand further steps to give working people greater power over corporations of all sizes. A worker's bill of rights would be an important step in this direction; it would enable workers to elect and recall their supervisors, as well as fire the management of the company if it does not care for the needs of everyone in the enterprise and the needs of the public as well.

To further democratize the economy and make it responsive to the needs of the earth we would also need to ban cars from most major cities and replace them with environmentally sustainable mass transit; develop new energy sources that do not pollute the earth; subsidize locally oriented, small family farms; ban factory farming of animals; and dramatically reduce the consumption of animals, hence reducing methane emissions and increasing the amount of land available to grow non-GMO, earth-sustaining organic food.

3. The elimination of poverty. The Global Marshall Plan proposed by *Tikkun* requires the twenty wealthiest industrial and financial countries to dedicate between 1 percent and 2 percent of their gross domestic product each year for the next twenty to thirty years to fully end poverty, homelessness, hunger, inadequate education, and inadequate health care. This money would also go toward repairing some of the damage done to the planet by 150 years of industrial arrogance and insensitivity to the needs of the environment. Only once people have their basic needs met will they be willing to participate in environmentally sensitive behavior. Until then, environmental issues will seem like a concern of the privileged rich rather than a program for us all. The elimination of poverty will also slow population growth so that we can lower the population of the earth to a sustainable level.

4. The elimination of national boundaries and all restrictions on immigration. The Global Marshall Plan we have proposed would fundamentally equalize the well-being of everyone on the planet, making it unnecessary for poor people to risk their lives crossing national borders in an attempt to alleviate their families' poverty. *(continued on page 60)*



Tuvalu, a low-lying island in the Pacific Ocean, is already suffering the effects of rising seas due to climate change. Pleading with world leaders at the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Tuvalu climate negotiator Ian Fry said, "The fate of my country rests in your hands." Photo by Juriaan Booij.

Facing the Death of Nature

Environmental Memorials to Counter Despair

BY WHITNEY A. BAUMAN

POWERFUL EMOTIONS SURFACE in the face of massive ecological destruction: panic, terror, guilt, emotional overload, and despair. It's tempting to run from them.

To begin to accept the realities we face and to channel our feelings toward constructive engagement with possible solutions, we must first allow ourselves to mourn. As Bill McKibben noted so long ago, we must mourn the “end of nature”—including the end of many species, ecosystems, seasons, agricultural ways, and archipelagos.

Eco-Buddhist scholar Joanna Macy has suggested that the more we experience eco-fallout from human-induced climate change and other environmental problems, the more we will have to learn to deal with eco-despair. As an educator who teaches courses with titles such as “Religion, Nature, and Globalization,” I have had to learn how to deal with the ecological despair that my students face when they begin to realize just how impossible, wicked, and huge the problems associated with ecological degradation are.

We all need something to turn to in the face of recognizing our own complicity with a system that is not good for human or nonhuman life. Pursuing quick, individual solutions—recycling more, driving less, eating vegetarian, supporting clean energy—can make us feel better about ourselves but do little to stem the tide. I encourage my students to instead confront the loss head on. I'm not saying that individual actions don't make a difference. They absolutely do. But they will continue to be like the proverbial bucket on the Titanic until large, systemic changes occur. The limited power of lifestyle changes becomes particularly apparent when playing with ecological footprint calculators such as



the one located at myfootprint.org: doing so reveals that just by virtue of living in an industrialized nation like the United States, we are incapable of living in ways that sustain the planetary community.

After reassuring my students that individual actions *do* add up, even though they are not enough, I encourage them to begin a mourning process. Such a process is inherent to the practice of hope: hope entails recognition of a situation that is “not as it should be” and desiring for it to be different, even if there is no indication that it will be different. It is an existential positioning in the face of trials and uncertainty and thus must begin with recognition that all is not well.

Mourning, Hospice, and Memorialization

The process of dealing with despair has at least three parts: mourning what is lost, a turn toward environmental hospice, and environmental memorialization.

The importance of mourning, both repentant and otherwise, must not be underestimated. There are some species and ecosystems that are already lost, and rather than spin our wheels trying to prevent the changes that will occur, we ought to develop some ethics and attitudes that foster environmental hospice.

Environmental hospice means confronting in a healthy way the death of many species and aspects of nature that

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Creating environmental memorials is one way to mourn and care for dying nature. The three sculptures above—*Chinese Pangolin*, *Mekong Catfish*, and *Forest Owlet*—are part of Christina Jung’s broader Sanctuary project, which memorializes endangered species across the globe.

we have taken for granted. It means helping some species and ecosystems to die gracefully (maybe the polar bears, the Everglades, or Miami Beach, for instance) by beginning to plan for their nonexistence. This may involve genetic cataloging for those that will go extinct, the relocation of certain species (including humans) that can survive in other, similar ecosystems, and the setting aside of funds so that future generations can deal with the unforeseen problems that result in this great transformation.

In terms of future generations, mourning for and caring for dying “nature” will also mean that we create environmental memorials. Memorials will help future generations remember what once thrived in certain places and exactly where we went wrong in our interactions with the rest of the planetary community. They will be like markers to show both that our intentions were not all bad (and hence avert our demonization by future civilizations) and that these problems can happen to any generation, despite good intentions. All our attempts to manage can go wrong, and something that we must pass on to future generations is our sense of hope amid uncertainty.

Abandoning Our Pretense of Mastery

Contemporary environmental discourse seems to have no place for hope in it. Various scientific and governmental agencies offer apocalyptic scenarios on a daily basis. Some have projected that it is already “too late.” And many of us go

on about our daily lives, caught in our habituated “business as usual” mentalities. In all of these arenas, the existential stance of hope is all but lost. However, by forcing us to live amid great uncertainty, climate change is also pushing us toward hope because uncertainty is the breeding ground of hope-filled living.

Climate change has shown that our attempts at mastery and progress through technological solutions have ultimately failed. In other words, our attempts at reducing all eco-social problems to rational, mechanical solutions have not worked out. If nothing else, climate change presents a challenge to our attempts at mastery and suggests that we may need to adopt a certain amount of “unknowing” in our dealing with the planetary community and the future of that community.

Mastery implies certainty and control. Ideas of progress—of moving from the dark into the light or of moving toward better and better ways of being in the world—require these notions of mastery, certainty, and control. Ambiguity and messiness trip up this certainty and force us to recognize our limitations as contextual, planetary creatures. We need to adopt, then, a “viable agnosticism” in the face of our decision making. A viable agnosticism recognizes that all our knowledge fades off into uncertainty at the edges, and that an open and evolving planetary community will always mean that we cannot attain mastery and control.

This unknowing opens space for the resurgence of hope (since certainty is the opposite of *(continued on page 61)*

Hope Requires Fighting the Hope Industry

BY CHARLES DERBER

HOPE IS CRUCIAL TO MOST POLITICAL ACTIVISM, but when the situation is dire, watch out for the “hope industry.” It’s made up of institutions and people who send out messages of false hope, stoking collective ignorance, soothing consumers’ consciences, and revving up the climate change engine.

In the age of climate change, false hope is everywhere. It takes two main forms: denial and necessary illusions.

The denial message is spouted and funded by the core of the U.S. hope industry: the big energy companies and the Republican Party. Some peddlers of denial say climate change is not happening. Others acknowledge its existence but say humans did not cause it. And yet others within the corporate hope industry say climate change is real but deny its gravity, telling us that smart companies can solve the problem. Hey, no worries. Because the problem doesn’t exist or will resolve itself.

According to polls, about 40 percent of Americans buy into this corporate false hope. The mass denial is devastating to real hope.

Some liberals tend to believe that the problem can be solved within the existing economic and political system. The liberal false hope is that conventional politics can deal with the problem—or that personal changes in lifestyle (recycling, driving hybrids, going to farmer markets) will do the trick. Along with liberal citizens, self-proclaimed “environmentally friendly” companies—whether Exxon and Chevron or Bank of America and McDonalds—promote this denial. Hope-peddling corporations make money off their “greenwashing,” a word invented to describe the acts of companies that lie to persuade consumers that their products are environmentally safe. This goes beyond “clean coal” companies and oil corporations fracking for natural gas. A 2010 report called “The Sins of Greenwashing: Home and Family Edition” conducted by the environmental marketing agency TerraChoice

showed that 95 percent of consumer products claiming to be green were lying or obfuscating in some way, and the annual Greenwash Academy Awards have exposed some of the worst offenders. Whole industries profit deceitfully on individuals’ efforts to live green.

False hope also takes the form of “necessary illusions”—corporate-manufactured messages that justify corporate rule. Noam Chomsky has identified several of the necessary illusions in circulation within our society: the virtues of the market, the benign invisible hand of capitalism, the morality of American militarism, and American exceptionalism. In the context of climate change, these translate into the following false hopes:

False Hope #1: Technology Will Solve the Problem.

Many environmentalists join the corporate hope industry in believing that technological innovations—from solar panels and wind turbines to electric cars and bio-diesel fuels—will save the day. Technological change is certainly necessary to help heal the planet, but believing in a technological fix to a systemic crisis is magical thinking and false hope.

False Hope #2: Capitalism Will Solve the Problem.

Capitalism may have created some of the climate problem but by another trick of magical thinking, the hope industry argues it is also the only system certain to fix it. This necessary illusion rests on the reigning neoclassical economic view that self-correction is built into capitalist markets. Market theorists argue that if climate change creates the costs that environmentalists predict, fossil fuel sources will lose out in the market and the problem will be corrected naturally. Keynesians, meanwhile, argue that the necessary changes will follow from prodding by government regulatory and tax incentives.

The hope industry doesn’t tell us that capitalism requires endless expansion of production and consumption in a finite world. Companies that don’t sell more than their competitors will lose market share and capital investment, and eventually be driven out of business. Capitalism “externalizes” the inevitable costs of more and more production, shifting the pollution burden down the road to future generations. This partly reflects the power of capitalist companies—including energy giants such as ExxonMobil, one of the most profitable companies in the world—to resist paying the costs themselves. It also reflects the inability of the market to accurately see the true costs, which—in the case of climate—are

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indirect, diffuse, and set to occur most powerfully beyond the time frame in which capitalist decision makers operate. To change the market's blindness to these costs would require profound and long-term planning and public intervention in the market. In other words, capitalism can't solve this problem because making capitalism responsive to the threat of climate change would require undoing the privatized wiring and the capitalist-class political power of capitalism itself.

False Hope #3: Future Generations Will Solve the Problem.

The idea that the climate problem will be solved in the future rather than in the present exonerates current generations from the genocide of the future generations they are creating. The necessary illusion is that we can carry on fine for decades and that if conditions worsen, people will respond to survive. The cruder version is: "Well, I'll be dead when the shit hits the fan, so I don't have to worry about it." Like other false hopes, it is wrong because we are already suffering the extinction of thousands of species. Ice melts are already occurring that will inundate the 3 billion people living within 50 miles of a coast, and the fossil fuels we are merrily pumping into the atmosphere cannot be vacuumed out by future generations, who will suffer a horrible fate unless this generation acts now.

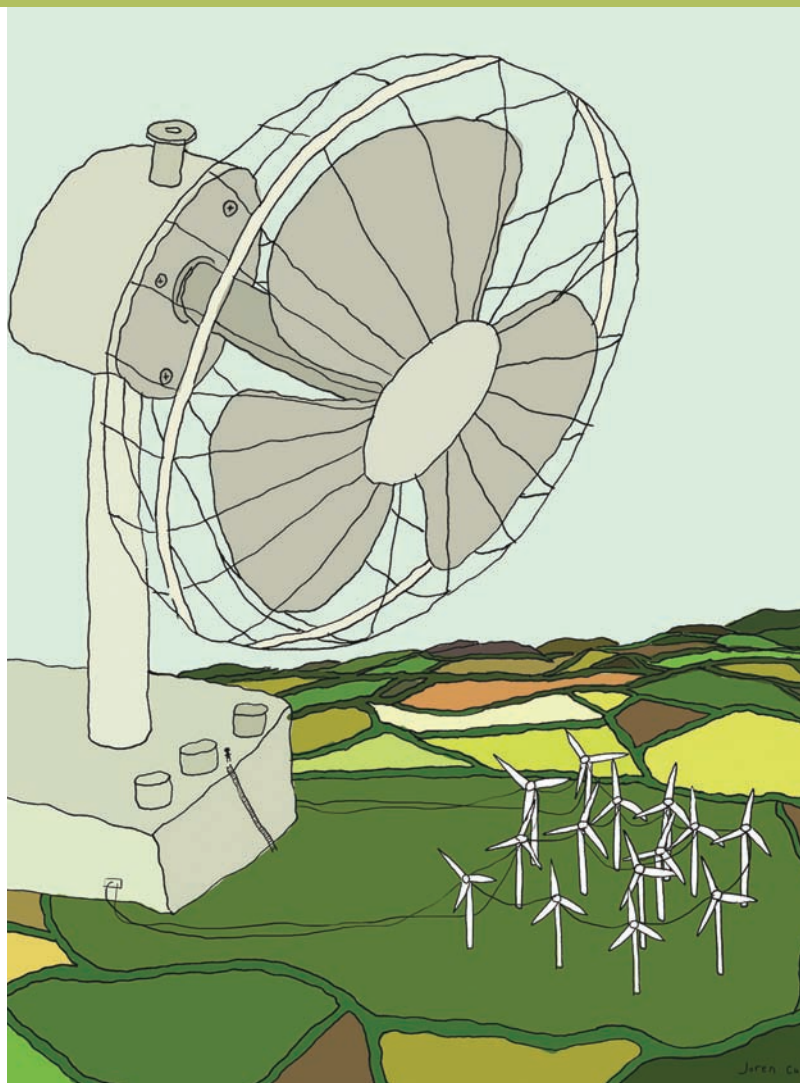
All of these necessary illusions are false hopes resting ultimately on the ideology of American Exceptionalism. How could the best civilization in history destroy human civilization itself? It's a concept that's threatening to millions of Americans, and it is so threatening to corporate profits that it will never be treated by elites as anything but a necessary illusion.

How to Resist False Hope

Hope requires exposing and discrediting the hope industry.

First, we must acknowledge that the situation is systemic and grave. Shout the truth to the rooftops: climate change creates the greatest threat known to humanity, along with nuclear war, and we are already suffering the consequences. The 2014 UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, the most authoritative scientific climate statement, tells us that we are now warming at the fastest rate in history, and that prior IPCC reports have been too conservative in estimating present and future devastation.

Second, we must recognize that politics is personal. Scientific truths must be told again and again, in a way that moves people by traveling from the brain to the gut. Millions of people who know the facts do not act, because they don't feel either the fear or the hope in their gut. That happens only when they personalize the threat. If a doctor tells you that you have cancer, you will drop everything to heal yourself. Climate change means we have collective cancer and thus



Technological innovations will never solve the climate crisis. What's needed is a radical transformation of our energy-guzzling economy. Illustration by Joren Cull.

have to feel like we each have been told we have cancer. That grim truth will move millions into action—and it is the paradoxical road to hope.

As you personalize the threat, you must personalize the change. I recently spent a weekend in a Vermont cottage of a friend that was completely off the grid. I enjoyed delicious local food, sitting next to a solar battery generator that ran the lamps and the laptops in the house and got its own energy from two small solar panels the size of a flat-screen TV. There was no refrigerator or running water, but most of the creature comforts I needed were there. I came away feeling hope that was based on the personal experience of a different lifestyle that seemed more attainable.

Third, hope requires that we see climate change as a systemic problem that requires changing the system. This means we need a climate movement that is simultaneously a labor movement, a peace movement, and a civil rights movement. Corporate capitalism is just another name for climate change. That means the climate movement is just another name for the pursuit of social and *(continued on page 61)*

Disaster and Disability

Social Inequality and the Uneven Effects of Climate Change

BY JULIA WATTS BELSER

A RECENT CLASS-ACTION LAWSUIT brought against the city of New York by Disability Rights Advocates affirmed that residents with disabilities face disproportionate risks of catastrophic harm and death during large-scale disasters—not because of some inherent “natural” risk, but because the city fails to plan for their needs.



“Hope is not an antidote to danger; it is a goad to better and more meaningful action,” Belser writes. Graphic designer Milton Glaser created this “It’s not warming, it’s dying” image, which has proliferated on t-shirts, buttons, and the sides of buildings, to inspire action against climate change by acknowledging the gravity of the problem.

One of the plaintiffs in the case was Melba Torres, a New York resident unable to evacuate during Superstorm Sandy in 2012 because she could not find accessible transport that could handle her power wheelchair. Torres was trapped without power on the eighth floor of her building and remained stuck in her apartment for six days. In a far-reaching settlement, the first of its kind, New York City agreed to overhaul its emergency preparedness plan, adding sixty new emergency shelters accessible to people with disabilities, creating a high-rise evacuation task force, deploying more robust accessible transportation resources in times of disaster, and hiring a disability coordinator for emergency services.

As climate change increases the frequency and severity of extreme weather, it makes us all more vulnerable to natural disaster. While we often shorthand hurricanes and floods as “acts of God,” we are beginning to recognize erratic, deadly storms as augmented by human causes. Though then-President George W. Bush famously said of Hurricane Katrina that “the storm didn’t discriminate,” disaster almost always intensifies pre-existing social inequalities. In *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Rob Nixon observes, “Discrimination predates disaster: in failures to maintain protective infrastructures . . . in failures to organize evacuation plans for those who lack private transport, all of which make the poor and racial minorities disproportionately vulnerable to catastrophe.” While disasters may start as “natural” events, they become social catastrophes. The brunt of disaster is borne by those who have the least.

When it comes to disaster, people with disabilities are often cast as perfect victims, as tragic icons of misfortune on some cosmic stage. By drawing attention to the deadly intersection of disability and disaster, I don’t mean to add to that old story. Let us consider, instead, how the structural inequalities of ableism—intertwined with racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of oppression—intensify the risk disabled people face in times of crisis and natural disaster. Structural barriers we face every day—including inaccessible infrastructure, subpar public transportation systems, endemic poverty, and limited voice in matters of city planning and civic governance—become even more life threatening in disaster situations. Shelters are often inaccessible, while evacuation plans commonly assume a normative body and a substantial bank account. Environmental justice increasingly demands that we take a hard look at whose lives we deem worth saving, whose bodies can find shelter from the storm.

Hope in an Age of Climate Change

To act for justice in an age of climate change, we must recognize and grapple with the ways that environmental harm

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intensifies structural violence and exacerbates systematic oppression. This is difficult work that challenges our already strained capacity for hope. It can be tempting to look away, to salve our fears with a dose of easy optimism. Whether we find ourselves on the front lines of the environmental justice struggle or scrolling faster past the news to try and stave off despair, we all yearn for a sense of renewed possibility. But hope is a difficult thing, a powerful gift, a dangerous one. Let us not talk cheaply of hope. Let us not use hope as a fantasy to paper over the presence of injustice. Hope is not an antidote to danger; it is a goad to better and more meaningful action. It is a dare.

If we treat hope like a hothouse orchid, spectacular and fragile, with an elusive singular bloom that demands careful, precious tending, then we nurture it by turning away from trouble. This kind of hope-seeking isolates us and insulates us. It cuts us off from our own capacity for courage and solidarity.

When we are already flinching from the fear of pain, we are ill equipped to open our hearts. The hope I long for is a more contrary breed, a hope that pushes up like rascable weeds that press their heads through the crevices in sidewalk concrete, like the small luminous blooms that cluster at the crumbling edge of asphalt, shot through with stubborn glory and a plain unwillingness to die.

I find hope in the persistent, prophetic obstinacy of environmental justice advocates around the globe who refuse to write off *any* communities as the inevitable casualties of climate change. Closer to home, I draw hope from the efforts of disability activists pushing for city and regional disaster plans that take into account the needs of people with disabilities. The disproportionate

deaths of disabled people in recent U.S. disasters makes plain the devastating costs of our failure to treat disability as a central part of city planning, as a vibrant and vital part of our communities. But disabled people also have powerful lessons to impart about the conditions that improve our changes, about the qualities of living that allow for resilience and response in crisis.

Building Mutual Support Networks

Within disability circles, it's common knowledge that we survive best when we are nourished by activist and self-advocacy networks that allow us to live and thrive through mutual support and care. Another Hurricane Sandy story makes this insight plain. When disability activist and ventilator user Nick Dupree and his wife Alejandra Ospina lost power in their lower Manhattan apartment, a group of activists, friends, and community members rallied to organize life-saving battery backup power throughout the days of blackouts. "People have been incredible," Dupree wrote,

reflecting on those days, "biking across the Brooklyn bridge with batteries, huffing up twelve flights of stairs with recharged ventilator batteries every three hours, cannibalizing cars for their batteries, even helping out directly with my hands-on care."

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"The hope I long for is a more contrary breed . . . like the small luminous blooms that cluster at the crumbling edge of asphalt," Belser writes. Illustration by Milton Glaser.

Limiting Corporate Power and Cultivating Interdependence

A Strategic Plan for the Environment

BY VANDANA SHIVA

IN THE CURRENT ERA, corporate power translates into abuses of the environment and violations of *every* human right, including basic human rights, worker rights, and the rights of women. As a result, limiting corporate power must be a central concern for those who seek a strategy to save the environment.

Environmentalists need to insist that businesses create or allow for mechanisms to hold them accountable to society. Corporate accountability is precisely the opposite of what is happening today in the political arena, where the allies of corporations in the government are trying to take these corporations one step beyond the reach of democratic accountability.

Overcoming Fragmentation

In addition to fighting for limits on corporate power, it's important for environmentalists today to focus on overcoming the divisions within the environmental movement, as well as the separations between environmental, economic justice, and social justice movements. At present, even when some campaigns become successful, they don't go all the way because they lack the integration with other struggles that's required to effect sweeping changes.

In the earlier days of the environmental movement, back when new environmental agencies, laws, and regulations were being created and it was easier to enforce compliance with these regulations, it seemed fine for an environmental

activist to specialize on an issue such as water, air, or endangered species. That kind of specialization of social change works in a period of stability and democratic accountability. But when the state has been hijacked, as it has been in the current moment, then the power needed to bring change has to be an amplified power. And that amplified power won't come from a movement fragmented into separate silos of specialization—it will come from the integration of various environmentally sensitive projects into one movement or one big organization that helps people develop clarity about the interconnectedness of all the environmental and economic issues.

All deep change occurs when a movement is able to get a society as a whole engaged. How did we in India get our freedom? We succeeded once Gandhi was able to charge the imagination of the people of India, to help them hear the message that “you have a role in this, you can participate, and you can grow the change you want to see.” Gandhi's leadership was more powerful than the leadership of past politicians because, instead of just giving big speeches, he shifted the frame to “*you* can make the difference.”

Spiritual Activism

I think spiritual organizations could play an important part in overcoming fragmentation and engaging society as a whole, though today environmental groups and spiritual organizations for the most part have very little connection. But the same is currently true of all groups working to transform our world: they are all operating in their own silos and we need to bring them together. That's why I like the work that the Network of Spiritual Progressives (spiritualprogressives.org) is doing in bringing these communities together.

Global warming is one arena in which I can imagine spiritual progressive organizing making a difference by shifting mass consciousness. We know that 40 percent of greenhouse gas emissions comes from industrial agriculture and globalized trade in food. Today much of the support for this comes through our own consumerism, so we've got to withdraw that support. That withdrawal can only happen if we see ourselves in a deeper way—as spiritual beings embedded in an increasingly just, compassionate, and environmentally



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Amy Bell



Deforestation by Amy Bell.

sustainable world. The Network of Spiritual Progressives is working to help people imagine such a world through its proposal for a “New Bottom Line” that reorients our society toward generosity, peace, and social transformation. Coming to see ourselves as spiritual beings embedded in a compassionate world is the only way we are likely to gain the strength to give up our consumer addictions and habits and recognize that as deeper beings we need less things and more relationships. And once our relationships grow, whether with the earth or with our communities, our power grows too.

Interdependent Self-Sufficiency

The spinning wheel became a powerful symbol for mobilizing society in the Gandhi-led struggle for independence and liberation in India because it represented the self-sufficiency actualized through the creation of an interdependent network of Indian cotton growers, carders, and weavers—an alternative to the British-controlled textile industry.

Thirty years ago in India, I found an environmental equivalent of Gandhi’s spinning wheel, similarly capable of mobilizing society: the struggle for plant seeds. In the 1980s I decided to study the Green Revolution and what happened to Punjab for a program in the United Nations University and wrote a book called *The Violence of the Green Revolution*. At that time, five corporations had successfully sought to create patents on seeds and through that they were seeking to gain corporate control of the seeds (and thus the food and health) of the world. They were not ashamed to state their goals: by the turn of the century, they wanted all seed to be genetically modified and to have patents on all of life. I joke sometimes that GMO means “God move over” because the real intention is substitute creation with the claimed invention. Gandhi sought self-reliance in his fight with the British. So I decided to start Navdanya, a network of community seed banks. Seeds are sacred to all life—not just plant life, all life. So with recognizing the sacredness of seeds came the duty to protect their freedom to evolve in freedom.

Speaking of self-sufficiency from corporations, we also need to create interdependent food communities—a network of producers and eaters in relationship with each other. Farmers who come to such a market and those who come to buy build a relationship around nonviolent food systems: the farmer hasn’t been exploited, pesticides and poisons haven’t been put into the soil, and the food is GMO-free. We need an alternative to the factory farming of animals. We need a political practice as well—including a campaign to get money out of politics through an Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Even while these demands are being made for amendments in the constitution, there need to be public hearings on key issues: the connection between pesticides and GMOs.

