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SAVING THE EARTH FROM CORPORATE GREED

September/October 2010 | Volume 25, Number 5

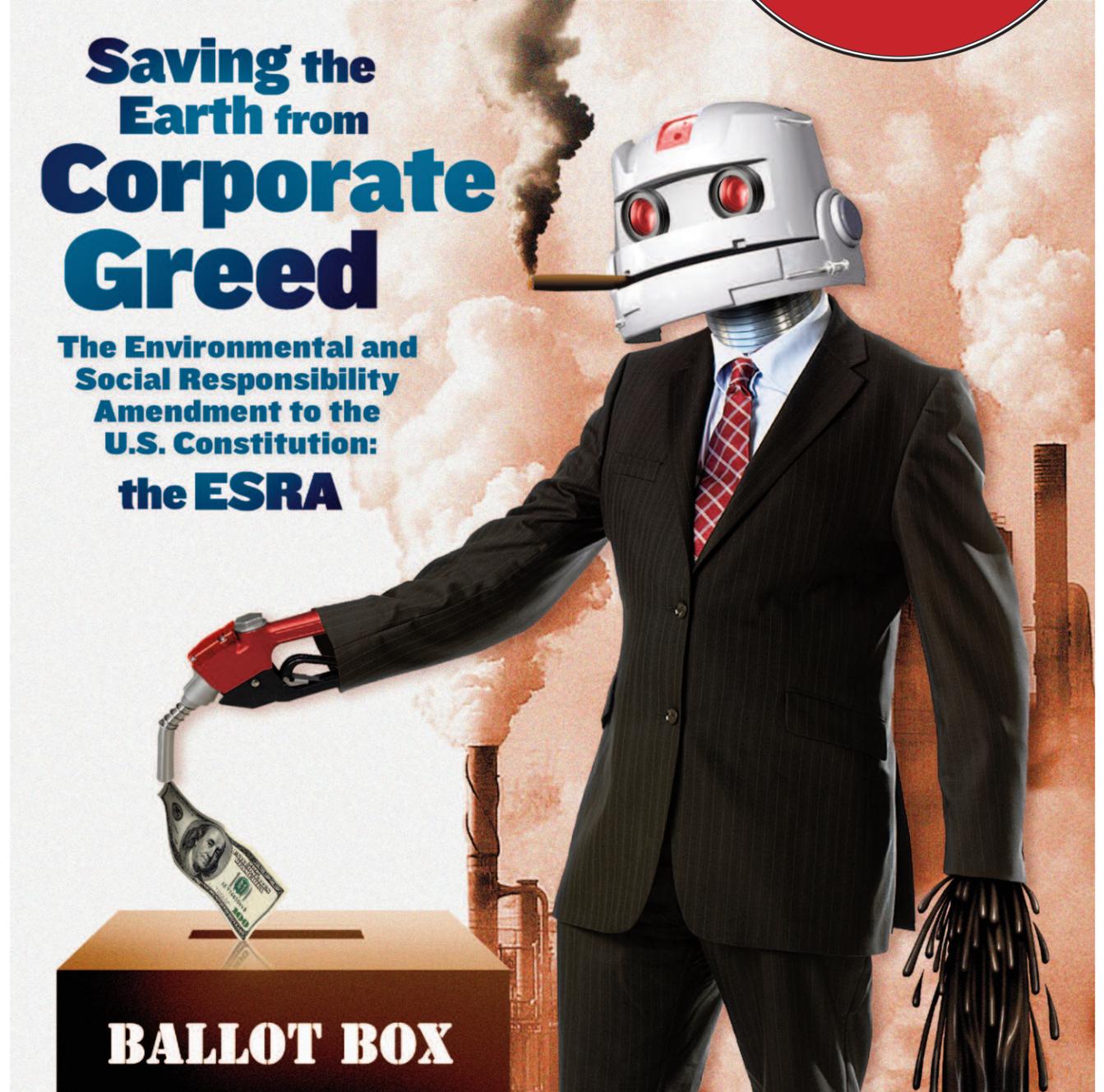
Tikkun

POLITICS+SPIRITUALITY+CULTURE

(tē-kūn) To mend, repair, and transform the world. SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2010

DO THE DEMS DESERVE TO LOSE?

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YOU THOUGHT THIS WAS GOING TO END?

So did we. Or at least we hoped that the candidate who voted against the Iraq war would end it and then get the troops out of Afghanistan instead of escalating that war. Obama has a more loving demeanor and more smarts than George W. Bush, but he's continuing the man's imperial policies. The momentum of the American empire's militarism will not be checked until we buy into a thorough alternative: a foreign policy built on generosity, equity, and respect. Check out Congressman Keith Ellison's take, "A Foreign Policy of Generosity," on page 50 and our larger discussion about how to free the United States from corporate goals, and the corporations from greed, starting on page 33.

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A GOOD NEW YEAR

*Le-shana tova tikatevu
ve'techatemu!*

May you be inscribed and
sealed for a wonderful year 5771.

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

QUEER SPIRITUALITY AND POLITICS

I AM WRITING TO THANK YOU FOR the July/August 2010 issue of *Tikkun* magazine. I am a psychological counselor at Gettysburg College and the mother of a transgender woman. I participate in a women's theological discussion group at St. James Lutheran Church in Gettysburg. My class is interested in participating in the current discussion on sexuality in the Lutheran Church. I was hoping to facilitate this discussion with stories from GLBT people that would further educate us and trigger discussion. Your issue feels like a Godsend to me. Literally. My class has decided to read and discuss this issue of *Tikkun* one article at a time.

Tears came to my eyes when I read Jay Michaelson's description of the love he feels when his soul turns to God. I identify with his feelings of loneliness during the time that he was closeted and when he currently doubts himself. I felt it when I was keeping the news of who my oldest child is a secret. The process of coming out to my community has liberated my soul and enriched my relationships and my work in ways that I did not anticipate. I have no doubt that God is with my daughter and our whole family as we struggle to be true to ourselves and to each other.

SHIRLEY ARMSTRONG
Gettysburg, PA

SELF-INFLECTED ANTI-SEMITISM

I CAN UNDERSTAND RALPH Seliger's anguished, if confused, response to the unsettling issues raised by my article in the May/June 2010 issue of *Tikkun* ("Are Israeli Policies Entrenching Anti-Semitism Worldwide?"), but this does not give him license to misrepresent my views as he did in his letter to the editor, "Entrenching Anti-Semitism," which appeared in the July/August 2010 issue.

I do not hold the conviction that "this is entirely the fault of the Jews." Heaven forbid.

What does concern me, though, is that Israel's long-term future in the region of which it has chosen to be a part may be in jeopardy if there is not a comprehensive peace in the near future that is conducive to normal relations between Israel, the Palestinians, and Israel's other neighbors. It follows that it is a quintessential Israeli interest to conduct itself in a manner that advances this end and for Israeli governments to actively encourage all initiatives that promote it. Their woeful record in this regard in the post-Oslo years, including the effective rejection of the Arab Peace Initiative, has charted a course to seclusion. Its essence, of course, is the deadly forty-three-year occupation of another people's land and lives and the belligerent settlement project that it nourishes and by which it is nourished in turn. For this

willful policy, Israeli governments are indeed to blame.

And of course these unwise, unjust, and unpopular policies—when overtly supported by organized Jewish communities in other countries—are bound to have knock-on consequences for the standing of Jews around the world. It's not rocket science. Defensiveness and other forms of self-denial are indulgences we can no longer afford. The issues have to be faced squarely.

The vital point in my article was that the Palestinians, with the backing of their supporters, would have opposed and resisted their treatment whatever the ethnic, religious, or national character of the state they held responsible for their plight and original dispossession, be it Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, secular, or whatever. It is important to understand this, for the alternative explanation—strangely appealing to some Jewish and pro-Israel circles—that (rising) antipathy to Israel and opposition to its policies are nearly always motivated by (rising) anti-Semitism (not to say they never are), and that Israel must therefore stand firm and concede nothing, is the surest path to further isolation and national self-destruction.

It is not too late to change course. But more than ever, Israel and Israelis need honest assessments and sound

MORE LETTERS

Thanks for all your letters! We receive many more than we can print. Go to www.tikkun.org/letters for an expanded version of this issue's letters, including letters on genetic testing, organizing for social change, health care, Israel/Palestine, the Catholic crisis, and more.

counsel from their shrinking base of friends and supporters around the world. And first we need to work on liberating ourselves from the old mental shackles and lemming-like tendencies.

TONY KLUG
London, UK

ISRAEL/PALESTINE

I CONSIDER MYSELF TO BE PRO-Israel. I love Am Yisrael, Eretz Yisrael, and Torat Yisrael. That love, however, leads me to be critical of many Israeli government policies (i.e., perpetuation of the Occupation, the present form of the Gaza blockade, etc.). Because I love Israel, I want it to be the best that it can be—to live up to the ideals in its declaration of independence as well as those in the prophetic tradition and the teachings of many of our great rabbis. Among Jews I am very open about my criticism of some of the things that Israel does, but I am hesitant to be the same way among non-Jews. I think that I am like many Jews who are pro-Israel and pro-peace: afraid that those

who are anti-Israel (as opposed to simply pro-Palestine or pro-peace or pro-no one) will twist my criticisms, which come out of love, into something that they are not.

MAX YADIN
Gaithersburg, MD

Michael Lerner Responds:

THOSE OF US WHO LOVE ISRAEL must be guided by our concern for what is best for Israel's security and survival, not by who might be able to twist what we are saying for other purposes (something that goes with the territory, no matter how careful one is). What's best for Israel's security? Ending the Occupation and changing Israel's whole approach to Palestinians from one of hostile occupier to one of generous and openhearted neighbor. We at *Tikkun* and in our Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP) call it a "Strategy of Generosity." When Israel is perceived not as the toughest guy in the neighborhood, but the most generous, it will have secured its future to stay in the Middle East.

Such a change in Israel's approach to security will not happen without us in America changing our own approach to the misconceived "war on terrorism." That's one of many reasons we at the NSP have launched a campaign for a Global Marshall Plan (please download and read it at www.spiritualprogressives.org/GMP)—because while the plan itself is unlikely to be funded (though it is now introduced into Congress as H. Res. 1016), the campaign for it is a way to raise public understanding about our underlying message: homeland security is better achieved through a strategy of generosity than a strategy of domination.

That same message needs to be brought to Israel, which is one reason why we are advocating that the Global Marshall Plan ought to be tried first in the Middle East.

Neither Israel nor the United States will adopt this approach as long as secular "realists" cannot imagine how spiritual values such as "caring for others," "love," "empathy,"

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and “generosity” can break through the barrier of fear of being disrespected or humiliated by the West that is at the core of the psychodynamics that have afflicted both Israelis and Palestinians, and indeed much of the Muslim world, for the past hundred years or more. No wonder, then, that they continue to rely on negotiations that will go nowhere until there has been a spiritual breakthrough. That’s why the work of the NSP and the Global Marshall Plan are actually, though dismissible as “unrealistic” or “utopian,” the only realistic path to a lasting peace agreement that could bring both security and justice to both sides.

I hope you will join our Network of Spiritual Progressives, which comes with a free subscription to *Tikkun*, and start circulating *Tikkun* to your friends, so that they too can understand that the best way to serve Israel is to advance a message of love, generosity, and openheartedness. That will help them see that our criticisms of Israel are *leshem shamayim* (for the sake of heaven), even though they have led us to be constantly attacked from every side and angle. Please do join or make a tax-deductible contribution to *Tikkun*.

THE VANDALIZATION OF LERNER'S HOME

IN “REFLECTIONS AFTER MY Home Was Vandalized” (*Tikkun*, July/August 2010) you write, “ Hamas is a violent group, and *Tikkun* has frequently denounced its violence, just as we have denounced the violence of the Israeli Occupation” (italics mine).

To make an equivalence between Hamas and the Israeli Occupation reflects a special kind of moral obtuseness. When was the last time Israel sent thousands of deadly rockets into Palestinian towns? When was the last time Israelis blew up Palestinian schools and buses? Does Israel hold Palestinian captives for ransom, refusing them even Red Cross visitation, as Hamas holds Shalit? Or do you consider inconveniences at

Israeli checkpoints to be the same as ballistic violence?

With the days of *teshuvah* (repentance) upon us, it would be advisable for *Tikkun* magazine to make a *tikkun* on its moral compass.

RABBI EMANUEL FELDMAN
Jerusalem, Israel

I AM GLAD NO ONE WAS HURT BY this act of terror [the vandalization of Rabbi Lerner’s home]. I am shocked and appalled by this act of violence, but I am not surprised. Activities of this sort have been perpetrated by radical Zionists for years. In many cases the result was much more violent, as it was in the case of Yitzchak Rabin.

My question is, why should we expect anything different? Who are the Zionists? They are simply another group of nationalists—no more, no less. There is nothing special about them. They are the philosophical descendants of European communists, socialists, anarchists, and assimilationists (who oftentimes wished to be international capitalists).

There is nothing inherently Jewish about the Zionist state. They abandoned Judaism before they took up the banner of nationalism. The fact that they usurped the name Israel, which was given to my father Jacob, does not make them his spiritual descendants. I cannot put any credence in the government of those who have disassociated themselves from our ancient beliefs. I cannot abide by their laws. I cannot justify their actions. I cannot agree that either the means or the ends are acceptable, commendable, or desirable. I cannot consider them in any way related to me spiritually, morally, or intellectually.

The path of the Torah is the path of pleasantness, and all its ways lead to completion (*Sholom*). Does anyone even in his or her wildest fantasy believe that of the path of Zionism or any other nationalist cause?

YOSEF ROSENBLATT
Colchester, CT

WHAT SPARKED THIS LETTER IS what you wrote at the end of the article: “Starting the day after the attack on my home, I have prayed for God to forgive those who did it, to forgive Dershowitz and others who demean me and my fellow rabbis ...”

Why should those people be forgiven? Should people who destroy people’s homes, drive them out and turn them into refugees, be forgiven? What about mass murderers, rapists, brutes and sadists, Hitler and Stalin? Where do you draw the line? What is the meaning of the word “forgive” when applied to people who’ve never asked for forgiveness and indeed have no notion of having done anything wrong?

There are actions that fill me with anger, and when that anger motivates a quest for justice I consider it good and right to be angry. I would suggest that too-easy forgiveness delegitimizes forgiveness itself and wrongly delegitimizes well-placed anger.

JULIE WORNAN
Paris, France

Michael Lerner Responds:

I FEEL SADDENED BY THE LEVEL of inhumanity of those who have attacked me personally, attacked my home, minimized in the media the import of that attack (as did Dershowitz), and called me with death threats. Yet I believe that these attacks are motivated in part by a genuine love for the Jewish people, albeit deeply misguided and distorted, and their outrageous actions come more from fear and inner terror (which I believe they have been dealing with all their lives and is now displaced into attacking those critical of Israeli policies). I affirm the need for righteous indignation at their deeds and will continue to challenge those deeds and statements in the public realm. But our peace-, justice-, and love-oriented spiritual movement must not sink to their level, but instead reflect the same compassion for them that we have toward everyone else on the planet.

Seventy-Five as the New Forty-Five

BY GEORGE VRADENBURG

THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD ARE LIVING LONGER. BABY boomers are feeling younger and healthier than their parents did at the same age. At the beginning of the twentieth century, life expectancy was fifty. Now it's close to eighty. Thirty years added to life expectancy in just one century. Science and lifestyle changes have permitted the greatest extension of life in human history.

Is this all good news? What if, as expected, regenerative science and lifestyle improvements lead to another twenty-plus-year extension of life expectancy in the twenty-first century?

Even as people are living longer, women are having fewer babies, in many countries below the replacement rate (about two children per woman). For the first time in human history, there will be more people over the age of sixty than under the age of fifteen. What are the consequences of this historically unique “age shift” of human populations?

Culturally, those in the developed nations have been accustomed to “retiring” by age sixty (France) or sixty-five (United States). The dictionary tells us that “retirement” means “withdrawal” from work or “taking out of circulation.” If life expectancy extends to one hundred, should society want those in their sixties to withdraw and be “out of circulation”?

Public and private pension and health systems are built on the assumption that people retire in their sixties and are given income support and health insurance. What if most people live into their nineties?

Alzheimer's now afflicts one out of two people over the age of eighty-five. If that doesn't change, people may live to one hundred, but half of that population above eighty-five will have Alzheimer's and the other half will be taking care of them. While life expectancy may be extended to one hundred years, will people's brains be there?

In developing nations, longer life expectancies coupled with greater-than-replacement fertility rates mean larger populations and potentially greater poverty. Will the income inequality between richer and poorer nations grow, with implications for poverty reduction, migration, and global security?

Imagine if present demographic trends continue. The population of Japan will decline from 120 million today to 90 million in forty years. The population of Russia may fall at even a faster rate. The populations of Germany, Italy, and other European nations are falling today. Iran's fertility has already dropped below replacement rate. China's population will peak in 2030 and fall as the consequences of the One Child Policy take hold. The populations

in high-fertility, Catholic Latin America will continue to grow, and those of sub-Saharan Africa will grow as the scourges of malaria, smallpox, and HIV/AIDS are arrested.

Alzheimer's is an emerging pandemic, with an estimated 36 million victims today, doubling every ten years (by comparison, an estimated 33 million are infected with HIV/AIDS). For every Alzheimer's victim, there are conservatively two to three caregivers providing support, composing a population of over 100 million today personally and directly affected by the disease. But, amazingly, over two-thirds of the cases of Alzheimer's in the next forty years will occur in developing, not developed, nations as life expectancies grow in those countries.

These trends are requiring nations around the globe to think and act differently about aging in three ways:

First, older populations are being viewed not simply as an expense and burden on society, but as potentially experienced workers able to contribute to national prosperity and competitiveness. This shift in thinking will require different approaches to lifelong education and training programs, staggered retirement ages based on physical and cognitive health, and blended public-private pension and health care schemes for part-time work and workers. For developed nations with declining populations, urgent attention to these issues is a national imperative.