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The Banality of Environmental Destruction

BY ANA LEVY-LYONS

WE'RE FACING AN ENVIRONMENTAL cataclysm that is endangering all life on this planet, yet none of us think we're participating in something horrific.

We ask, "How could something really horrific be accepted by everyone around me? Surely my career and my way of life can't be that bad if everyone else is doing it too. If it were, somebody would have stopped it already. Right?"

We are having trouble recognizing this horror because there are virtually no bad guys in the game. There are a few, probably, at Monsanto and in oil and gas companies, and a few in public office. But even they are not sitting around tables in the evenings smoking cigars and plotting the extinction of the polar bear. Most of them don't have malicious intent. They're just following the prevailing logic and ethic of our culture—the logic and ethic of commerce. They're just being smart businesspeople, doing what they've been raised to do. The banality of evil.

And then there's the rest of us. We're not evil and yet we are all semi-knowingly participating in the creation of this global catastrophe. Most of us eat meat and dairy products that require massive quantities of water, fossil fuels, and pesticides to produce, destroying forests and jungles. Most of us live and work in buildings that are burning fuel 24/7 for lights, computers, appliances, heating and air conditioning systems. This is all *normal* for our culture.

Terrible and Terrifyingly Normal

Hannah Arendt, the twentieth-century political theorist, had some insights into the concepts of "evil" and "normal" that seem to have direct bearing here.

In 1961 she went, as a reporter for the *New Yorker*, to the trial of Adolf Eichmann. Eichmann was a Nazi lieutenant colonel who had been responsible for the operations side of the project of forcing millions of Jews into concentration camps and later deporting them by train to places like Auschwitz. If there were ever an example of a psychopathic monster—grand evil incarnate—Adolf Eichmann should be it. But Arendt published a series of articles about the trial that she later turned into a book subtitled, *A Report on the Banality of Evil*. In it she made the argument that Eichmann was actually not psychopathic, not exceptional in his propensity for violence, and not particularly hateful or malicious. What he *was* was unintelligent, rule-oriented, and insecure, with a desperate need to belong. He was a joiner who wanted to be part of something. He wanted to advance his career. He wanted respect and a good life. He often spoke in clichés. While he was in prison in Israel awaiting his trial, five different psychiatrists interviewed him and found no evidence of any pathology. He was a psychologically stable, normal person. Arendt wrote:

The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal. From the viewpoint of our legal institutions and of our moral standards of judgment, this normality was much more terrifying than all the atrocities put together.

Arendt got a lot of pushback for this view, and in fact some of her claims about Eichmann's guilelessness were recently debunked, but the book changed the conversation about the nature of evil forever.

For a holocaust to be carried out on a grand scale, you don't need a battalion of sinister bad guys. You maybe need a few bad guys, but what you need even more are thousands of ordinary people who want badly to fit in and advance themselves and their careers. You need people who will accept the moral standards of their social environment. You need people committed to being *normal* relative to their place and time, whatever that entails.

In the current moment, the violence that has become normal in industrialized countries is a life of daily violence against the planet. Most of us rely on products shipped from far away, made of plastic, wrapped in plastic, or delivered in plastic bags, most of which cannot be recycled, cannot biodegrade, and sit as pollution on our earth forever. Most of us watch TV shows and Hollywood movies whose production creates more air pollution than almost any other major industry. Most of us, when using a public restroom, will dry

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our hands with paper towels made from trees. Then we throw them in the garbage where they will be transported to a landfill for all time. This is all normal. In Arendt's words, "terribly and terrifyingly normal."

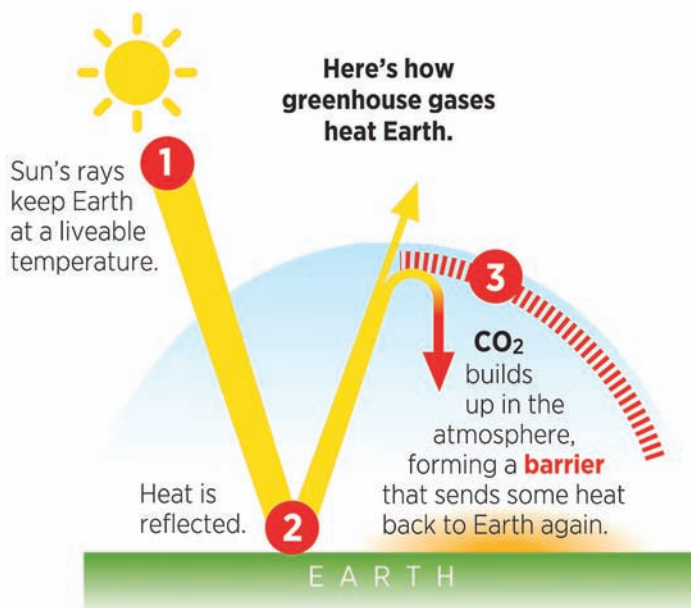
"I'm going to go watch a movie." Normal! "I'm ordering us a pizza." Normal! "Remember to pick up a crate of bottled water at Costco for the picnic." Normal! Some of us try to not do some of these things—I don't use paper towels, for example, and I don't eat much meat. But I still participate in the system as a whole and accept the basic premise of what's OK in our culture. I just took one of these online quizzes to find out the carbon footprint of the way that I eat. It was not good. I personally generate the equivalent of three tons of carbon dioxide each year through my food choices. And I think of myself as someone who makes a reasonable effort.

Changing Our Traditions

The madness of the way we live is largely invisible to us because it's simply the water we swim in. It's hard to really believe that our banal, day-to-day activities are creating devastation. It's hard to really imagine that a "reasonable effort," like the one that so many of us make, is just not going to get the job done.

Jess Sasko, a member of my congregation, told me a story that illustrates how our cultural lens makes it hard for even the best-intentioned of us to see the connection between what we do and the natural world: It was Thanksgiving a few years ago. Her grandfather was cooking. Knowing that she was a vegetarian, he told her he had prepared a special stuffing just for her that had no turkey in it. But when she looked for a pot on the stove with the vegetarian stuffing, she didn't see one. She asked him where it was and he said, "Oh, your stuffing? It's inside the turkey. I put it in there to give it some flavor." She graciously ate the stuffing but later said, "You know, Grandpa, people who are really serious vegetarians wouldn't even eat stuffing that was cooked in a turkey."

He was a little surprised to hear that, but he took it to heart and the next year at Thanksgiving, he said, "Guess what? I've made you a stuffing and there's no turkey in it and it's not in the turkey." Jess told him how grateful she was and went into the kitchen to help him cook. There was her vegetarian stuffing cooking on the stove, separate from the turkey as promised. He proudly started listing its ingredients: celery,



Four key results of global climate change:

Rising oceans

- **Polar icecaps** have melted faster in the last 20 years than in the whole of the last 10,000. Scientists now say that this melt is unstoppable, and that sea levels could rise by 3 feet or more by 2100.
- **Coastal cities** in the US, home to more than 3.7 million, will be inundated. The **Maldiv Islands** in the Indian Ocean will completely disappear.

More rain (much more)

- Climatologists calculate that just in the US **global warming has put an extra 3.7 trillion litres (1 trillion gallons) of water into the air.**
- **This has to fall** as rain or snow, and that's why rain- and snow-storms will be more frequent and of greater ferocity.

Conflicts

- It's said that the next major war will be fought over **water rights, food and land.**
- Some experts believe that the conflict in **Darfur, Sudan**, was partially caused by a warmer climate—especially because it reduced natural resources, and that led to refugees fighting settled farmers for food sources.

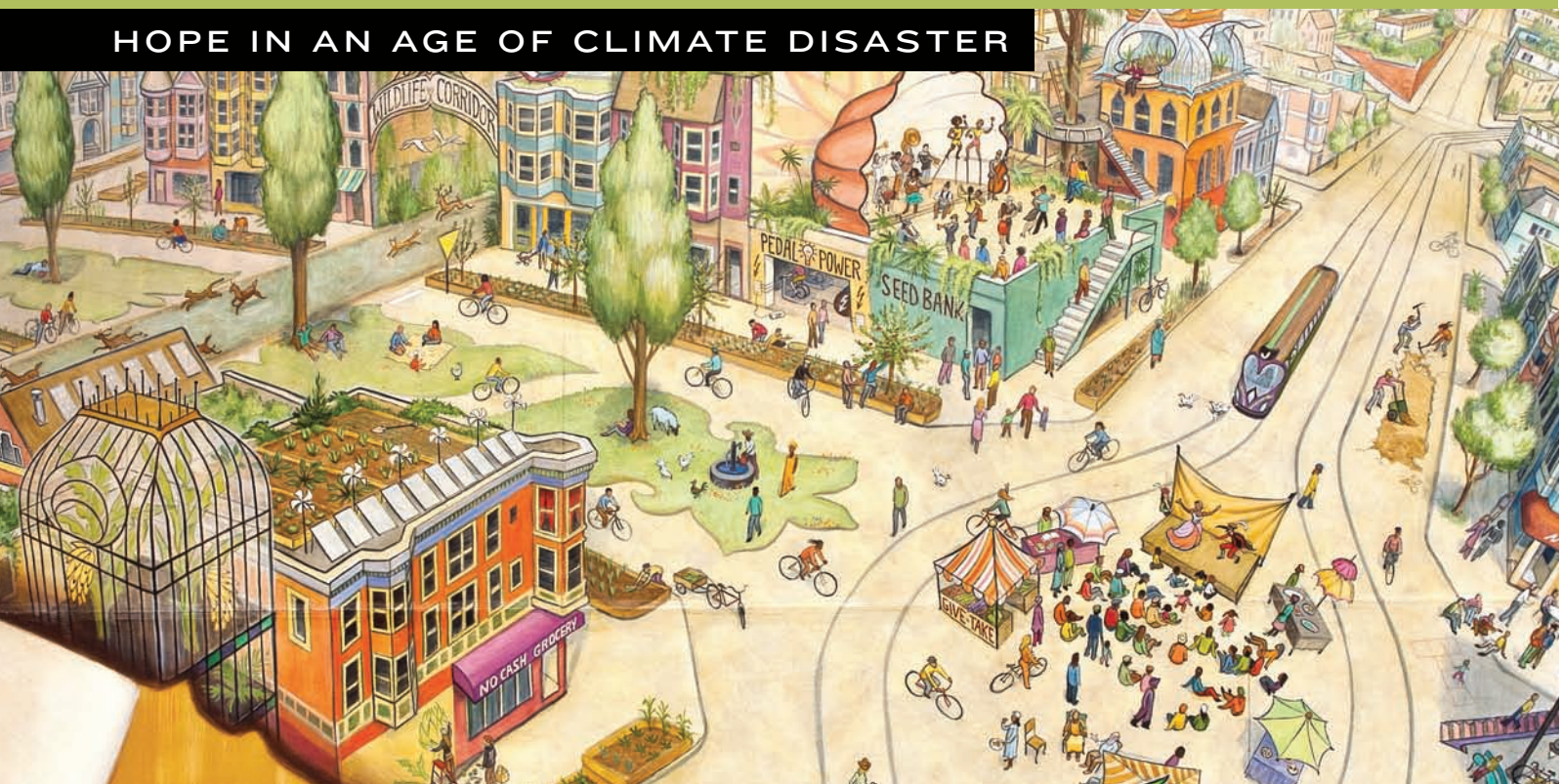
Hunger

- Moderate warming and increased carbon (CO₂) in the atmosphere help plants grow faster, but if the warming trend continues at the current rate, **floods and drought will reduce crop yields.**
- **Fisheries** are adversely affected by warming water temperatures; this makes the water hospitable to invasive species and alters the timing of life cycles.

Graphic by Nigel Holmes, adapted from his book *Instant Expert*.

carrots, parsley, a chicken bouillon cube, thyme, sage. . . Jess graciously ate it but later said, "You know, Grandpa, people who are really serious vegetarians wouldn't even eat something cooked with a chicken bouillon cube." He looked dismayed and protested, "Well then it wouldn't have any flavor at all."

Here was a loving grandfather trying as hard as he could to fulfill the bewildering requests of his granddaughter. And to him, because of the culture he's been part of his whole life, chicken is a substance, not a bird; it's a flavor that's essential in cooking good food for the people you love. This is what makes this whole situation so hard. The very things that we will need to change in order for this earth to be safe for our children and our children's children are the things closest to us, dearest to us, most rooted in our warmest, oldest traditions. They will sometimes be the things we buy and do to express love. They will often be things that make us feel successful and good about ourselves. They will frequently be things that help us feel "normal." (continued on page 63)



How might we restructure our cities around principles of ecological sustainability? Mona Caron portrays an ecotopian future in this detail from her *Noe Valley Mural* diptych.

Reducing Auto Dependency and Sprawl

An Ecological Imperative

BY JANET BIEHL

AS CLIMATE CHANGE THREATENS to make life on earth unbearable, most of us recognize that our society must reduce its dependency on fossil fuels. Automobile use is one of the greatest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. To reduce emissions, we must stop driving so much. But how?

More than half of all Americans live in sprawling suburbs, a built environment that forces them to own cars in order to function. For thousands of years of human settlement, the functions of daily life were clustered together in one place, accessible by foot or animal-drawn wheels. Later, as cities developed, people could live in apartments above shops, or down the block from them, to meet most of their daily needs.

But after World War II, for many social, cultural, psychological, and economic reasons, the United States initiated a radical departure from this settlement pattern, creating an entirely new one: horizontal sprawl. Americans fled their old urban neighborhoods for single-family homes in low-density housing subdivisions.

For a time they commuted back to work in the cities. Then workplaces left the cities as well, and cars were the only way to get around. Soon homes, workplaces, and shopping sites were cordoned off into their own dedicated areas. Zoning codes even came to mandate the separation of residential, office, and commercial spaces. People living in sprawl have to drive, usually several times a day, to meet their basic daily needs, traveling from housing subdivision to strip mall to office park. For people to simply function in sprawl, car ownership—one vehicle for each adult per household—is thus all but mandatory.

The Importance of Walkable Neighborhoods

To reduce auto dependence, we need to reshape our built environment so that it no longer requires car ownership—thereby enhancing sustainability. In recent decades, a new generation of urban planners has been devising concrete ways to do just that. *(continued on page 64)*

JANET BIEHL is the author of *Ecology or Catastrophe: The Life of Murray Bookchin*, forthcoming from Oxford University Press.

Prayer as if the Earth Really Matters

BY ARTHUR WASKOW

MORE AND MORE OFTEN, religious communities are bringing their prayer and practice to bear on a profound religious and spiritual question: radical dangers posed by the climate crisis to the web of human and more-than-human life forms on this planet.

There are two ways we've found to relate prayer to the present crisis of our planet. One is exploring how earth awareness can enter more deeply into our formal prayer services. The other is exploring how public action intended to affect public and corporate policy toward the earth can become prayerful.

Earth Awareness in Formal Prayer

"Prayer is meaningless unless it is subversive," Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel once wrote. One way to enhance earth awareness in the formal prayer of many religious traditions is to introduce new symbols and rituals into them. One extraordinarily powerful effort along these lines was undertaken at the Interfaith Summit on the Climate Crisis organized in 2008 by the Church of Sweden. The most moving aspect of the summit's initial service in the Cathedral of Uppsala was the rolling of a large green globe made of moss down the center aisle of the cathedral—the symbol of no one religious community and a possible symbol for them all.

A version of this practice has since been introduced into a number of multireligious services focusing on the climate crisis—especially several held by Interfaith Moral Action on Climate at the White House fence and Lafayette Park in 2012 and 2013. At those events, the participants passed an inflatable globe from hand to hand, singing verse upon verse of a familiar hymn remade with environmental language:

We have the whole world in our hands,
We have the rain and the forests in our hands,
We have the wind and the clouds in our hands,
We have the whole world in our hands!

It is both factually and theologically notable that this liturgy transformed an older hymn in which the refrain was, "*He* has the whole world in *His* hands." That assertion—*He* is in charge of the world—is closely related to a major traditional metaphor in most Jewish, Christian, and Muslim prayer. In that metaphor, God is King, Lord, and Judge, above and beyond the human beings who are praying. In regard to the earth, this metaphor crowned a series of hierarchies that emerged in ancient Greece and the Middle Ages through the concept of a great chain of being—a hierarchy from rocks and rivers up to vegetation, thence up to animals, and then human beings, and finally up to the Divine King and Lord.

Today we know that the relationship between the human species and the earth is ill described by these metaphors of hierarchy. Not only do we know that what we breathe in depends upon what the trees and grasses breathe out; now we also know that within our own guts are myriad microscopic creatures that occasionally make us sick but far more often keep us alive and healthy. There is no "environment" in the sense of "environs" that are "out there," not us. There are fringes (threads of connection), not fences, between us and other life, and sometimes fringes in our very innards.

Though now we know that humanity has great power to damage the web of life on earth, we also know that we are strands within that web—not simply above and beyond it. What we do to the web also has an impact on us. The more we act as if we are in total control, the closer we come to "totaling" the whole intricate process. So those metaphors of ordered hierarchy are no longer truthful, viable, or useful to us as tools of spiritual enlightenment.

The Torah's Take on the Breath of the Earth

If we are to seek spiritual depth and height, the whole framework of prayer must be transformed. How can we do this while drawing on the rich experience of prayer that spiritually enlightened many in the generations that came before us?

If we look deep into the Torah tradition, we can find accounts that hint toward a very different metaphor and therefore a very different path of prayer. When Moses hears a voice speaking from the Burning Bush, the voice gives him two new names by which to understand the universe and God and by which to lead the liberation of the Israelites from slavery to Pharaoh. One of those new names is in Hebrew—*Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh*—that is, "I will be who I will be." The world, we understand, is always becoming. Slaves can become free; a rabble of runaways can become a community. The other name, in the Roman alphabet, is YHWH.

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Mrs. Goda Held By... by YoHana Bat Adam.

Much later in biblical understanding, we were taught that this name must not be pronounced and that instead the Hebrew word *Adonai* (“Lord”) should be used as a substitute for it. This practice greatly affected Christian prayer and practice, as *Adonai* became *Kyrie*, then *Dominus*, and later *Lord*.

But if we do try to pronounce this YHWH without any vowels, what we sound and hear is not quite a pronunciation but a breath. A breath that appears not only in Hebrew but in every human language. A breath that appears not only in human languages but also in every life form on our planet. No living creature on our planet breathes in its own little bubble. We breathe each other into being. Into living. We breathe in what the trees breathe out. The trees breathe in what we breathe out.

The metaphor that God is the interbreathing of all life is far more truthful than the metaphor that God is King and Lord. It brings together spiritual truth and scientific fact. It has only been about 250 years since human beings discovered that the great exchange of carbon dioxide and oxygen between plants and animals is what keeps our planet alive. Yet this scientific fact echoes the ancient sense that we are all interwoven, interbreathing.

Even to say the word “spiritual” is to teach the importance of this interbreathing. For just as the word *spiritus* in Latin means “breath” and “wind,” as well as what we call “spirit,” so the word *ruach* in Hebrew means “breath,” “wind,” and “spirit.” Much the same sense is expressed in many other languages.

Reinterpreting the Shema Prayer

What would it mean, then, to reframe our forms of prayer around the metaphor of God as interbreathing? I will speak here from my own roots in Jewish prayer, but the basic question should arise in the prayers of all cultures.

Let us start with what many consider the central affirmation of Jewish prayer, the *Shema*. Drawing on our new metaphor, we might hear the *Shema* saying, “*Sh’sh’shma*—Hush’sh’sh’sh and listen, you Godwrestlers! Our God is the interbreathing of all life, and the interbreathing is One.”

In the traditional Jewish prayer book, the *Shema* is followed by three paragraphs of explication and affirmation. The second paragraph is devoted to the relationship between human beings and the earth. It asserts that if human beings follow the sacred teachings that indeed the Divine is One, then the rivers will run, the rains will fall, the heavens will bless the earth, and the earth will be abundantly fruitful in feeding human beings, in making the harvest abundant, and in making the land flourish.

But the paragraph continues that if we follow false gods, if we carve the world up into parts and worship not the One Breath of Life but some substitute piece we have carved out—then the rivers won’t run, the rain won’t fall, and the heavens will become our enemy. We will perish from the good earth that the One Breath of Life, our God, has given us.

In the last half-century, that second paragraph has been excised from many modern Jewish prayer books. The argument for removing it has been that it teaches a false notion of reward always coming from good action and punishment always coming from bad action. But that excision came before we understood how interwoven and fragile our relationship with the earth is, and how we might in fact act with such strength and arrogance as to wound even the rain and the rivers. In the current context of climate change, the meaning of the *Shema*’s assertion that the rivers won’t run if we follow false gods becomes clear in a whole new way. I’ve created a new translation of the three paragraphs that follow the *Shema* to highlight this reality (see facing page).

Neshama: The Breath of Life

Now let me go back to an earlier part of the traditional Jewish service that comes before the *Shema*. There are three passages in which the Hebrew word *neshama* (breath/soul) is central. Translated into English, the first says, “The breath *my* God has placed within *me* is clear this morning, as I wake.” The second says, “The breath *of all life* blesses your name, *our* God.” The third says, “Every breath praises Yah, the Breath of Life.”

In order to pray so that the earth really matters, we might actually breathe these three different passages in three different ways. For the first, we might experience the breath coming into our own noses, mouths, and throats, and moving

THE SH'MA

*A Jewish Invocation of the Unity:
An Interpretation for the 21st Century*

Sh'sh'sh'ma Yisra'el— Time by time, time by time;
Hush'sh'sh and Listen, You The rivers will run,
Godwrestlers— the heavens will smile,
Pause from your wrestling and hush'sh'sh the good earth will fruitfully feed you.
To hear— But—if you chop the world into parts
YHWH / Yahhhhhh. and choose parts to worship—
Hear in the stillness the still silent voice, gods of race or of nation
The silent breathing that intertwines life; gods of wealth and of power,
YHWH / Yahhhh elohenu gods of greed and addiction
Breath of life is our God, If you Do and you Make,
What unites all the varied and Produce without pausing;
forces creating If you Do without Being—
all worlds into oneness, Then the rain will not fall—
Each breath unique, or will turn to sharp acid—
And all unified; The rivers won't run—
Listen, You Godwrestlers— or flood homes and cities;
No one people alone The heavens themselves
owns this Unify-force; will take arms against you:
YHWH / Yahh is One. the ozone will fail you,
So at the gates of your cities, the oil that you burn
where your own culture ends, will scorch your whole planet—
and another begins, and from the good earth
And you halt there in fear— that the Breath of Life gives you,
“Here we speak the same language you will vanish—yes, perish.
“But out there is barbaric, So on the edges of your Self,
“They may kill without speaking—” On the corners of your clothing,
Then pause in the gateway to write take care to weave fringes—
on its walls threads of connection.
And to chant in its passage: So you end not with sharpness,
“Each gate is unique in the world A fence or a wall,
that is One.” But with sacred mixing
If you hush'sh'sh and then listen, of cloth and of air—
yes hush'sh'sh and then listen A fringe that is fuzzy,
to the teachings of YHWH / Yahh, part yours and part God's:
the One Breath of Life, They bind us together,
that the world is One, Make One from our oneness.
all its parts intertwined,
then the rains will fall Good fringes/ good neighbors.

into our lungs to be picked up by our bloodstream. We might experience our blood bearing the oxygen to our brain, our arms, our heart and legs and genitals and skin—to all our organs that through their diversity make each of us into a One. This is *my* breath, and it comes from *my* God.

The second passage invites us to see the breath of all life, praising the name of *our* God—no longer *my* God. For this passage, we might begin by experiencing how our

NISHMAT KOL CHAI

You Whose very Name—	Nurtures us,
YyyyHhhhWwwwHhhh—	Teaches us.
Is the Breath of Life,	
The breathing of all life	First, last,
Gives joy and blessing to Your Name.	Future, past,
	Inward, outward,
As lovers lie within each other's arms,	Beyond, between,
Whispering each the other's name	You are the breathing that
Into the other's ear,	gives life to all the worlds.
So we lie in Your arms,	And we do the breathing that
Breathing with each breath	gives life to all the worlds.
Your Name, Your Truth, Your Unity.	
	As we breathe out
You alone,	what the trees breathe in,
Your Breath of Life alone,	And the trees breathe out
Guides us,	what we breathe in,
Frees us,	So we breathe each other into life,
Transforms us,	We and You.
Heals us,	YyyyHhhhWwwwHhhh.

breath—now mostly carbon dioxide—leaves our mouths and noses, how it moves into the air and atmosphere of all God's creatures, how it moves into a plant and is breathed in by trees and grasses. Trees absorb the carbon to make new leaves and new wood, and then breathe out oxygen into the world, so that we can breathe it in. My free translation of it is above.

And finally the third passage comes from the very end phrase of Psalm 150, the last psalm. It affirms that every breath praises, blesses, the God who is the Breath of Life. It uses one of the ancient names of God—*Yah*, as in *Hallelu-Yah*—the name that has the initial Y and the ending H of the YHWH name.

The exercise I have described is a way of teaching our community that it is part of the earth, interwoven with the earth—neither its ruler nor the viceroy of a king still higher and more royal.