Second, as older populations continue to work full- or part-time, attention to healthy aging, including cognitive health, becomes increasingly important to national competitiveness. Many nations, including France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, have developed explicit national strategies to deal with Alzheimer's and other dementias. India, Japan, South Korea and others are following. Investment in cures for dementias and other diseases of older populations is shifting national medical research priorities. Next year, the United Nations will host the first-ever conference on noncommunicable diseases, reflecting the reality that, for the first time in history, more people will be dying of noncommunicable than communicable diseases.

Third, important new attention is being paid to increasing private savings rates to build the reserves needed to support individuals and families as fiscally constrained national pension and health care systems are forced to reduce benefits for older populations.

As seventy-five becomes the new forty-five, the ability of nations to stay prosperous, competitive, and safe will demand dramatic new ways of thinking about global aging. ■

George Vradenburg is the co-publisher of Tikkun.

2010 Elections

Why Have the Democrats Lost Popular Support?

PERHAPS THE NOVEMBER ELECTIONS WILL NOT BE as harsh on the Democrats as the polls predict, but the Dems' behavior in power has decreased their popularity dramatically.

We know, of course, that the Democrats did not have a solid majority in Congress, given Rahm Emanuel's 2006 decision to back the most conservative candidates in the Democratic primaries in order to win in swing districts and take Democratic control of the House of Representatives (a decision he made while serving as chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee). Democrats in the Senate followed a similar path. As a result, they won formal control and hence could be blamed for what ensued, but they did not have the votes to fulfill their promise to the electorate to cut off funding for the war in Iraq.

Democratic primary voters in 2008 enthusiastically supported a presidential candidate who spent much of the primaries reminding voters that he had opposed the Iraq war from the start, and who focused in the general election on conveying that his presidency would be about "change you can believe in" and telling people that his presidency would empower people, as implied in his slogan "Yes, we can." Candidate Obama's success in piling up a significant popular vote majority and an electoral college landslide—a success that indicated that the racism of Americans had receded behind their hopefulness about fundamental change—proved that many Americans yearned for a world of peace, justice, kindness, generosity, and love.

It's easy to blame the Republicans for their "Politics of No" and, indeed, given the fact that de facto Republicans were allowed to run as Democrats and be elected as such, it might have been impossible for either the Congress or the president to pass significant new legislation capable of fulfilling the promise of "change you can believe in."

What the Democrats Could Have Done

THE DEMOCRATS COULD (AND SHOULD) HAVE ARTICULATED A positive progressive vision of what was needed, put forward legislative proposals that embodied that vision, and then fought for those proposals not only in the halls of Congress but also in their own districts/states.

It is never as important to win a legislative agenda as it is to convince the American people of a worldview. The reason: if you don't win support for a worldview, the next president of the opposing political party and a Congress that supports that president can

dismantle most of what you've put in place. But if, as Roosevelt did in the 1930s and Reagan did in the 1980s, you use your presidency to build support for your worldview, then you find that even when a president and Congress of a different party take control (Eisenhower in the 1950s and Clinton in the 1990s), their options are extremely limited because the previous ideology still has a hold on the consciousness of the American people. Thus Eisenhower kept intact much of the New Deal legislation, and Clinton's policies confirmed Reagan's absolute faith in deregulation, free markets, and the globalization of capital and expansion of the military.

From the start of his presidency, we urged President Obama to use the theme of "The Caring Society"—caring for each other and caring for the earth. And we urged him to insist that he would only support programs that reflected the values of caring, generosity, social justice, peace, environmental sustainability, and corporate social responsibility.

Why "The Caring Society" as the theme? Because most people in this society feel that the other people and huge economic and political institutions that surround them care only for themselves. Thirty years of ruthless self-interest on the part of the wealthy, the banks, the insurance companies, the health care industry, and the major corporations have profoundly affected the consciousness (not to mention the economic security) of most Americans. The insecurities of daily life in this society (and in all the societies in the world that have experienced the impact of global capitalism) have driven many to seek some refuge in strong families, religious fundamentalism, and ultra-nationalism as a way of finding some corner of their lives within which the ideals of caring for each other and being part of some larger community in which "we are all in it together" trump the individualism, materialism, and exhortation to "look out for number one" that suffuse daily life, the media, and the economy. A president who would have explained all this to the American public and then presented policies and legislation that transparently placed these values above the values of marketplace "rationality" would have precipitated a huge transformation in the consciousness of American society.

Add to that one other thing that the president could have done: fulfilled his promise to tell the truth. If the president had announced in his inaugural address that each week he would be speaking honestly and revealing what he was up against in trying to bring real change, and that he would name names of those who were blocking efforts to change, and then actually followed through on this, that single act of having a truth-telling president

would have changed the whole dynamic of American politics.

Please note that everything we are saying Obama and the Democrats could have done are things they could have done without the consent of the Republicans or the right wing of the president's own Democratic Party.

What the President Could Have Done Without Congress

IN ADDITION TO ALL OF THAT, THERE ARE OTHER SPECIFIC THINGS the president, acting on his own, could have done:

1. Challenged the worship of the free marketplace.
2. Refused to fund banks and corporations that were failing and instead proposed to create a national bank offering interest-free loans (as called for in the Bible) to socially valuable projects. The loans could go to small business startups or bailouts, to people seeking college and university educations, and to corporations that increased pay and benefits for any of their employees making less than the national average income.
3. Required that any business getting government support or tax breaks demonstrate that it is creating jobs and making its products far more environmentally sustainable.
4. Articulated to the nation the depth of the environmental crisis facing the world and what steps would be needed to lessen that crisis—including a tax on carbon emissions and proposing other bold steps to save the environment, including a ban on offshore drilling and an excess profits tax on all energy companies.
5. Taught Americans that “homeland security” is not best secured through a strategy of domination but rather through a strategy of generosity. He could have proposed a Global Marshall Plan (www.spiritualprogressives.org/GMP), only sending troops to Afghanistan to build and not to fight, canceling all drone flights, and releasing to the public the classified information that was leaked by WikiLeaks, prosecuting the evildoers instead of the whistle-blowers.
6. Proposed a constitutional amendment such as the Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment (www.spiritualprogressives.org/ESRA) that functions not only to overturn the Citizens United decision of the Supreme Court but also to require corporate social responsibility.
7. Prosecuted all members of the CIA and the Bush administration, and others who participated in illegal acts of torture or conspiracy to commit torture and establish the practice of bringing human rights group members to serve as monitoring teams for unannounced visits at every military facility where prisoners are being held around the world and every U.S. prison.
8. Appointed to judicial positions those who are unequivocally supportive of a progressive agenda in the same way that the current Supreme Court majority is unequivocally supportive of a conservative agenda. The president then could have admitted that that was what he was doing, and defended the value of having judges and justices who are empathic to the suffering of ordinary citizens rather than those who twist the law to serve corporate power. No dishonesty please—let's fight for a more humane set of values in the judicial arena.
9. Demanded that the media stop responding to the corporate

interests of those who fund them and start responding to the interests of ordinary Americans. The president could have picked one example per week of irresponsible media coverage and taught Americans how that coverage distorts their understanding.

10. Campaigned for a universal and free (single-payer) health care plan, and campaigned for price controls over all pharmaceuticals, rather than for the deeply flawed plan that passed.

Well, I'm sure you can suggest other things that should be on this list.

But you get the central idea: the point is not to win each battle, but to convince Americans of a different way of thinking.

Instead, by abandoning their promises for “change we can believe in,” the Democrats have created an electorate that identifies “liberal” and “progressive” with “Obama” and consequently doesn't want to hear anything from liberals or progressives. And most liberals and progressives are so heartsick at having campaigned for a president who turned out to pursue policies almost diametrically opposed to what they had understood him to be promising that they are either in shock, dismay, disillusionment, or denial. Many feel humiliation at having believed Obama and are unlikely to spend much energy trying to back the Democratic Congress that failed to back their ideals.

None of this, however, is a reason to welcome a victory of the Republicans, who meanwhile have acted in an extremely irresponsible and immoral way, blocking anything and everything they could, not because they all believe every measure deserved to be fought, but because they wanted to show that Obama could accomplish nothing. Moreover, the Republican embrace of the racism and “know-nothing-ism” that is part of the ethos of some in the Tea Party movement, and their own embrace of anti-immigrant populism while simultaneously being faithful lapdogs to the wealthy and the powerful corporations, bespeaks a political party that does not deserve to benefit from the screw-ups and betrayals of the Democrats. Had the Democrats been willing to put forward their programs and then force the Republicans to actually carry out their filibusters for weeks on end on each piece of legislation, Americans would likely have become fed up, as they were when Gingrich used the filibuster tactic only to find that grinding the government to a halt created a pro-Democratic backlash that led to the re-election of President Clinton in 1996.

What We Can Do Nonetheless

WE NEED A NEW POLITICAL PARTY THAT ADVOCATES FOR “THE Caring Society,” but we don't have the financial means to create that. In the meantime, we spiritual progressives need to do the mass educational work at which the Democrats have failed. That's why we've developed the Global Marshall Plan, and the focus of this issue of the magazine: the ESRA. Please read it and become involved with us in these campaigns by joining the Network of Spiritual Progressives at www.spiritualprogressives.org and becoming involved with our work to advance these ideas! The education done on these projects is the best way to create the foundation among Americans for a future political party based on love and generosity. ■

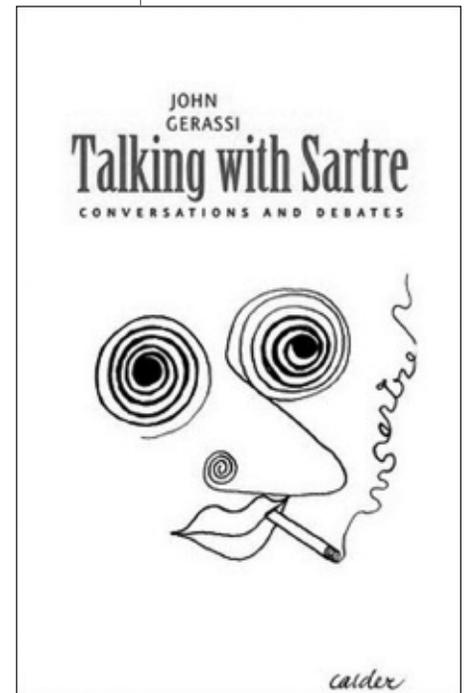
The Spirit of Sartre

by Peter Gabel

TAKEN AS A WHOLE, THE WORK OF JEAN PAUL SARTRE IS THAT OF A SENSITIVE man with a good heart gradually coming to understand the distinctly social aspect of human reality—that while we appear to ourselves as alone and struggling to make sense of things from within our own isolation, we are actually always powerfully connected in our very being to each other and, through the networks of reciprocity that enable our material and spiritual survival, to everyone on the planet.

Sartre's early work for which he is best remembered in mainstream liberal culture—the period in his thirties and forties that produced the novel *Nausea*, the philosophical work *Being and Nothingness*, and the plays *The Flies* and *No Exit*, among many, many other writings—were all addressed to “the man alone” struggling to find authentic meaning in a world without God and in a world pervaded by false images and false conceptions of what matters in life. To a young person like me gradually emerging into the radical awareness of the 1960s, this work was thrilling. I was brought up within the image-world of upper-middle-class New York culture, taught by word and gesture to accept that artificial world of the bourgeoisie as if it conformed to some real “essence,” as if the right thing to do in life was to do well in school, dress nicely, acquire my share of wealth by entrepreneurship or inheritance, get married, fit well and admirably into this or that pre-given role, and have a solid obituary. But to use the famous phrase drawn from one of his lectures, Sartre showed that “existence precedes essence”—that all of these preconstructed forms of identity, worth, and value were actually made up, that it was “bad faith” to allow our longing for superficial security to rationalize draping them over ourselves as if they would safely install us in some kind of “reality,” that we are free to accept or reject every form of received wisdom and, even more, that we are personally responsible to make these choices and by these choices to give our own stamp to reality and take our own stand for all of humankind about the kind of world we ought to be creating.

As important as these insights were—and as empowering as they were to me as a young man trying to find the strength to choose to align myself with the idealistic aspirations of the movements of the sixties and to take the risk of rejecting the class destiny to which I was bound by the erotic ties of family loyalty and devotion—Sartre himself came to realize that they were skewed and limited by the liberal individualism of his own upbringing; these early insights illuminated the world from within the pathos and solitude and psycho-spiritual struggles and relative material privilege of the floating or unanchored bourgeois intellectual. Thus his early philosophical understanding of “Relations with Others,” as elaborated in *Being and Nothingness* and in his early plays, reflected the Fear of the Other that he came to see later as the unconscious foundation of “individualism” itself. To the early Sartre, the Other is mainly a threat whose gaze “steals my freedom” by pinning me in an



In his analysis of Sartre's intellectual development and influence, Peter Gabel draws on this new book, which reveals a philosopher who, in the 1970s, was questioning the adequacy even of his later existential Marxism.

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Jean Paul Sartre (middle) and Simone de Beauvoir meet with Che Guevara (right) in Cuba, 1960.

image-for-the-Other that is colored with pride or shame and from which I must recover myself as a free being through a kind of ontological struggle, a struggle captured in the famous concluding line from *No Exit*: “Hell is other people.” In many ways, as radical as Sartre’s early ideas were in rejecting the conformity of inauthentic social life and its mores, roles, and hierarchies, they remained quite consistent with the aspect of liberal Western society that defined “man” as a free being inherently separate from and in conflict with the freedom of the Other. This is no doubt one reason that his “existentialism” is today taught in every liberal university while his later conversion to Marxism and social commitment and his brilliant reconciliation of the insights of existentialism with those of Marxism are almost nowhere to be studied and learned.

That later integration began to take place when Sartre served in the French army in World War II: through his conscription he began to grasp that he was involuntarily bound to others by social forces much larger than the mainly two-person interactions that he was in those very years exploring in his philosophy; and his deepening awareness of the inherently social nature of each individual’s existence was accelerated by the encounter that every serious intellectual had with Marxism and its “really existing” embodiment in the Soviet Union following World War II. But in spite of the sympathy that Sartre had for the Soviet Union’s egalitarian ideal in the face of McCarthyism and the increasingly reactionary cast of Western capitalism in the early 1950s, he knew that the Soviet Union was a grossly distorted manifestation of Marxist ideals and that its distortions were in no small part the result of the limitations of the state of Marxist theory itself—indeed, of its very failure to give sufficient ontological priority to the subjective, qualitative experience of actual human relations that was the central concern of his own work. Thus he felt it fell to him as a kind of moral responsibility to throw himself into showing how Marxism had become false to its own human aspirations by the hyper-objectivity of its own pseudo-scientific theory, how its transformation from a culturally complex and human historical materialism into a mechanistic and externalized “dialectical materialism” had led it to rationalize a new form of class society and social oppression as if it were a near-messianic embodiment of social progress.

Published in 1960, Sartre’s *Critique of Dialectical Reason* was an effort to show that while Marxism was correct in giving primacy to materialism—to the need for food, clothing, and shelter as being the key shaping force that had thus far connected all humans to each other and mediated their relationships to one another in a milieu of material scarcity and the struggle for survival—Marxist thinking nevertheless had to incorporate into itself the relatively independent longing for human freedom and the transcendence of the inter-subjective and distinctively social facts of oppression, exploitation, and alienation of self from other to accurately understand and portray the truth of social life and offer a path to improving it. In this later philosophical work and in his later plays like *The Devil and the*

Good Lord and *The Condemned of Altona*, as well as in several volumes of essays and a three-volume biographical study of Flaubert, Sartre replaced his earlier emphasis on the “man alone” struggling for freedom and authenticity with the social individual bound to all living others through the necessities of economic production and bound also to prior generations through the medium of the world of “worked matter” that we have inherited from them and which directs and limits our possible forward motion. In place of the floating and unanchored individual seeking to recover his or her authentic being from the inauthenticity of a fallen society living in bad faith and in flight from itself through a kind of ubiquitous personal and moral inadequacy, Sartre makes a powerful and original argument for a collective, intersubjective, distinctively social recovery of our authentic human capacities, a recovery achievable through the “praxis” of collective action to transcend class society and the alienating reciprocal conditioning through which we have enslaved ourselves and each other to dehumanizing socio-economic forces over which no one has control.

John Gerassi’s new book *Talking with Sartre* is a transcription of a fascinating series of interviews conducted with Sartre by Gerassi over the period from 1970–1974, just as Sartre himself was coming to question whether his own later theory of existential Marxism was adequate to either offer a new path to human liberation for the Left or account for the extraordinary dynamics that had been sweeping the world in the form of “the sixties” during the previous decade. Gerassi, the son of longtime family friends of Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir and already an established independent left intellectual in his early forties at the time of these interviews, serves as a comradely inquisitor of Sartre as the great philosopher was approaching his seventieth birthday and could not but see the shortcomings of the social movements of the sixties beginning to manifest themselves in historically decisive ways. The interviews are in a certain sense a first-person evaluation of the state of the Left worldwide, as they reflect Sartre’s thoughts on his own visits to the Soviet Union, Mao’s China, and Castro’s Cuba, as well as his own participation in the radical groups in France—in particular the *gauche prolétarienne* and its newspaper, *La Cause du Peuple*, of which Sartre had become the editor.