The Green Faces of God

With this new relationship with the earth in mind, we move to the moment in the Jewish service that affirms there is a *minyan* (a community, a quorum for prayer) in the room. Traditionally, this required ten male Jews at least thirteen years and one day old. Now, in many Jewish circles, ten adult Jews of any gender make a minyan.

As we pause to say a welcoming affirmation—“Let us praise that holy Breath of Life which is indeed to be well praised”—we might in our new mode look from face to face around the room, pausing at each face to affirm what the ancient rabbis taught: “When Caesar stamps his (*continued on page 65*)

A Bodhisattva's Approach to Climate Activism

BY DAVID R. LOY

THE ECO-CRISIS IS SO ENORMOUS and intimidating that we don't know where to start. We know that the collective decisions we make in the next few years will set the course of events for generations to come. And yet the more we learn about climate breakdown, species extinction, the global economic system, corporate domination of government, and overpopulation, the less we feel able to act. Our conviction in our own powerlessness overwhelms us.

The Buddhist tradition of bodhisattva activism offers a lifeline out of this downward spiral of paralysis. The model of bodhisattva activism speaks to our current situation because the bodhisattva's job is to do the best one can, without knowing what the consequences will be—without knowing whether anything one does makes any difference whatsoever.

According to one definition, a bodhisattva is “any person who, motivated by compassion, wishes to attain Buddhahood for the sake of all living beings.” Traditionally, the bodhisattva chooses not to enter the realm of *nirvana* (the state of perfect peace), but instead remains in *samsara* (this world of cyclic existence) to help all sentient beings end their suffering and reach enlightenment. Instead of asking, “What can I get out of this situation” or “How can I get out of this situation?” the bodhisattva asks, “What can I contribute to make this situation better?” Today we can understand the bodhisattva path as a spiritual archetype that offers a new vision of human possibility.

A Vow to Liberate All Beings

Bodhisattva activism has some distinctive characteristics. Buddhism emphasizes interdependence (“We’re all in this together”) and delusion (rather than evil). This implies not only nonviolence (violence is usually self-defeating anyway), but also a politics based on love (more non-dual) rather than reactive anger (which separates *us* from *them*).

The basic problem in our society is not rich and powerful bad people, but rather institutionalized structures of collective greed, aggression, and delusion. Moreover, the bodhisattva's pragmatism and non-dogmatism can help cut through the ideological quarrels that have weakened so many progressive groups. And Buddhism's emphasis on *upaya* (skillful means) cultivates the creative imagination, a necessary attribute if we are to collaboratively construct a healthier, more sustainable way of living together on this earth.

According to the most common formulation, the bodhisattva takes a vow to help liberate all living beings. Someone who has volunteered for such an unachievable task will not be intimidated by present crises, no matter how hopeless they may appear. That is because the bodhisattva practices on both levels—inner and outer—which enables him or her to engage in goal-directed behavior without attachment to results. Perhaps the bodhisattva's daily commitment to the unachievable is the most important contribution of Buddhism in these difficult times, when we often feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of the environmental challenge.

As T. S. Eliot put it, “For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.” Have we already passed ecological tipping points? Is human civilization doomed? We don't know. Yet rather than being intimidated, the bodhisattva embraces “don't-know mind” because Buddhist practice opens us up to the awesome mystery of an impermanent world where everything is changing, whether or not we notice it.

Connecting Inner and Outer Transformation

Another piece of wisdom that Buddhism has to offer to the many activists and organizations working to promote sustainability and social justice is its insight into how inner and outer transformation can reinforce each other. Just as the bodhisattva path constitutes a model of activism connecting inner and outer practice, Buddhist teachings as a whole offer a broader framework for connecting inner and outer work.

Historically, churches and churchgoers have played an important part in many reform movements, for example, the anti-slavery and civil rights campaigns. But much of the impetus in the West for deep structural change has originated in socialist and other progressive movements, which traditionally have been suspicious of religion. Marx described religion as “the opium of the people” because too often churches have been complicit with political oppression, using their doctrines to rationalize the power of oppressive rulers and diverting believers' attention from their present condition to the life to come. (*continued on page 66*)

DAVID R. LOY is a Zen teacher and author whose books include *The Great Awakening: A Buddhist Social Theory*. His new book is *A New Buddhist Path: Enlightenment, Evolution, and Ethics in the Modern World*. Many of his writings and podcasts are available on his website: davidloy.org.



Buddha Shakyamuni (2007) by Gonkar Gyatso.

Looking to the Qur'an in an Age of Climate Disaster

BY RIANNE C. TEN VEEN

NATURAL DISASTERS ARE OCCURRING nearly five times as often now as they were in the 1970s, according to a 2014 report by the World Meteorological Organization. Both developed and developing countries are bearing the burden of repeated floods, droughts, and temperature extremes.

Are we, humanity, innocent in all of this? In the Qur'an, God says: "Evil has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of men have earned, that He [God] may make them taste a part of that which they have done, in order that they may return" (30:41).

This passage from the Qur'an points toward a truth that scientists have been articulating as well: 97 percent of climate scientists agree that climate warming trends over the past century are very likely (scientific language for "quite certainly") due to human activities, and most of the leading scientific organizations worldwide have issued public statements endorsing this position. And yet, mired in denial, we are continuing to move in the wrong direction.

Natural disasters alone have cost the world 3.8 trillion dollars since 1980, according to the World Bank's 2014 World Development Report. It is depressing to think about the thousands of people suffering the personal costs of these increasingly frequent disasters, all of whom are someone's mother, father, friend, daughter, son, husband, or wife. How can one have hope?

However, as the Qur'an suggests, the road is not doomed: we may "return" if we reflect on what we are doing and change our behaviour. The Qur'an urges us many times to reflect. Consider, for example, this passage from Yunus (or Jonas) 10:31:

Say: "Who is it that sustains you (in life) from the sky and from the earth? Or who is it that has power over hearing and sight?

And who is it that brings out the living from the dead and the dead from the living? And who is it that rules and regulates all affairs?" They will soon say: "God." Say: "Will you not then show piety (to God)?"

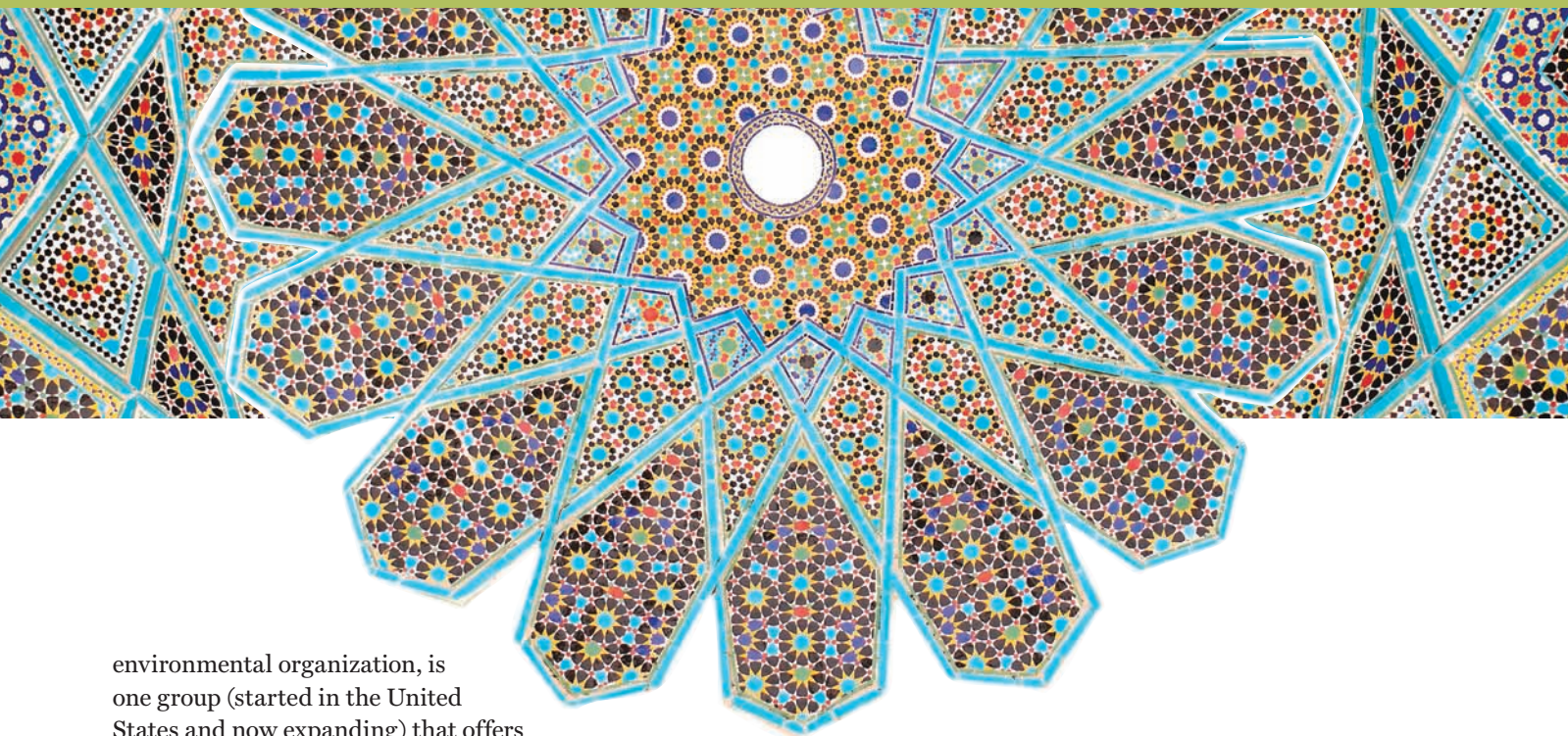
By urging us to reflect on God as the source of our sustenance, this passage reminds us to see the world around us as a sacred domain rather than to use it wastefully for our own purposes—indeed, "squanderers" are described as brothers of the devil in the Qur'an (17:27). This idea reappears in a story told by Aishah, the wife of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who says that when the Prophet lived in his house, he used to repair his own shoes, sew his own clothes, and carry out all such household chores without complaint or want for more. The idea behind this story was to show Muslims that "menial" tasks were not degrading for God's Prophet. Reusing and repairing things instead of always buying new is not a sign of poverty; it is a sign of power. By performing household duties, the Prophet was saying that we can build foundations on less "stuff"—that we are in control of what we consume and we do not need more. Even more to the point, verses 1-2 of chapter 102 of the Qur'an says, "The mutual rivalry for piling up (the good things of this world) diverts you (from the more serious things), until you visit the graves."

The calamities we have been experiencing as a result of climate change are not even a full recompense for our environmental actions. Were we to be punished for all that we do, there would be no creature living on earth. According to the Qur'an, "if God were to punish mankind for that which they earned, God would not leave a moving [living] creature on the surface of the earth; but He gives them respite to an appointed term, and when their term comes, then verily, God is Ever All-Seer of His believers" (35:45).

While staring the enormity of our wrongdoing in the face is difficult, there is still a significant place for hope among people of faith in an age of climate disasters. If as people of faith, we choose not to behave like wild football fans, pitting our religions against each other, but instead choose to truly reflect on what our faith teachings say, then we can learn to be truly good stewards of God's Creation. In chapter 6 of the Qur'an (titled "Livestock"), God in verse 38 instructs us to be stewards and live lightly on the earth. Following these instructions would not only make us better individuals but would also enable us to create better communities and ultimately achieve world peace. God knows we need that! But, as the Qur'an says, "God does not change a condition of a people until they change what is in themselves" (13:11).

So there is hope, we just need to grab it, talk about it, and live by our faith teachings. GreenFaith, an interfaith

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environmental organization, is one group (started in the United States and now expanding) that offers practical resources for houses of worship that want to put environmental faith teachings into practice locally. For example, GreenFaith's start-up kit for religious institutions guides houses of worship through forming a "green team" to lead their environmental efforts, screening interfaith environmental films such as *Renewal*, publishing eco-tips in every worship bulletin, saving energy within the house of worship, organizing educational series on the environment, and starting to preach green sermons.

And in the United Kingdom, the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences, where I volunteer, has been collaborating with Muslims worldwide to connect ecological themes from the Qur'an and the Hadith literature to contemporary conservation and sustainability efforts. In addition to publishing dozens of teaching materials, books, and journals such as *Islam and Ecology*, *Applying Islamic Environmental Ethics*, and *Guidebook on Islamic Environmental Practice*, the foundation has also led workshops on Islamic-rooted sustainability and conservation in Madagascar, Zanzibar (Tanzania), Indonesia, Nigeria, and England, as well as discussions across the world, from Jordan to Germany.

By raising consciousness about Islamic environmental ethics and offering guidance for how they may be put into practice, we have saved fish stocks in Zanzibar and made inroads against deforestation in Indonesia. Our larger strategic vision for preserving biodiversity and reducing global warming is for Muslims to have an internal drive and conviction that being a good Muslim requires care for the Earth, Creation. Our sincere *dua* (supplication) is that they will then use this conviction to affect decisions, from making their daily choices about what is not just *halal*, but also wholesome (*tayyeb*) as regards where our food comes from, where we invest our money, and what our elected representatives stand for.

By linking up with initiatives such as OurVoices.net—which is aiming to generate the largest and most spiritually and religiously diverse number of voices possible to show politicians at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris this coming December the strength of support for a meaningful climate agreement—we hope to enable individual Muslims to feel strengthened in their environmental convictions. Fossil fuel interests and other geopolitical factors sometimes make it hard to get our positive message out, but we are committed to broadcasting far and wide the message that being an environmentalist is not about converting to another belief or having competing objectives. Having a faith and using our shared moral values and arguments (values that Muslims share with people of other faiths and of no faith too) is an exciting connector among us all.

Focusing on environmental issues can lead to joint interfaith projects to heal the earth and our sometimes broken societies. Not a quick fix, not a technological fix, and not further violence, but rather a wave of increased appreciation of what it truly means to "believe *and* do good deeds" (a value mentioned many times in the Qur'an). We need to do these good deeds for ourselves and also for all others—my favourite verse in the Qur'an reminds us of this: "There is no animal in the earth, nor a bird flying on its two wings, but they are communities like yourselves" (6:38). We know this healing will not happen overnight or easily, but *sabr* (patience or endurance) is a positive virtue in Islam.

If Muslims become more aware of what their faith teachings truly state, and if people of other faiths simultaneously raise awareness within their own communities, we will all become abundantly more able to collaborate toward sustainable coexistence on this shared earth. What could be more hopeful than that? ■

Dharma and Ahimsa

A Hindu Take on Environmental Stewardship

BY PARTH PARIHAR

DIDN'T YOU GUYS EVER FEEL BAD about taking *three buses* to New York City?" my classmate at Princeton asked me following the People's Climate March last September. "Think about all of the greenhouse gas emissions you could have avoided by simply not going."

Taken more broadly, his question touches on a seminal dilemma faced by all who care for Mother Earth: should humans retreat from engagement in nature, in an attempt to leave no footprints, or step forward to take action in a mindful way? Though taking mindful action seems like the natural winner between the two, it is not always obvious that this is the case. Many religions preach nonviolence at their core. Yet, the essence of human action *is* violence—violence in the sense that every action we take has tangible negative consequences for the environment and for our fellow living beings. If we cannot safely traverse the proverbial lawn without inadvertently crushing an ant, why cross it in the first place? Shouldn't we retreat instead of step forward?

The environmental movement almost exclusively deals with this question from a utilitarian framework. However, I have always found it instructive to delve into my own religious tradition—specifically, the Bhagavad Gita, an explicitly non-utilitarian text—for answers. In the third chapter, Krishna says to the warrior-king Arjuna:

Not by avoiding actions does a person gain freedom from action. And not by renunciation alone does a person attain perfection. . . . Certainly no one, not even for a moment, ever lives without performing action. Indeed, against one's will, everyone is forced to perform action by the qualities born of primordial nature.

Not traversing the lawn, then, is not an option. While eschewing action in a given situation may exculpate us from the negative consequences associated with it, a retreat from engagement with nature is impossible, even in the relative sense.

Within many Hindu traditions, *Brahman* (God), is all-pervading, literally enmeshed in all things, both within and without the cosmos. Hence, we are all inextricably linked in a network of *karma* (force created by a person's actions), where action is not only inevitable, but inevitably has tangible consequences toward everything in nature. Thus, as Rajiv Malhotra notes in his book *Being Different*, the dharmic philosophy of *ahimsa* ("not to injure") does not demand absolute nonviolence but rather advises taking action so as to minimize harm to others. Thus, taking action is not only "permissible" but also a moral imperative—the only means through which we as responsible citizens can fulfill our *dharma* (our duty toward the environment and those around us).

Dharmic Responsibility

It is from this framework of dharmic responsibility rather than from utilitarian frameworks that I derive my conviction toward environmental stewardship. It's striking, however, that both frameworks converge on the principle of least harm: in this way, these disparate ideologies can find common ground within the environmental movement. Finding common ground will be a major part of the climate struggle ahead. As the diversity I experienced firsthand during the People's Climate March aptly demonstrated to me, the opportunity for constructive engagement with people of other faiths, worldviews, and communities presents itself promisingly amid the slogans, symbols, and rhetoric of climate actions. We will need to cultivate as much cooperation, mutual respect, and continued engagement as we can in order to reverse the troubling pattern of crop failures, human-made "natural disasters," ocean acidification, and increased greenhouse gas emissions that threaten our food security, economies, ecosystems, and livelihood.

Being committed to the climate justice program is important but not enough. Whether we act on that commitment is the true litmus test of whether we are fulfilling our dharma toward the environment. Ahimsa doesn't just mean practicing vegetarianism—"nonviolence" in quite a literal sense—but also cutting down shower time, purchasing clothes created from post-consumer recycled plastic, reducing consumption of what we don't need, and, for me, shedding my introvert exterior and continuing to speak up on climate justice issues.

Fulfilling one's eco-dharma requires going beyond merely lifestyle changes. It requires sacrificing personal time to ensure that local government makes decisions in the best interest of the environment—like my friend at Princeton did by

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meeting with Princeton Mayor Liz Lempert and advocating against a proposed natural gas pipeline through this pristine town. It means exhorting the institutions we are a part of to be more energy efficient, something I did during high school by spearheading an energy audit of my school district. It also means engaging in community organizing, joining mass movements and protests like the People's Climate March, writing to elected officials on proposed environmental regulation, and much, much more.

By guiding us to minimize the violence we perpetuate in the world while acting to fulfill our dharma, the idea of ahimsa has the power to steer religious communities within Hinduism toward constructive engagement in both spiritual practice and environmental stewardship.

Mindful Action

I have always thought of Hindus as generally forward-thinking on issues concerning the environment. It is not in every faith-based community that vegetarianism is practiced in a quasi-organized way (various surveys would place the proportion of vegetarian Hindus at 40 percent to 50 percent worldwide). This is obviously a positive practice that should be nourished: contextually, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations notes that over 18 percent of all human-induced greenhouse gas emissions are due to factory farming, and most believe this estimate is woefully conservative.

But a deeper engagement with ahimsa could challenge Hindu communities to commit to vegetarianism and other ecological practices intentionally, from within the heart, rather than following these practices in a mechanical way. I was stunned when a peer in my student religious organization (the Princeton Hindu Satsangam) informed me that many of her friends could not quite place the finger on why they were vegetarian—they were simply practicing vegetarianism as a sort of imbibed cultural practice. Although intentionality never emerges as a variable in the utilitarian calculus, it clearly matters.

Mahatma Gandhi was once asked where his undying belief in *satyagraha* (nonviolent insistence on truth) came from when the Bhagavad Gita itself—superficially, at least—hinged on the question of whether or not Arjuna should engage in actual physical warfare. Instead of pointing to a text or guru, Gandhi pointed to his heart. The relationship between conviction and action is tangible because how we care often translates to how we act on multiple fronts.

If our approach to the world remains narrowly issue-based rather than guided by a larger philosophy of ahimsa, inconsistency in action is bound to occur. Within the Hindu tradition, the unfortunate practice, for example, of disposing plastic bags containing *vibhuti* (sacred ash) and other religious offerings on the sites of temples leaves many sacred Hindu spaces in squalid condition and is a testament to the



In an age of melting ice caps and rising seas, fulfilling our eco-dharma requires more than lifestyle changes. *What Lies Beneath* by Caitlin Ng.

lack of mindfulness many *bhakts* (devotees) take with them when they leave. Reflecting more deeply upon the demands of ahimsa reveals the inconsistency of actions such as these. Ahimsa calls us to a deeper mindfulness about the environment and a community-based commitment to environmental stewardship.

One Hindu-led environmental stewardship effort in which I had the pleasure to partake is the campaign surrounding the “Bhumi Pledge,” an oath affirming young Hindus’ commitment to taking better care of the environment. Supported by the Oxford Center for Hindu Studies, this campaign encourages young Hindus who sign the pledge to then involve others by hosting an event to raise awareness of environmental challenges and possible solutions. The pledge’s simplicity and open-endedness are perhaps its strongest assets. In asking us to make a commitment, it invites us to rethink our learned behaviors on our own, thus allowing environmental stewardship to become rooted in the way we organize our daily lives and calibrate our choices. It is this relearning, rethinking, and reinvigorating of a broader concept of ahimsa that could plant the seeds for a spiritually rooted Hindu environmentalism to flourish in the future. ■

Love Is Stronger Than Stewardship

A Cosmic Christ Path to Planetary Survival

BY MATTHEW FOX

THE NOTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL “STEWARDSHIP” within Christian theology is a tired old idea. As a theologian I fundamentally disagree with it. Stewardship implies a subject/object relationship with creation. We don’t need such dull relationships in religion’s name.

For decades I have been putting forth a different spiritual basis for an eco-theology: the idea that the “Cosmic Christ” is the light in every being in the universe. In other words, every being in the universe is the image of God. The “Buddha Nature” is a parallel name for this same idea within Buddhism, and this idea also exists at the heart of the Jewish tradition.

In *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, a book I wrote twenty-six years ago, I pointed out that if Christ is “the light in all beings” (John 1) and science today teaches us that every atom in the universe contains photons or light waves, then every being is an image of God, a Buddha, a Christ. In addition, the Cosmic Christ (or Cosmic Wisdom) is the “pattern that connects” (see Col. 1:15-20).

In the context of a Cosmic Christ theology, Christians’ relation to the environment goes far beyond that of a *duty* to be a steward, operating from a minimal stance of ethics—it taps into a far deeper place of *being*, spirituality, and interdependence. If every being is another Christ or another Buddha, then to destroy rainforests and bring about the extinction of elephants, polar bears, tigers, lions, whales, ocean ecosystems, and soil ecosystems is to crucify the Christ all over again. I propose here as I have been proposing for years, that *here is where the future of an eco-theology lies*—not in stewardship talk but with a perspective of the Cosmic Christ. The issue is the sacredness of creation that has to be regained. Here is where a Cosmic Christ theology comes in.

Focusing on the light of the Cosmic Christ that exists within every being in the universe also has the power to ward off despair by inspiring us to act out of joy and connection, rather than out of heavy-hearted obligation. The brilliant medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas said injustice is the worst of all sins but despair the most “dangerous.” Why? Because when we succumb to despair we give up loving ourselves and can therefore love no one else. Despair kills caring and compassion. “The worst thing one can do is to teach despair,” Aquinas added. Despair, which is the opposite of hope, is a dangerous disease that needs addressing.

Despair about climate change is an acute problem in our times. It’s hard to imagine winning against the auto industry, the oil and coal industries, Wall Street, and all the other powerful forces that are fueling climate change. It seems impossibly idealistic to imagine everything that can be altered in a short enough time to make a difference, and wildly apocalyptic projections abound. In a few decades, will the world’s 9 billion people be reduced to a few million living at the North Pole, as scientist James Lovelock hypothesized in his recent book *The Vanishing Face of Gaia: A Final Warning*? Whether or not they are grounded in truth, such images can freeze us like a deer in headlights. On the other hand, they can sometimes shake us out of our deep denial.

Dangerous Denial

What is hope in a time of climate disaster? Well, certainly it is *not* denial.

Republican Governor Rick Scott of Florida has repeatedly denied climate science, saying he is not “convinced that there’s any man-made climate change,” and yet he recently won re-election. So it seems that denial is in fact a rather successful political course to take in our times. Denial has a great deal going for it—it essentially means that we don’t have to change much, that band-aids will do, that our addictions to shopping, work, making money, and polluting the earth can all proceed unabated. It means those who are making off like bandits can continue on their merry way, no matter what Main Street is suffering in terms of unemployment or underemployment. It means the 99 percent will continue bailing out Wall Street and picking up their bills while Wall Street firms park their earnings in offshore accounts to avoid paying for their use of U.S. infrastructures.

Even those of us who are not in denial about the climate remain in denial about our economic and financial system. Following the collapse of this system a few years ago, we taped it back together with string and scotch tape without asking the real question: can we create an economic system that works for everyone on the planet—not only the

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two-legged ones but also the oceans and forests and soil and four-legged ones? The answer is yes. We are capable of such creativity, and people like David Korten have been working out the details for decades. Yet voices for a new economics remain gagged by the media which after all is profiting from the current system. Proponents of a new economics receive no invites from the White House to come and make their point of why we need a new economic system and how it can come about. The power of denial cannot be overestimated.

The Network of Spiritual Progressives' effort to promote an Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment that would take money out of elections seems like a no-brainer if we are to bring democracy as well as environmental responsibility back from the havoc that the Supreme Court has wreaked with its recent decisions informing us that corporations are people, and religious people at that.