To readers of *Tikkun* who today are working toward the creation of a spiritual-political progressive movement, the most important sections of the book deal with Sartre’s evaluation of his own ideas about how we are to overcome the social alienation that at the time of these interviews and still today seems to separate us from each other and disable us from banding together to create a more loving, egalitarian, solidaristic world. In the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Sartre had developed two important ideas that remain relevant to us today as we try to build a new movement and understand the psychosocial dynamics that inhibit our efforts. One is the idea of “seriality”—the idea that when we are thrown by socioeconomic forces into relationships based on competition for survival and are conditioned by the weight of historical traditions and social ideologies to accept our situation as necessary and even desirable, we each become stuck in a kind of social quicksand in which other people seem to be constantly receding away from us like threads in an inside-out shirt and in which we ourselves each become “one of the others” to each receding other, collectively casting one another into a mutually distancing, one-and-one separation that we can’t seem to get out of. Whether we are languishing in the passive rituals of family life, or passing each other with blank gazes on the street, or carrying out the repetitive routines of work in offices or on assembly lines, when we are trapped in the one-and-one series, we exist as passive occupiers of social slots without a common active or creative purpose that unites us in any sort of original collective project: we cannot seem to translate our longing for vitalizing social connection into any form of meaningful action that would allow us to recover our spontaneity and freedom. A key question for Sartre in the *Critique* had been what form of collective action could enable us to lift ourselves out of this self-reproducing separation that actually was the central dynamic reproducing capitalism itself, an anti-human system that we all feel trapped in as if it were coming from “outside” us, like a nonhuman force over which we have no control.

Sartre’s answer to this question in the *Critique* had been that under certain favorable conditions combining the right material circumstances with the right (continued on page 85)



Peter Gabel writes that it is Sartre’s early work, typified by the books above, for which he is best remembered in mainstream liberal culture. But in his later works (below), Sartre replaced his earlier emphasis on the “man alone” struggling for freedom and authenticity with the social individual bound to all living others by economic necessities and cultural inheritances.



Economics for a Global Community

A Conversation with Joseph Stiglitz

Michael Lerner (ML): MANY OF THE INTERVIEWS WITH YOU AS A PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL and liberal economist focus on your analysis of current economic realities. For a *Tikkun* readership, the equally interesting question is your larger vision of what a decent economic arrangement for the United States and the world would look like in the twenty-first century, and how we would get there. What is your picture of a rational and ethically sound economic arrangement for the world and the United States?

Joseph Stiglitz (JS): We would partly begin with asking the question, how do we create a fairer society with more opportunity for everyone? I think that when you are talking about these issues you have to put them in the context of where we have been going. One of the major concerns that should be put at the top of the agenda is that there has been growing inequality in the United States. Very serious, growing inequality. The way we have often characterized it, as a set of trade-offs between growth and inequality or efficiency and inequality, is probably wrong. If we really had a more equal society and were able to tap the potential of everybody, our economy would be stronger. To achieve these results one needs a certain degree of collective action, acting together as a community. And part of the way of acting together as a community is through government activity, through research, education, and a whole variety of ways in which we could act together collectively.

ML: Do you imagine some kind of democratic arrangement? Would it be a decentralized one or a globalized one, for dealing with investment? And how should production decisions and investment decisions be made?

JS: Inevitably, I think, the market economy, which involves a high degree of decentralization with decision-making occurring at the level of the enterprise or firm, is both necessary and probably the most efficient way of running an economy.

The problems that we face today with the market economy are partly caused by the concentration of power, for instance, in the hands of relatively few banks, large corporations, and so forth. And they exercise their influence not just through the economy but also through the political process, indirectly.

Now, there is a general principle that they talk about in Europe a lot, and it's called "subsidiarity," which means that different problems need to be addressed at different levels, with the general principle being that the problem should be addressed at the lowest possible level that is consistent with the nature of the problem. So there are local problems, national problems, and global problems. And we need to address these problems simultaneously at all these different levels. But there are many problems today that can only be addressed globally, such as global warming, global health, or global poverty.

ML: Given the current realities of the United States, how do you imagine that we could get to a place where increasing democracy would be possible with decisions of investment and production?

JS: When you talk about democracy and the general set of principles I described, they revolve around a number of levels. There is democracy in the political arena, but there is also democracy in the workplace—worker participation in the decisions that affect them. That is not possible in all enterprises, but it is possible in many enterprises. There is a lot of evidence

that enterprises that engage in that are actually more efficient and more innovative.

ML: Some progressives thought democracy in the workplace was the answer until Yugoslavia tried it and found that it didn't seem to do much to humanize the society, which subsequently broke into ethnic conflict.

JS: That was a failed experiment. You cannot evaluate workplace democracy in a context without overall political democracy. And that is why I emphasized the importance of the political context. There have been some very successful experiments in Spain. I don't think it is a panacea and that it will work everywhere, but there will be many enterprises for which it is a way to achieve both more individual fulfillment and greater efficiency.

David Korten: Joe, in terms of the worker participation, you mentioned Spain; I assume you are referring to Mondragon, which I also very much admire. It also has the very clear element of worker ownership. I would be interested to hear your thoughts on that piece of worker participation.

JS: I think they thought through a lot of the problems with worker ownership. The Yugoslav experiment did not work very well and a lot of people who have been involved in this movement learned a great deal from why that did not work very well. I haven't visited [Mondragon] for several years, but when I visited I was struck with how thoughtful they were in trying to figure out how to adapt the model to the changing technology and the changing globalization. For example, how to integrate workers who were owners and workers who were not. They took a fairly practical approach that I think seems to have worked pretty well.

ML: I want to ask you about two proposals that we are discussing in the Network of Spiritual Progressives and in *Tikkun*—proposals that were a focus of our conference in Washington in June. The first is the ESRA, the Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the Constitution, which would overturn the Supreme Court's Citizen's United decision and require corporate environmental and social responsibility. It includes (and this is the most controversial part) a proposal that corporations with incomes over \$100 million a year would be required to get a new corporate charter once every five years. The charter would only be granted to those corporations that could prove a satisfactory history of environmental and social responsibility to a jury of ordinary citizens. The jury would have the power to require changes in the organization if they found it did not have satisfactory responsibility. It could remove the charter from the current board of directors and assign a new board of directors or a new ownership scheme to the workers themselves or to some other group that could prove that it could run the corporation in a more environmentally and socially responsible way.

JS: I think those are interesting ideas. I think Citizen's United was a deeply flawed decision in every respect, from a legal perspective but also from a more deeply democratic perspective. Corporations are not people. They are a social construction, and in a decision about what rights to endow them with, we have to keep that always in mind. Clearly if they unbalance the political process, that is not healthy. Some of the proposals being discussed, including in Senator Chuck Schumer's bill, I think, are approaches that could rectify that decision if we can't directly overturn it.

Exploring ways of increasing corporate social responsibility is important. I am very sympathetic with the sentiment of the proposal, but I worry that there are real difficulties of setting and agreeing on the appropriate standards. And the uncertainty until those standards are solidified would have significantly adverse effects on some businesses, which would worry about their ability to function in five years.

ML: Wouldn't that be a good worry for them to have?



In this conversation U.S. economist Joseph Stiglitz (above), recipient of the 2001 Nobel Prize in Economics, endorses economic equality and workplace democracy, and discusses how to accomplish the Network of Spiritual Progressives' economic goals, with which he sympathizes.

JS: It may be a good worry, but the question is going from worry to anxiety and not being willing to undertake investment: that would not be good. In general, economists are very worried about the destructive impact of excess uncertainty. I think it would probably be preferable to create clear standards of expectations, because “corporate social responsibility” are words that mean very different things for different people. I have heard some firms feel socially responsible if they put green light bulbs in, even if they are lending to tobacco companies that are killing people.

ML: If the amendment mandated Congress to set those standards, would that be sufficient or would they have to be spelled out in the amendment itself?

JS: Well, that is part of the problem. Once you go to Congress to do it, you know what kind of process will set in. The special interests will play an important role. So I understand and I find intriguing the idea of leaving it up to a group of peers, but I think that is too capricious.

ML: We do that with human life when it comes to people who are accused of crimes such as murder.

JS: That’s true, but there we have very well structured laws such as burdens of proof, very clear rules of evidence, and innocence until proven guilty.

ML: Owning a corporate charter is not a right, as opposed to life being a right.

JS: I understand that, but still the process is not ambiguous. You’re caught between two difficulties. You are caught between the difficulties of having the constitution lay out too much detail, because norms will change over time and different circumstances. On the other hand, if you don’t spell it out you leave too much uncertainty and ambiguity. To give some examples, I would certainly claim that the whole cigarette industry by its very nature is an exercise in corporate irresponsibility. Or consider the food industry: those parts of the food industry that encourage products that cause obesity are irresponsible. But as a man of democratic principles I feel nervous about delegating that to a jury if we can’t get it through Congress. There are really big issues in corporate responsibility. In some sense, they are issues of life and death. While the goal is really lofty, one has to think very carefully about how one adjudicates and sets the standards.

ML: Yes, these considerations will be addressed by the Network of Spiritual Progressives as we move forward with our campaign for the ESRA. To move on to a different question, the second program we are advocating for is a Global Marshall Plan: we want the United States to take leadership with the other industrialized countries to commit between 1 percent and 2 percent of U.S. GDP each year for the next twenty, to once and for all end global poverty, homelessness, hunger, inadequate education, and inadequate health care. In other words, it’s time for a huge commitment, far beyond what the current UN millennium development goals are. The underlying argument is that this approach (we call it the Strategy of Generosity) is a more effective path to homeland security than any of the military spending and wars we’ve been pursuing for the past fifty years. We also emphasize that a Global Marshall Plan (GMP) would only work if it were done in a spirit of generosity and not done just with the goal of homeland security and advancing U.S. interests or with the covert agenda of strengthening our global empire. It would have to be accompanied by a transformation in the consciousness of Americans, a recognition that our well-being in the twenty-first century depends on the well-being of everyone else on the planet. And our campaign for the GMP would become a vehicle for championing and popularizing that kind of change in consciousness. Done in that way, the campaign for the Global Marshall Plan would be more likely to gather mass support than a program like the One program or the millennium goals. Those programs’ goals are seen as extravagant from the standpoint of inside-the-Beltway realism, but in terms of actually solving the problem they are more like welfare than like solutions. My experience as a psychotherapist at the Institute for Labor and Mental Health for the decade before we began *Tikkun* magazine, and the experience of others who are behind this, is that it may be easier to support a program that really ends poverty than a program that merely ameliorates poverty. *(continued on page 86)*

Cuba Sí

by Phil Wolfson

IT'S 2010 AND I'M VISITING CUBA AGAIN. I AM TIRED, OLD, discouraged, trampled by excuses and broken promises, and ground down by human failure and our incessant will for domination. It is time to fish and be done with it, to set sail and go whither the wind and currents will course. It is not important where I begin. It need not be definitive. But I will choose a spot somewhere on the north coast: a broken pier, stubs standing just above the lapping waves, where the borrowed boat with its scraped green paint and its ancient, pre-revolutionary Evinrude 25 horse will be available for a few CUCs (Cuban dollars for foreigners) to the crazy gringo who asks to go fishing on his own—no charts, just water for a day, some black bruised bananas, and a *cerveza* of whatever stripe, most likely the bland and omnipresent Cristal. It couldn't be the south coast—manure-splattered Trinidad, the colonial jewel; or industrial Cienfuegos with its great bay hugged by Che's still-wild Sierra Escambray—for they say there are no great fish left in the blue Caribbean. But I care little about catching anything; I don't really want to end another life, even that of a fish. For I am withering away faster than any state on the planet. Theorists say so much about what old Karl M. missed. But that one was a doozy—the withering away of the state with an educated populace in control of its destiny. When? Not in my lifetime! Doesn't look good for my son's lifetime. He has yet to give me a grandchild, so no comment about that. It seems so difficult for us to give up control, to choose social forms based on love and cooperation. Withering was to have occurred based on greater sharing and participation, going through the socialist stage as an evolution of cooperation, connection, and an understanding and acceptance of each other's needs and requirements—a spirit program, certainly.

Why I have held on for so long I cannot explain, save that I hate to resort to the bitterness that perfuses my soul, my rage at all that incessant go-nowhere drama that has resulted in the mess, the stench of Cuba: the failure of truth to have its due, the triumph of the Revolution and “democratic centralism” still blaring on radio and television, on billboards that splatter towns and countryside, even as obvious indolence, unemployment, poverty, discouragement and disorientation are plain to see and hear, not just from the discontented. And above all the waste of the glory—the damnable lying to excuse the many failures of leadership. This was in me, how the *amargo* of “nothing to be salvaged” poisoned my soul.

I had been first Cuba's witness and supporter, united in revolutionary zeal and commitment; later her unfaithful lover, critic, distant admirer; then, for too many years, absent and unfeeling, not able to look, lost in despair. This was the toll taken by unnecessary Leninism; the anti-gay criminalization and the isolation of the AIDS-infected; and the

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Two sides of the Cuban Revolution.

Top: Havana, Cuba, 1959. Crowds celebrate the liberation of Havana in the main plaza.

Bottom: Berlin, East Germany, 1972. On his first visit to this important ally and trading partner, Castro described those charged with shooting East Germans fleeing to the West as “the courageous and self-denying border guards of the GDR People's Army who stand guard in the front line of the entire-socialist community.”

Cuban government's refusal to trust its educated, faithful people with full democracy, socialist style—an election, after thirty, forty, fifty years of life with *El Lider*, the last holdout for democratic centralism. We won't count the Chinese system that is just a means to maintain slave labor and control of capital accumulation and people's minds and independence in the service of domination; we won't mention the abomination of North Korea; Cuba is much better, much more loving than that.

First Visit: Nine Years after the 1959 Revolution

IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT IN 1968, A TIME OF MAXIMAL ENTHUSIASM, WHEN THE Revolution worldwide seemed a possibility, however deluded that would soon turn out to be. Cuba's defiance of the United States' exploitation of her as a gangster wet dream and sugar confectioner could only be accomplished by nationalization of core industries, agricultural reform with the breakup of large agricultural worker-impoverishing landholdings to be distributed to new native collectives, and self-defense against U.S. military intervention. U.S. interventions had occurred repeatedly during the sixty-one years since the end of the Spanish-American War and the first U.S. betrayal of Cuban independence—all of that prior to the new victory of the Cuban people. That first theft of the victory of Cuban forces fighting for independence from Spain in 1898 was in many respects the model for U.S. imperialism worldwide thereafter: let the indigenous forces carry the burden and casualties for the bulk of the fight, send troops in to take advantage of their near-victory, and after victory install puppets who represent U.S. interests economically and politically. All subsequent interventions were in response to threats to these imposed U.S. interests by nascent nationalist and liberation movements. The history clearly delineated what would come after 1959 and the definitive victory for Cuban independence by the Fidelistas. Expropriation of foreign holdings—necessary for the establishment of an independent self-interested national economic formation—always brings with it a vicious response. Powerful external property holders don't take kindly to self-determination.

The Revolution was military in nature, as it had to be to remove the exploiting country's Cuban-born puppet management, its so-called national government, they who stripped the country of their ill-gotten gains and made off with the national treasure to the Miami refuge, just as the popular uprising closed in on Havana. If the United States took its time to respond, it was not out of fear of the consequences of invasion, but rather an arrogance that time was on its side and a languid response was always possible. Besides, you could starve out the Fidelista vermin and cut them off from the rest of the world—let the people suffer and they would turn out the dogs without loss of U.S. soldiers. So thought the overconfident U.S. leadership, drastically underestimating the power of the collective mind of the Revolution, its insistence on self-determination, and its staunch resistance to imperialism. As if any Cuban person of intelligence and heart would prefer being exploited by foreign domination over the right to march the path of independent national development.

Young, Radical, Anti-Stalinist Gringos in the Late 1960s

TRANSCENDING CUBA'S NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT WAS THE ROMANCE OF Che and the first emanation since the Spanish Civil War of a Western anti-bureaucratic, near anarchist, anti-racist, internationalist liberation movement. My throng of people in the sixties had no truck with Soviet apparatchiks and Kafkaesque monolithicity. If Stalin's full diabolic mass-murdering status had yet to be clearly delineated or absorbed by us far-flung visionaries from a planet other than the Soviet Union, few of us had roots in parental Communist Party membership. Rather, we were naturally arisen from the bowels of our parents' McCarthyite conformism in response to the cultural blight of the fifties and in resistance to the arbitrary authority of parents, especially fathers, and the authoritarian institutions of the state, the school, and the corporation. We were children of new opportunity, of the emerging post-War welfare state, of airplanes and the possibility for travel, of post-Great Depression prosperity and relative freedom from want—children of the great American surplus production glut.

Fair Play for Cuba was the organization that was beginning to defy the U.S. blockade, sending people to Cuba to experience its revolutionary realization and to widen the base of support, politically and economically, in order to reduce the impact of the blockade that was depriving the Cuban people of their historical U.S. import/export relationship. The blockade was cruelly applied even to core humanitarian requirements—medicines, surgical supplies, and basic foodstuffs such as rice and wheat. Cuba’s pre-Revolutionary infrastructure was minimal, its literacy at less than 70 percent, its infant mortality typically gruesome, as was common throughout Latin America. Its marginalized rural population largely lived in dirt-floored thatch huts or *bohios*, deemed irrelevant save when needed for the sugar harvest or to service the tourists who came to gamble, womanize, and tan at the lustrous white beaches. Americans in pre-Revolutionary Cuba could buy property for a song, even a whistle. Cubans could not. Racism and segregation reflected U.S. prejudices and apartheid. Cubans were stereotyped as a weak, foolish, dance-ridden rhythmic people of no intellectual consequence, like Desi Arnaz’s Ricky Ricardo character in *I Love Lucy*.