According to the fourteenth-century mystic Meister Eckhart, "God is the denial of denial." To me this means that until we can let go of denial, cut through denial, and melt denial, the Divine cannot flow. The creativity to create alternatives cannot flow. Justice and compassion cannot flow. Love cannot flow.

Hope Is a Verb

Once we reject denial and despair, we can start to hope. But what is hope? I like David Orr's definition the best: hope is a verb with the sleeves rolled up. Action generates hope—not just any action, but thought-out action, strategy, a movement, the making of alliances, action based on shared values. Action generates hope when we take the fight to the streets and airwaves and internet. Action generates hope when it is shaped by contemplative activist insights so that protest is not born of the win-at-all costs mentality that resides in the reptilian brain but out of genuine care and love. Hope is the enlisting of more and more justice-oriented people who genuinely care about the future of our great-great-grandchildren and about the health, beauty, and diversity of this amazing planet.

Once our religions move beyond the ideology of private salvation, they can contribute to this movement of spiritually motivated defenders of Mother Earth. Hope grows when contemplative prophets draw on their moral outrage, love, and creativity to forge new ways that we humans can live sustainably on this earth. Let us not underestimate our powers of creativity that set us off from many other species. Creativity generates hope.

A burst of creativity is what is needed to reinvent the way we approach energy, and this burst of creativity is happening in our time. Solar and wind energy costs have tumbled,



Creating environmental rituals can help move us past denial and into collective action, Fox argues. Here, a protester participates in the Climate Ribbon ritual at the People's Climate March in New York City in 2014. Thousands created and exchanged "climate ribbons" to share what they love and hope to never lose to climate change.

making these industries competitive with high-pollution energy industries. Universities are divesting themselves of investments in fossil fuel companies. People in Colorado and in Germany have voted to take control of their energy needs from private corporations. In India, scientists have invented a car that runs on air—compressed air—and feeds zero emissions back into the atmosphere. And non-polluting hydro-power yields nearly 100 percent of the electricity produced in Norway and Paraguay.

But new energy technologies are not enough. We also need to put creativity to work in creating rituals and ceremonies that allow us to get over denial and to go deeper in a collective way into our shared joy, our shared grief, and our shared passion for life and creation. Creativity is needed everywhere. God *is* the work of creativity, and the Holy Spirit is creativity in action.

The spiritual community that I'm part of, called the Creation Spirituality movement, has been developing rituals of grieving that are so needed today. And in our rituals of "the Cosmic Mass" (see thecosmicmass.com), we use premodern forms of worship such as dance together with postmodern forms like VJ, DJ, rap, and more, to bring life alive in body and soul within a liturgical lineage. Two summers ago we celebrated a Cosmic Mass at the Sounds True conference in Colorado for 1,000 persons of varied religious backgrounds and none, and most everyone was thrilled to pray in that manner. The Ecstatic Dance movement also brings body back to communal prayer.

If more people see creativity being put to use to save the planet, not just to make more gee-whiz gadgets and consumer items, they will become motivated (*continued on page 67*)



"The notion of genuine hope suggests that, in our present lives and communities, we can find seeds or fragments of the alternative world we hope to build," Peterson writes. *Seeds* by Linnea Vedder-Shults.

Climate Change and the Right to Hope

BY ANNA PETERSON

MOST PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES genuinely care about the environment, and yet collectively we are still filling landfills with plastic, guzzling gas, supporting factory farms, investing in unsustainable companies, and electing officials beholden to energy lobbies.

Why do people so rarely act in ways consistent with their ethical commitments? As an environmental ethicist, I am especially interested in this gap between values and practices. Most people care about nature and about the prospects of future human generations. Most people also know that in order to make these prospects brighter, it is necessary, especially for Westerners, to reduce our collective consumption of resources, to restore ecosystems, and to live differently with nature and with each other. Holding values and knowing what they demand, however, does not seem to provoke the necessary behavioral changes.

To Act, We Need Genuine Hope

This gap between values and practices has multiple, complex causes, including economic and political structures, as well as more personal factors. One of the most important reasons people fail to act is that they do not believe their behavior can make a difference. The problem is too big, or the situation is too far gone, for individual changes to matter. This issue takes on new urgency in the face of climate change and the impending ecological and social crises it threatens.

Regardless of how much we care and how much we know, we rarely act on our commitments if we do not believe that we can affect the outcome—in short, if we lack hope. Hope is crucial to social change as well as to individual well-being. It is what makes effective action possible and keeps us going in the face of disappointments, obstacles, and opposition. However, philosophers and theologians, along with activists and advocates, rarely think about what makes hope possible or what sustains it. There is no science of hope, no serious attention to its nature or to the shape (*continued on page 68*)

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Why I Preach from the Hebrew Bible

BY STEPHEN H. PHELPS

MOST CHRISTIAN PREACHERS do not make much use of the Hebrew Bible. Black church leaders are the main exception to this rule. As a result, many churchgoers know little of the Hebrew Bible beyond a few beloved psalms, the exploits of legendary heroes, and, alas, their certainty that it testifies to “a wrathful God.” Well-traveled parishioners who have had direct experience of many other preachers have confirmed for me how unusual it is for a church to drink deeply from the Hebrew Bible during the worship hour.

Not so in the congregations I have served. There, the Hebrew Bible sounded a major chord along with the New Testament. We journeyed through Genesis and Job, the Psalms and the Samuels, the Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, prophets major and minor, the histories, and more. Very much hangs on whether a Christian congregation is offered spiritual nourishment from Jewish scripture, or whether, by contrast, silence teaches Christians to ignore Judaism and the Jewish people.

My own journey with this question began in seminary in a crisis not of faith, but of vocation: for a time, I felt impelled to relinquish the aim of becoming a Christian pastor. In spite of the anxiety that attends any passage with “no direction home, like a complete unknown” (as Bob Dylan sang), in that clearing, a path to learning Judaism opened for me. My Hebrew language professor infused lectures and practice with love for the tradition. I studied Hebrew texts with scholars whose knowledge and passion formed one light. I experienced Jewish cultural and religious practices, so far as seemed fitting for a non-Jew. I developed a deep appreciation of Judaism and goodwill and humility toward the Jewish tradition and people. My journey through this landscape revealed to me a mystical path for apprehending truth. It is this: adorned in a thousand names, love bids the lover discover the unknown love. This is the blood in the body of true religion, not the known, but the unknown.

Drawing on these insights, I would like to offer up seven reasons why other Christian pastors ought to join me in preaching from the Hebrew Bible.



Looking for the Dreamer
by Samuel Bak.

REV. STEPHEN H. PHELPS, a pastor in the Presbyterian Church USA, served as Interim Senior Minister of The Riverside Church in New York City until 2014. He speaks and writes on themes of power and spiritual consciousness. He and his wife live in New York.

Reason #1: Jesus Was a Jew

Not seldom, a Christian reminds others, “After all, Jesus was a Jew.” However elementary, this is the first reason to preach from the Hebrew Bible and the only one many will ever hear. This brief commentary is often offered with gladness by a Christian who wants to emphasize unity with, not separation from, Jews and Judaism. The phrase is also meant to chasten those who seem to think Jesus was sent straight from heaven to earth unburdened with so much as a history lesson about the land he would land in. The ugly fact is that while ignorance of Christianity’s birth within Judaism does not necessarily degenerate into anti-Semitism, anti-Semitism does necessarily feed on ignorance of Jesus the Jew. The preacher of the Christian gospel who cares about the people’s lack of knowledge must keep close in mind the rutted, bloody roads of violence against Jews throughout Christian history—and ride a different road.

Preachers need not shame people for their fears and ignorance. This only drives the fears deeper, which are better left by the wayside. Preaching frequently from the Hebrew Bible can clear a path along which anyone unused to seeing Jesus as a Jew can simply join in celebrating the manifold voices of the Jewish people’s devotion. These are beginning steps in wisdom for a Christian. In my experience, those who first took these steps long ago seem not to mind retracing them. A vaster prospect beckons.

Reason #2: Jesus’s Bible Was the Hebrew Bible

In the New Testament, Jesus speaks several times of “what is written in the law and the prophets.” If a preacher teaches that this phrase refers to the Hebrew Bible, the people learn a little something. If, however, a preacher teaches directly from “the law and the prophets,” she can propose a great deal more. Provided the preacher does not force the texts to point to Jesus, teaching from the Hebrew Bible invites Christians to learn something of what lay in Jesus’s heart and mind—to step in paths of thought in which he stepped. It invites Christians to “remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there.” It invites Christians to see in Jeremiah and Ezekiel models of how a prophet acts and speaks in public. It invites Christians to “let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you” as “we tried to sing the Lord’s song when we remembered Zion” and to long that “instead of the thorn, there shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier, myrtle; that it be to the Lord a memorial, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.” All people yearn to dwell within a narrative, with heroes. I preach the Hebrew Bible to supplement my listeners’ heroes and yearning with the heroes and yearning of Jesus and of Jews.

Reason #3: To Counter the Idea of Judaism as a “Flawed Religion”

Many Christians think that Jesus thought of Judaism as a flawed religion and assume that they can or should think likewise. Unhappily, more than a few New Testament passages seem to volunteer for service in belittling the religion of Jesus. Year after year, Sunday school children are bombarded with stories of Jesus slam-dunking verbal one-on-ones with “the scribes and the Pharisees.” Adult Christians who have learned nothing about religion since childhood repeat tiresome stereotypes of Judaism as a religion of laws but Christianity as a religion of love. Thus hardens the churchgoer’s heart.

A preacher needs to bust up this hard earth, but it may not work to strike it with a blade. So many Christians are centuries deep in the assumption that they alone have the true understanding of the Bible—both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. To soften the soil of ignorance, pastors can pour the stories out abundantly. We water the ground until it can accept the seeds of truth and delight that are present to any humble reading of the texts, regardless of religion or culture. After a (*continued on page 69*)

Culture

BOOKS

This Consciousness So Outside My Own

Seasonal Works with Letters on Fire

by Brenda Hillman
Wesleyan University Press, 2013

REVIEW BY MICHAEL MORSE

FOR THE PAST DECADE and a half, Brenda Hillman has patiently and successfully pursued a project whose scope and ambition might derail lesser poets, a tetralogy of volumes that explores each of the cardinal elements—earth, air, water, and fire—as a material stage on which we play out our emotional, political, and environmental machinations.

A quarter of the way through her last entry in the tetralogy, *Seasonal Works with Letters on Fire*, Hillman lays out, in direct and unironic terms, an efficacy for poetry that sums up what she has sought in the previous volumes, which first started appearing in 2001. She writes, in “Ecopoetics Manifesto: A Draft for Angie,” that a poem “is its own action, performing practical miracles: / . . . to reflect . . . the contours of emotion / . . . to enter into collective bargaining with the political & the social.” Her ambitious “practical miracles” aspire to elevate contemporary American poetry so that it might include—via play and pleasure and a serious calling forth of accountability—a multifaceted, contemporary experience in equally various forms and music. And

she simply takes risks that push language in ways that most contemporary poets don’t dare. The marvel of this last volume is how she can balance a sense of playful exploration with a dire agenda: how the “poet can accompany acts of resistance so the planet won’t die of the human.”

The final volume in her tetralogy finds fire center stage, and there’s no better representative or figure to carry out her explorations of how language can capably warm *and* frighteningly transform whatever or whomever it engages. Hillman’s concerns—with dynamic individuals and the physical world, with the materiality of language, and with a gendered lens of ethically oriented receptivity—call for a sustained and sustaining consciousness that attends to the world that our very presence threatens.

The Mysteries of Relationality and Clarity in Sound

Hillman has spoken of the first impulse in the book’s first poem, “To Spirits of Fire After Harvest,” as emerging from seeing a field of pumpkins and marveling that “there’s all this other experience . . . the things that humans are actually not inhabiting—it has nothing to do with my experience. It just bloomed like some great, some weird magical thing. It seemed like, oh, this consciousness is so outside my own.” She writes:

Between earth
& its noun, i felt a fire . . .

—What does it mean by “i,” Mrs?
—It means, (& i quote): one
of the vowels in the brain
& some of the you’s—;

we were interested in the type of thing
humans can’t know,
interested in kinds of think animals
think
—a rabbit or a skink! (*Eumeces skiltonianus*)

when autumn brings a grammar,
wasps circle the dry stalks
& you can totally
see through amber ankles dangling
in dazzle under our lord the sun
of literature—

These first three stanzas serve as a content-and-rhetorical primer of sorts for the entire book: a preposition that initiates the poem; a lower-case *i* that suggests humility, a consciousness that seeks to privilege and promote the consciousness of other living entities;



There's also the rigor and pleasure of sound in her work. The rich, sonorous repetitions of the initial three stanzas continue in the last two stanzas:

Even with tricky case shifts and a point of view that suddenly turns to direct address at the poem's end, the rich vowel echoes of *noon* and *noun* and *runes* and *gourds* steady the poem—a Hopkins-esque glitter for the ear that surfaces again with the exes of *oxygen* and *sex* and *fox* in the final stanza's request for a materiality of world and language. Hillman is obsessed with our relations with sounds, images, and problems, and the poem is where we attempt to clarify those relations. The poem, then, tries to be Veronica's Veil, with its imprint not the face of Jesus but the imprint of the world.

inanimate perceived via the senses, and between various syntactical units on a micro level (through letters) and on a macro level (through phrases and clauses). Her work here melds an expansive Whitmanian appetite for inclusiveness with a Dickinsonian materiality—the thrill of consciousness and the impossible mysteries that emerge from it in music that’s taut, playful, and opaque. What Hillman has said of Dickinson’s poems—that they “carry us from comfortable to impossible realms within single lines of their strange diction”—readily applies to her own lyrical bricolage, where ethical allegiances consort with playful compositional techniques, including icons, doodles, and calligraphic pen strokes that recall the hooks and dashes in Dickinson’s fascicles.

Readers new to Hillman or used to poetry that's prone to fewer lane changes in case, tense, and attention will need to patiently let Hillman's hunger unfold over the course of the collection. She does not proffer easy narratives or succinct lyric bursts as whole poems. There are wonderful moments of narrative and music, but these occur in an ambitious tapestry whose goal is no less than a mapping of consciousness seeking connection with others, human and otherwise. This is a collection of drift, of switchback, of cultivated instability and pluralities.

both to how entities come into being and also the concept of *gender* at its core). These categories of tethering, playing, and engendering interconnect and interact within the vast ambitions and explorations of Hillman's lyrics.

Prepositions—the grammatical element used to create relations in space and time—serve as Hillman’s primary tethering tool. A random scan of the table of contents reveals a rhizomatic, spatial, and temporal connectivity present in poem titles throughout the collection: “In High Desert Under the Drones,” “A Halting Probability, on a Train,” “The Nets Between Solstice & Equinox,” “After the Orionids, Near the Plaza,” and “Lyrid Meteor Showers During Your Dissertation.” Nearly all of her titles have some kind of prepositional reference that locates their emergence in time and place and in juxtaposition with other phenomena—it’s a simple but lyrically faithful tool that helps her ground her work.

Hillman also uses dedications as a tethering tool. It's arguable that the first poem in Hillman's book is on her dedication page. Her forty lines of anaphora-as-dedication, which range from Oulipo poetics to the Occupy movement, from the poets of Libya to the warblers of California, from living contemporary poets to squirrels, establish a "to and for" sensibility that's present in the entire volume. Nearly a third of the eighty-four poems in the book are dedicated to someone, and sometimes to multiple others. The poems, as collective and egoless as they become, remain made and dedicated things.

Throughout the two sections of Hillman's book, "On the Miracle of Nameless Feeling" and "A Sense of the Lively Unit," numerous phrases and expressions repeat. The short lyric "For One Whose Love Has Gone" has the expression "get over it," which appears shortly thereafter at the end of one of the collection's signature

pieces, “Moaning Action at the Gas Pump”; in turn, “moaning at the gas pump” appears further on in the prose poem “Report on Visiting the District Office.” This tethered play lends comfort in the form of familiar sonic and syntactic markers. Familiar tropes continually emerge as well, including one figure of “our lord the sun of literature” that appears in at least six separate poems, thematically linking the realms of the celestial, the natural, and the literary.

There are other couplings throughout the collection—Halliburton and oysters; Diet Coke and coral; Google and honeybees, Hondas and hornets—weave the corporate and corporeal, as in “Geminid Showers & Health Care Reform”:

Behind the galaxy, there was a flute:
 sound was making love to sound;
 time was making sound
 to sexual, textual, lexical
 space—
 we worked too hard, we lay
 near fields from which they gathered
 plastics—
 mimics & contortionists—under the
 ping-ping
 of meteors, under made-up
 constellations;
 the planet flew through space junk
 while the Health Care Bill was being
 penned
 with pens from Chantix, pens from
 Lidoderm
 & Protinix, with pens
 from Actos, Lamosil, & Celebrex;
 late autumn made a fire in us;
 the cosmos waited for a sign;
 the soul was waiting for the mind,
 fat chickadees waited for sweet fennel
 [*Foeniculum vulgare*] & nameless
 asters on side streets where drones
 take violins to the Queen—
 what kind of drones?
 The sounds fly out, for thee—
 we slept as many as the anyway
 where meaning met material, that is,
 inside the personal,
 that is, for love of earth—

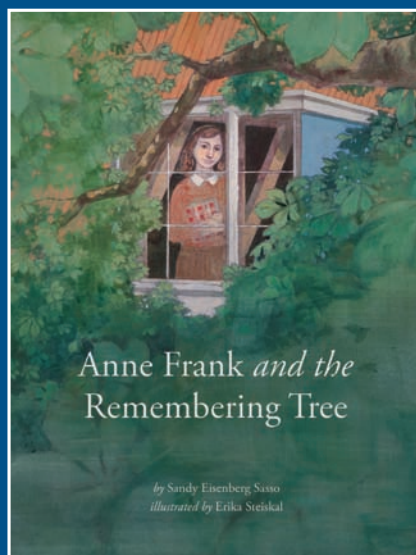
Here Hillman creates a kind of contemporary pastoral that manages to bring corporate, political, landscape, and even celestial components into a fragmented-yet-inclusive whole. She wants to bring forth the big picture, and the big picture is full of shared relations. If *Citizens United* holds that corporations are people, they’re certainly part of our flora and fauna, however they/we are altering the world.

Much as she sees poetry as potential negotiation (see “The Seeds Talk Back to Monsanto”), Hillman is a poet who argues with herself and willingly questions all accounts and approaches. This is a poet who writes “i distrust moral certainty & even distrust the sentence *i distrust moral certainty*.” Her poems frequently engage the interlocutor whom they address with a kind of adolescent-sibling back-and-forth in expressions like “—did not / —did too” or “am not / am too.” The internal quibbles and challenges lend a sense of levity even in poems of

great seriousness and anxiety. In “A Short Walk During Late Capitalism,” for example, the speaker considers corporations-as-persons and laments:

the left too blue to protest
 all those raised hands
 like seated Hindu gods
 zinc oxide titanium dioxide
 a georgics of sunscreen
 after a fracking
 cross-cultural sunshine
 trying not to buy so much shit
 HELP ME

“Moaning Action at the Gas Pump” begins, “Soon it will be necessary to start a behavior of moaning outdoors when pumping gas.” I find this concept—and poem—disarmingly funny and tragic. Its deliberate echo of lamentations from Greek drama and playful-yet-dire desire for “a democracy with no false knowledge” call full attention to our crippling fossil fuel dependencies.



Anne Frank and the Remembering Tree

Sandy Eisenberg Sasso
 Illustrated by Erika Steiskal

“Rabbi Sasso’s book imagining what Anne Frank’s tree witnessed will engage the imaginations of generations of children to come while teaching about Anne and Margot Frank and the Holocaust.”

—EVA MOZES KOR
 founder of CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center

Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, bestselling children’s author and winner of the National Jewish Book Award, tells the story of Anne Frank and her sister Margot, who loved the tree outside the window of the Secret Annex, and the tree who promised never to forget them.



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The Poet as Activist

Hillman's politics are no laughing matter. Whether Hillman is literally reading poems to congressional staffers (as in "Report on Visiting the District Office"), arguing on the sidewalk with a representative of the Heritage Foundation (as in "Experiments with Poetry Are Taken Outdoors"), or looking into the "eyes trained not to meet other eyes" of riot police (as in "A Brutal Encounter Recollected in Tranquility"), the poems here continue the eco-political orientation of the entire tetralogy. In "Experiments," a spokesperson comes out to talk to the speaker and a friend who have been chased from a hearing room by a publicist who has smashed the speaker's camera:

The man said, You people are endangering the country with your tactics.
i said, You people are endangering the country with your corporate wars.
. . . The man & i have reached our limit.
Now should be the moment when we recognize each other's humanity but we each think the other will destroy the world. This is where poetry can be helpful. . . . It makes extra helpful nerves between realities.

Throughout the tetralogy, Hillman enacts her politics self-consciously as a female poet writing about dangers resulting from the governing work of men. In the third volume of the tetralogy, *Practical Water*, her poem "Pacific Ocean" presents a roll of influential women poets; her entire tetralogy puts her in the company of her predecessors, a collective of dynamic and radical female voices. The activist strain that emerges in her last three books—where the poet literally enacts her political protest—suggests an essential attentiveness and consciousness that's missing when men are in charge. The gendered aspects of politics and poetry present—or engender—a potentially life-saving paradigm for readers to consider. The book's penultimate poem, "Smart

Galaxies Work with Our Mother," presents a series of entries that juxtaposes "small" domesticities (our classic sense of the "works and days" inherent in mothering) with our obsessive cataloguing of what's celestially most distant from us. These juxtapositions suggest that nurturing and ambitious exploration need to exist in balanced proportions, and Hillman wraps up this necessary feminist lyric-epic with one last lens through which to view a world that needs better mothering-as-governing.

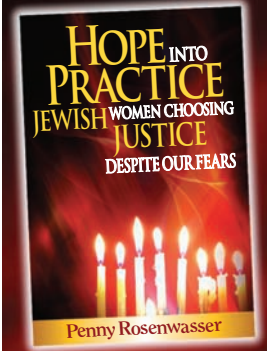
Questions, albeit minor ones, remain. The use of pictures within the text often feels strained, as their content is hard to see and does little to advance the power of the work. Sometimes Hillman's obsessions with the materiality of letters can undermine focus on more compelling psychological or intellectual themes. And sudden rhetorical lane changes can feel like evasions of development rather than parallel tracks. Sharper edits could have improved this volume, given its sheer length and intensity. That said, patient entry into *Seasonal Works* will yield a healthy ratio of challenges and pleasures.

Just as Muriel Rukeyser, in *The Life of Poetry*, reminds us that "all we can show to people is themselves . . . a poetry of meeting-places, where the false barriers go down," *Seasonal Works with Letters on Fire* reminds us that our paths to our meeting places are not linear and simple. In "A Brutal Encounter Recollected in Tranquility," Hillman recognizes that "our writing accommodates uncertainty but most people prefer certainty, which is why writers become depressed." Funny, and true. But, as in "Some Kinds of Reading in Childhood," she notes that "reading [makes] sparks." That's true here, too, and welcome. In lyric poems that enact an individual consciousness elevating into communal consciousness, her concerns and her calls to attention ("Phenomena / request your attention") are clear.

I can think of no better recent poetry than Brenda Hillman's in its reach and ambition and serious play that widens poetic horizons. As with the three earlier books in the tetralogy (and in her alchemical and dynamic collection *Loose Sugar*, which marks a real shift and pivot in style and expression), her latest book—visionary, political, and ecological—encompasses a dizzying number of layers as it warms, shines, threatens, and burns. In her poem "After a Death in Early Spring," one line in particular—which I'll take out of context and render instead as an imperative—resonates with the accomplishments of this collection: "particles of chaos[,] meet particles of song." ■

MICHAEL MORSE's first collection of poetry, *Void and Compensation*, was published by Canarium Books in March 2015. He teaches English at the Ethical Culture Fieldston School in New York City.

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HOPE INTO PRACTICE
JEWISH WOMEN CHOOSING
JUSTICE DESPITE OUR FEARS
by Penny Rosenwasser

...Saturated with Rosenwasser's brilliant thinking and unwavering love for the Jewish people...I was brought to tears more than once...*Hope into Practice* is an absolutely inspiring call to action. Because, if not together, how?—Liz Manlin, JewishCurrents.org

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Freud and Kafka Revisited

Becoming Freud: The Making of a Psychoanalyst

by Adam Phillips
Yale University Press, 2014

Franz Kafka: The Poet of Shame and Guilt

by Saul Friedländer
Yale University Press, 2013

REVIEW BY HOWARD COOPER

HOW DOES PERSONAL CHANGE come about? Two new biographies, of Sigmund Freud and Franz Kafka, offer us some tantalizing clues.

The literary critic Harold Bloom declared back in 1986 that Freudian ideas “have begun to merge with our culture, and indeed now form the only Western mythology that contemporary intellectuals have in common.” But nearly thirty years later, that doesn’t ring so true. In a May 2014 review in the *New Yorker*, book critic Joan Acoella swatted away the topic with a dismissive aside: “Why fuss over psychoanalysis, so seldom practiced today?” The mystique of psychoanalysis seems to have evaporated.

For the British psychoanalyst and essayist Adam Phillips this is a welcome development. A former general editor of the new Penguin Modern Classics translations of Freud’s texts, Phillips has for years been exploring the ways in which psychoanalysis can help us lead more pleasurable lives—lives rooted in the richness of interpersonal relationships and in an ever-renewed sense of wonder at the dynamics of our social, political, and spiritual lives. In an earlier essay he writes, “Psychoanalysis—as a form of conversation—is worth having only if it makes our lives more interesting, or funnier, or sadder, or more tormented, or whatever it is about ourselves that we value and want to promote; and

especially if it helps us find new things about ourselves that we didn’t know we could value.” This is teasing, seductive, and illuminating—and a new way of writing about psychoanalysis that forgoes jargon and opens up lines of thinking from which anyone who works professionally with others (teachers, therapists, social workers, clergy, health professionals, etc.) can benefit.

Phillips is interested in turning psychoanalysis from being a so-called helping profession into something more radical and universally relevant: a “curiosity profession.” His concept of psychoanalysis as “a conversation that enables people to understand what stops them having the kinds of conversation they want, and how they have come to believe that these particular conversations are worth wanting” opens up to anyone interested in the dynamics of interpersonal relationships—with one’s parents, one’s partner, one’s friends, one’s siblings, one’s lovers, or one’s colleagues—a deeper understanding of potential routes toward enhanced intimacy or engagement in such relationships, as well as the repertoire of unconscious ways we have of subverting our best intentions in relation to each other.

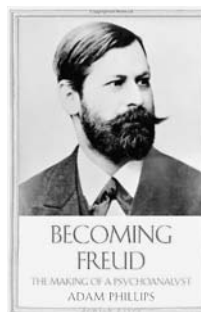
A Self-Reflexive Approach to Biography

Although Phillips’s first book, *Winnicott*, explored the ideas of the British psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott, *Becoming Freud* is his first venture into biography. The new series of “Jewish Lives” biographies published by Yale University Press are not traditional fact-and-interpretation biographies; they are self-styled “interpretive biographies,” in which subjects are paired with authors who can offer lively, idiosyncratic, and informed

insights into a range of characters such as King David, Moshe Dayan, Moses Mendelssohn, Emma Goldman, and Groucho Marx. But with characteristic playfulness, Phillips’s opening chapter raises important questions about the entire genre:

Freud’s work shows us not merely that nothing in our lives is self-evident, that not even the facts of our lives speak for themselves; but that facts themselves look different from a psychoanalytic point of view. . . . One of the first casualties of psychoanalysis, once the facts of our lives are seen as complicated in the Freudian way, is the traditional biography.

With these reservations in mind—reservations that he transforms into opportunities to throw himself into lines of thought and see where they lead—Phillips offers us a portrait of Freud focused on the first five decades of his life, the years when he was “becoming Freud.” In doing so he is also psychoanalytically alert to an additional set of self-reflexive questions: “After Freud . . . we have to ask, what does the biographer want his subject for? . . . What does he need him to be and not to be? What does he use his subject as a way of talking about, and what does he use his subject to avoid talking about?” Thus all biographies have double lives: they tell of the subject and they tell of the author.



Otherness and Assimilation

One way that Phillips uses Freud is as a vehicle to explore the Jewish immigrant experience in a late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Vienna that enacted Europe's new civic acceptance of the Jew yet continued to manifest ongoing hostility to the Jew's unassimilable "otherness." Phillips uses the fraught dynamics of assimilation to tease out wider themes that revolve around a question Freud was always asking. Put simply, the question was, in Phillips's pithy formulation: "How do people change each other?" Whether it is the relationships between parents and children, doctors and patients, immigrants and their host culture—or Jews and non-Jews in Europe—Phillips intuits that Freud's preoccupation with what we do to and with each other, in reality and in fantasy, both individually and collectively, was Freud's conscious and sometimes unconscious route into revealing something of the perhaps impossible-to-live-with-or-speak-about dilemmas of modern lives.

Bombarded as we are by social, political, technological, and economic pressures to conform and consume—Saul Bellow memorably described this as our living in the "moronic inferno"—we can find in Phillips's reading of Freud a way to think about new ways of listening to and talking about human lives: our lives and others' lives. Part of his brilliance in this book lies in the ways in which he detects the multiplicity of themes that emerge out of Freud's invention of a new "science" of human relationships. Psychoanalysis, he suggests (channeling Freud's recurring preoccupations), can help us understand "rivalry, ambition, jealousy, envy, pride, authority, religion, communism, scarcity, abjection, success, failure, mourning, and murder, among other things." His mention of "other things" hints at the revolutionary potential in the psychoanalytic enterprise: everything

that we live for and suffer from, hope for, and work toward becomes open to be thought about anew—and transformed.

Always alert to paradox, Phillips points toward Freud's groundbreaking labors in developing a "science" of storytelling that is nevertheless both "suspicious of narrative coherence" and "ambivalent about scientific method." The Enlightenment Freud—who believed in science, rationality, and progress—was always in tension with the Romantic Freud who valued the truth of the imagination and became increasingly troubled by the almost intractable resistance in people to self-knowledge: our self-destructive capacities often sabotage our conscious desires. This may be unwelcome news for spiritual progressives. But Phillips's cautionary tale needs to be attended to by anyone too eagerly believing that activism, or *tikkun olam*, on its own, can transform our destiny on this fragile planet.

This leads us to Franz Kafka, who once wrote, memorably, enigmatically: "There is an infinite amount of hope in the universe. But not for us." If for Freud—or Phillips's Freud—the Jew in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe is a prototype or representation of the modern individual as a person under continuous threat, with little sense of what is really happening that's making life so anxiety-provoking, then Kafka embodies that lacerated contemporary consciousness.

Kafka's Exploration of Modern Life

Like his Viennese forebear, Prague-born Kafka was the son of a Jewish businessman who grew up within the Austro-Hungarian Empire during that period of rapid Jewish cultural assimilation when anti-Jewish prejudice was the backdrop to daily life.

The history of the twentieth century may have taken us into a very different

cultural, social, and political world, but Kafka's explorations into the disturbing nature of modern life have a vivid immediacy that transcends the era in which they were composed: "Someone must have been telling lies about Joseph K., for without having done anything wrong he was arrested one fine morning." The opening sentence of *The Trial*—written before Stalin, before the Gestapo, before countless twentieth-century paranoid despots and corrupt political systems and state "security" agents swung into action—illuminates a landscape that is both inner and psychological and instantly recognisable as part of our daily global politics. By digging deeper into his own labyrinthine psyche than any modern writer before him, and reporting on what he found in sentences that are at once utterly realistic and yet always hinting at ungraspable meanings beyond themselves, Kafka produced a body of work that has a universal provenance.

Professor Saul Friedländer's biographical approach to his subject in *Franz Kafka: The Poet of Shame and Guilt* is more conventional than Phillips's. As a renowned historian of the Holocaust, he acknowledges, disarmingly, that he is "writing on a topic far from my field." Although he spends time on Kafka's fraught relationship with his family, his explorations into Judaism and Yiddish life, and of course his daily battle to transform his acute perceptiveness into sentences that live on the page, Friedländer is particularly keen to bring out some of the more "hidden" aspects of his subject's experience of himself as a sexual being. Impulses hidden, that is, not from Kafka himself—there has rarely been a contemporary artist more scrupulously self-observant and capable of discerning and describing the most fleeting inner movements of the psyche than Kafka—but from the public gaze.

Kafka's literary executor, Max Brod, excised sexually explicit passages from Kafka's letters and diaries in order to

present, after his friend's death in 1924, a rather hagiographic portrait of a writer who wrestled with the largest existential questions of meaning and purpose, doubt and despair, Jewish identity and human relationships—but not sexual doubts, fantasies, activities, wishes, and homoerotic desires. It is these thoughts, feelings, and experiences—now available in more recently published uncensored texts—that his biographer believes led Kafka to become that eponymous “poet of shame and guilt.”

Yet to concentrate, somewhat reductively, on the role these universal human emotions play within the writing life of Franz Kafka—for are not the complexities of sexuality present in any creative artist, indeed any sensate human being?—ends up doing a disservice to a writer whose primary interest lay in exploring imaginatively what it is like to live in a world where all the old certainties of faith and belief are gone, where truths are partial or provisional, where the contingency and randomness of everyday life press in around us, where all that was once experienced as solid has melted into air. This is why we still read him. And why the term

“Kafkaesque” is known to millions who haven’t.

For along with the humour, irony, and self-knowledge inscribed in his texts, Kafka had the capacity to describe aspects of contemporary experience that social anthropologists, political scientists, theologians, sociologists, and psychologists also seek to illuminate—but that for Kafka were most readily evoked, described, and interrogated through crafting sentences on the page that point to the ineffable mystery at the heart of being: a mystery about life and its tribulations and possibilities that is always in excess of language itself. Many academic disciplines try to make sense of the world for us, to package it up so that we can “understand” it, the misguided belief being that if we have a good enough story about how the world works, we can then control it. But for Kafka, “writing is a form of prayer”—a confession or self-exculpation that points us in a very different direction: toward inwardness and gratitude, toward humility and self-judgment, toward an awareness of both our human limitations and our creative potential to ameliorate, to some extent, the uncontrollable world around us.

Shame and guilt are present in Kafka's texts—as they were, powerfully, in his life, as Friedländer shows. But it is a misunderstanding of Kafka's vocation, and what he still has to offer us, to use these emotions as the prism through which his writing should be viewed. When Kafka writes that “the fact that there is nothing else but a spiritual world deprives us of our hope and gives us our certainty,” we sense that he was bigger, braver and—fortunately—more endlessly unfathomable than his latest biographer's partial view allows.

Yet in their very different ways these biographies—of two iconic figures whose thinking underlies modernity—both reveal the extent to which any hope for change in the outer world starts with an individual's struggle for change within themselves. ■

HOWARD COOPER is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, writer, and the Rabbinic Director of Spiritual Development at Finchley Reform Synagogue in London, England. He is the author of *The Alphabet of Paradise: An A-Z of Spirituality for Everyday Life* and he blogs at howardcoopersblog.blogspot.com.

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on our vital interests even when it's not popular, that is the prime minister's job." Netanyahu has also insisted that any agreement with the Palestinians allow the Israeli army to remain stationed in the Jordan Valley—effectively reducing a Palestinian “state” to a donut hole surrounded by Israel.

Moreover, half of Netanyahu's current coalition government firmly opposes a Palestinian state. If he made any substantial move toward establishing one, Naftali Bennet's Jewish Home party and Avigdor Lieberman's Israel is Our Home party would bolt the coalition. If that resulted in early elections, Netanyahu would likely be repudiated as leader by most of his Likud party, in which he almost single-handedly represents the “moderate” wing.

As former Labor Party Knesset member and Israeli foreign minister Shlomo Ben-Ami explained—after he left office, of course—no Israeli government since 1967 has accepted that most settlements (or any at all in East Jerusalem) should be dismantled and a large number of settlers repatriated in the context of a two-state solution that would establish an economically viable, territorially contiguous, sovereign Palestinian state alongside Israel with borders based on the pre-1967 Green Line and a capital in East Jerusalem.

Former Prime Minister Ehud Barak's so-called “generous offer” to Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat at Camp David in 2000 did not come close to proposing this. His record reveals that he never supported any form of Palestinian self-determination. As a Knesset member from the Labor Party, he voted against resolutions ratifying the 1993 Oslo Declaration of Principles and the 1995 Taba (Oslo II) accord, even though neither document mentions a Palestinian state of any sort. The Labor Party's platform opposed a Palestinian state until just before the 1996 elections.

Then-Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who succeeded Yitzhak Rabin after his assassination, believed he had to invade Lebanon in April 1996, before the Knesset elections a month later, to establish his military credentials. Having never won an Israeli election, Peres had to convince the public he was “strong on security,” like Rabin. During that operation, the Israel army shelled a UN compound at the village of Qana that killed more than 100 Lebanese civilians and four UN peacekeepers. Some criticized this detour into Lebanon as a political digression. But it was not. The great majority of Jewish Israelis have always believed that military force, not peace, is the best way to achieve security.

Despite the strategically pointless invasion of Lebanon, Peres did not persuade the electorate. The Likud returned to power. Prime Minister Netanyahu correctly boasted that he effectively killed the Oslo process during his first term in office from 1996 to 1999. Talk of two states since then has been misleading at best.

Ben-Ami was present at Camp David in 2000. Then, as foreign minister, he orchestrated the *hasbara* (propaganda) campaign that mendaciously asserted that the predicted inability to reach a Palestinian-Israeli agreement meant that Israel had “no partner for peace.” However, in his memoir/history, *Scars of War, Wounds of Peace: The Israeli-Arab Tragedy*, Ben-Ami explains that, “failure was written into the genetic code of Oslo” because no Israeli political leader imagined that a Palestinian state with a capital in East Jerusalem and borders based on the pre-1967 Green Line was the requisite price for peace.

Even many who, despite Ben-Ami's cogent analysis, retrospectively retain unwarranted optimism about the possibilities of the Oslo era would now accept that the two-state solution, as international opinion has understood it, is most unlikely to materialize.

Widespread Israeli Opposition to a Palestinian State

Today, only 59 of 120 Israeli Knesset members represent parties whose platforms support a two-state solution; eleven of them belong to non-Zionist, mostly Arab parties. Many Jewish Israelis would consider a parliamentary majority that depended on their votes on such a sensitive issue to be illegitimate. A Knesset motion for two states would need a majority of “Jewish votes” (61) to be considered acceptable by most of the Israeli Jewish public, although there is no legal reason “Arab votes” should not count. Moreover, perhaps as many as 40 of those 59 Knesset members support a mythical version of the two-state solution in which Israel annexes all or most of East Jerusalem and the larger settlement blocs, Palestinian refugees return to a Palestinian state, but none to pre-1967 Israel, and Israel accepts no responsibility for the Palestinian *Nakba* or recognizes, even in principle, the refugees’ “right to return.”

A poll of Israeli Jews conducted in October 2014 by the right-wing Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs concluded that 74 percent oppose establishing a Palestinian state along the pre-1967 war borders (76 percent if it means returning parts of East Jerusalem to Arab rule). Like most polls of this sort, it disregarded the opinions of Palestinian Arabs, who constitute 20 percent of the citizens of Israel. Even among the Israeli Jews who identify themselves as “leftists,” nearly 40 percent oppose a re-partition of Jerusalem and 42.6 percent oppose withdrawing the Israeli army from the Jordan Valley as part of an agreement to establish a Palestinian state. Hence, the vast majority of Jewish Israelis oppose a Palestinian state that controls its own borders, a fundamental component of sovereignty.

Opposition to a Palestinian state worthy of the name by the great majority of the Jewish political elite and population of Israel is the main reason

that a two-state solution is unlikely. This is ultimately far more important than the growing number of settlements and settlers, the separation barrier, and the extent of the infrastructure supporting the settlement project.

In recent years, this opposition has been buttressed by the militant and self-confident upsurge of anti-democratic, racist, and militaristic sentiment which went so far as the chair of the Jewish Home Knesset faction using genocidal language in the run-up to Israel's assault on the Gaza Strip last summer. These tendencies, present in Zionist political culture since the pre-state era, are now hegemonic.

Current trends are unlikely to change. The demographic sectors that mostly oppose meaningful Palestinian statehood—*Haredim*, modern Orthodox communities, and Russians—are large and fast-growing components of Jewish Israeli society. Secular, middle-class Ashkenazim, who are more likely to accept Palestinian statehood, have the lowest rate of population increase and are leaving Israel in increasing numbers. Even more fundamental than these demographic trends, in the history of post-World War II decolonization, there is no case in which anything close to a majority of settlers has supported an indigenous people's movement for liberation.

The Israeli citizens best positioned to contribute positively to peace are Palestinian Arabs. Long ago Israeli authorities renamed them “Israeli Arabs” (or worse, “minorities”) to avoid acknowledging their national identity. In order for them to serve as a bridge between Jews and Arabs, Israel will need to acknowledge that they are, in fact, Palestinians who deserve equal rights in a shared Arab/Jewish homeland, however those rights are politically secured.

The unlikelihood of a two-state solution has led to the previously unthinkable one-state solution becoming a topic of discussion, though still only on the margins of Israeli and world opinion.

This is a sterile debate. Peace, whether based on two states or one state, is not on the agenda for the foreseeable future. But two-state fundamentalism is the greater danger.

An Undemocratic One-State Solution Already Exists

As Gideon Levy wrote in his *Haaretz* article “Who’s afraid of a binational state?” an undemocratic one-state solution “is here—and has been for quite a long time.” For nearly half a century there has been only one sovereign power between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. This is why campaigns for boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel, responding to the 2005 call of Palestinian civil society organizations, have gained momentum, even before the horrors of Israel's assault on the Gaza Strip last summer.

In fact, Jews and Arabs have lived in an effectively binational state since 1948, and before that under the British Mandate. Even between 1948 and 1967, only one community, Jews, had national or even full democratic rights in Israel. As Shira Robinson explains in *Citizen Strangers: Palestinians and the Birth of Israel's Liberal Settler State*, most Arabs citizens lived under a military government from 1949 to 1966. That regime was the model for the post-1967 military government imposed on Arabs (but not Jewish settlers) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. By the 1960s, nearly half the lands owned by Palestinian citizens of Israel had been confiscated by the state. The same expansionist “Judaization” (the Hebrew term, *yihud*, is used without embarrassment in official documents and public statements) shaped Israeli practices in the territories occupied in the 1948 war as well as those occupied in the 1967 war. The ethos of “another *dunam*, another goat” has governed the steady progression of settlement since the early days of the Zionist movement.

Transforming a regime that has engaged in extensive undemocratic practices for nearly 70 years into a democratic regime, whether in the form of one, two, or seven states, as Lev Luis Grinberg proposed in a 2010 article in the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, is a task that will take decades, if not generations. Trying to foretell the precise political structures that may emerge in Israel/Palestine when the global and regional balance of forces has changed sufficiently to enable a peaceful resolution of the conflict wastes time and energy and diverts attention from the real tasks at hand. We cannot know what the Middle East and the world will look like at that point—whether the United States will still be the hegemonic global superpower, for example.

Principles for a Shared Future in Israel/Palestine

Given the current constraints blocking the implementation of a two-state vision, it is more fruitful to focus on the principles that should guide a future in which two peoples, Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, live on the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

The first principle is that the two peoples will live together, not separately. The Labor Zionist ideal of constructing an exclusively Jewish economy gathered strength from 1920, with the establishment of the *Histadrut* (General Federation of Labour in Israel), which functioned both as a Jewish labor federation and a multifaceted state-on-the-way until the 1967 war. However, there has never been a complete separation of the two peoples, “us here, them there,” as both former Prime Ministers Rabin and Barak put it. Nor should there be.

In the United States we call this segregation, which has been considered undemocratic and inherently discriminatory since the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision.

Sixty years later, as the events in Ferguson, Missouri, and many similar instances of wanton police violence against African Americans painfully demonstrate, the legacies of segregation and white supremacy remain with us. Equal access to good schools, housing, social services, economic opportunity, justice, and mutual respect—the hoped-for fruits of integration—remain higher up on the tree than our society has been willing to reach. But this is still a worthy goal.

The second principle is equality. One common definition of political equality stressing individual rights is straightforward: one person, one vote. This is not adequate for Israel/Palestine. Equal collective rights for both peoples will need to be secured by some political mechanism. This would require abandoning the claim that Jews, and only Jews, have eternal rights to the Land of Israel/Palestine. For some, this means abandoning what they regard as the essence of Zionism. If so, Zionism cannot be part of a democratic solution to the conflict. The belief that God gave *Eretz Yisrael* to the Jewish people is, of course, also a fundamental tenet of Orthodox Judaism. Those willing to wait for the coming of the Messiah for the reestablishment of the Kingdom of David, as most rabbis taught for nearly 2,000 years, need not abandon their faith.

There is a tradition of binationalism within Zionism, historically associated with Martin Buber, Judah Magnes, and the socialist-Zionist Hashomer Hatzair (the Young Guard) in pre-1948 British Mandate Palestine. Binationalism had many political shortcomings—even beyond the difficulties associated with its implementation—because it sought to secure the success of the Zionist project against the will of the indigenous Arab majority. Nonetheless, binationalism at least in principle acknowledged the rights of Palestinian Arabs (not “concessions” made magnanimously for the sake of peace) to the land many of their ancestors lived in for centuries.

If there is agreement on the principle of substantive equality of individual and collective rights for all the inhabitants of Israel/Palestine, the debate over Zionism might be rendered moot.

The third principle is upholding international law. Among the most relevant provisions of international law is the inalienable and personal right of refugees to be repatriated. Jews who claim that they were made refugees in the years between the Great Revolt (66-70 CE) and the Bar Kochba Revolt (132-135 CE) against Roman rule and therefore have a historic right to the land of Palestine/Israel cannot reasonably maintain that Arabs who became refugees 67 years ago have no such right. Such a position is further weakened because a large number of Jews, perhaps a majority, voluntarily chose to emigrate from Palestine before the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. Israeli Jews who are now reclaiming German, Polish, and Spanish citizenship in significant numbers—as is their right—cannot reasonably argue that a Jew whose ancestors were expelled from Spain in 1492 has a right to Spanish citizenship, but descendants of an Arab who was a citizen of British Mandate Palestine and fled or was expelled in 1948 have no comparable right.

Embracing the Palestinian Right to Return

There will be no peace without recognition of the principle and implementation of some meaningful and freely negotiated form of the Palestinian right to return. The precise mechanisms and timing for implementing this right would necessarily be part of any authentic, negotiated peace. There is little to be gained, other than scoring political points, from insisting on precise details at this time.

Maintaining that this right cannot be fulfilled for “demographic” reasons—the need to maintain a Jewish majority over some territory—is simply racism.

Racist covenants excluding populations deemed “undesirable” from middle-class white neighborhoods are illegal in the United States. The same principle should apply everywhere.

Jewish emigration to Palestine/Israel since 1882 is a settler-colonial project structurally similar to those of North America, Algeria, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, etc. Many of those movements, like Zionism, were also motivated by idealistic ideologies or flight from oppression. I’ve never heard anyone argue that European settlers and their descendants who reside in North America should leave or that the territory should be returned to exclusively indigenous rule. And only white supremacist fanatics maintain that the United States must be a “white people’s nation.”

There will be no peace without recognition that the Jews who now live in Israel/Palestine have acquired full citizenship rights due to their residency and that of their ancestors, in some cases for generations. The Law of Return for Jews enacted by the Knesset in 1950 and similar Israeli legislation will require extensive revision. It would not satisfy the requirement of equality if a Law of Return for Jews remained open ended while Palestinian return was subjected to limits.

The Algerian case teaches us, by negative example, what can happen if settler and indigenous populations uncompromisingly pursue what they consider their exclusive, inalienable rights. The extreme violence of French colonial conquest, the stubborn opposition of a majority of the settlers to recognizing any indigenous rights, the protracted armed struggle for independence, and the ruthless suppression of that struggle created the conditions that prompted 900,000 French settlers to leave the country after Algeria won its freedom from French rule. This was not an outcome desired by progressive Muslim, French, or indigenous Jewish Algerians.

Reorienting Our Focus Toward the Actual Conditions in Palestine

The inordinate focus on a Palestinian state has diverted attention from the fate of the Palestinian people. The conditions of many Palestinians—citizens of Israel, inhabitants of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, and refugees in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq—have deteriorated dramatically since 2000. Evictions of Palestinians from the East Jerusalem neighborhoods of Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan by messianic religious-nationalist settlers, the expansion of settlements to surround East Jerusalem and prevent its return to Palestinian rule, home demolitions and disruption of normal economic and academic life throughout the West Bank, the siege (tighter or looser as Israel chooses) imposed on the population of the Gaza Strip, attacks on refugee camps in Lebanon and Syria, insecure and dysfunctional conditions throughout Iraq—all these have taken a toll on Palestinians. The most urgent task is to focus on the present and future conditions of actual Palestinians, not to speculate on the nature of a state

or states that have little chance of coming into existence anytime soon.

This means exposing and resisting Israeli efforts to diminish the Palestinian presence through various mechanisms of expulsion. It means dismantling the separation barrier and other infrastructures that separate Palestinian communities, including the massive checkpoints at Qalandiya and Bethlehem in the West Bank that are effectively international frontier posts, and opposing the continuing confiscation of lands for new settlements and the violent campaign of settler fanatics like the “Hilltop Youth” to terrorize Palestinian farmers and shepherds. It means demanding an end to Israeli occupation of all the lands conquered in 1967. It means advocating the full equality, including individual and collective rights, of the Palestinian citizens of Israel. Perhaps most painfully for some, but nonetheless absolutely necessary, it means educating ourselves about and recognizing the full extent of the Palestinian Nakba, whose effects continue today. Resolution of the conflict necessitates that we confront our moral obligations as Jews, as Americans, and as global citizens to acknowledge responsibility, make restitution, and pay compensation. ■

ROSENBLUM (continued from page 14)

the similarity between them and me,” Abdullahi said.

As November approached, the Alaska Airlines-led “no” campaign hit full throttle, with a door-to-door canvass, mailers, TV ads, and media events. Under the bright glare of the national spotlight, voters approved the measure by 77 votes out of nearly 6,000. The morning after the election airport workers high-fived each other and proudly wore stickers that read “\$15—We Did It!” throughout the airport.

A Community Transformed

The SeaTac campaign transformed the community in lasting ways.

“For the first time, we were able to tell our people, the immigrants in SeaTac, that you have a voice and your voice can be heard,” said Omar Mumin, a community activist and former airport worker.