Our little group of four came in the first wave of North Americans to visit since the blockade, traveling illegally through Mexico with a thirty-hour return via the Azores and Spain, or alternatively via Prague and back to the United States—we chose the quicker route through Madrid. We were the vanguard of doctors, dentists, and nurses who would come to explore, support the Cuban national health service—health care for all, which we dream of so fervently in the United States—and send supplies in an attempt to offset (in a very small way) the anti-humanitarian U.S. blockade. We arrived just as the first major SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) group was leaving to return to the United States for the Democratic National Convention and what would come to be called the Days of Rage. We were in Cuba when Soviet intervention muzzled the Prague Summer, and we waited in anticipation for Fidel’s announcement of where Cuba stood in regard to Russian intervention to put down the Czech democracy movement. Days passed and our hope mounted that Cuba would speak independently, act independently. Then Fidel mounted his podium and spoke for the usual many hours, laying out his rationale for the intervention as the responsiveness of the Soviet Union to U.S. and Western counter-revolutionary sponsorship of the anti-Soviet occupation freedom movement, and we knew some price had been paid and the deal signed.

Arrogance is a quality that one must recognize and fight in oneself. So too is its opposite, the fear that institutions and states know better than we do. This fear is bulwarked by the institutions’ size, their ability to obtain information, the masses of humans employed by them, and especially by their authority as trumpeted by the organs of the media that serve them. How could any of us know better than Fidel? Che was gone and with him the spirit of perpetual revolution, Trotskyist as that sounds. For me, all beings need be free, and sharing will conquer power—now, in this spiritual era, a kind of Bodhisattva, Mahayana thing—a constant loving revolution toward all power to the people, indeed. But that was then. Despite our misgivings we returned to the United States, telling the great and good story of Cuba on the radio and in articles. We organized health groups to travel to Cuba and see for themselves, to support the emerging health care sector that had been so devastated by doctor and dentist defections—money talks—and to send medical supplies. But our so-called movement was fracturing and moving into deluded, irrelevant, sometimes destructive micro-organizations, splintering over the method to seize state power, as if we were close to that possibility, and looking for leadership and ideology outside our own evolving consciousness within our own national conditions. And of course, drastically underestimating the power of corporatism and its lackeys to absorb our demands—for enfranchisement of people of color, women, and eventually, gay people in the United States—without changing its basic class structure or its ravage of the global poor in its compulsion for profits.



A farmer collects tomatoes in Guira de Melena in 2008. Cuba has begun lending unused land to private farmers and cooperatives as part of a sweeping effort to step up agricultural production.

Second Visit in 1988—Optimism and Fidelismo Survive

INFLUENCED BY THE CRITIQUE OF BUREAUCRATIC STATE SOCIALISM AND PUT OFF BY THE Soviet Union's control and lack of cultivation of local potential, I only returned to Havana again in 1988 for the New Year's celebration. The harbingers of hard times were discernible—glasnost and the beginnings of perestroika signaling major changes to come. Yet Cuban leadership was caught up in the same economics, 90 percent dependent on the Soviet Union, reliant on their historical relationship for artificial support of the price of sugar, despite much lower world pricing, and dependent on Soviet oil imports—4.5 tons of petroleum for each ton of sugar—while also following Soviet foreign policy. Cuba felt bureaucratic and tense, a bit of a freight train on a historical crackup track. I was in the

worst time in my life, my nearly seventeen-year-old son, Noah, having died after four years of leukemia just months before. Havana in winter was tropically stunning, but the decay of the city mirrored my own grief and despair, and little could penetrate me. I jogged from Miramar to Ciudad Vieja and back a few times, and the beauty of the sea vistas was notable, as was the incredible pollution from buses and trucks. The massive new Russian embassy hung like the towering bridge of an aircraft carrier above the suburb, and folks seemed OK. There was enough food to go around, even if the quality was poor. There was nothing to buy. I was impressed by the lack of work initiative. For example, when I brought my friend's Lada to get fixed at a local government garage, I turned it over to six or seven guys who hung around sitting on boxes; it seemed a gigantic effort for one to get up and look interested. It felt as if there were an unofficial *huelga*—a strike, certainly a slowdown—going on. At the Miramar cement and rock beaches, many people hung out during the week's work hours, and the floating inner tubes suggested the long and hazardous passage to better economics in *Gringolandia* to the north. We met some folks living as squatters beachside in a pueblo outside the city, raising parrots and living like U.S. hippies on next to nothing, having fun and being completely unproductive, outside the official economy. I was struck by the tolerance for this, but later heard they were evicted for not having title to the spot. The Coppelia ice cream was still delicious, with a different flavor each day, but the water was off at the tap more than it was on. We hung out with my friend's artist and film buddies, who were vital and creative, brimming with ideas and projects and open to discussion. There was great concern about being openly gay, and many of those who weren't defended the official position. Optimism and *Fidelismo* still reigned.

U.S.-supported economic sabotage and potential terrorist acts against

Cuba were in the minds of everyone with whom I spoke. The unprecedented dengue fever epidemic of 1981 (seen by many of us as biological warfare waged by the United States) and the earlier swine flu virus attack were still fresh in public memory. And with Ronald Reagan nearing the end of his second term and the Contras in Nicaragua barely defeated, the United States loomed large as a threat.

Cuba had built a close alliance with the Sandinistas and knew all too well the forces arrayed against a second Caribbean revolution, as well as the implacable hostility toward the first. Cubans also perceived the U.S. administration's willingness to conduct criminal acts against Cuba. We spent time with several marvelous people just back from the Managua front and learned a great deal about that so-called covert U.S. effort to undo another popularly elected government that had moved from banana republic dictatorship towards nationalization and self-determination.

The Difficulty of Criticizing Cuba in a Useful Way

WRITING CRITICALLY OF CUBA IS A RISKY AND TRICKY BUSINESS. I DON'T WANT TO FEED the Right and the malevolents of the exile, or shall I say the elite Cuban immigrants who



A common sight in Cuba: children eager for education. The country's literacy rate soared during the National Literacy Campaign of 1961 and has risen since: 99.8 percent of Cubans over the age of fifteen are now literate, according to the CIA World Factbook.



settled in the United States immediately following the Cuban revolution (U.S.-born Cuban-Americans, much like younger post-war Germans, are themselves innocent and often unconnected to the conflict). I don't want to discourage anyone from visiting, as that is helping Cuba financially through its tourist economy. I want to make clear that the U.S. embargo is criminal, a punishment against innocent people, ineffective as a change agent, and has no basis in just international relationships, is cowardly and bullying, and has no relationship to remuneration for nationalization, as the corporate interests that were nationalized had been extracting profit from Cuba and Cubans for generations—money incalculably in excess of the value of the nationalized property. I want to be clear and explicit: the blockade is a unique and murderous reaction to self-determination and the end of U.S. exploitation; it's a punishment for stopping future exploitation by aggressive foreign capital. I want to praise what is good and original as a result of the Cuban social transformation. I don't know how to build socialism, as I am a gringo in a privileged life and reside in the main global imperialist state. And besides, it is clear that no socialist state has been truly socialist or moved toward a fully democratized—i.e., an empowered activist, collectivist, egalitarian, and individual- and endeavor-honoring—society. Yet I don't want to withhold my observations of what appears troubling and off-putting or to refuse to report the views of those Cubans I've encountered who communicate their experience in a balanced and penetrating fashion; and I want to be true to myself, my own evaluation and judgments, and make them clearly and helpfully. There are many clashing perspectives and truly, I cannot please everybody.

A Problem in Cuba Today: Lack of Self-Sufficiency

WHEN I LAST WENT TO HAVANA, AT THE END OF 1988, THE WATER SUPPLY TO MIRAMAR—the formerly wealthy garden suburb of Havana, where many of the embassies are located—was off many hours of many days and often for days on end. This was attributed then to the disastrous effects of the hurricane that struck Cuba in the late spring. Now, in 2010 while I was in Havana, water in Miramar was shut off for two days of the five I was there. Water to the Cienfuegos all-inclusive resort, built exclusively for foreigners and tourist dollars, was intermittent and off for hours at a time on several occasions during the two days I was there. Provision of water is a governmental responsibility in Cuba; since 2000 in Havana it's been a mixed public/private enterprise with a Spanish co-investor company. Water in Cuba is plentiful. It is tropical and it rains abundantly—about fifty-two inches per year on average. Provision of water is a matter of necessity. Water systems require investment, maintenance,

Artist Jose Fuster, known as the Cuban Picasso, has beautified more than eighty of his neighbors' houses in Jaimanitas, a fishing town west of Havana. "When I travel to the Dominican Republic or Mexico, I see children begging," Fuster says. "I see children cleaning car windshields. We don't have that. In Cuba, I paint what I see: the happiness of children."



A street in Trinidad, Cuba.

and supervision. In a society where labor is plentiful and jobs needed, why hasn't this been fixed in twenty-one years? Where is the mobilization for repairing the water system? Can it all be about materials and supplies—is there no room for innovation? The effects are incalculable on hygiene, waste disposal, health, industry, and urban agriculture. In 2005, the Ministry warned Havana residents of the failure of five pumps at the same time. Water was dispensed by truck to tens of thousands of residents for several weeks. Who was watching the pumps? Certainly the U.S. embargo plays a role in all of this—the absence of spare parts for machinery that was in place before the revolution cannot help matters.

But the water problem of Havana is not just about the embargo. It is also about capital accumulation. And if there is one overarching historical failure of leadership, it is the lack of clarity and success in this nearly fifty-year-old, erratic, planned economy. For it is one thing to defend the Revolution, to stave off the hostile U.S. giant, and it is another to become a client state of the contending giant—the USSR—with its terrible history of bureaucracy, stagnation, and failure to anticipate and thrive, not to mention its failure to create better, democratic, and more fun lives for its citizens. And that dependency is not an excuse for not building an independent economy, as if states and conditions were permanent and not in constant flux. If you take foreign money, at least struggle for your own conditions and your own economic needs, for self-sufficiency in vital industries such as agriculture. Don't let your cement plants disintegrate. Don't let your agriculture decline in favor of foreign imports. Build up what you have as resources—use labor and horticulture, tap the sun, grow plants, irrigate, grow soy and nuts and stuff that feeds—so that when change occurs you have some resilience. Please! Although sugar no longer serves as the main engine of the Cuban economy (sugar production is down to 1.5 million tons or so from its Soviet era levels of 7 million to 8 million tons, so Cuba is no longer a factor in the global sugar economy and has little to export), special trade relations that are predictably fragile and subject to political winds still grease the vulnerable economy. For example, Cuba maintains a special relationship with Venezuela in which the Chavez government provides oil at bargain prices in exchange for doctors and health care workers and, no doubt, political support. Another case in point involves the billion-plus dollars that flow from relatives in the United States to relatives in Cuba. This remittance economy creates harsh inequities—one needs to have a relative to buy the good stuff—and moreover the United States could cut this revenue stream off at any time, forcing Cuba to suffer. Less well known is the fact that Cuba imports 50 percent of its foodstuffs from abroad, and 50 percent of these imports, including soy, wheat, rice, and poultry, come from the United States. With Cuba not allowed to sell anything to the United States—the embargo again—the trade imbalance is deliberately profitable to the U.S. agricultural industry. Wow!

Underemployment and a Ruin in Process

NOTHING IS WHOLE IN CUBA. NOTHING NEW IS ENTIRELY FINISHED. NOTHING OLD IS maintained. Cuba is a ruin in process. There is a disturbing lack of recent human-created beauty. The antique and pre-revolutionary Havana apartment houses still command interest with their melting cornices and remnant cheesecake décor—sometimes strikingly inspired by Art Deco. The recent constructions are scarce, hard-edged, blocky in form, Eastern Bloc-inspired and also crumbling. Every sidewalk appears cracked and broken. Havana is a ruin in the making. Recently some of the buildings along the *Malecon* have been painted, the external stucco cement improved so that the paint could hold. *Havana Vieja* is a tourist-inspired, colorful, and pleasing renovation of a magnificent square of the old city. But, by and large, walking the streets of the city, one sees virtually no evidence of maintenance of structure. The money and supplies are simply not available, but this means that the housing structure of Havana is disintegrating from age, abetted by sun, pollution, and salty sea air. And as for the rest of the country, what I saw was the same, the only differentiation being the resorts and the *Casas Particulares*—private homes with rooms to let for tourists, often renovated with money from Miami and U.S.-based relatives who fled the country and are now allowed to bring U.S. dollars in limited amounts with them on visits—under the Helms-Burton stricture, 1,200 U.S. dollars annually. Lack of government maintenance, lack of personal initiative to fix homes and apartments (lacking because it is discouraged), lack of craft talent, lack of craft cooperatives, lack of tools, lack of shops, antiquation of even the cement mills, lack of rebar and PVC pipe—basics—all of this means ruined housing and depressing living circumstances. Garbage is incessantly visible in Havana, but elsewhere there appears to have been an at least partial victory for the anti-litter movement—something rare indeed in the Third World.

Direct human contact and the Cuban sun are the country's source of warmth. There is music in the air, complex rhythms, and a panache of dress and ornamentation. Cubans' sartorial style is an accomplishment given the lack of clothes, stores in which to buy them, and funds for their purchase. My doctor friends bring home about \$24 per month. Yes, that is on top of free education, free health care, home and apartment ownership, and a ration of basic staples, but \$24 is all they have in their pockets to pay for the rest—such as is available. (Try imagining, with me, doing \$24 a day in the United States—let alone per month.) This means that Cuban people are sharing, bartering, acting as extended family units, looking to relatives abroad for help, calculating, and seeking special circumstances, such as help from workers at the resorts, who bring home tips to support entire circles of people. And there are illicit schemes particularly aimed at the main source of external funds—tourists. Extraordinary women court me as I walk in the neighborhood around the *Hotel Nacional* searching for a store that might have a bottle of rum. I am sixty-six and this does not go to my head. But the sex trade—gay and straight—is thriving, although in addition to straight hooking, some women are looking for a great meal and are prepared to be warm and friendly and spend time with their beaux—unusual for prostitution in the wider world. So goes the story.

We drive two-thirds of Cuba and back in a small and somewhat beaten up Hyundai rental. This is a relatively recent opportunity—to rent your own car. The sidelights have been ripped off, stolen in Havana, probably to embellish some fifties U.S. relic. The steering wheel is a bit loose and the car tends to plane and slide at fifty-five miles per hour. Vast stretches of countryside are unpopulated, perhaps depopulated. Farmland goes untilled; sugar cane gone. Horses and bullocks continue to function as transport and plow teams, the latter justified in the framework of the recent low-input, sustainable organic farming (*continued on page 87*)



Cuba, 2009.

Ever Dying, Never Dead—That’s Life!

by Bradley Shavit Artson

YOM KIPPUR IS COMING AROUND THE CORNER. IT IS ALMOST TIME ONCE AGAIN to don my twenty-seven-year-old wedding *kittel* (white robe) for this holy day, a day on which we seek to live as though we were angels.

On Yom Kippur we strive to be angels, but we are also reminded of our essential difference from them. According to Jewish, Christian, and Muslim understanding, some angels come into existence when they are assigned a specific mission, and they cease to exist the minute that mission is fulfilled. Other angels exist eternally and never die. That immortality is not our biology, so to compare ourselves to angels is also to reflect on our mortality. The *kittel* is not only a symbol of purity and joy. It is not only what I wore at my wedding, what I wear at every Passover Seder, and what I have worn for ten years on the holy days: it is also what my remains will be buried in. The *kittel* is my shroud. It is not coincidental that on Yom Kippur, Jews traditionally wear what will become their shroud. On Yom Kippur we are the walking dead.

We are on that holy day like the dry bones of Ezekiel, knowing that we are frail, knowing that we are finite. It is as if we were given a reprieve. We may be dying, but we are not dead yet! In that sense, the philosopher Hans Jonas teaches that mortality is the gift the living give to the future. The wonder of life, awesome and terrible, is that it renews itself constantly, by sloughing off the old and by embracing the new. Just as we thrill that infants and children refuse to do things the way they have always been done, bringing a relentless energy to their lives and to ours, so too do we know that what is old breaks down and gives way before the young. Life is this cascading process of endless renewal splashing across the millennia toward greater diversity, greater experience, greater relationship, and greater connection.

Midway through the afternoon of Yom Kippur, the congregation directs itself to *yizkor* (memorial prayers), reciting *hazkarat neshamot* (a prayer for recalling souls)—an opportunity to focus on those who have gone before. But Jews do so not from some neutral place, not as though we were looking at some other species. We are ourselves on the way. We humans live as dying creatures. We are aware, to a greater and lesser extent, of the inevitability of our own mortality. Sometimes we push it aside; sometimes it comes crashing in. But as we sit in our sanctuaries, the liturgy reminds us who shall live and who shall die, and who by water, and who by fire. We recall over and again through the words of the *machzor*: that we have a limited number of times when we will gather together to recite these prayers, that the clocks of our lives are ticking.

Awareness that we are dying should serve to focus our attention on living. It should make what is unimportant less important. We do not have time to waste: not on people we do not enjoy being with and not on doing things that are not compelling or worthy. Our time is brief. Because we all are under the same sentence, it ought to be easier to forgive each other. The one who has wronged us is not some all-powerful divinity who will outlast the ages, but

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like each of us, a brief and ephemeral flash of life in a sea of roiling darkness. We ought to be able to take what time is at hand and use it to resolve to improve ourselves. And we ought to know that our identity is not simply that of solitary, individual beings. We are part of something larger than ourselves. We are this moment's embodiment of *Am Yisrael* (the Jewish People), which has lasted through the ages and, if we do our part now, will continue to span eternity.

Consider an odd aspect of Jewish belief and eternity: we pray in the *machzor* and elsewhere for the coming of the Messiah. We say the *Ani Ma'amin*—"I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah." Notice that it does not say, "I believe in the Messiah." What we Jews pledge allegiance to is not belief in the Messiah, but we must believe in the coming of the Messiah. But here's the catch: a Messiah, to be coming, can never arrive. Once the Messiah arrives, he is no longer coming, so at that point one can no longer believe in his coming. But Jewish beliefs are timeless affirmations. God is always One, the Torah was given to Moses—these beliefs do not become false over time. So if we are to believe in the eternal coming of the Messiah, then the Messiah must be eternally on the way. Because we know that the Messiah is always on the way (hence, never arriving), our job is to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah, doing what it takes to make the world that much more messianic. We must engage in acts of justice and compassion so that even though the arrival is never completed, the work of the Messiah is advanced: a world with somewhat greater justice, somewhat greater compassion, somewhat greater inclusion, somewhat greater welcome.

A Messiah always on the way reminds us of our goals and aspirations, but it is up to us to work for justice.

We can affirm the same paradox about death: during your life you will never be dead. You will always be dying. But within life you are never dead. Perhaps for this reason, people cannot imagine the conditions of their own death. They can conjure the process of dying, but when you imagine yourself being dead, you think of yourself being immobile. You imagine having a mind, having a body, watching your body at your own funeral. But that is not being dead. That is being bored perhaps, maybe even napping, but not being dead. We cannot imagine being dead because we are always on the way; we are always dying. Always dying, never dead—we are, like the Messiah, always on the way, never arrived. That inescapable limit means that our dying is about living—with awareness, gratitude, and urgency. Dying is not something separate from the process of living: our lives are a persistent training for death, and our death wafts back to force us to value our life.

The Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Hasidic Movement, at the hour of his death turned to his students and said, "Now I finally know the purpose for which I was created." He is not encouraging morbidity, as if life's only significant moment is a deathbed scene. Each and every moment counts. Nonetheless it remains true that whenever I start a novel, I cheat: I



"Jews Praying in the Synagogue on Yom Kippur" by Maurycy Gottlieb (1856-1879), Polish-Jewish artist. Oil on canvas. Painted in Vienna, 1878.

flip to the end so I can read the last couple of pages first. I need to know how the story turns out so that I can better attend as it proceeds. In that light the Baal Shem Tov suggests that only when we look back at the completion of our life will we really understand the meaning of everything that transpired previously. It means that we prepare for death by living well: by living in accordance with God's values, and the Torah's, and our own integrity. By living fully in each and every moment.

In Masechet Megillah, the Talmud teaches, "A righteous person who dies is only lost for the generation in which he lived." The sages compare the death to a person who owns and loses a pearl. That pearl remains a pearl even though it is no longer accessible to its owner. So it is with those who have gone before us. We do not have access to their physical presence, but is it possible to say that they are not still with us? Don't you know from your own life, from the people who have touched your life and then have passed on, how valuable and how important their presence remains every day? Can't you think of what grandparents or parents or mentors would have said at every given moment to anything you experienced, to anything you say or do? Their reality is like the pearl. They are not physically accessible to us, but they are very much present in our lives. As we remember their love, their goodness, and their giving, we fortify ourselves: We remember to contribute to this endless cascade of love and devotion that crosses the generations. That is life. We remember their best attributes, and we remember that time is fleeting.

The Baal Shem Tov, again as he was dying, turned to God and said: "I hereby pledge a gift to you of the remaining hours of my life." The Koretzer Rebbe, one of his students, taught that this was a true act of *Kiddush Ha-Shem* (martyrdom). But we do not have to wait until our deathbeds to offer up the gift of our remaining time. It is never given to us to know whether we have several hours or weeks, or months, or years. But imagine how elevated our lives could be were we to pledge:

This time is no longer my time. It is my gift to God. And I will live my life in such a way that every moment is my gift to God. The way I treat the people I love, I will offer up as a gift. The way I work to build community, I offer God this gift to you. The way I work to strengthen Judaism and the Jewish people, the way I represent my love for Israel and for Zion everywhere I do these, God, I give to you. The way I care for your creation and walk lightly on your beautiful blue-green planet, this, God, I give to you, as a gift. My remaining hours, I give to you.

There is a blessing recorded in *Pesikta Rabbati*, a midrashic anthology approximately 1,500 years old. It offers words to recite when visiting a cemetery, upon seeing the graves: "Blessed is the One who created you in judgment, who brought death to you in judgment, and who will raise you up in judgment." I would ground that ancient *berakhah* (blessing) thus:

- God's love shines in judgment to create us—finite and precious—aware at each moment, and especially at this sacred moment, that our time is limited, that we will each join our mothers and fathers, who have gone the way of all earth, that we are eternally dying and learning thereby to live.
- God's firm judgment imposes upon us the awareness of dying, which spurs us to live our lives in desperate appreciation, numbering and living each day to the full, illumined and inspired by the memories of our dear ones who have already offered up their lives to the eternal renewal of life itself and of the cosmos.
- Their memory and love raise us up in this world as better people, as more caring and more courageous than we would have been without their deeds of love. We are embraced and fortified by their continuing influence in our hearts and on our actions.
- We affirm, strong in memory and faith, that God will elevate our lives in this world and will one day raise us up to them, all of us embraced by a love eternal, persistent, and redeeming. ■

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Repentance and Atonement Are NOT Just for Jews

A Note to Our Non-Jewish Readers on How This High Holiday Workbook Can Be of Use to You

Tikkun is not just for Jews—it is interfaith as well as Jewish. This High Holiday workbook is an invitation to all people to join with the Jewish people in using the period from the evening of Rosh Hashanah (the day of both celebrating the Birthday of the Universe and of remembering who we have been this last year) until nightfall ten full days later on Yom Kippur (the Day of At-one-ment) to rethink our personal and communal reality and engage with the process of *teshuvah* (returning to our highest selves and turning away from the ways we've missed the mark in this past year) as outlined in the pages of this workbook.

בְּרֵאשִׁית הַשָּׁנָה יִכָּתְבוּן. וּבְיוֹם צוֹם כְּפוּר יִחְתְּמוּן.

High Holidays 5771 | *Yomim Nora'im* (The Days of Awe)

America Needs Repentance

Repentance is particularly needed in the United States at this historical moment, given our society's problems. We are painfully aware that, in the time since taking office, President Obama has not yet taken the kind of consistent stands for peace, human rights, environmental sanity, social justice, and defense of the weakest and poorest elements of our society that many of his supporters imagined he would. Moreover, when he has taken positive steps, as in his attempt to extend health care coverage, he has faced massive opposition from the elites of wealth and power and their allies in the media, and this has often led him to compromise on principled issues in ways that have undermined the value of some of the programs that actually got passed. We see all this as a reflection of our own failures to build a movement for social change that does not depend on a given political party or political leader but rather mobilizes us ordinary people to struggle for global environmental survival, justice, and peace. These failures on the part of the liberals in Congress and the Obama administration, plus our own failures, have generated a deep disappointment commensurate with the deep hopes we harbored in 2008. It's a disappointment that has created the space for the emergence of right-wing quasi-fascist forces and a deeply reactionary mood that is now shaping public discussions and may soon shape our national government as well.

In the United States, Israel, and most other advanced industrial countries, this year's High Holidays once again come at a time of massive hypocrisy, nationalist chauvinism, repression of civil liberties and human rights, environmental destructiveness, and denial of the most critical issues facing

our planet. We continue to ignore the basic problems that plague the global human community, such as starvation, disease, and impending ecological crisis. Instead of attending to these problems, we persist in the "war against terrorism"—now switched in focus to Afghanistan and Pakistan, while tens of thousands of troops remain as "advisers" in Iraq—which we use to justify military aggression against countries whose regimes we abhor. There still is too little attention to the daily suffering of 2.8 billion people on the planet living on less than two dollars a day, or the 850 million people who are hungry, or the 12,000 to 20,000 children who, according to UN estimates, die *every single day* of starvation or of preventable diseases related to malnutrition.

Too many of our synagogues and churches condoned Israel's behavior toward Palestinians and the killing of more than 1,600 Gazans in December of 2008 and January of 2009, then joined in denouncing the UN commission chaired by its Jewish chair Judge Goldstone when it reported on the human rights violations committed by Israel (and by Hamas), just as they joined in justifying Israel's attack on the Gaza Aid Flotilla in June of 2010. Instead of honestly and publicly atoning for the sins that Israel has perpetrated this past year, Jewish spokespeople once again deflected the conversation to the sins of the Palestinian people or their supporters.

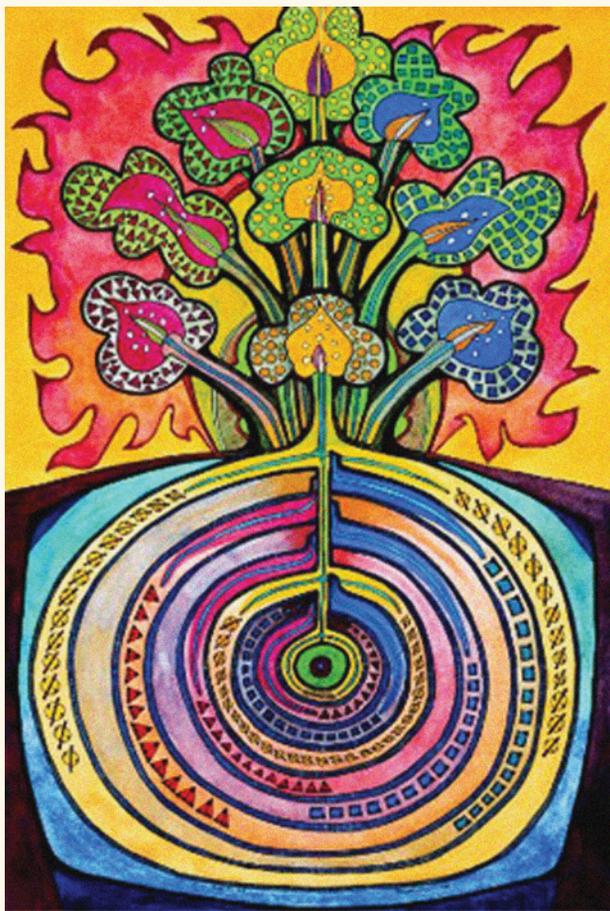
Yet even as we atone for the outrageous behavior that is an inevitable part of the Occupation that has been going on since 1967, we also join those who decry the violence of Hamas, the bombings of Sderot and other southern Israel cities, the intransigence of many Palestinians in not unequivocally recognizing the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state within the





pre-1967 boundaries, the hate-filled statement toward Jews articulated by some of the leadership in Iran and by some extremist elements within the Muslim world, and the acts of violence and destruction of property against some Jews around the world by those who blame all Jews for the sins of some.

Meanwhile, many Jews interpret righteous indignation at Israeli behavior toward Palestinians as anti-Semitism. Indeed, to the extent that the Jewish people and our institutions worldwide continue to oppose all attempts by governments and human rights groups to push Israel to end the Occupation, and allow Israel to claim to speak in the name of the Jewish people, we as Jews do in fact take on some responsibility for Israeli behavior. We cannot say, “Hey, that’s just Israel—it’s not us Jews,” unless we are actively and publicly involved in organizations such as the Tikkun Community/Network of Spiritual Progressives, J Street, Jewish Voice for Peace, or others that are saying much more than the rather weak “Don’t expand existing settlements, and get back to negotiations.” The suffering of the Palestinian people is in fact our responsibility—and it is not negotiations we want, but to end the Occupation of the West Bank and to free the people of Gaza from all Israeli-imposed restrictions on travel to the West Bank or to the rest of the world, restrictions on exporting goods to the rest of the world, or any other restrictions other than those on the importation of weapons!



“The Big Bang” (previous page) and “Tree of Life” (above) by David Friedman

We Jews, stuck in Holocaust memories from more than sixty-five years ago, are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. With compassion and kindness, we need to encourage our people to recover, to recognize that we are no longer powerless but powerful, and then to strive to *make Israel a country that becomes internationally famous not for its arbitrary power over others, but for its generosity and caring for the Palestinian people and for all the people of the region in which Jews have chosen to live.*

If you do go to synagogue, you’ll hear the Haftorah on Yom Kippur in which Isaiah recounts God’s message: “Is not this the fast that I desire: to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, and unloose the bonds of oppression?” And yet, you’ll find few synagogues organizing their people to help promote the Global Marshall Plan, the Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, or anything similar. They’ll engage in a monthly “feed the poor” or “house the homeless” activity, and label that their “*tikkun olam* activities,” but few will engage in active campaigns to change the larger economic policies and presuppositions of the capitalist system that have led to increased poverty and homelessness and the triumph of a global ethos of selfishness and materialism.

We at *Tikkun* encourage you to stand up for the vision of the prophets for a world of peace, justice, and love. And yet try to do it with compassion for our fellow human beings, fellow Americans (yes, those in the Red States as well as the Blue States), and our fellow Jews (even the ones who demean and slander us) because they, like us, are flawed and yet also beautiful embodiments of the spirit of God. Our righteous indignation, so very necessary, must be balanced with compassion and love and forgiveness.

It’s easy to feel righteous indignation about the distortions of the United States or Israel, but don’t let that keep you from facing your own personal issues as well. Just as we advocate compassion for the United States and Israel, and celebrating of the good parts of them while strongly critiquing what is wrong with them, so also do we urge you to use this period to do your own inner work with compassion for yourself, while still being honest enough to really evaluate and then form plans for how to change those aspects of your own personal being that need transformation. We at *Tikkun* and in the Network of Spiritual Progressives know full well how much we need to do this work ourselves.

To acknowledge our own screw-ups is an important first step. But the High Holidays are not about getting ourselves to feel guilty, but rather engaging in a process of change. If we don’t make those changes internally and in our communities and in our society, all the breast-beating and self-criticism become an empty ritual.

In many situations and relationships, you are not the only part of the problem—but for the sake of this process, it is *your part* that you are to focus on, not the part contributed by your partner, spouse, parents, children, friends, etc. Begin to work on your part during these ten days of repentance/teshuvah!

On these days, our focus is not on what others did to us, but on what we ourselves did to lessen our connection to our highest possible selves and to our highest manifestation of the God energy of the universe!



What is spiritually out of alignment in my relationships with...

	PROBLEM	WHAT YOU CONTRIBUTE TO IT
<i>Parents</i>	1. 2.	
<i>Spouse or Partner</i>	1. 2.	
<i>Friends</i>	1. 2.	
<i>Children</i>	1. 2.	

How spiritually nourishing is your work?

What have been the problems you've faced here? Have you had good relationships with co-workers? Have you felt fulfilled in your work? Have you been involved in collective efforts to change the workplace, or the union, or tried to organize—or have you felt powerless and unable to envision changing anything? If you were in a supervisory position, did you treat your supervisees with the respect that they deserve? Did you discharge anger from work by punishing yourself (e.g., through alcohol or drugs) or by dumping on friends or lovers—or did you express that anger at the appropriate targets or through collective action? Have you taken any of the steps to fight for a “new bottom line” at work?

See www.spiritualprogressives.org for ideas on how to do this.

	PROBLEM	WHAT YOU CONTRIBUTE TO IT
<i>Relationship to co-workers.</i>		
<i>Relationship to supervisors or supervisees.</i>		

- How healthy were your coping mechanisms for stress at work?
- Did you inappropriately blame yourself, or dump anger inappropriately on others?
- What kind of political action did you take in relationship to work?



Did you show adequate respect for your body?

Did you care for your body this past year? If not, what didn't you do that you should have done?

Eating

Exercise

Vacations

Clothing, Appearance, and Self-Presentation

Quiet Time or Meditation

Are you taking enough time to nourish your soul?

- Did you care for your soul this past year? If not, what didn't you do that you should have done? In what ways did you care for your soul this past year?
- In what ways did you neglect your soul? Did your soul give you any messages that you ignored? What were they?
- Did you take time to read books that would have expanded your awareness of spiritual life? If not, what do you want to read this next year? Did you give yourself alone time for meditation, for prayer, or for walks in nature?
- Did you take the time to read other books that would have given you pleasure and joy? If not, what do you want to read this next year?
- What courses (evening schools in liberal arts or a new profession, art programs, Hebrew, Jewish studies, studying a new musical instrument, learning about another culture or philosophical tradition) did you take to expand your horizons? What would you like to take this next year?
- What pleasures did you give to yourself this year? Which do you want to expand or initiate this coming year? Did you allow yourself to go to art exhibits, plays, musical concerts, poetry readings, discussion groups, community political action activities, or other events that would have given you pleasure? What do you want to do in this regard in the next year?
- In what ways did you explore your relationship with God this past year? In what ways did you ignore that dimension of life? Did you read any books, attend lectures or courses, or dedicate time to exploring the spiritual dimension of your life?

Are you giving real energy to *tikkun olam*, to healing and repairing the world?

- Which of our society's political, economic, or social institutions have destructive consequences to the environment, social justice, or our capacity to be loving and compassionate human beings? Have you challenged any of them in the public arena?
- What concrete steps have you taken to be involved? What will you personally do to change the status quo? Will you support the Global Marshall Plan or the Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (both can be read at spiritualprogressives.org)? If not, what will you actually do or what campaigns or projects will you support with your money and/or your time?
- If you haven't been involved, what were the reasons you gave yourself? Which of those reasons presupposed a "surplus powerlessness" (a way in which you were actually assuming yourself less able to initiate things or take leadership than is "objectively" true)? In what ways did you buy the message that "they will never listen," or, "I can never get things to happen," or, "I'm not powerful enough to start something so I'll wait for someone else—like President Obama—to do it," or, "Other people are not together enough, or too immoral, or too passive, so there's no point in me trying to mobilize them," or other similar messages?
- If you tried to be involved, and had hassles or disappointments with other people in the process, what were those and what part did you have in making or sustaining them? What did you do to confront the problems directly? Would you be open to working with the Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP), *Tikkun*, Beyt Tikkun, the One Campaign, the School of the Americas Watch, 350.org, the B'Tselem (Israeli Human Rights Organization), J Street, Jewish Voice for Peace, Pax Christi, Zen Peacemakers, Evangelicals for Social Action, UUA, Baptist Peace Fellowship, or some other national organization doing work with ideals in which you can believe, *and which one will you commit to now and stick with the commitment?*

Did you help build a connection to Judaism and the Jewish world or to whatever spiritual tradition or discipline makes sense to you?