Mohamed Sheikh Hassan, executive director of Seattle’s Afrique Service Center, said the campaign had generated role models for many people who had never engaged in activism before, and particularly for the girls

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and women in his community. “Now you can see their energy and the momentum,” he said. “We see the women standing up.”

And Rev. Jan Bolerjack, whose Riverton Park United Methodist Church was a key supporter of the initiative, said, “People seem to look at each other now with more recognition and respect. . . . The campaign highlighted just how hard people work and how much people care for their families.”

Interreligious Solidarity Builds Labor Solidarity

The campaign didn’t enjoy a smooth start. When SEIU and Teamsters union organizers started reaching out to workers in 2011, it became clear that a trademark union organizing campaign focused largely on job issues would not be sufficient. The airport workers were a fragmented group composed of Muslims, Orthodox Christians, Catholics, evangelicals, and people from other heritages. They had come to Seattle through war, turmoil, refugee camps, and untold struggle only to land in a place that delivered poverty wages, irregular work hours, abusive managers, overcrowded apartments, underfunded public schools, food bank lines, and an overwhelming materialistic culture.

The workers wanted good jobs, but they also needed to defend their communities, traditions, and values. And as they began to meet with organizers in 2011, more than a few were skeptical that the U.S. labor movement would understand and be able to help solve their problems.

That skepticism was first tested early in the campaign on an issue that had nothing to do with money.

On the last Friday in September 2011, Somali shuttle drivers for Hertz took their customary break to pray, something they had done for years. Praying five times a day is obligatory—it’s one of the five pillars of Islam. Ritual prayers last but a few minutes, hardly causing a

blip in operations. Hertz management had always accommodated the workers, treating prayer breaks like smoke breaks: just take it and then come back to work. But on this day a manager told the workers to clock out.

Hertz shuttle driver Zainab Aweis recalls that the manager announced the new rule, saying, “If you guys pray, you go home.” For Aweis it was an easy choice: she went to pray, because while money mattered, faith was fundamental. Along with thirty-three of her co-workers, Aweis was suspended.

Although the Hertz workers were members of the Teamsters union, it would have been understandable if union leaders took a pass on the fight. After all, they were operating in a post-9/11 environment, cognizant that the vast majority of their union members were not Muslim and were likely to be quite unsympathetic.

But the Teamsters didn’t balk. Five days later, more than fifty protesters gathered around the Hertz counter at SeaTac. Muslims, Christians, and Jews joined union and community activists, praying while holding signs that read, “Respect me, respect my religion.”

Faith Leaders’ Role in the SeaTac Campaign

The aggressive stand taken by union members caught the attention of the East African community, and the organizing at the airport gained momentum. A few months after the Hertz fight erupted, twenty-five imams and other leaders of Seattle’s Muslim community gathered to hear from airport workers and strategize with organizers. As we discussed the campaign, they referred back to the standoff at the Hertz counter as a moment when they saw the meaning of solidarity.

Community leader Mohamed Sheikh Hassan said that when both the union organizers and faith leaders started telling the airport workers, “We are here with you, fight with us,” it made workers realize “that you can make

a change, that you can stand up, that everything’s possible collectively.”

Two years later, during the fall 2013 campaign for the \$15 initiative, I would often hear union leaders marvel about how active and enthusiastic the Muslim community was. Not everyone fully appreciated that the seeds of that alliance were planted in a trust-building exercise two years prior that had nothing to do with \$15.

Throughout the campaign, faith and community leaders built close relationships with individual airport workers. “The airport workers are our neighbors, our friends,” explained Yemane Gebremicael, head of the group African Diaspora of Washington. “At first, they were frightened—‘We could lose our jobs,’ they said. But when they saw us coming to the airport, marching with them, testifying in their support, they became more confident.” Gebremicael and other community leaders also insisted that workers not be mere “props” held up by the campaign to establish legitimacy. “It is possible to overshadow communities when you are an expert or you are an activist, you overshadow them and you are speaking on their behalf and they’re just sitting waiting for you to do things for them,” he said. For the campaign to be successful, he added, workers had to be seen as “speaking for themselves.”

Faith leaders also engaged in direct negotiations with Alaska Airlines. In late 2012, for example, Alaska Airlines CEO Brad Tilden agreed to meet with campaign leadership. Instead of union officers, the campaign sent four faith leaders and three workers to the meeting. “Faith leaders were very present there with the workers,” said Rev. Paul Benz, a Lutheran minister and leader of a statewide interfaith group. “So right up front, Brad Tilden and his folks know this—there is a moral side to this picture.”

Internal to the campaign, the active engagement of mosque and church leaders, social service agency leaders, and community leaders served to

nudge forward, gently but persistently, the notion that the wage problem was inextricable from the other problems in the community, and the campaign needed to stay focused on a broader social mission. Good airport wages? Sure—but this had to be about lifting up the entire community.

Beyond Wages: Changing Lives

In SeaTac and in other social justice campaigns, we should measure our progress not just by tangible things like wage gains, but also by how lives are changed in the course of struggle—the ripple effects beyond the immediate campaign that spur further action for justice.

In the months following the ballot victory, SeaTac workers continued organizing. Parking lot workers won union representation elections in April 2014, and three months later Yusur Adan helped lead a successful union representation election for her 240 fellow SeaTac wheelchair attendants. They had to overcome four rounds of compulsory anti-union meetings held by her employer. In the run-up to the election, managers brought in from as far away as Florida trailed workers around the airport and warned them against talking to union activists. The union election was the largest private-sector worker win at SeaTac in a generation. Omar Mumin helped organize a strike last summer against Uber, the for-hire ride company. Uber fired him after the strike, but he's not slowing down. And when I met up with Abdirahman Abdullahi one evening last September, he had been spending the day mobilizing people in mosques and neighborhoods to turn out for a meeting to fight the local housing authority's rent hike plan.

A year after the twelve minister-shareholders disrupted the Alaska Airlines meeting in Seattle, the airline announced it was moving its 2014 gathering 1,500 miles away, to Anchorage,

Alaska. The SeaTac campaign decided to send a dozen workers and faith and community allies anyway. A week before the meeting, my phone lit up with the number of Alaska Airlines' corporate headquarters. It was Shannon Alberts, the company's corporate secretary. She said she had a message from the company leadership for us: they realized that they couldn't control everything we intended to do, but "this year we're not going to let you lead off the meeting with a prayer." There was a pause. "We really, really don't want you to do it. OK?" Her plea signaled the company leaders' recognition that subtly but surely, the ground is shifting under Alaska Airlines.

The "Fight for \$15" Spreads Nationwide

Beyond SeaTac, the "fight for \$15" took off nationally. Fast food workers escalated job actions in cities around the country. President Obama highlighted the need for a higher minimum wage—but promoted a meager vision of \$10.10 per hour. Mayors and other local government leaders took up the call.

Living wage fights have developed nationwide in varying ways. In New York City, Chicago, Detroit, Little Rock, Las Vegas, and elsewhere, fast food workers are staging individual and group walkouts, and augmented by community supporters, marches and civil disobedience; many but not all are tying the \$15 wage demand to recognition of the workers' union. San Francisco voted in November 2014 to raise the city's minimum wage to \$15, and Oakland voters approved an increase to \$12.25. Alaska, Arkansas, Nebraska and South Dakota—not your typical "blue" states—passed modest wage increases as well. And mayors and city councils in a range of cities, from Portland, Maine, to San Diego, California, have proposed wage hikes. In Chicago and Seattle, mayors diverted growing street heat into a political process that yielded agreements for sizeable,

though incremental, wage gains. (The Seattle settlement includes a three-to-seven year phase-in and allowances for employers to count tips and health care benefits against wages during the phase-in period.)

These are indeed heady times for living wage advocates. Poll after poll show strong public support for raising worker pay. In the next few years, on the current trajectory, millions of low-wage workers will see bigger paychecks due to political action. Not bad. But economic concessions are one thing; power concessions, quite another.

What's less certain is whether in years to come, outside of a few discrete cities and regions, there will be a meaningful U.S. labor movement capable of allying with other social justice organizations to tackle the myriad challenges that capitalism poses to our society and planet. As the living wage movement has blossomed, the pushback against worker organizations has only increased. Three years ago Wisconsin governor Scott Walker won a high-profile battle to strip public workers of bargaining rights. Legislatures in Michigan and Indiana passed stiff anti-union laws. Last summer, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a ruling that further weakened public sector unions nationwide. In Washington state, the same legislators who applauded the bravery of the SeaTac community for leading the \$15 fight against Alaska Airlines rushed into a special session to enact a record \$8.7 billion tax benefit package for the Boeing Company. The legislature's vote effectively cornered aerospace machinists into giving up secure retirement plans in exchange for less-than-ironclad job guarantees.

Staying Focused on Power Inequality

With momentum currently favoring those who advocate hikes in the minimum wage, there's a strong temptation to cater to "opinion-leaders" by downplaying union formation and instead

framing the issue of income inequality as a way to stabilize and improve capitalism. Venture capitalist Nick Hanauer and SEIU leader David Rolf wrote in 2013 that living wage campaigns “will create a faster-growing and fairer economy that is built from the ‘middle out,’” adding that “the alternative, a vast sea of poverty with tiny islands of wealth, will be bad for everyone eventually, even the rich.” And former Labor Secretary Robert Reich wrote that a \$15 minimum wage “would put money in the pockets of millions of low-wage workers who will spend it—thereby giving working families and the overall economy a boost, and creating jobs.”

These men are directing their words at the country’s elite, but is the hope of becoming better consumers really going to animate workers to build a movement? Rather than trying to persuade the 1 percent that the wealth and power they’ve accumulated is somehow not in their long-term interest, we should move our living wage struggles beyond the narrow frame of material gains and instead present the moral and spiritual character of these struggles.

In conversations with workers as the ballot campaign heated up, I heard time and again how their aspirations went far beyond Reich’s compassionate brand of Keynesian economics. They want personal dignity, time with their loved ones, and opportunities to live and grow. They want relief from the unceasing, grinding stress of poverty.

“If SeaTac Proposition 1 passes, it would change my life so I could only have one job and spend more quality time with my family,” said Sheryl Molina, a shuttle bus assistant. Bereket Elala, a baggage handler, added, “I will be able to spend more time on my education, and concentrate better on my studies. I can have days off to spend with my family.”

The vast majority of workers harbor no illusions that they’ll get what they need by portraying raising wages as also good for the 1 percent. To win

better lives, they recognize that they will have to confront the bosses’ power with their own organized power. They recognize that the root cause of their economic distress is the problem of power inequality.

“The corporations, they just want to get more profit, profit, profit,” said Abdullahi, the Hertz rental car worker. “So we need to come together to organize and to be a part of the movement so we can fight back for our rights. We have to have power. We have to show our strength.”

A Spiritual Progressive Approach to Income Inequality

Because unions are representative organizations with distinct members, its leaders understandably tend to look at issues in concrete, material terms: “What can we win at this bargaining table?” “What bills can we pass in this legislative session?”

While such concrete goals are crucial to building worker power, attempts to mobilize around them are rarely as stirring, inspirational, and effective as campaigns that move beyond a materialistic framework and connect material issues to the values of community, human dignity, freedom, and justice.

To be sure, wage-focused campaigns have merit in the broader movement. Wage improvements provide vital, tangible relief to low-income workers and families. By bringing into stark contrast the difference between the 1 percent and the rest of us, living wage fights can be a launch point for an important discussion about why we have such inequality. As we win living wage campaigns, they become important confidence-building milestones of the movement’s growing success. And as people build confidence, they get involved.

But if campaigns don’t articulate a vision beyond the \$15 symbol, then political and business elite will misappropriate it as the ceiling. We have to frame our struggle as a fundamentally

moral one—a struggle based on values that contest the assumptions of our capitalist culture. And our values have to put forward a vision of what we think a just society ought to look like. Within this larger set of demands resides the call for a living wage. A sharp economic critique is vital, but a sustained movement must be built on a foundation of values. A spiritually grounded call for justice can be such a foundation.

When Rev. Helmiere and his colleagues crashed the Alaska Airlines shareholders meeting in 2013, they were connecting spiritual values to material demands in just this way, deftly shifting the terrain from dollars and cents to values and justice, challenging the company not with math problems contained in corporate balance sheets, but with moral questions of how executives ought to be treating their fellow human beings.

Looking back on his prayer, Rev. Helmiere noted that he wasn’t seeking to advance ideology, but rather to deliver a genuine prayer that seeks to connect with the Divine. “Part of that prayer is indeed a plea for justice and a plea for social change,” he said, “but the roots of it aren’t an economic agenda or political agenda. I think it’s more dangerous to people in that way because they can’t just say, ‘OK, that’s a leftist thing or a greedy worker thing.’”

The U.S. labor movement today is in desperate need of creativity and vision. Labor organizations and leaders who are struggling for basic survival are ill-resourced and ill-equipped to imagine a broad, vibrant social justice movement. They are caught in constant issue fights, defensively responding to the needs of their members, an ever-diminishing fraction of the U.S. workforce. Others do have vibrant visions but feel unable to build meaningful, collective worker power within the constraints of the current economy. Income inequality is a relatively easier challenge to tackle compared to power inequality, so unions focus on the former at the expense of the latter.

The SeaTac campaign was powerful because, through the strong participation of faith and community groups, it fused workplace power-building with a broader values-based mission. If spiritual progressives build on this model in tackling power inequality nationwide, they could play a powerful role in saving the U.S. labor movement. ■

FOX-HODESS (continued from page 16)

3. Make space for the pain underneath the anger and make care work central.

Too often in activist circles, we cultivate an ethos that makes righteous anger acceptable but doesn't provide space for individual and collective healing and care to address pain and suffering. This is a point that has been made many times over by feminists doing social justice work, but it always bears repeating. Movement work can be intensely painful and even traumatizing (for example, when it involves confrontations with the police or the law) and is often motivated in the first place by experiences of oppression, exploitation, and trauma. Of course, personal healing is not "enough" to transform systems of oppression, but if we don't make the time and space to care for ourselves and our comrades, it's very difficult to find the strength to continue doing the work of confronting injustice. We don't need to choose between interpersonal work and broader structural transformation: we must do both.

4. Learn to be less reactive and accept impermanence in order to cultivate a sense of equanimity.

Doing social justice work often requires dealing with a nearly uninterrupted series of urgent or emergency situations. The normal human response to emergencies is fight or flight—our

adrenaline spikes, providing us with short-lived extra powers to deal with the situation at hand. But we're not built to experience this sustainably, on a regular basis—afterward, we feel depleted, off-balance, and in need of rest. So doing this work for the long term requires finding more sustainable ways of responding physically and emotionally to intensely stressful situations.

Mindfulness practitioners often refer to this kind of adrenaline-driven response as being "reactive." The answer is not failure to react when a situation arises—as activists, we have no choice but to respond to injustice—but finding a way to react that does not so deplete us such that we're unable to sustain ourselves in the work.

A whole series of mindfulness exercises focused on becoming more attuned to our bodies and the physical connection to our emotional state are particularly helpful for learning to become less reactive (as well as becoming more attuned to, and able to sit with, feelings like anger and pain.)

Perhaps inevitably, we also develop a greater sense of equanimity in movement work simply through accumulating more experience as activists. Over time, what I've come to see is that, even though things are difficult much of the time in movement work, the worst-case scenario usually doesn't pan out, and even when it does, we have no choice but to find new ways to organize around it. Learning to respond to difficulty without a supercharged shot of adrenaline is critical, not just for sustaining ourselves as activists but also for finding the best solutions to evolving problems.

Conversely, even when things are going well in the movement, we never reach the end of the work. There is always more to do, and dynamics are constantly changing. Movements are called movements for a reason: they are constantly in motion, and whatever the current situation may be, for good or for bad, it is impermanent.

Accepting this central truth about the work (and about everything in life, of course) makes it easier to develop a greater sense of equanimity in charged and constantly changing situations. Resisting the temptation to fuel ourselves on the highs that come from wins is the flipside to resisting the temptation to fuel ourselves on anger.

5. Foster a sense of community with comrades and others who support the work you do.

An absolutely critical aspect of learning to be less reactive in movement work is developing a strong activist community. For those of us who are seeking to make social justice work sustainable, there is no better thing we can do than to cultivate a sense of community with our comrades. The work itself can be incredibly intense—anxiety-provoking, depression-inducing, and self-isolating. Without a like-minded group of caring people around us to offer mutual support, it may be nearly impossible to sustain our work in the long term.

Social justice groups are, of course, not immune to the problems of the larger society, and highly toxic dynamics can develop. Sometimes we need to take a break or leave altogether when faced with an unchangeably toxic situation in an activist setting. If leaving is not an option (for example, in the context of workplace or neighborhood-based organizing), we can still find new people within the same community to organize with.

On a related note, wherever possible, it's important to hold on to relationships with non-activists who support the work we do and to maintain some interests outside the movement. When things are not going well in the movement, these non-movement friends can help keep activist struggles in perspective.

6. As much as possible, try to keep your ego out of the equation.

Being a social justice activist means accepting that things will go badly as often as, or more often than, they go well. As a result, we can't count on getting a lot of external approval or even recognition for the work we do. Even when things are going well, there are still many people who disagree with us: that's the whole point. So in order to make movement work sustainable, we have to find a way to really make it about the movement and not about our own egos. This doesn't mean being a martyr, but it also doesn't mean doing the work in order to feel important or to be praised.

It helps me to start with the following premise: on one hand, I am just one person and I'm not responsible for fixing everything, but on the other hand, I am still one person with something to contribute—because *everyone* has something to contribute. The trick is to figure out just what that thing is and to balance it with other people's contributions. We don't need everyone to be in the spotlight to make a big impact,

and in fact, the most important movement work *always* happens outside the spotlight. It's the day-in, day-out stuff that makes the difference in the long run. It's very unlikely that everything will just fall apart if one person needs to step back. And, in fact, if things were to fall apart just because of one person's absence, there's a much deeper problem there that's bigger than one individual's ability to solve it.

7. Remember that it's all connected and that you always have more to learn.

Because of the way that social justice work is often organized along single-issue lines, it's easy to forget that all our struggles are connected. Intersectionality, which recognizes the multiple, overlapping layers of oppression and privilege that each of us experiences, is a helpful tool for thinking through our connectedness. Divide and conquer is the oldest trick in the book, and unless we can find ways to deal with internal oppression and divisions in our movements, the forces of oppression and exploitation will keep winning. It's a question of the pragmatic realities of

organizing as much as it is a question of principle.

This is yet another reason it's so important to keep our egos in check in movement work and to learn to really listen to comrades with different backgrounds and experiences. Assuming that any individual can have all the answers is both damaging and wrong. More fundamentally, the really liberating thing about doing movement work is not just fighting for liberation itself but also the experiences we have along the way: collective process and collective action can be powerful antidotes to the alienation we experience, individually and collectively, in our daily lives.

Ultimately, both movement work and mindfulness practice share not only a commitment to stringent intellectual honesty about our lived reality but also a profound commitment to radical love and compassion for the people around us. Together these values can provide us with a great deal of meaning and purpose in a world that too often leaves us feeling empty and alone. In other words, social justice work, when done in a healthy and sustainable way, can be profoundly therapeutic, not only for our communities but also for ourselves. ■

LERNER (continued from page 19)

This in turn would kindle an international consciousness and the deep knowledge that we are all one. We could then start to transcend nation-states and recreate the earth along lines of environmental districts coordinated to best protect the planet while sustaining life.

5. The creation of a Sabbatical Year.

If we adopted the practice of the Sabbatical Year globally, then every seven years, a seventh of the countries of the world would halt all forms of production and work, and the other countries would provide them with food and energy. Residents of the Sabbatical countries would have time to slow down, reconnect with nature, and

rethink the direction of their lives and their society. The goal of the Sabbatical Year is to give people the time they need to experience awe, wonder, and radical amazement at the grandeur of creation, and hence to understand why the consumption of goods must be limited and the earth treated with love and caring. Slowing down the pace of life is a psycho-spiritual prerequisite for saving the planet: it would allow us the time to really encounter what has been happening to this amazing planet.

All “utopian fantasy?” No. The real fantasy is the belief that lesser and more moderate steps than these can sustain the life support system of the planet.

But since there may be ways to achieve these goals other than those

suggested here, I invite *Tikkun* readers and the environmental organizations that they currently support to send us articles about other ways to get real about saving the planet. We would love to share them on our website. Please tell us steps that our society can take that go beyond small changes in our private lives and beyond supporting slow legislative battles to impose environmental restrictions, even as corporations and the rich come up with ever new ways to exploit the planet and declare unconstitutional any serious attempts to impose environmental responsibility on corporations. And tell us exactly how your proposals would lead to a fundamental transformation of how most people and corporations treat the environment. Members of the Network of

Spiritual Progressives and subscribers to *Tikkun* can send proposals to us at cat@spiritualprogressives.org.

Some of the articles in this section address this big picture, and others continue to present good work being done at a local level. The two need to mutually support each other—and can do so as long as each local group also advocates for the ESRA and the Global Marshall Plan and encourages its members to embrace the New Bottom Line (see spiritualprogressives.org). Please take the considerations I've discussed above and bring them into your own environmental activism, and join our Network of Spiritual Progressives as we try to get people to address the monumental transformations necessary to save the planet. ■

BAUMAN (continued from page 21)

hope). Instead of looking forward toward the mirage of “progress,” perhaps we ought to turn inward and examine how our various ways of being and becoming in the world affect the spatial relations between living bodies. As Rob Nixon suggests in his book *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, we ought to move away from analyzing environmental harms in terms of time and focus more on the space of environmental violence. A geography of violence will enable us to see how our actions create ripple effects throughout the planetary community. The point of such analysis is to help us transition to

less violent ways of being and becoming in the world, rather than progress toward some ideal utopia. In other words, the hope is that we may begin to finally understand ourselves not as individuals on a journey or quest that is our own life, but as emergent creatures in an evolving planetary community.

Hope in the Emergence of a Planetary Community

Recognizing our environmental despair and cultivating a little humility about what we can know may just help us turn toward the planetary community of which we are a part. We live in a multi-perspectival, evolving planet, and human perspectives—much less individual human perspectives—are not the only position from which to understand and navigate it. Ideas of multi-perspectivalism abound in many different religious traditions, but at the very least, recognition of other life on the planet ought to lead to an end of what Peter Singer called “speciesism,” in his book *Animal Liberation*. Just as religious communities have tried to deal with racism, sexism, classism, and other “isms,” so now we must begin to tear down the idea that humans are the only kind of beings that matter. Climate change challenges the idea that humans are not a part of nature because everything we do has ripple effects, and we find that we cannot master or control nature. In challenging this idea, climate change opens up space to critique the speciesist ways of understanding

humanity that have predominated over the past few millennia.

In this challenge to human exceptionalism, the end of speciesism also means a resituation of our identity as evolving planetary creatures. Our politics of nationalisms and identities buckles under the pressure of understanding ourselves as something more than just human beings: we are creatures among creatures on a planet that continues to evolve. Such recognition does not do away with difference but allows it to multiply as we form new alliances across species boundaries. Hope for the future is not lost. Rather, hope now proliferates in the many different ways the world might become. We are, in a very real way, no longer alone in the universe; our species is intimately intertwined with all other life on the planet. Our future will look much different from our past, to the point that we may begin to glimpse a trans-species planetary community in which humans find multiple other companion species and partners for imagining our future becoming.

(Please note: This article draws inspiration from a 2010 workshop on “Dealing with Ecological Despair: Religion, Ecology, and Hope in the Classroom” organized by the Religion and Ecology Group from the American Academy of Religion, as well as from Nancy Menning’s 2013 American Academy of Religion presentation on “Teaching Hope: Death, Rites of Passage, and Environmental Loss.”) ■

DERBER (continued from page 23)

economic justice. Only the 1 percent will be able, for a while, to buy security and the good life, moving to higher ground as the seas rise and climate changes accelerate. The environmental movement has no special claim on climate change since it is just as much an economic and peace and civil rights issue.

Fortunately, justice movements are waking up to this. The peace movement, labor unions, women’s groups, faith communities, and student groups, joined by 350.org and other leading environmental groups, organized the astonishingly big and beautiful climate march in New York City on September 21, 2014, and 500,000 marched in solidarity across the world, from Paris to Melbourne. The next day, Occupy

and climate activists committed civil disobedience on Wall Street—a crucial melding of justice movements. World leaders, including Secretary of State John Kerry and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, called climate the world’s top priority the day after the march. The conservative World Bank announced it was coordinating seventy-three countries’ efforts to factor carbon costs into energy prices. And

the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, filthy rich with oil revenues, proclaimed, astonishingly, that it was divesting from fossil fuel stocks as part of a global divestment movement.

Fourth, we need to mainstream this movement of movements, using electoral politics and nonviolent direct action. Claiming he would put hard emission targets on the table at the 2015 Paris climate meeting, President Obama said in September 2014: “Our citizens keep marching, we cannot pretend we cannot hear them. We have to answer the call.” This could be pure rhetoric, but on my bus back to Boston from the march, we pledged to organize in our communities and colleges to force the president’s hand.

Fortunately, the youthful millennial generation tends to see climate change as part of their personal reality. Corporate capitalism is not welcoming them as they enter adulthood, and they tend not to see America as exceptional or even fair. According to Pew and Rasmussen polls, half of American young people have a negative association to the word “capitalism,” and nearly 50 percent positively associate to “socialism,” hinting that millions of youth could support systemic change. Moreover, many millennials have expressed openness toward a less consumerist lifestyle, indicating that the focus on material goods stresses them out because of cost and competition for status.

Fifth, we need to reframe our talk and walk, showing that climate solutions also help fix poverty, unemployment, infrastructure issues, and other key socioeconomic problems. We need to ditch wasteful material growth for growth in our education, health, public transit, arts, and community. We need to throw out mindless consumerism, let go of all our “stuff,” and instead seek enjoyment in good conversation, good food, and good company.

We have hope when we feel that our climate activism is a way of overcoming our most important deficit—that of public goods, and especially of community and justice itself. ■

BELSER *(continued from page 25)*

These dynamic, resilient community networks are a concrete expression of the political and cultural insights of disability justice activists, a tangible manifestation of the way material acts of solidarity and mutuality reaffirm the grace, dignity, and vitality of disabled people’s lives. But you needn’t have a disability to fashion a circle of mutual support and care. Mutual support networks improve all of our chances for survival in times of crisis—and enhance our well-being even in ordinary circumstances.

Building these networks requires that we shift our thinking, that we embrace interdependence rather than privileging independence. Dominant culture champions independence as the primary marker of human capability, asserting that human dignity rests on our capacity to go it alone. I do not wish to do away with independence. Disability activists have fought hard to create more accessible public spaces and to secure vital accommodations that allow more people to live independently, to claim space for ourselves, to make our own way through the world. But if we push for independence alone, we accede

to an atomized notion of the individual that is profoundly ableist: the idea that we can and should be self-sufficient, that needing others makes us weak, less worthy, less whole.

The disability communities I value most celebrate the principles and practices of interdependence above all else. Interdependency emerges out of the recognition that we need each other—to accomplish ordinary tasks and the myriad details of our days, to navigate the inaccessible spaces of this world, to live out the full richness of our lives. When we practice interdependence, writes disability activist Mia Mingus, we are “inscribing community on our skin.”

Among disability activists, these networks of mutual support extend beyond conventional notions of family to encompass kin by choice and circumstance: friends, partners, care providers, co-workers, strangers, and neighbors. We make community by allowing ourselves to need and be needed, by recognizing the ways in which our lives are bound up with others.

The resilient networks of mutual support fashioned through disability communities offer a powerful testimony to the conditions that enhance

our chances in difficult days, just as they lay plain the qualities that nurture our capacity for hope.

All of us—regardless of disability status—can face our fears of vulnerability and become more resilient in the face of crisis and disaster by building similar networks. A simple first step is to come out to your wider community about your own needs and vulnerabilities. The next time you break a bone, have surgery, or enter an emotionally turbulent time, why not try reaching out to a broader group of friends and neighbors, communicating your needs and how they can help? Encourage them to do the same whenever they are in need of support. Once these personal bonds of support start to strengthen, you can solidify and build the network through other means. Throw regular potlucks at which members of your network gather to brainstorm ways to support each other. Reach out to neighbors to build relationships and strengthen the connections in your local community.

Just as networks of mutual support within disability communities can easily be mobilized to fight for disability legislation or pressure institutions to build accessible public spaces, these broader networks could also

mobilize to push for urgent community needs such as improving public space, enhancing public transit, cutting carbon to mitigate climate change, and putting policies in place to protect us all in the case of flooding, drought, hurricanes, and climate disaster.

Survival is not a private act, but a communal commitment. Hope, too, is forged in community, from the relationships we make, from the justice we strive for, from the solidarity we demonstrate, and from our concrete acts of daring and care. ■

SHIVA (continued from page 27)

But all this political activity must have a spiritual dimension: a sense of relationship both to the earth and to human community. A deeper realization of one's spiritual being creates an imperative to organize even one's material life in a different way. I think one of the big challenges of our time is actually to get rid of the material/spiritual divide. That is an artificial dichotomy. When we realize that the seeds that embody life and the food that nourishes us are sacred, we cannot violate our bodies by pumping ourselves with food (both literal and metaphorical) that never satisfies. We start to realize that satisfaction comes from the experience of better food, better music, better culture, better education, and better health care. The experience of satisfaction and "enoughness" is vital to reducing our ecological footprint: we reduce our ecological footprint when we enlarge our consciousness. In the current moment, the opposite is occurring. We have expanded our ecological footprint and shrunk our consciousness. The privileged can begin shifting their ecological footprints through personal choice. But for the disadvantaged, it has to be through political choice. We have got to organize so that all of this money that's currently going to corporations starts to go toward good food for everyone.

These are some of the ideas I'm bringing to the Network of Spiritual Progressives as I serve in the coming years as international co-chair with Rabbi Michael Lerner and work with executive director Cat Zavis. ■

LEVY-LYONS (continued from page 29)

An Alternative Vision

The changes we need to make will not be sexy or dramatic or heroic or generally very much fun. Because the corresponding truth to Hannah Arendt's "banality of evil" is the "banality of good." I don't believe, as some do, that political pressure alone will save us. I'm all in favor of participating in mass protests and climate marches, and it's crucial to make global accords and regulate industry. But as long as we keep buying the products, they will keep being made. I don't believe, as some do, that green technology alone will save us. Wind and solar will certainly help, but as long as we keep using energy like we do now, the problems will just pop up whack-a-mole style somewhere else. The banal, inconvenient truth is that what will save us is radically downsizing the way we live. The things we will have to do will mainly entail *not* doing things. Every generation will have to make real sacrifices. The greenest car is the one you don't drive. The greenest air conditioner is the one that's off. The greenest house is the house that's never built. The incessant, frenetic buzz of our world has to subside. We have to let the earth rest.

Here's a convenient truth: We are in desperate need of some kind of *other* context outside of the cultural waters we swim in—some *other* vision for the world to equip us to make the hard changes. Well, it just so happens, conveniently, that we all have access to the one context that can possibly give this to us: progressive religious communities. Such communities have the ability to combine ancient spiritual wisdom with

poetry and art and the insights of today to create full-color, three-dimensional alternative visions of human life on this earth. We are not beholden to modern culture in the same way that the commercial world is. We have the freedom here to imagine another way. And because of this freedom, we carry moral authority in the broader society. As powerful as secular organizations like Greenpeace and the Sierra Club can be, in the public discourse they can't make environmental destruction an abomination. Religion *can*.

Ecological consciousness, it turns out, is not new at all—there are long traditions of religious teachings charting this territory. The Constitution of the Iroquois Nation calls for every decision to be made with consideration of the impact it will have seven generations out. The Torah calls for a yearlong Sabbath, called the *Shmitta* year, once every seven years. During this year, all year, humans are to rest, animals are to rest, and the earth is to rest. The Torah says, "The land shall have a year of ceasing." We are in the middle of a *Shmitta* year right now. The Unitarian Universalist tradition has inherited this consciousness, mixed it with science, and translated it into this simple phrase: we are part of an interdependent web. This means that we depend on everything in it and everything in it depends on us. To be loving stewards of our earth is to be loving shapers of our destiny.

From a spiritual perspective, scaling back our "lifestyle" is not a deprivation—it's an opportunity. Eating less meat and more vegetables—so good for the earth—turns out to be really good for our bodies too. It's healthy for us to walk more, bike more, connect with our local communities, and watch less TV. It's kind of fun to make lists of all the things we can do that don't extract anything from the earth: things like conversing, going for walks, reading a used book, having sex (assuming we don't make any more humans in the process), playing acoustic instruments, or playing pickup soccer with an old

ball. You'll notice that most of these activities actually connect us more closely with others while at the same time shifting our culture to create a more sustainable world. These are going to need to become the staples of our lives.

Some people believe that it's already too late to save the earth from devastation, that we've already gone too far. Call me a Pollyanna optimist, but I don't believe that's true. I believe passionately in our power to change. We can still change our culture, change what's "normal," embrace the banality of good, and heal the earth. But it has to be *now*. We cannot wait another year, another month, another day. Starting today, we need to begin making profound changes. As environmental activist Bruce Hirsch said in the lead-up to Climate March in New York City last fall, "To stand with each other, to stand for the sacred dignity of living things, the awesome beauty of a diverse and evolving world, and to celebrate the power of collective life-affirming intent." ■

BIEHL (continued from page 30)

The Congress for a New Urbanism, founded in 1993, calls itself "the leading organization promoting walkable, neighborhood-based development as an antidote to formless sprawl." Among its founders and collaborators are the architects and planners Andrés Duany (coauthor of *Suburban Nation*), Peter Calthorpe (author most recently of *Urbanism in the Age of Climate Change*), and Jeff Speck (*Walkable City*), who have explained this cluster of ideas. Strong Towns, a nonprofit organization inspired by the civil engineer and planner Chuck Marohn, shares their basic approach; so does the Project for Public Spaces, based on the work of the urbanist William H. Whyte. These groups understand that compact, high-density settlements are in many ways inherently more desirable than low-density suburbs, not least because they are inherently greener.

One reason for this greenness is that urban dwellers have access to public transportation, while suburban housing developments are insufficiently dense to support transit. But perhaps more important, settlements like urban neighborhoods are compact and therefore walkable. Destinations are within walking distance, not zoned into distant enclaves.

During the decades when Americans were enchanted by sprawl, our society neglected its urban cores, and urban homes and neighborhoods fell into disrepair and decay. Planners today are discovering that municipal neighborhoods that were built before the era of the car already have the bones for compactness, walkable streets, and mixed uses. They already have water lines, sewers, and streets in place—they don't need expensive financing. As a result, many planners are rebuilding and renovating abandoned buildings and neighborhoods. Old houses can be repaired and new ones built as infill. The National Trust for Historic Preservation offers guidance and support for renovating urban neighborhoods for sustainability.

Today's new urbanists are also creating new settlements, using traditional town planning methods. Their neighborhoods are closely woven and small in scale; they bring homes (of a variety of types including row houses), stores, offices, and civic buildings together on narrow, tree-lined streets dense with sidewalks and parks. Their towns have easily identifiable centers with common spaces that welcome pedestrians. They are within walking distance of good public transportation.

Hundreds of new neighborhoods have been created using these principles. Perhaps inevitably some planners have gone into open farmland or greenfields to build them. But others, commendably, are working to transform sprawl itself, reconfiguring it, transforming commercial moonscapes into sustainable, community-oriented neighborhoods.

Turning Dead Malls into City Centers

According to architect Ellen Dunham-Jones, the author of *Retrofitting Suburbia*, the majority of the indoor shopping malls in the United States are struggling to survive. Some have gone out of business, thanks in large part to the internet, and once they finally fail, their huge concrete shells can be put to new use as civic centers, medical centers, schools, offices, nursing homes, and even universities—places with civic value. Dead big-box stores are becoming churches and libraries. Dunham-Jones says, "The big design and development project of the next fifty years is going to be retrofitting suburbia."

About forty U.S. shopping malls have been razed altogether, and where once they choked the landscape, city halls and parks and even entire downtown cores are arising. In Lakewood, Colorado, for example, one hundred acres that were once buried under a regional mall are now dedicated to twenty-two blocks of walkable streets lined with multiuse buildings and 1,500 households in a range of housing types. Underused parking lots are being dug up and converted into urban downtowns. Mashpee Commons—a compact, mixed-use New England village in Massachusetts—was created this way, incrementally, on the site of an old parking lot.

In some places densification doesn't work: some subdivisions are just too far from transit. They can be returned to green areas or suburban farms. When a shopping center in Phalen Village, outside Minneapolis, went under, the city tore it up and restored the wetland that had been there before.

Some of the most sprawled-out American cities are developing plans to densify. Phoenix, Arizona, the epitome of a low-density, car-dependent city, has adopted a program called Reinvent PHX to create more walkable centers and connect them by public light rail. The city of El Paso, Texas, now requires

that architects working on city projects have accreditation in new urbanism; and the Texas Department of Transportation's new rulebook actually recommends new urbanist street design.

Financial Incentives to Eliminate Sprawl

The imperative to reduce or eliminate sprawl is not merely ecological; according to Marohn, it is financially necessary as well. Building horizontally into a green field—say, a new suburban cul-de-sac—requires the construction not only of roads but also of waterlines, electricity, and sewers. The suburbs don't pay for such infrastructure; the municipalities that begot them do. Marohn explains in his traveling “Curb-side Chat” that in the 1970s and 1980s, municipalities that wished to build sprawl normally borrowed funds to help pay for the infrastructure. Loans from departments of transportation or from the state were cheap, so residents wouldn't have to pay much. The condition commonly imposed was that in exchange for the cheap initial loan, the municipality would pay future maintenance costs. Since the build-out seemed to promise future growth, it seemed like a good deal at the time, and most municipalities took it.

But what they really exchanged, as Marohn puts it, was a “near term boost for a long term obligation.” The sewers, roads, water lines, and so on that were built after World War II are now, a generation or two later, falling into serious disrepair. The cost of repairing them now far exceeds what the municipality, let alone the cul-de-sac's residents, can afford. In fact, municipalities all over the country can't maintain even a fraction of their sprawled infrastructure with the property taxes they collect.

As a result, Marohn argues, municipal debt has been skyrocketing. In 1950, debt service averaged 2 percent of municipal budgets; it is today an impossible 16 percent. But where in the past government loans came to the

rescue, they can't do it anymore, and departments of transportation are out of money. Municipalities are left holding the bill. Drowning in debt, they have to choose between drastically raising taxes and drastically cutting services, but not even the most drastic service cuts could solve the problem. Sprawl is quite simply unaffordable. It is an expensive investment that has proved a fiscal failure. And it has done nothing but produce a fundamental municipal insolvency.

Fortunately there is a path out of the dilemma, Marohn argues, and it happens to be the one we are discussing in terms of climate change: we can stop sprawling and concentrate on building places that don't require auto-dependence but are walkable and compact and mixed-use, like the settlements that once sustained human beings for millennia. We need to build them affordably. They are necessary not only for climate change but for solvency.

In sum, American urban form is currently moving away from being reflexively dictated by the automobile. Planners are discarding the old land-use codes that generated sprawl in favor of urban infill. Moreover, unlike earlier generations, a large share of the members of today's millennial generation (those born between the early 1980s and the late 1990s) like urban living. They are rejecting the car-dependent lifeways of their parents: in 2010, only 47 percent of seventeen-year-olds had driver's licenses. And 77 percent of them say they prefer to live in places with walkable neighborhoods, transit, biking facilities, and a lively urban pulse.

Combined with other efforts to cut carbon, will this new urbanist movement shift our energy use quickly enough to avert cataclysmic climate change? Even with the help of generational shifts and pro-densification financial pressures, it's hard to tell. Under the new Republican-controlled Congress, it's highly unlikely that U.S. lawmakers will pour federal money into sweeping efforts at sustainability,

so the scale and speed of densification efforts will depend largely on municipal decisionmaking.

For the sake of the planet and for the health of their cities and towns, citizens must refuse to let their municipalities take on any more debt for horizontal expansion. Instead, they must insist on the creation of places that are both financially solvent and ecologically sustainable. ■

WASKOW *(continued from page 33)*

image on a coin, all the coins come out identical. When the Holy One stamps the Divine Image on a ‘coin,’ each ‘coin’ [each human being] is unique.” So at each face we affirm: “This is the face of God. And this, so different, is the face of God. And this, and this, and this.”

We affirm that each face—so different not only in its physical shape and look but also in its history and future—is the face of God, not despite their differences but precisely because of their diversity. For the infinite can be expressed in the world only through the many faces of diversity.

As Rabbi David Seidenberg has uncovered for us, much of kabbalistic thought extends the Image beyond humanity to all life. So with the earth in mind, we might then turn to see the green faces of God—especially if there are windows in the congregation's prayer space, looking out upon the trees and grasses. Someone might say, “We invite into our minyan these green faces of the holy Breath of Life, for no minyan could live and breathe if these green faces of the Holy One were not breathing into us what we need to live.”

There are many other moments in the service when this new metaphor takes on a fuller meaning. In some ways it seems more accurate within our prayers than does King or Lord. For example, as we celebrate the way in which the Red Sea was blown apart for the Israelites to walk through into freedom, the action of a great wind, the wind of

change, seems a more accurate metaphor for the force that forced the sea to split than does the metaphor of King.

And in the *Alenu* prayer, in which traditionally we bow and bend before the Royal Majesty, we can indeed bow and bend and let our bodies wave and move in the great wind of change.

Finally, the *Kaddish* that appears as a bridge between sections of Jewish prayer addresses God as “*Shmei Rabbah*,” the Great Name. One way to understand the Great Name is that it is the Name that includes all the names of all the beings in the world—all species, mountains, rocks, and rivers (like the fifty thousand names in the Vietnam War memorial in Washington that make up one “great name”). Asking people to envision and mention individual ones of these names helps the whole community to begin weaving these names into the Great Name, and thus heighten awareness of how all the earth is interwoven.

Making Public Advocacy Actions Prayerful

“I felt my legs were praying,” Rabbi Heschel once said upon returning from the great march in Selma, Alabama, for equal justice in regard to voting rights. In the current age of impending climate change, how can we bring this sort of prayerfulness into our own activism?

One resource is the intertwined religious stories of Passover and Holy Week, which speak in powerful ways to the danger facing the earth—and though there is no analogous festival in Islam, the Exodus story and the story of Jesus are major aspects of the Qur’an, as well. As a result, many interfaith and multireligious groups have drawn on the stories of Passover and Holy Week tradition by recalling that the arrogance and stubbornness of Pharaoh brought plagues upon the earth—all of them ecological disasters—as well as oppression upon the human community.

Building upon that foundation, some have held public religious gatherings

to lift up the symbols of Passover and Palm Sunday—matzah and palms—in calls to act against the plagues of global scorching brought on by the modern Carbon Pharaohs of coal and oil. In doing so, they have marked the matzah as a call to urgent action—what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called “the fierce urgency of Now”—and the palms as witnesses of fresh green life renewed. Some have carried these religious celebrations into the city streets with marches interspersed with vigils at local centers of “pyramidal power.” And some religious communities have gotten arrested at the White House to demand urgent action against Tar Sands pipelines, carbon dioxide emissions from coal plants, and more.

Reframing Jewish Fasts and Festivals

Eco-Jewish activists have in similar ways reconfigured many Jewish festivals as direct actions to protect and heal the earth. Some have reshaped Tu B’Svat, the “Re-Birthday of the Trees,” as a time for protests and civil disobedience to protect ancient redwoods and the Everglades from corporate depredation. Others have drawn on the tradition of Chanukah, the celebration of the miraculous fulfillment of one day’s supply of sacred oil to meet eight days’ needs, as a spur to energy conservation. Some have celebrated Hoshana Rabbah—the seventh day of the harvest festival of Sukkot that is traditionally set aside for invoking rain, honoring the seven days of Creation, and praying for salvation from insect swarms, droughts, and other natural disasters—as a day of protest against the corporate poisoning of the Hudson River with PCBs. And some have observed the laments of Tisha B’Av over the destruction of the Holy Temples in Jerusalem by defining the universal temple of today as the earth itself, and gathering at the U.S. Capitol to lament the ongoing destruction of Temple Earth and demand action to save it.

The reframing of Jewish fasts and festivals in this way has been especially attractive because the Jewish festival cycle is closely keyed to the dance of sun, moon, and earth. Many of the festivals, therefore, can be understood as universal at heart though clothed in Jewish history and culture. Probably for that reason, these actions, drawing on uniquely Jewish ceremonies and practices, have often attracted members of other faith traditions and secular eco-activists to take part.

As the experience of religious communities grows in exploring this whole area of reframing festivals as forms of public action, there has begun to emerge a pattern of spiritual practice in each event: first, public celebration of the earth; then, mourning for its wounds and dangers; and last, a commitment and covenant to act on its behalf and to challenge whatever power centers are worsening its wounds.

This three-fold pattern echoes many powerful evocations of spiritual depth: prosperity of ancient Israel in Egypt, slavery, and Exodus; the Promised Land, exile, and return; celebration, crucifixion, and resurrection; and Siddhārtha Gautama’s life of royal luxury, his discovery of suffering, and enlightenment.

This process of reframing festival observances as actions to protect the earth has only begun. It is likely that much more richness of spiritual imagination and political adeptness will be brought to bear as religious and spiritual communities keep facing the planetary crisis. ■

LOY (continued from page 34)

This criticism applies to some Buddhist institutions as well—karma and rebirth teachings can be abused in this way—but at its best, Buddhism offers an alternative approach. The Buddhist path is not about qualifying for heaven but about living in a different way here and now. This focus supplements nicely

the secular progressive emphasis on social justice and social transformation.

We need both political change and inner work because as long as we do not acknowledge the importance of individual transformation, social transformation will tend to be subverted. Too often a “successful” revolution means that one oppressive political elite ends up being replaced by another oppressive elite. Democracy may be the best form of government, but it guarantees nothing if people are still motivated by greed, ill will, and the delusion of a self whose well-being can be pursued indifferent to others’ well-being.

We need both personal and social transformation in order to respond fully to the Buddha’s concern to end suffering. The Buddha emphasized that what he had to teach was how to end suffering. For suffering to truly end, however, social transformation is also necessary in order to address the

structural and institutionalized suffering perpetuated by those who benefit (in the narrow sense) from an inequitable social order.

Active Nonattachment

The equanimity of the bodhisattva activist comes from nonattachment to the fruits of one’s action, which is not the same as detachment from the state of the world or the fate of the earth. What is the source of this nonattachment? That question points to the fruits of the bodhisattva’s inner work. Shunryu Suzuki, the founder of the San Francisco Zen Center, told his students, “You are all perfect just as you are—and you can also use a little improvement.” Both are true: this world is perfect just as it is, right here and now, but it can also use quite a bit of improvement.

Isn’t that a contradiction? How can one actualize both aspects? The bodhisattva realizes *shunyata* (emptiness)—

that dimension in which there is nothing to gain or lose, no getting better or worse—but does not cling to that realization. As the *Heart Sutra* emphasizes, forms are empty, and emptiness is form. Emptiness is not a place to dwell that is free of form; it is experienced through the impermanent forms it takes, the forms that constitute our lives and our world. And the bodhisattva is committed to furthering their well-being.

For the Buddhist activist these are the two dimensions of practice—form and emptiness, personal transformation and social transformation. They are two sides of the same coin, and in order to address the ecological challenge successfully, we definitely need both. ■



Join Our Movement

tikkun.org/join

FOX (continued from page 41)

and excited rather than depressed and anxious. They will want to get on board and undertake the discipline that learning takes to become full allies and partners in the struggle to melt denial and pessimism. A new depth of community could emerge from these efforts because community is primarily born of the common work we do together, and saving the planet as we know it is a common work par excellence.

Learning to Imitate God

According to environmental analyst Lester Brown, the number one obstacle to an ecological revolution is *apathy*. The number one issue then is waking people up, getting us out of our arm-chairs and comfort zones to respond to the dire news of our time. How to cure apathy? Thomas Aquinas says, “Zeal comes from an intense experience of the beauty of things.” It is falling in love with the earth and its beauty that will in turn awaken our potential

to become prophets who stand up for Mother Earth and all her creatures. It is awe at the beauty of the earth that will transform us into spiritual warriors who employ wakefulness and love to change the ways we work and live on the earth.

Rabbi David Seidenberg’s new book, *Kabbalah and Ecology: God’s Image in the More-Than-Human World*, helped awaken my own sense of awe at the universe through his discussion of the “image of God” concept in the Torah, Midrash, and Kabbalah. Seidenberg writes:

For Kabbalah, there are sparks of the dimension of divinity in all things, whether inanimate or living, whether wholly of nature or human-made. All things in this sense have some intrinsic value. [We need to] recognize divine sparks everywhere. . . . God’s creative pattern, as big as the universe, is expressed in all its detail within the human frame, is a kind of miracle. . . . This pattern is the divine image.

He goes on to explain that “later rabbinic texts equated the idea of God’s image with imitating God, another important ground for a deep ecotheology.” The call to imitate God, he writes, means that humans must act with compassion toward the other creatures and see the image of God in them. Here lies Judaism’s companion teaching to the notion of the Buddha Nature of all beings or the idea of the Cosmic Christ presence in all beings.

There are many people of all faiths, along with spiritual atheists and agnostics, who sense the holiness of all beings and this image of God, this Buddha Nature, this Cosmic Christ present in the dying plants and animals around us and feel called to defend the planet today. How to organize them?

I propose a new spiritual (not religious) order, a loosely connected federation of allies of all ages, lifestyles, nations, and professions who see it as their task to save Mother Earth. This federation would draw in people from all religious traditions and people with

no religious traditions. Let us support one another by taking a vow to be mystics and prophets defending the Earth and its future dwellers seven generations hence. Let us take vows like this: "I promise to be the best mystic and warrior I can be by doing inner work and putting my skills into practice to battle climate change." A mystic is a lover; a warrior defends what one cherishes. Let us be allies in community and create living rituals that render us courageous and alive, generous and loving, and also effective in making a difference. ■

PETERSON (continued from page 42)

it takes in different settings, especially not to the particular kind of hope that can make a difference in social change.

After the great political disasters of his time, including Nazism and Stalinism, Paul Tillich dropped the language of utopian expectation that he had used his work in the 1930s. In the post-war era, he began to speak of "genuine hope," which was smaller and more realistic, though no less radical. In 1965, he clarified the distinction in his talk "On 'Peace on Earth,'" published in *The Theology of Peace*: "utopian expectations have no ground in the present." Indeed, he argued, such expectations draw us away from the here and now, as we imagine a perfect resolution of our problems. Genuine hope, on the other hand, is based on the already existing presence of a fragment "of that which is hoped for." Tillich compares genuine hope to a seed, in which the mature plant is in some sense already present.