- How much did you seek to deepen your knowledge of Judaism, Jewish history, Jewish texts, or the culture of the Jewish people or of Israel? Or of whatever other religious tradition or spiritual discipline speaks to you? What opportunities were there and what were the reasons you gave yourself for why this year wasn't the right time? Will you make time for this in this New Year?
- Did you allow yourself to take twenty-five hours out of your busy schedule once each week to observe Shabbat or some similar weekly spiritual practice in a traditional way? Did you meditate, pray, say the prayer of forgiveness before going to sleep, or some other spiritual practice? How fulfilling or spiritually deep did you allow it to be? If it wasn't, what explanations did you give yourself for why it wasn't working? What could you personally do to make that spiritual practice or some other spiritual practice work for you on a daily or at least a weekly basis?

ועל כלם אלוה סליחות, סלח לנו, מחל לנו, כפר לנו.

Teshuvah “partner” or support group

We encourage you to get a teshuvah partner—someone who can support you to be serious about the process and someone who doesn't have a personal stake in the decisions you make about how you will live your life this coming year.

The partner's task is not to make concrete suggestions, but to encourage you to explore all the possibilities that you might face as you consider how you might wish to transform your life. After you've done this exploring, switch roles so that you become the facilitator, and you encourage your teshuvah partner to face the possibilities of change.

Partner's name or names of people in the support group:

(Use a separate piece of paper if necessary)

Home Phone: _____

Work Phone: _____

Do not convey the impression that you know that a particular road is the right one for this person. Instead, keep asking about a wide variety of options, and help the person consider these options through asking, whenever a stumbling block appears, whether that person can think of any ways to get around it. After Yom Kippur, check in with each other once a month to see how you are doing on keeping to your current intentions.

CHECKING IN WITH EACH OTHER

During the week, arrange to talk to your teshuvah partner every day (yes, every day). The phone call can be as short as, “Did you get to work on your teshuvah work today? If not, do you want to do it now on the phone? If not now, is there some time later today we can discuss it?” On Shabbat, arrange for a time to get together (one hour, half of which goes to one person, half to the other, to explore both of your issues and the steps you are taking).

For Our Sins

A Supplement to the High Holiday Prayerbook (not a replacement).

We invite you to use the following along with the traditional confessional prayer, *Al Cheyt*, recited on Yom Kippur. Bring your own list to Yom Kippur services—don't just go through the rote of reading the traditional “sins” that don't actually speak to our contemporary reality. If you are not Jewish or not going to any High Holiday service, use this at your home or with your friends any time during these ten days of repentance!

READ OUT LOUD IN YOUR SYNAGOGUE OR REPENTANCE GROUP:

On the Jewish High Holidays, or whenever we are doing repentance work, we take collective responsibility for our own lives and for the activities of the community and society of which we are a part. We affirm our fundamental interdependence and interconnectedness. We have allowed others to be victims of incredible suffering, have turned our backs on others and their well-being, and yet today we acknowledge that this world is co-created by all of us, and so we atone for all of it.

While the struggle to change ourselves and our world may be long and painful, it is our struggle; no one else can do it for us. To the extent that we have failed to do all that we could to make ourselves and our community all that we ought to be, we ask God and each other for forgiveness—and we now commit ourselves to transformation this coming year, as we seek to get back on the path to our highest possible selves.

Chant: Ve-al kulam, Eloha selichot, selach lanu, mechal lanu, kaper lanu.

For all our sins, may the Force that makes forgiveness possible forgive us, pardon us, and make atonement possible.

For the sins we have committed before You and in our communities by being so preoccupied with ourselves that we ignore the larger problems of the world;

And for the sins we have committed by being so directed toward outward realities that we have ignored our spiritual development;

For the sins committed in the name of the American people through our invasions of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, and the violence we used to achieve our ends;

And for the sin of not rebuilding what we have destroyed in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan;

For failing to prosecute those in our government who enabled the torture of prisoners around the world and in American detention centers and the denial of habeas corpus and other fundamental human rights;

And for the sin of not demanding that our elected representatives provide affordable health care and prescription drugs for everyone, and for the sin of not demanding that they make the dramatic changes that are needed to save the planet or to lessen the power of big money to shape our democratic process to serve the interests of the corporations and the wealthy;

For the sin of those of us in the West hoarding the world's wealth and not sharing with the 2.5 billion people who live on less than two dollars a day;

And for the sin of supporting forms of globalization that are destructive to nature and to the economic well-being of the powerless;

For the sins of all who became so concerned with “making it” and becoming rich that they pursued banking and investment policies that were destructive not only to their investors but to the entire society;

And for the sins of blaming all Muslims for the extremism of a few and ignoring the extremism and violence emanating from our own society;

For the sin of being cynical about the possibility of building a world based on love;

And for the sin of dulling our outrage at the continuation of poverty, oppression, and violence in this world;





For the sin of not being vigilant stewards of the planet and instead allowing the water resources of the world to be bought up by private companies for private profit;

And for the sin of allowing our media and elected officials to have no problem finding the monies to make wars in Afghanistan, maintain troops in Iraq and Japan and drones in Pakistan, to support close to one thousand U.S. military bases worldwide, and to bail out the banks and the large corporations—only raising questions of where the money will come from and the dangers of inflation when addressing health care reform, environmental measures, or aid to the unemployed, the homeless, and those facing crushing debt or impossible-to-pay mortgages;

For the sin of not doing enough to challenge racist, sexist, and homophobic institutions and practices;

And for the sin of turning our backs on the world's refugees and on the homeless in our own society, allowing them to be demeaned, assaulted, and persecuted;

For the sin of not sharing responsibility for child-rearing;

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

For the sin of being so concerned about our own personal tax benefits that we failed to oppose tax cuts that would bankrupt social services;

And for the sin of not taking the leaflets or not opening the emails of those who tried to inform us of what was going on in the world that required our moral attention;

For the sin of spreading negative stories about people we know;

And for the sin of being passive recipients of negativity or listening and allowing others to spread hurtful stories;

For the sin of being “realistic” when our tradition calls upon us to transform reality;

And for the sin of being too attached to our own picture of how our lives should be—and never taking the risks that could bring us a more fulfilling and meaningful life.

For these sins we ask the Force of Healing and Transformation to give us the strength to forgive ourselves and each other.

For the sins we have committed by not forgiving our parents for the wrongs they committed against us when we were children;

And for the sin of having too little compassion or too little respect for our parents or for our children or our friends when they act in ways that disappoint or hurt us;

For the sin of cooperating with self-destructive behavior in others or in ourselves;

And for the sin of not supporting each other as we attempt to change;

For the sin of being jealous and trying to possess and control those we love;

And for the sin of being judgmental;

For the sin of withholding love and support;

And for the sin of doubting our ability to love and get love from others;

For the sin of insisting that everything we do have a payoff;

And for the sin of not allowing ourselves to play;

For the sin of not giving our partners and friends the love and support they need to feel safe and to flourish;

And for the sin of being manipulative or hurting others to protect our own egos.

Chant: Ve-al kulam, Eloha selichot, selach lanu, mechal lanu, kaper lanu.

For the sins we have committed by not publicly supporting the Jewish people and Israel when they are being criticized or treated unfairly; or for not challenging unfair singling out of Israel for criticism by our allies in the anti-war movement;

And for the sins we have committed by not publicly criticizing Israel or the Jewish people when they are acting in opposition to the highest principles of the Jewish tradition;

For the sin of not taking anti-Semitism seriously when it manifests around the world, among our friends, or in our community;

And for the sin of seeing anti-Semitism everywhere, and using the charge of anti-Semitism to silence those who raise legitimate (though painful to hear) criticisms of Israeli policies;

For the sin of allowing the Jewish community to portray itself as the innocent victim and for allowing Holocaust trauma to legitimate oppressive treatment of others;

And for the sin of being so disheartened that we stopped paying attention to the details of what is happening in the West Bank and Gaza—thereby ignoring the massive suffering that a self-described Jewish state imposes on others;

For the sin of blaming the entire Palestinian people for (inexcusable and murderous) acts of violence by a handful of terrorists—and then cutting off water, food, and access to medical care for more than one million people;

And for the sin of bulldozing Palestinian homes, killing Palestinian children, and torturing, assassinating, and oppressing the Palestinian people;

For the sins that Israel committed by creating the checkpoints that make travel an unbearable hassle for many Palestinians and by creating a separation wall that effectively grabs up more portions of Palestinian land;

And for the sins that American Jews have committed by giving blind loyalty to the Israeli far-right lobby and believing that the critics of that lobby must somehow be disloyal or alienated from the Jewish people or from Israel;

For the sin of teaching hatred about Palestinians and Muslims, and then claiming that it is only they who teach hatred;

And for the sin of portraying every Palestinian or Muslim as a hater;

For the sin of condemning Palestinian or Muslim extremists as typical, while “understanding” our own and claiming that they are exceptions to our normal generous and kind attitudes;

And for the sin of insisting that there is no “moral equivalence” between the deaths of innocent Israeli civilians and the deaths of innocent Palestinian civilians;

For the sins of tribalism, chauvinism, and thinking our pain is more important than anyone else's pain;

And for the sin of allowing religious and communal institutions, colleges and universities, government and politics, the media, and the entertainment industry to be shaped by those with the most money, rather than those with the most spiritual and ethical sensitivity;

For the sin of not putting our money and our time behind our highest ideals;

And for the sin of not learning the Jewish tradition; not studying Jewish history, literature, and holy texts; and not learning the depth, wisdom, and meaning for our lives that can be found in Jewish spirituality and prayer and on a Jewish path;

For the sin of thinking that our path is the only path to spiritual truth;

And for the sin of allowing conservative or insensitive leaders to speak on behalf of all American Jews;

For the sin of not providing public support and financial backing to the few Jewish leaders, organizations, and publications that do actually speak our values;

And for the sin of not recognizing and celebrating the beauty and grandeur of the universe that surrounds us;

For the sin of not seeing the spirit of God in others;

And for the sin of not recognizing and nurturing the spirit of God within ourselves;

For the sin of not praying, meditating, or giving adequate attention to the needs of our soul;

And for the sin of focusing only on our sins and not on our strengths and beauties;

For the sin of not transcending ego so we could see ourselves and each other as we are: manifestations of God's loving energy on earth.

Chant: Ve'al kulam Elohai Selichot, selach lanu, mechal lanu, kaper lanu.

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

Repentance is not meant only as an exercise to help us feel better, but also as the beginning of organizing our personal and communal lives to begin the process of changing. To join with others in this sacred work, please join the Network of Spiritual Progressives and *Tikkun*. www.spiritualprogressives.org or rabbilemer@tikkun.org. Composed by Rabbi Michael Lerner, editor, *Tikkun* magazine, for Yom Kippur 5771.

Why a New Translation of the New Testament?

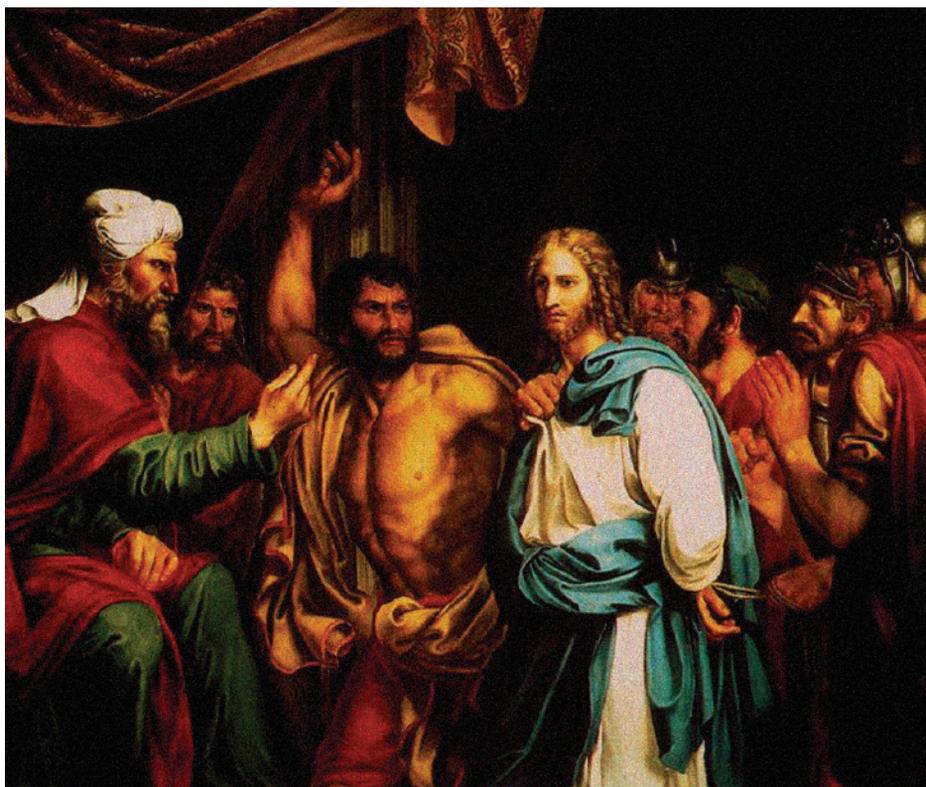
by Willis Barnstone

THE FIRST TRANSLATION OF THE NEW Testament directly from the Greek into English was made by William Tyndale in 1526 to bring holy scripture to the people. Before Tyndale only the Latin Vulgate was permitted, thereby limiting its reading mainly to the Latin-educated clergy. For flouting the English bishopric, in 1536 Tyndale was strangled and burned at the stake in Antwerp, where he was hiding. Tyndale did his fresh version so that, citing his Dutch model Erasmus, “the word of the gospels should reach the eyes of all women, Scots and Irishmen, even Turks and Saracens, and especially the farm worker at the plow and the weaver at the loom.” As the Protestant Reformation took hold, soon there was a flood of new translations into the European vernaculars, and especially into English.

Why the new translations? As religious sects diversify and change, so too do literary conventions for making speech contemporary and natural. Hence, each age and major denomination has demanded a new English version of the Bible. The King James Version (1611) had its literary and spiritual aims, which appear in beautiful metaphor in the first line of the prefatory: “Translators to the Reader: Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light.”

As a Greek scholar, I undertook a new translation of the New Testament (*The Restored New Testament: A New Translation with Commentary, Including the Gnostic Gospels Thomas, Mary, and Judas*) to give a chastely modern, literary version of a major world text. I translated as verse what is verse in the New Testament, as in Yeshua’s speech (Yeshua was probably Jesus’s name in his lifetime), the authentic Paul letters, and the epic poem of Apocalypse, following a practice that has prevailed in lineating Hebrew poetry as poetry (as in the Song of Songs, Psalms, Job, and the Prophets) since the nineteenth-century Scrivener Cambridge Bible (1873).

On all questions of faith versus fact, I take a neutral stance and address them in the annotations. As far as possible, I limit these matters to indicating a historical context of biblical happenings, always with the awareness that more is unknown than known. (Events recounted in the gospels are essentially theologically framed accounts confined to the gospels themselves, with no confirming external documentary evidence. The few references to Jesus outside of the gospels tell us little and are problematic with respect to historicity.) As to



The essential drama of the New Testament as it has been translated until now, argues Willis Barnstone, involves the divine Jesus persecuted by the evil and malicious Jews, as portrayed above in “Jesús ante el Sumo Sacerdote” (Jesus before the High Priest) by José de Madrazo Agudo (1781-1859). Barnstone’s translation restores Rabbi Yeshua (as Jesus was probably known in his lifetime) and his followers to their Jewish identity and thus portrays the conflict as an intra-Jewish one.

Willis Barnstone is a writer of comparative literature, biblical studies, and poetry, as well as a translator. A Guggenheim Fellow and Pulitzer Prize finalist in poetry, Barnstone is Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature at Indiana University.

denominations—Jewish, Christian, Muslim—while respecting all views, I have no pitch for any camp. I hope this “bible as literature” version will appeal to those who want to read the finest examples of ancient story, myth, letter, and the surreal poetry of Apocalypse. There is no more polemic or proselytizing here than were this book a new version of the *Odyssey* or of Sappho’s fragments. And I hope they will elicit love for these extraordinary world scriptures as well as sadness and dismay before the unrelenting pursuit of hatred for Jesus’s coreligionists, the Jews.

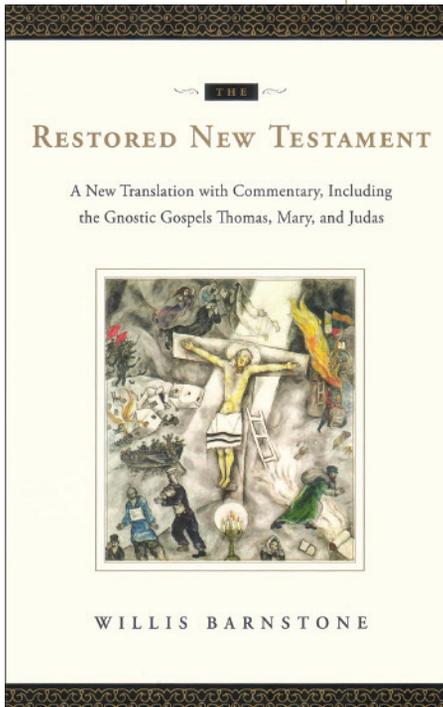
Jesus the Jew

AS A SECULAR JEW AWARE OF THE TRAGIC HISTORICAL FATE OF JEWS AT THE HANDS OF Christians incited by the New Testament, I present ideas that may radically alter popular reception of scripture and profoundly diminish its inherent anti-Judaism. My new translation makes clear that Christianity is the child of Judaism, having its first-century origin in Jerusalem as one of the diverse Jewish messianic sects vying for domination.