The notion of genuine hope suggests that, in our present lives and communities, we can find seeds or fragments of the alternative world we hope to build. As Tillich wrote in an essay titled "The Right to Hope," these pieces exist "here and now in every act of love, in every manifestation of truth, in every moment of joy, in every experience of the holy." They are our best, and only, reason to believe that a different future is

possible. To ground hope in the face of climate disaster, we need to identify the evidence, embodied in practical experiences, that humans can live in a more sustainable way. We also need to expand these experiments so that they feed not just private but public hopes and dreams.

Identifying Seeds of the Future

Every individual and every community will locate hope in different places. While possibly cliché, it is still true that among the most profound sources of hope are children—not just our own but also those we care for or teach. The noninstrumental love and pure joy that children make possible offer a glimpse of what we hope for, at the same time as their vulnerability frightens us. This is true in my own life, although I often experience sharp fear and sadness when I think about the uncertainties of the future. The same is true of experience in special wild places. Every moment of feeling "this is right" seems to be counterbalanced by the realization that all that we value is at risk.

At best, we will see incremental evidence that our efforts are working. These moments of grace, fleeting and partial, have to be enough to sustain our hope that we can do better. We cannot wait for evidence that our efforts will work, which may arrive too late or not at all. We have to act on the basis of hope, without any certainty that our efforts will come to fruition. The moments of grace, seeds of an alternative future, make possible "the right to hope," as Tillich put it, "even against hope."

What does the right to hope mean in the face of climate change, perhaps the most pressing humanitarian and environmental disaster of our time? What are the seeds and beginnings that can ground our hope for a more sustainable world? In order to find the "seed-like presence" of an alternative future that can give shape and weight to our hopes, we need to look not for "a beautiful vision to impose from above" but

rather for "critical resources to apply from below," as the Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder put it in his book *For the Nations*. We need to seek, in everyday experiences, relationships, and practices, the resources that give us a right to hope and provide a shape and direction for that hope.

In the face of climate change, the most important resource for hope may be the fact that we can still experience ourselves as part of larger natural processes. Special wild places, creatures, and trees continue to enrich our lives, both from afar and close at home. I find hope, for example, in the sandhill cranes who arrive every fall, having made the trip from the upper Midwest to north central Florida. Seeing these remarkable, ancient creatures go about their business in the roadside fields reassures me that at least some ecological processes go on as they should. It also inspires me to work for a world in which their annual rituals will continue.

Nature's processes continue despite the destruction we have wrought, despite losses that cannot be recovered. The natural ecosystems in which we are now embedded are less rich and expansive than those that existed before mass extinctions and other anthropogenic changes. Climate change currently threatens coastal communities, alpine ecosystems, and arctic species, but they are far from the first or the only victims, and they will not be the last. Grief is a natural response, but we may also want to heed Joe Hill's advice: don't mourn, organize. Or perhaps, do not merely mourn.

We rightly feel sadness and even despair in the face of environmental devastation. However, if we notice only loss, we will have no ground for hope and perhaps no reason to struggle against future destruction. We also have to notice—and take joy in—the ongoing life of what David Abram terms the "more-than-human world." We experience this world in myriad ways, from solo hikes in the High Sierras to strolls through the neighborhood

at night, from glimpses of charismatic whales and elephants in the wild to moments of communion with family pets. All these sensuous experiences, to use Marx's phrase, remind us that we are part of something much larger than us. They also remind us that not everything is about us, for us, or even very interested in us. This should be not disheartening but liberating. The fact that the world is so much more than us is a form of transcendence that inspires humility and also gives us a reason, even a right, to hope against hope. ■

PHELPS (continued from page 44)

while, people drink from the flowing cups, giving praise and honor to the source of all spiritual fruit. Gratitude and joy for the traditions replace energies once spilled in making invidious distinctions.

Reason #4: The Hebrew Bible Models Self-Critique

The Hebrew Bible is replete with the Jewish people's unique critique of itself and its heroes. From accounts in Genesis of the inner weaknesses of the patriarchs and the matriarchs to the portraits of the kings' lust for power and for women, to the prophets' relentless challenges to the nation in the name of God's justice, to Job's jousting with his friends' heartless religiosity, the Hebrew Bible beats a drum to advance a courage that questions, criticizes, protests, and demands justice from humanity and from God. How often I have said, "They could have burned these scrolls, you know, just as America has torched memories of its savagery, weakness, and woe." But the Jewish people saved their scrolls, the severe with the sublime. No nation's literature was ever so bold in holding itself and its myriad of misleaders to account.

Once I have laid that groundwork with a congregation, it comes time to translate. Jesus's judgments on his own religion stand firmly within Judaism's

prophetic tradition, which invoked divine judgment upon the Jewish people for abandoning peoples and practices. Therefore, Christians today need "to be like Jesus," as the old spiritual has it. They need to transpose Jesus's judgments from the ancient to the contemporary situation and call down divine decision upon the dominant religion. When the critiques of Jesus are laid against how Christians do Christianity, then leaders and led alike can feel inspired to take the beam from their own eye and see the world as it is and their sin in it.

In sum, it was not a flaw in Judaism that Jesus saw, but a flaw in all who grow lax in the assumption that they have God's favor. Left in human hands for a generation or two, all religions become decadent. All grow lazy and literalistic, too sure that their God really is in that box to which they have prime access through their priests or preachers. For grace to stay awake through the night of spiritual decay is a prayer devoutly to be made. Preaching the Hebrew Bible can bring to a congregation the subversive power of divine judgment against ourselves for shutting off the people and the practices that could bring us alive before a whole world.

Reason #5: The Narratives of the Hebrew Bible Disrupt Conformist Attitudes

Many who attend religious services do not expect to have to think. On the contrary, they expect to be told the orthodox thing to think. (The word "orthodoxy" derives from Greek terms for "correct thinking.") In and out of the church, people mean by "faith" nothing more than a set of doctrines and assertions to which a believer is required to nod assent, though not one could be tested by sense, logic, or experience. Preaching from narratives—and the Hebrew Bible has plenty—can thwart conformist religious attitudes by providing space in which listeners first remove the hot garments of doctrinal assertion and division, then swim. People can wade

into the divine presence, as the figures in many of the stories do. Alternatively, the preacher's invitation to listeners is to experience delight in a tale with a beginning, a middle, and an end, and in that way, to learn to think for themselves.

In contrast to the narratives of the New Testament, which keep teachings about God close at hand, in many Hebrew Bible narratives, the divine nature or will is not a major character. The Genesis cycle is rather reticent about the patriarchs' and matriarchs' thoughts of God. In the earliest sources of the David cycle, God is not on the stage at all; the human drama is central. Although the Elijah and Elisha cycles regularly affirm the connection between the prophets and the source of their powers in God, the action is with humans. While the preacher hardly intends to *avoid* exploring the divine mystery, mystery is not like mastery. Its attitude is humble, open, and curious; not self-certain, not in control. How helpful then, when Bible stories encourage the attitude of mystery by revealing the divine presence just plain everywhere, often unnamed. Moreover, since narratives (allegories aside) do not lay down only a single meaning, the preacher who also refuses univocal interpretations of the stories all but requires the listener to do her own thinking. A sermon grounded in the Bible's "less-God" narratives can help the listener discover his own wisdom to see more of the marvelous in the world as it is.

Reason #6: Jewish Tradition Can Open a Window on What the Bible Is

There is yet another reason—or better, yet another way—to preach from the Hebrew Bible. It has to do with how to read the Bible with trust, no longer depending on rigid credulity vis-à-vis things that can never be known. This understanding takes again as its point of departure early Christianity's situation within Judaism.

The first interpreters of Jesus were Jews accustomed, as he was, not only

to the narratives of the Hebrew Bible and the messianic hopes expressed there, but also to ways of interpreting scriptures shaped by Jewish tradition, including, for example, the early tannaitic midrashic tradition. Midrash closes gaps in Bible stories by creatively and devoutly expanding the narratives where aspects of events and characters went unexplored in the received scriptural texts. Midrash is like setting a beloved song of praise in a new key, with an added stanza.

When it comes to the biography of Jesus, most Christians have been trained to avoid a question wedged way in the back of the mind: weren't there big gaps in his life story? Those who knew plenty of facts about him cannot have been many. Were there any at all who both knew him well before his fame spread and still lived forty or sixty years later to say what they recalled? On the other hand, the intensity of desire among members of the early Jesus movement to fill the gaps in Jesus's story can hardly be overstated. It was desire of the kind that moves people to divine praise. As a result, the lenses that first focused on the figure of Jesus for faith's sake were more like mystical kaleidoscopes than microscopes.

To be rid of the rise of infant Jesus to kingship, did King Herod decree death to all male babies? No record of such a slaughter stands, but the Hebrew Bible does tell of Pharaoh's order to kill all male infants so as to be rid of the rising Hebrew people. Is Herod's murderous mayhem midrash? When Mary gave voice to the Magnificat, did someone take a memo for the soon-to-be-mother maiden and leave her a copy? Or did Luke, knowing nothing of Jesus's mother but a name, but knowing a poem that stirred hope for a permanent revolution on earth, midrash this unsung psalm upon the lips of Mary because they were empty and open for his purpose? From a mountain, did Jesus offer a sermon shaped like Moses's Ten Commandments? Or did Matthew arrange ribbons of sayings from the oral

tradition on the Mosaic template to help bring Jesus home as living Torah, down from the mountain for good? Did Jesus utter from the cross words from Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why have you left me"? Or, with memory of that awful day gone blank in friends scattered in terror, did the poet of the Passion put Psalm 22 on Jesus's dying tongue to do as storytellers long to do—draw listeners interior to a truth they know, but don't know how to speak?

Long, long ago, the facts these questions imply slipped beneath the mud of history. No answer will ever come from there. Some Christians feel very anxious near such questions, as if the foundations of the world will founder if fictions are found among the Jesus stories. For them, the badge of faith is the bravado to assert as fact what cannot in fact be known. Others feel very cynical about what seems to them evidence that religion's truths are like those of politics—all spin, no spirit.

When we preach the Hebrew Bible on its own terms, refusing to press the texts into service on ships bound for Jesus, and when we help people feel something of the motives and methods of first-century Jews composing stories of Jesus as praiseful soundings of the depths of their own scriptures, a door can open into an interior castle of faith built on a rock infinitely greater than stick-built facticity. In this castle, the preacher can ask the listener to consider the risk and the spiritual adventure undertaken by the authors of the biblical stories, in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.

That there was risk and adventure is not itself a fact. It is a possibility to consider. It is the possibility that the process of writing what became the Bible involved immense, intense liberties and responsibilities. To write of the things of God is like mounting an assault on a cloud-shrouded pinnacle. Somehow, the writers had to accept that their own numinous experiences could be helpful, even normative, guides for a community of brothers and sisters stirred

by inchoate hopes. With courage, they drew up the needful words, some from other sources, some sourced within themselves, and gave them birth and handed them, vulnerable as any infant, into the arms of a community, hoping that the communication might live and become life for others.

Some stories failed. They did not meet the "tell test"—the spiritual and organizational need of religious communities to tell their treasures to the young. Some circulated in communities that never developed effectively. Others were completely forgotten—though obviously, this cannot be proved. But some met the challenge of the generations. This is a fact, perhaps the only fact about the Bible that observers from any angle can agree on: the writings proved invaluable in shaping and strengthening communities. When the preacher imagines all Bible texts coming into being through bold and hopeful poets and prophets, and invites awareness that stories of untold number slipped into oblivion, two things can happen for those listening.

When the possibility is admitted that both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament were born through the same sort of creative, community-based spiritual process, it is time to step onto holy ground outside one's own religious tent and look up at the great and starry sky and see that "we," with everything we love about "our" tradition, are descendants of all who have longed for God by any name whatsoever. In this blessing, a plural "we" shifts toward One. A new "we" is constellated.

The idea of divine revelation is pushed off its high heavenly shelf right into the listener's lap. She has glimpsed the possibility that the Bible—the Bible!—is composed of concrete choices by writers and readers and listeners, all taken in eternal, mystical hope. Revelation, whatever it is and however divinely driven, landed in the breasts of men and women as courage to interpret in new language all that they had received—religious tradition, instruction,

insights, intuitions, moral formation, even dreams. It landed as courage to offer these interpretations to help specific communities act on and feel their unspoken hopes. If divine power was always revealed—made manifest—in this way in communities of old, then divine power can come—no, must come—this way now.

Whether or not the stories happened just as told, faith takes wing, flies up to bring a new word, like the dove sign, to join ancient and long-suffering yearnings to a possible future. It becomes clear too that we cannot, Icarus-like, paste on wings of our own design and fly however high we like. To be sealed in the great constellation, we need the wings given from generation to generation. It was never about us, but it is our time to speak.

Reason #7: The Hebrew Bible Challenges Us to Build Moral Nations

I also preach from the Hebrew Bible to call two nations from the delirium of war to the demands of peace. Those nations are the United States and Israel—the first because I am one of its citizens by birth; the second, because I am one of its descendants by faith.

Many Jews worldwide do not see the contemporary political nation-state of Israel as a legitimate extension of the ancient conception of “Israel” (the Jewish people), and it’s a mistake to see the modern State of Israel as an embodiment of the ancient covenant of Israel. But the truth is that, despite the strong voice within modern-day Israel of secular Zionists who want Israel to be seen and judged as a nation like all other nations and who do not take this covenant seriously, there is also a strong voice within Israel of those who argue that the modern State of Israel is in fact a religious venture rooted in the covenant described in the Hebrew Bible. When those of us—Jews and Christians alike—who uphold that ancient covenant between God and Israel hear

such claims, we must speak out about how the current policies of the Israeli government violate the terms of this holy covenant.

As a Christian, I too am a descendant by faith of ancient Israel and its holy covenant promise, so I share a connection with Israel today, just as I share a special connection with the United States. With no other states do I share such constitutions. For that reason, I feel no compulsion to balance every claim with notes that other nations engage in evils worse than those of my two nations, for I have no part in others’ evils like the part I have in those of my two nations.

If we citizens and children of these two lands intend anything besides manipulation when we speak of God’s law, then an extraordinary and risky calling sounds in our ear. It is set forth in the first words of the Lord God to father Abram in Genesis 12. There it is said that God promised Abram first that he would be given a land in which to live securely and second that he would be father to very many children. Now, these two desires belong to every living thing; the simplest sea urchin and the most lordly lion seek a safe place to live and many strong children. Since all creatures desire these two good things, and since all that live receive them—or must fight for them—it follows that neither of these two promises sets the people of Israel apart from any tribe. Yet the word “holy” means “set apart.” Inasmuch as neither of these promises sets Israel apart, neither should be thought of as a holy promise; rather, both are conditions necessary for receiving and acting on the call of God, and are offered by God only in service of a higher purpose.

Through Abram, ancient Israel received a third covenant promise: “In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). One might object that we have omitted God’s promise to curse any nation that curses Israel. This objection fails for the same reason that the first and second promises are not worthy of being called holy. Craving

curses upon one’s enemies is a common and unholy desire. Therefore, from the Lord’s first words to Abram, only one promise stands strange and holy, fully divine and fully human: “In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

The whole of the Hebrew Bible unfolds as a contest. Will the Israelites scratch from a patch of earth a safe place for their babies in a fearful and competitive way? Or will they rise and become a blessing for all the families of the earth, beginning with themselves and their neighbors? As often as ancient Israel decided on its own to blast, not bless, their neighbors, just so often did God raise up a prophet of doom against the nation.

If the Israeli government today seeks only, as of old, “to be like other nations,” able to fight for more space for its people, cursing and destroying Palestinians and whomever else it fears, then it has abandoned the ancient covenant with God. When the covenant is abandoned, the nation has no calling. It is as if the scrolls of the prophets were burned. The same holds true for the United States, as our government abandons the U.S. Constitution in numerous ways, abandons our weakest members, and approves military policies that rain bloodshed down on nations we loathe. Israel and the United States depend on their founding principles for their vitality and their future. Insofar as the principles are ignored, the nations become disorganized and incoherent. Perhaps divine damnation of nations has always worked this way.

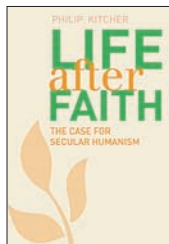
I believe that, despite many temptations, secular leaders in Israel and the United States can still listen for the moral coherence laid down in the stories and covenants that constitute their nations. But these leaders seem unable to voice that coherence themselves. They need to hear it arising from their people. I preach the Hebrew Bible so that those who have ears to hear may find tongues to speak a blessing for all nations that may yet save us all from ourselves. ■

Influenza Ode (From a Very Tall Building)

From here, the farthest highway
 slammed with cars
arrives to the eye in segments
 slicing through the baffling clouds,
shiny as the bite of a memory
 of being yelled at, a call to the kitchen
for a late-night admonition,
 while the dirty river to the harbor
dries like mustard upon the evening meat.
 The worser I feel, the childer I am.
Beyond the window, I can see
 how the moody wind manipulates,
the splat of the springtime
 jumbled in some illegible smatter,
while the rooftops pretend to organize—
 a scripture of rooftops,
dishes and antennae—and jumbled,
 over-heated gardens snarl in disuse.
From this far away the occasional bird
 blackens in silhouette, little rabbi.
From this far away a rabbinate of birds
 swoops above the alleys below,
a gulp of swallows.
 The trees evangelize the season,
the light clear as sick soup.
 The sky's a laryngitis.
Shiver me in your arms, my fever—
 my life untied, a hospital gown.

—Alan Michael Parker

Tikkun RECOMMENDS



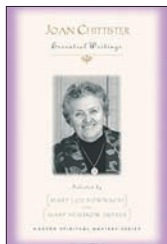
Life After Faith

Philip Kitcher
Yale University
Press, 2014



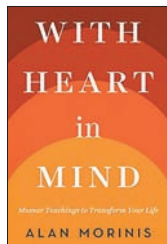
Sensible Religion

Edited by
Christopher Lewis
and Dan Cohn-
Sherbok
Ashgate Publishing,
2014



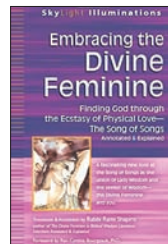
Joan Chittister: Essential Writings

Edited by Mary Lou
Kownacki and Mary
Hembrow Snyder
Orbis Books, 2014



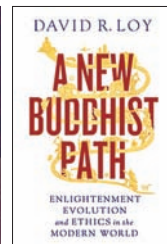
With Heart in Mind

Alan Morinis
Trumpeter/
Shambhala
Publications,
2014



Embracing the Divine Feminine: The Song of Songs

Translated and
annotated by
Rami Shapiro
Jewish Lights
Publishing, 2014



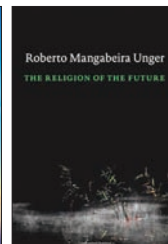
A New Buddhist Path

David R. Loy
Wisdom
Publications, 2015



God's Message to the World

Neale Donald
Walsch
Rainbow Ridge
Books, 2014



The Religion of the Future

Roberto Mangabeira
Unger
Harvard University
Press, 2014

The powerful ascent of fundamentalist religions in the last forty years has chastened those who predicted a triumph of secular thought and the gradual withering away of all religions. Yet the prominence of hate-filled orthodoxies has also provoked a strong movement of spiritual progressives in every religious community who are seeking to reclaim the ethical foundations of their religion and sometimes to rethink the metaphysical and theological foundations that underlie them.

The challenge to religion is put forcefully by Philip Kitcher, whose subtitle, *The Case for Secular Humanism*, suggests a more powerful argument than the “New Atheists” have been able to supply, in part because it eschews their crude caricatures of the more sophisticated versions of contemporary religions. Kitcher hopes for a supersession of the privileged scriptures of religion to “a more inclusive collection of resources ... supplied by the natural and social sciences ... [and] derived from the great artistic achievements, including the great literature of our species.”

Christopher Lewis and Dan Cohn-Sherbok, meanwhile, have assembled thinkers from a wide variety of the religions that continue to shape the consciousness of the world. These thinkers present in their own discourse a “sensible” version of their religion to counter the versions espoused by fundamentalists who behead their opposition, violently grab what they consider to be their holy land or holy temple mount, or demean the nonobservant. And if you want to add a sensitive Catholic voice to the mix, you might also consult the collection of writings by Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister, one of the original co-chairs of the Network of Spiritual Progressives.

In the Jewish realm, Alan Morinis’s new book, subtitled *Mussar Teachings to Transform Your Life*, and Rami Shapiro’s rereading of the Song of Songs by “finding God through the ecstasy of physical love” build on the groundwork laid by Jewish Renewal thinkers such as Zalman Schachter-Shalomi (z”l), Arthur Green, Arthur Waskow, Judith Plaskow, and Tirzah Firestone to move contemporary Jews to a depth of spiritual engagement that many secularists acknowledge is missing in some (but not all) of their communities. And similarly, David R. Loy’s Buddhist vision addresses enlightenment, evolution, and ethics in the modern world and provides a more naturalistic interpretation of Buddhist concepts such as karma; he offers an account of “a rudimentary awareness even at the quantum level” that opens onto a consciousness that pervades all being.

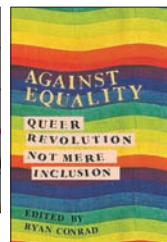
Among all of these authors, leave it to Neale Donald Walsch to take many of these ideas and express them in a super-accessible yet sophisticated way. Walsch’s *Conversations with God* series may have been dismissed as too simplistic by some (likely by those who never bothered to read them), but he is in fact a very smart purveyor of new ways of thinking about God, and his purported message from God to the world in his latest book is stated clearly on the cover: “You’ve got me all wrong.”

Yet perhaps what is needed most is a brand new religion of the future such as that predicted by one of the Left’s most creative thinkers, Roberto Unger. Urging us to leave behind faith in a transcendent God who continues to intervene in history, Unger exhorts us to become “more human by becoming more godlike,” suggesting that we can share in the experience of the divine “by living out, through love and cooperation, the implications of our incompleteness.”



Speaking OUT: Queer Youth in Focus

by Rachel Lee Smith, Graeme Taylor,
and Candace Gingrich
PM Press, 2014

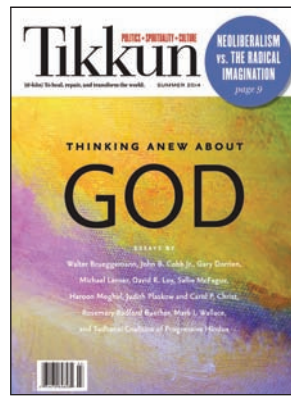


Against Equality: Queer Revolution, Not Mere Inclusion

Edited by Ryan Conrad
AK Press, 2014

As state after state approves gay marriage, it can be tempting to jump to the conclusion that the most pressing issues for LGBTQ people have been “solved.” Taken together, these two books offer an illuminating reality check. *Speaking OUT*, a photo essay that pairs photographic portraits with handwritten reflections from youth who identify as queer, offers a glimpse of the wide range of experiences that comprise life for queer youth today. Some teens express a sense of deep joy about the loving support they received from their entire community upon coming out (“the response was 100 percent supportive—100 percent!” exclaims contributor Graeme Taylor), attesting to the meaningful shifts that have taken place culturally within the last half-century. But others describe experiences of physical assault, rejection, and discrimination, attesting to the continued lived realities of homophobia and transphobia in the current era.

Ryan Conrad’s anthology, meanwhile, offers a hard-edged political analysis of the many forms of oppression that mainstream efforts such as the marriage equality campaign will never solve. The book’s essays are culled from the online archives of the Against Equality collective, an anti-capitalist group that uses the “greater-than” symbol to convey its commitment to liberation for all rather than to achieving equal rights for gay men and lesbians within a fundamentally unjust society. With its mixture of provocative pamphleteering and deeper political analyses, this anthology is sure to challenge even progressive readers with its radical queer and trans critiques of “the holy trinity of mainstream gay and lesbian politics: gay marriage, gays in the military, and hate crime legislation.” Whether or not you agree with all the essayists’ claims, it’s worth engaging with this book’s insistence that “queer resistance is not only against the oppression of people defined as queer, but against all disenfranchisement.”



HOW LONG WILL WE LET THE RIGHT DOMINATE OUR GOVERNMENT?

The Right will undoubtedly continue to control the political agenda in the United States so long as the following remain true:

1. We rally behind liberal politicians who propose only minimalist reforms in the face of pressing national problems and who fail to articulate an alternative worldview to counter the worship of the capitalist marketplace, which has become the dominant religion of contemporary Western societies.
2. We allow corporations and the wealthy to influence elections by bribing candidates who can prove their loyalty to the 1 percent with massive donations and threatening middle-income working people that their jobs will be outsourced if they vote for a living wage, serious environmental constraints, or a powerful carbon tax on earth-destroying emissions.
3. Liberal and progressive groups focus narrowly on economic entitlements and political rights without identifying guiding principles to unite all the different groups and campaigns—such as the principles articulated in the “New Bottom Line” (spiritualprogressives.org) and the Spiritual Covenant with America (tikkun.org/covenant) proposed by the Network of Spiritual Progressives.

Tikkun has an alternative: a strategy that can change the way people think about their lives and the society within which they live. Please join the Network of Spiritual Progressives and become a part of this change.

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