In our day some Christian theologians speak of Jesus as a Jew. In the past, almost no one did. Can anyone read Plato’s *Republic* and not realize he was a Greek? No. Why should the ethnic and religious identity of the central figure in the emerging sect be concealed? The Jews are on each page, yet always portrayed as the evil opponents of a deracinated Jesus who has neither ethnicity nor religion. Hence, for two millennia the identity of Jesus, the later acclaimed messiah, the central figure in the New Testament, has remained obscure. Even the rabidly efficient Gestapo—which unmasked and condemned Jewish composers such as Mendelssohn, poets such as Heine, and philosophers such as Spinoza—never condemned Jesus, the most famous Jew in history. Neither did they jail or execute any of the Christian clergy and parishioners for following the creed of this errant Jew from Galilee. Jesus passed. By a rhetorical but illogical twist in dramatic plot, by making every wicked character a Jew, Jesus and company suddenly cease to be Jews. Though the gospels and letters are texts written by, for, and about Jews, the biblical figures’ Semitic identity is concealed, including that of the Samaritans, one of the diverse Jewish sects. Was Jesus not circumcised on the eighth day? (Luke 2:21). Did a roving rabbi called Yeshua (Joshua in King James Version English) not teach in the temples?

Something is hugely wrong. But examine the Greek text and the hoax becomes clear. A reasonable reading of the Greek, one would think, should reveal that Jesus was a Jew. Jesus is addressed as “rabbi” sixteen times in the gospels. In the Greek scripture his epithet is “rabbi,” but not in its English translation, nor in other tongues. The cover-up in the translation, or, more properly, the identity theft, is seamless. While the Greek reads, “And Peter said to Jesus, *Rabbi*, it is good that we are here” the King James Version of Mark 9:5 falsifies the meaning, rendering, “And Peter answered and said to Jesus, *Master*, is it good for us to be here.” In other translations, “rabbi” is regularly “lord,” “master,” “teacher,” or “sir.” But not “rabbi.” By a deliberate forging of the translation, Jesus’s religion and ethnicity are obscured. Were his religious and ethnic identity clear, the traditional understanding of scripture would be radically different, and the demonization of selective Jews suspect. Had even one world authority in the past forcefully objected, the history of discrimination, expulsion, and slaughter might have taken a different turn, and the ancient rabbi Jesus might have been celebrated as the crucified rabbi of later Christianity. So too Peter, Andrew, Paul, and Matthew, his fellow coreligionists, might have been seen as celebrated Jewish figures. Such a reading is not radical but common sense.

As a result of the belligerently anti-Jewish gospels and church, bolstered by popular mistranslation and misreading, Yeshua’s Jewish identity has eluded virtually all readers, and this illusion has remained dominant at the center of Christian reception of the New Testament. Some contemporary scholars and informed readers today know better, but the anachronistic portrayal of Yeshua and his circle as later Christians among enemy Jews permits an unquestioned abhorrence of the Jew and is a logical, understandable, and inevitable reading of the New Testament as we have it. So the anomaly persists of loving Yeshua and despising his people, the religion he practiced, and the Jewish Bible that was his (*continued on page 89*)



ESRA: Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

(As proposed by *Tikkun* and The Network of Spiritual Progressives)
www.spiritualprogressives.org

Since the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision in 2010 enabled unlimited funding of U.S. elections by corporations, there has been some—but not nearly enough—discussion about how to reverse the appalling effects this will have on our democracy and our world. Some believe that legislation can do it. Many progressives are convinced a constitutional amendment is the only way because the current Supreme Court, which is the most right-wing court of the past seventy years, would likely declare any legislation unconstitutional. After the British Petroleum (BP) contamination of the Gulf of Mexico and the defeat by Congress of comprehensive legislation to lower carbon emissions, the urgent necessity for a comprehensive constitutional amendment requiring corporate environmental and social responsibility has become even clearer.

We invite you to read our Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment (ESRA) and to review the Q&A that follows to understand why we have gone further than other amendments proposed to deal with the core problems of corporate power and the need for environmental responsibility. The Q&A explains why we chose the approach we did in the details of this amendment (including why it is so long and so technical).

We also invite other organizations to join us in coalition to cosponsor the ESRA, and we in turn will support any more narrowly focused amendments that would simply overturn the *Citizens United* decision of the Supreme Court.

A campaign for an amendment requires a huge expenditure of energy over the course of many, many years. If we are to do that, why not use that energy to put forward an amendment that would actually achieve the goal of enhancing the power of ordinary Americans in elections and would make a substantial advance in protecting the environment? Linking environmental concerns and concerns to enhance democratic rights of all our citizens could generate the kind of broad support necessary to win a campaign that would make our planet safer and our democratic rights more secure.

We believe that even if our arguments don't yet persuade you, the events of the coming years will do so. We urge you to read the ESRA in full. And we'd like to invite you to join the Network of Spiritual Progressives, which will be spearheading the campaign, and to help us get endorsements from religious institutions, NGOs, your political party, your local community organizations, your college or university, your professional organizations, and your local and federal elected officials and candidates for office—and send that information to us at info@spiritualprogressives.org.

Please endorse the ESRA at www.spiritualprogressives.org or mail us the petition on page 38.

ESRA: Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

The intent of the framers of this amendment is to accomplish the following:

- Protect the planet Earth and its inhabitants from environmentally destructive economic arrangements and behavior and increase environmental responsibility on the part of all corporations and government bodies.
- Increase U.S. citizens' democratic control over American economic and political institutions and ensure that all people, regardless of income, have the same electoral clout, influence, and power to shape our government's policies and programs.
- Promote the well-being of the citizens of the United States by creating new checks and balances to ensure that public policy at every level of government reflects the recognition that our well-being depends on the well-being of the planet and all its inhabitants, and to recognize that our well-being in the United States urgently requires an end to global poverty, wars (under any name or formulation that involves the use of violence), and both overt and institutional violence and also depends on the rise of a new global ethic of genuine caring and mutual interdependence.

Article One: The Pro-Democracy Clause

A. The First and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution shall apply only to human beings, not to corporations,



Big Oil hasn't only devastated the Gulf of Mexico—it has also fouled the mangrove swamps and fisheries of Africa's Niger Delta and the Amazon (above). Ecuadoreans—who have been fighting Texaco/Chevron for dumping 18.5 billion gallons of toxic waste into their drinking water—have made new allies since the BP Gulf disaster. It's time to stand up to Big Oil and all corporations.

limited liability associations, and other artificial entities created by the laws of the United States.

- B. Money or other currency shall not be considered a form of speech within the meaning of the First Amendment to the Constitution, and its expenditure is subject to regulation by Congress and by the legislatures of the several states.
- C. Congress shall regulate the amount of money used to disseminate ideas or shape public opinion in any federal election in order to assure that all major points of view regarding issues and candidates receive equal exposure to the greatest extent possible. Congress shall fund all major candidates for the House, Senate, and presidency in all major elections and in primaries for the nomination for president by major parties (those which have obtained at least 5 percent of the vote in the last election for president) or any party that can obtain the signatures of at least 5 percent of the relevant electorate for any given office who are not already registered voters of another party.
- D. In the two months prior to a primary for those seeking a national office, and for the three months prior to any general election for a national office (the presidency, the House of Representatives, or the U.S. Senate), all media or any other means of mass communication reaching more than 300,000 people shall provide equal time without charge to all major presidential candidates to present their views for at least an hour at least once a week, and equal time at least once every two weeks for congressional and senatorial candidates, during that media agency's prime time (when it is most widely listened to or viewed). The candidates shall determine the form and content of that communication. Print media reaching more than 300,000 people shall provide equal space in the news, editorial, or most frequently read section of the newspaper or magazine or blog site or other means of communication that may be developed in the future. During the three months prior to an election, no candidate, no political party, and no organization seeking to influence public policy may buy time in any media or form of mass communication or any other form of mass advertising, including on the Internet. Major candidates shall be defined thus:

1. Those who have at least 5 percent of support as judged by the average of at least ten independent polling firms, at least two of which are selected by the candidates deemed "not major," three months before any given election.



Garment workers participate in an anti-poverty rally in Dhaka, Bangladesh, October 2009. Textiles account for almost 75 percent of Bangladesh's export earnings, employing more than 2.4 million people, mostly women. Are we Americans going to act in solidarity with these women to eliminate poverty?

2. Or any candidate who can collect the signatures of 5 percent of the number of people who voted in the primary for their party's nomination election, when considering primary elections, and, when considering general elections, any candidate who receives signatures of 5 percent of the number of people who voted in the general election for that office the last time that office was contested. These petitions can only be signed by people eligible to vote in the relevant electoral districts and by people who are not registered voters in another political party. Every state shall develop similar provisions aimed at allowing candidates for governorships and state legislatures to be freed from their dependence on wealthy donors or corporations.
- E. In the two months prior to any primary election for national office and in the three months prior to any general election for national office, no political party or any other organization or individual may use private money (that is, money not supplied by the government) for the purpose of supporting a political candidate, political party, or point of view closely associated with a given party or candidate. However, in recognition that the existing major parties (those that have received at least 20 percent of the vote in the last election for whatever particular office is now up for election) have already had extensive opportunities to get their voices heard, while minor parties or candidates have not had an equal opportunity in large part because of scarcity of funds or scarcity of opportunity to present their views to the public, these non-major parties and candidates are freed from the restrictions to spend private monies, with the following considerations:
1. No individual or group may donate more than \$1,500 to any candidate or party.
 2. No profit-oriented corporation, or nonprofit that is identified with the interests of any for-profit corporation or group of for-profit corporations or organizations may donate to

these minor parties or candidates, directly or indirectly, under the terms of this clause, Article One, Section E.

3. Courts shall interpret this provision broadly to ensure that individuals, groups, organizations, or corporations whose actual intention is to protect the interest of the rich and the powerful shall not be able to spend monies to disproportionately influence the outcome of elections or public policy debates.

Article Two: Corporate Environmental and Social Responsibility

- A. Every citizen of the United States and every organization chartered by the United States and/or by any of its several states, and any corporation doing business in the United States shall have a responsibility to promote the ethical, environmental, and social well-being of all life on the planet Earth.

This being so, corporations chartered by Congress and/or by the several states shall demonstrate the ethical, environmental, and social impact of their proposed activities at the time they seek permission to operate.

In addition, any corporation operating within the United States, whether based in the United States or in any other location, or operating through electronic or other means of global or local communication reaching more than one million citizens of the United States, or with yearly gross receipts in excess of \$100 million, shall obtain a new corporate charter (or if chartered outside the United States, permission to operate within the United States or to communicate directly or indirectly to U.S. citizens with the intent of selling products or services or with the intent of influencing public opinion or government policies) every five years. This charter (or permission, in the case of a corporation chartered or licensed by a country other than the United States) shall be granted only if the corporation can prove a satisfactory history of environmental, social, and ethical responsibility to a grand jury of ordinary citizens chosen at random from the voting rolls of the U.S. city



In 2008 candidate Obama criticized private security contractors—shadowy mercenaries critical to the Bush administration’s wars—for their lack of accountability. In office he has continued to expand the use of contractors like Blackwater, now renamed Xe (above, in a firefight with Iraqi demonstrators in 2004). Is this what the American empire has come to: corporations fighting wars for corporate interests?

or town in which the greatest number of corporate employees work.

Factors to be considered by the grand jury in determining whether a corporation will be granted a charter shall include but not be limited to the following:

1. The degree to which the products produced or services provided are beneficial rather than destructive to the planet and its oceans, forests, water supplies, land, and air, and the degree to which the corporation’s decisions help ensure that the resources of the earth are available to future generations.
2. The degree to which it pays a living wage to all its employees and the employees of any contractors with which it does business, either in the United States or abroad, and arranges its pay scale such that none of its employees or contractors or members of its board of directors or officers of the corporation earn (in direct and indirect benefits combined) more than ten times the wages of its lowest full-time wage earners; the degree to which it provides equal benefits including health care, child care, retirement pensions, sick pay, and vacation time to all employees; the degree to which its employees enjoy satisfactory safety and health conditions; and the degree to which it regularly adopts and uses indicators of its productivity and success that include factors regarding human well-being, satisfaction and participation in work, and involvement in community service by its employees and members of its top management and board of directors.
3. The degree to which it supports the needs of the communities in which it operates and in which its employees live, including the degree to which it resists the temptation to move assets or jobs to other locations where it can pay workers less or provide weaker environmental and worker protections.
4. The degree to which it encourages significant democratic participation by all its employees in corporate decision making; the degree to which it discloses to its employees and investors and the public its economic situation, the factors shaping its past decisions, and its attempts to influence public discourse and public policies; and the degree to which it follows democratic procedures internally.
5. The degree to which it treats its employees, its customers, and the people and communities in which it operates with adequate respect and genuine caring for their well-being and rewards its employees to the extent that they engage in behaviors that manifest genuine caring, respect, kindness, generosity, and ethical and environmentally sensitive practices.
6. The degree to which its investment decisions enhance and promote the economic, social, and ethical welfare, and physical and mental health and well-being of the communities in which its products may be produced, sold, or advertised, and/or the communities from which it draws raw materials.

AP PHOTO/GERVASIO SANCHEZ

7. In the case of banks, stock markets, investment firms, and other corporations whose activities include the lending or investing of monies, in addition to the issues 1–6 above, the degree to which the financial institution directs the flow of money to socially and/or environmentally useful activities, including supporting nonprofits serving the most disadvantaged of the society, and including financing local business cooperatives and local community banks and to support low-income and middle-income housing with affordable mortgages rather than directing the money to speculators in finance, real estate, or other commercial activities; the degree to which it forgives loans previously given to poverty-stricken countries; the degree to which it refrains from engaging in misleading advertising or hiding the costs of its services in small print or language not readily understood by many consumers, and refrains from engaging in aggressive marketing of monies for loans or preying on the most economically vulnerable; the degree to which it offers no-interest loans to those with incomes below the mean average income in the society; and the degree to which it seeks to directly fund socially useful projects and small businesses.

In making these determinations, the jury shall solicit testimony from the corporation's board of directors, from its employees, and from its stakeholders (those whose lives have been impacted by the operations of the corporation) in the United States and around the world. The U.S. government shall supply funds to provide adequate means for the jury to do its investigations, to hire staff to do relevant investigations, and to compensate jurors at a level comparable to the mean average income in the region in which the deliberations of the jury take place, or at the level of the jurors' current income, whichever is higher. The jury shall also have the power to subpoena witnesses and documents or other information relevant to the proceedings, and the U.S. government shall prosecute any who refuse to supply relevant information reasonably connected to the jury's task of assessing corporate environmental and social responsibility.

If the grand jury is not satisfied with the level of environmental, social, and ethical responsibility demonstrated by the corporation, it may put the corporation on probation and prescribe specific changes needed. If after three more years the jury is not satisfied that those changes have been adequately implemented, the jury may assign control of the board and officers of the corporation to non-management employees of the corporation and/or to its public stakeholders and/or to another group of potential corporate directors and managers who seem most likely to successfully implement the changes required by the jury, but with the condition that this new board must immediately implement the changes called for by the jury within two years' time, or the jury can reassign control of the corporation to another group of potential board members.

B. Any government office or project receiving government funds that seeks to engage in a contract (with any other corporation or limited liability entity) involving the expenditure of over \$100,000 (adjusted annually for inflation) shall require that those who apply to fulfill that contract submit an Environmental and Social Responsibility Impact Report, which will be used to assess the applicant's corporate behavior in regard to the factors listed above in Section A of Article Two. Community stakeholders and nonsupervisory employees may also submit their own assessments by submitting their own Environment and Social Responsibility Impact Reports to the governmental agency granting the contract. The contract shall be awarded to the applicant with the best record of environmental and social responsibility that can also satisfactorily fulfill the other terms of the contract.

Article Three: The Positive Requirement to Enhance Human Community and Environmental Sustainability

A. Earth being the natural and sacred home of all its peoples, Congress shall develop legislation to enhance the environmental sustainability of human communities and the planet Earth. The objectives of such legislation shall include but not be limited to alleviating global warming, reducing all forms of pollution, restoring the ecological balance of the oceans, and assuring the well-being of all forests and animal life. The president of the United States shall have the obligation to enforce such legislation and to develop executive policies to assure that its objectives are carried out.

B. In order to prepare the people of the United States to live as environmentally and socially responsible citizens of the world, and to recognize that our own well-being as citizens of the United States depends upon the well-being of everyone else on Earth and the well-being of this planet itself, every educational institution receiving federal funds, whether directly or through the several states, shall provide education in reading, writing, and basic arithmetic, and appropriate instruction including at least one required course, for all its students, per year per grade level from kindergarten through twelfth grade and in any college receiving funding or financial aid or loan guarantees for its students, in the following:

1. The skills and capacities necessary to develop a caring society manifesting love; generosity; kindness; caring for each other and for the earth; joy; rational and scientific thinking; nonviolence; celebration; thanksgiving; forgiveness; humility; compassion; ethical and ecological sensitivity; appreciation of humanity's rich multicultural heritage as expressed in literature, art, music, religion, and philosophy; nonviolence in action and speech; skills for democratic participation, including skills in changing the opinions of fellow citizens or influencing their thinking in



ways that are respectful of differences and tolerant of disagreements; and skills for organizing fellow citizens for nonviolent political action and engagement in support of not-yet-popular causes.

- 2. The appropriate scientific, ethical, and behavioral knowledge and skills required to assure the long-term environmental sustainability of the planet Earth in ways that enhance the well-being of everyone on the planet.

Congress shall provide funding for such courses in all educational institutions receiving public funds or loans or loan guarantees for students and shall provide funding for similar courses to be made available to the nonstudent populations in each state.

The measurement of student progress in the areas covered by points 1 and 2, such as artistic and musical skills, are difficult or impossible to measure quantitatively. That being the case, educational institutions supported directly or indirectly by public funds shall develop subtle and appropriate qualitative methods of evaluating adequate progress on the part of students in the areas specified—methods that

contribute to and do not detract from students' ability to love learning and that enhance their capacities to cooperate rather than compete with their fellow students in the process of intellectual and emotional growth. Teachers shall be funded to learn the skills described in sections A and B and the methods of evaluation appropriate to this kind of values-oriented subject matter.

Article Four: Implementation

- A. Any corporation that moves or seeks to move its assets outside the United States must submit an Environmental and Social Responsibility Impact Report to a grand jury of ordinary citizens, and the jury shall similarly receive testimony from other stakeholders and the employees of the corporation in question to determine the impact of the moving of those assets outside the United States. The jury shall then determine what part of those assets, up to and including all of the assets of the corporation, shall be held in the United States to compensate those made unemployed or otherwise disadvantaged by the corporate move of its resources, and/or to compensate for other forms of environmental or social destruction of the resources or well-being of the United States and its citizens.
- B. Any part of the Constitution or the laws of the United States or any of its states deemed by a court to be in conflict with any part of this amendment shall be null and void. Any trade arrangements, treaties, or other international agreements entered into by the United States, its citizens, or its several states, deemed by a court to be in conflict with the provisions or intent of this amendment are hereby declared null and void.
- C. Congress shall take action to provide adequate funding for all parts of this amendment and implement legislation that seeks to fulfill the intent as stated above. ■

FROM PHOTO BY JONATHAN MCINTOSH (CREATIVE COMMONS)

ENDORSE THE ESRA

Sign online at www.spiritualprogressives.org/ESRA or mail us this petition:

- I hereby endorse the Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment (ESRA) and authorize *Tikkun*/NSP to notify President Obama, my senators, and my representatives of my support.

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

- I also want to carry the ESRA around and get others to sign it. Send me copies!
- Yes, I'll support the campaign for the ESRA! I am enclosing a check, donating online at www.spiritualprogressives.org/ESRA, calling 510-644-1200 to use my credit card, or enclosing a sheet of paper with my credit card information (number, card type, security code, expiration date, mailing address, and email and/or phone number) for the amount below:
 - \$1,000 \$500 \$250 \$150 \$100 \$75 \$50 \$20 \$10 Other \$ _____
 - This is a one-time donation. I want it to be a recurring, monthly donation.
- I pledge to meet with my elected representatives to discuss the ESRA. If there are other interested NSP members in my zip code, please share my contact info with them so we can work together. My zip code and contact info are: _____

Return to: *Tikkun*/NSP, 2342 Shattuck Ave., #1200, Berkeley, CA 94704.

Q&A on the ESRA

What is the Citizens United decision and why does it have to be overturned?

This Supreme Court decision overturned limits set up by Congress for spending by corporations on federal elections. As a result, corporations can pour even more money into influencing the outcome of elections. Unless Citizens United is overturned, candidates who have criticisms of corporate environmental or social behavior will have an even harder time matching the spending of those who subordinate the real interests of their constituents to the best interests of the corporations. And pressure will increase even further for candidates to appeal for money from those who have it—the richest people in the society—and that will increase the degree to which those with money will shape the policies of those candidates.

In order to reach its decision, the Supreme Court had to affirm previous interpretations that corporations are “persons” under the Fourteenth Amendment (although history makes clear that the intent of the framers of that amendment was to ensure that

African Americans would not be denied their due process of law as they were at the time, and that when they used the word “persons” they meant what most people mean, not an inanimate legal fiction called “a corporation”).

Why do we need a constitutional amendment for this?

The Supreme Court has a solid conservative or right-wing majority and has shown frequently in the past decade that it will use its power to overturn significant constraints on corporate power. The only way we ordinary folk have to change this is to pressure our congressional representatives and members of our state legislatures to adopt a constitutional amendment that would explicitly overturn the reasoning behind Citizens United. So far, most congressional representatives, including those in the Democratic majority, seem timid about daring to move for a constitutional amendment. Instead, they have been considering lukewarm proposals that won’t actually challenge the right of corporations to spend unlimited funds to influence the outcome of elections. So we have to be the ones to fight for an amendment that rejects the idea of “corporate personhood” and equating money with speech.

Why not just address Citizens United? Why complicate it by bringing in all the rest that you address in this ESRA?

If all that happens is that Citizens United is overturned, then we go back to the status quo ante, namely the way it was before the 2010 Supreme Court decision. But the truth is that corporate dominance was pretty powerful even before that, and most candidates had to spend an inordinate amount of their time in public office seeking the favor of the wealthy to get donations from them.

Getting a constitutional amendment passed will take a huge amount of work over the course of many, many years. The first method is for a bill to pass both the House of Representatives and the United States Senate, by a two-thirds majority in each. Once the bill has passed both houses, it goes on to the states. This is the route taken by all current amendments. Because of some long outstanding amendments, such as the Twenty-Seventh Amendment, Congress will normally put a time limit (typically seven years) for the bill to be approved as an amendment (for example, see the Twenty-First and Twenty-Second). It must then be approved by three-fourths of all the states.

The second method prescribed is for a constitutional convention to be called by two-thirds of the legislatures of the states, and for that convention to propose one or more amendments. These amendments are then sent to the states to be approved by three-fourths of the legislatures or conventions. This route has never been taken, and there is discussion in political science circles about just how such a convention would be convened and what



Toxic smoke spreads from an oil refinery fire in March 2010. By contrast most of the carbon dioxide from modern industry is invisible to us, but far more damaging. How do we make our corporations and governments environmentally responsible? Campaign for the ESRA!



Following the U.S. Social Forum in Detroit, environmental justice advocates, the Teamsters Union, and neighborhood residents marched together to the world's largest waste incinerator to demand its closure.

kind of changes it would bring about. We do not embrace this second direction, in part because we fear that many extraneous issues would be raised and the tinkering might produce a worse result than leaving things as they are now. The first method, on the other hand, has the advantage that we know what we are getting and at each stage can use the democratic process to support or oppose it.

Now here comes the main point:

If we are going to spend this kind of time and energy for years and years, then we ought to do so on an amendment that, if passed, would dramatically improve our democratic process as well as our ability to protect the domestic and global environment. Then, at least, the effort would be worth it.

Isn't it more likely that Congress would pass a narrowly focused amendment to just overturn Citizens United?

Yes, that is more likely, though it would be very unlikely in the foreseeable future for such an amendment to receive the two-thirds vote it would need in both houses of the Congress.

What we have to face is that the process of building support for any such amendment is going to take many years of political work through every possible corner of America's civil society—its civic organizations, its schools and universities, its churches and synagogues and mosques and ashrams, its professional organizations and unions, its media, and its neighborhood organizations.

We believe that if we are doing all this work, it should be done

with the following goal: even if we fail to ever get the amendment passed, we will succeed in developing a new public awareness of what a more democratic politics and environmentally responsible economy might look like without overthrowing the entire capitalist order. That education might lead some to desire even more radical changes than we propose. But it would certainly help people understand that even within the current system there are options that have not yet been tried and ought to be.

Moreover, this process is not merely educational. In the years that women and their allies sought (and failed) to get the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) passed by the states, they managed through their campaign to convince many people of the need for a fundamental change in the way women were treated. Many of those changes eventually were adopted by state and city governments, corporations, the media, and many individual citizens. There were even some who adopted some of the program of the ERA in order to prevent the ERA from getting passed into law—they could say, "We already have practices that correspond to what you are seeking, so we don't need an amendment." That same thing could happen with the ESRA—that some important parts of the transformations we are seeking could happen as we build more support for the amendment.

OK, then why not just build an educational movement without the amendment?

Experience has taught us that many more people pay attention to a proposal when it addresses changing power relations in the society and using the mechanisms already in place to accomplish that goal than they do when people are advocating something that has no such mechanism available. The amendment process is extremely difficult, but it is not impossible, and people can see that; that makes it far more likely to be given attention, particularly if local city councils start to endorse it, and along with them some local and national elected officials, policy experts, and public celebrities in media, sports, or intellectual life.

But won't this take away energy from supporting a narrower amendment?

Not at all. If such an amendment emerges, we will support it also and take both amendments seriously when we approach elected officials or others. We will explain why we have two amendments, and we will be happy when we get the opportunity to use such amendments to explain the picture of eroding democracy and environmental crisis and why we need both amendments to help repair American society and the planet.

Why is the ESRA so long and complex—wouldn't it be more effective if it were much shorter, like almost all the other amendments to the Constitution?

As long as elites of wealth and power exercise effective control over the media and elections, the Congress and the president, regardless of their political party, will have to spend much of their time appealing for funds from those elites. There is no chance that

they will then be willing to implement an amendment that seriously and permanently undermines the power of those elites. Most Americans intuitively understand that, and this is part of the reason they have considerable skepticism or even cynicism about the electoral process. To imagine us passing an ESRA that is just a few general principles and gives wide latitude to the Congress to implement them (as previous amendments were able to do) would seem pointless to most Americans. It becomes a serious endeavor only if we spell out in some detail how this might work—something that makes enough sense on the face of it to excite people to the point where they'd be willing to say, "Yes, this is a vision I am willing to struggle to obtain." Similarly, without this level of detail, a Supreme Court could reinterpret whatever the people passed in a way that would satisfy the elites of wealth and power.

This whole thing sounds almost revolutionary! Won't most Americans worry that it's too extreme—taking on corporate power?

America was founded on the belief that there needed to be constraints on the power of the powerful, and that idea was incorporated into our Constitution, with regard to political power. Now we are taking the same step in regard to economic power. The best way to do that is to give that power back to ordinary citizens.

And yes, it will be scary to many people, which is why we need to be patient and persistent in the coming years and continue to put this idea forward, over and over again, because eventually more and more people will come to agree that it is the minimum change needed to save the planet and to save democracy. Gentle but firm persistence is needed—not simply one big push after which, if we don't win, we all go home in despair! If passed, these would be some of the most significant changes to our Constitution since the Fourteenth Amendment empowered Black people in the United States, so we won't be surprised about the resistance. And while supporting this, we can continue to do other political work as well, as long as we keep this in the forefront of our activity. Many liberals and progressives focus much of their attention on what they are against. The ESRA is an important balancing element, putting forward a coherent view of what we are for, particularly when conjoined with the Network of Spiritual Progressives' campaign for a Global Marshall Plan to eliminate global poverty, homelessness, hunger, inadequate education, and inadequate health care, and to repair the environmental damage done to the earth. The Global Marshall Plan, however, is unlikely to pass Congress unless the elites of wealth and power are constrained by the ESRA.

How does the ESRA help the environment?

There are many important things we can do to help the environment as individuals and as consumers. The ESRA mandates strengthening that kind of activity by teaching environmental responsibility at every stage of the public education process.

Yet we also have to acknowledge, after forty years of relying primarily on that strategy, that the world is in considerably worse

shape because corporations in their frenetic pursuit of profits have frequently degraded the environment in order to increase their profit margins. The damage done to the earth by British Petroleum's Gulf offshore drilling was possible because the Obama administration issued the company a permit to dig a mile into the earth, offshore. The destruction of our waterways, our air, and our land cannot be prevented by buying products from nonpolluting firms, because it only takes a small amount of corporations pouring poisons into the environment to destroy the planet, and this they will continue to do as long as they can make profits from doing so.

The ESRA will stop all that.

Why does the ESRA require "equal exposure" of all major candidates and issues?

Deceptive campaign strategies often move the focus of a campaign away from major issues and solely toward the personalities of the candidates. By requiring equal exposure of both candidates and issues, the ESRA will get issues back into the forefront of campaigns. "Equal" means that no candidate will be able to have greater exposure than any other by virtue of having more money at her or his disposal. Similarly, by requiring equal time to be given at a specified minimum amount, free, to candidates in the last three months of an election, while *prohibiting* candidates from using money to buy their own time (the usual way that the cost of campaigns gets wildly escalated), the ESRA seeks to reduce the costs of getting candidates' messages to the American people. The requirement of free time is the minimum level of social responsibility required of media, which use public airwaves and streets to get their messages out. It does not in any way impinge on the free speech of media except to the extent that it requires the media to give equal time to others (and if that is deemed to be amending the First Amendment, it is a good amendment for it to have, since freedom of the press has come to mean freedom for those with the money to buy and control media and indoctrinate the public with their perspectives, not allowing other perspectives to be heard).

For several decades after World War II, the Federal Communications Commission maintained a "fairness doctrine" that required media corporations to give "equal time" to alternative views—to those who were being critiqued or marginalized in the media. Toward the end of the Reagan administration, that requirement was lifted, so that media corporations no longer have any obligation to provide a balanced perspective—and hence supposedly are "freer" to present the news in any distorted way they choose. We want to make freedom of the press real, and that means allowing a range of views to be heard. Of course, this freedom comes with a cost—people will be exposed to views very different from those supported by the sponsors of the ESRA, but that comes with the turf of creating a more democratic society. It is our view that when given equal access to ethically grounded visions of the future, Americans will, over time, be won to a vision that demonstrates concern for the environment, social justice, and peace. Those who fear the American public

will, of course, not be happy with the ways that we are extending democratic rights and making them more real.

What gets accomplished by including Article One? Why not just focus on the environment?

No serious campaign to save the environment from global catastrophe in the twenty-first century can work unless the moneyed interests that profit from environmental irresponsibility are limited in the impact they have in choosing our elected officials, and the way to do that is to free the elected officials from having to spend an inordinate amount of their time raising money from the wealthy.

Why does Article Two start off with a general statement about the United States and organizations chartered in the United States having a responsibility to promote the ethical, environmental, and social well-being of all life on our planet and in space?

This statement accomplishes several things at once. It creates a responsibility that must be fulfilled by the president, Congress, the states, and the judiciary—thus extending the power of ordinary citizens to hold these parts of our government responsible. It requires that that responsibility be not just for the United States, but for the well-being of all who live on the planet, thereby creating a new urgency for something like the Global Marshall Plan or at least the One Campaign and the UN’s millennium goals. It provides the foundation for legislation to prevent the militarization of space or use space as a dump for all the irresponsible waste we produce on Earth. And it ties our well-being to the well-being of everyone else on the planet, a conceptual jump necessary for anyone to survive in the twenty-first century and beyond. The preamble and broad statements of this sort help to establish for future courts the underlying intent of those who support the amendment, making it harder for future Supreme Courts to attribute to the amendment meanings that are the opposite of what we intended.

Why does the ESRA set up a jury to enforce corporate social responsibility?

Attempts to regulate the capitalist class and its many, many allies in government and industry and media have proven inadequate, in part because every regulatory body gets filled up with people who share the fundamental assumptions of the industries that they are supposed to be regulating. While there is no absolute guarantee that the ideologies of the dominant society (with its strong emphasis on individualism, materialism, competitiveness, and accumulation of wealth at all costs, as well as its fantasy that even those who are beaten down might benefit someday from the same wealth that they do not hold today) won’t also influence many of those in a randomly selected jury, there is at least a reasonable chance that such a jury will have among its members those who have alternative views and who will listen impartially to the testimony of those whose lives have

been impacted by the operations of the corporation being assessed.

Most major cities today maintain “civil grand juries” that perform a function similar to the one we are proposing: civil bodies, outside the control of the powerful, that help assure democratic control over major concerns affecting our society. Our existing jury system in criminal justice is among our nation’s greatest contributions to unbiased decision making affecting people’s liberty and basic rights (which is one reason the powerful keep trying to pass legislation or get their conservative-dominated courts to restrict this system and keep personal liability trials out of the hands of these juries).

But can we really trust the future of our major corporations to ordinary citizens who may not really understand the complexities involved? And won’t this add an element of unpredictability for corporations when juries make decisions using different criteria from each other?

We trust juries with our own lives: we give them the ability to decide to indict us for a crime, to decide our guilt, and to decide in capital cases whether we should be allowed to live or not. Corporations are not natural entities but legal constructs. They do not have the same claim that human beings do for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, or for being treated as sacred or created in the image of God. So if we trust human life to a jury, we can certainly allow corporate life to be determined by a jury.

As to unpredictability, all of us face this problem when faced with a government that may wrongfully charge us with cheating on income tax, speeding in a car, or even more serious offenses such as theft or murder. People who are familiar with the workings of our criminal justice system knows how important it is for each side to get a judge who will favor their kind of approach, and they will also do what they can to get jurors most likely to support their side of the relevant issues. So, yes, unpredictability is built into democratic procedures. On the other hand, the unpredictability of corporate decision making impacts on the entire human race and on the survival of the planet, so what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. We know that corporations will always seek to maximize money, but that leaves so much unpredictability in our lives that we hardly have a clue how the world will look in twenty more years of unrestrained corporate power.

On the other hand, the ESRA mandates that a jury give special attention to at least eight issues that it spells out in considerable detail in Article Two.

Why does the ESRA address only the responsibility of large corporations with annual incomes over \$100 million? What about smaller corporations and individual behavior?

We are not trying to set up a system to govern every mom-and-pop operation or even relatively significant corporations that do not make large profits. They will be impacted, nevertheless, by clause eight, which holds that (*continued on page 92*)

NETWORK OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESSIVES CONFERENCE SPEECHES

The national NSP conference in Washington, D.C., June 11–13, 2010, was, like the West Coast version on February 15 in San Francisco, an exciting and provocative moment in the lives of many of the people who attended. The many hundreds of people at each event came together at a depressing moment in the history of progressive movements. So many of us, like so many others who did not make it to the conferences, have felt confused, betrayed, embarrassed, humiliated, or simply despairing about what has happened since President Obama took office. Yet we have also known that what is likely to replace Obama is a conglomeration of ultra-nationalist, racist, or even quasi-fascist forces, not a coalition of spiritual progressives or the religious or secular Left. So we are in the difficult position of not wanting to undermine the president but simultaneously feeling certain that it is his policies and his betrayal of progressive ideals that are precisely what has given the Right its opening.

At first, we had planned this strategy conference around the theme “Support Obama to BE the Obama most Americans Thought We Elected.” That theme made sense in January, but less so by May, after Obama escalated the war in Afghanistan and dropped the “public option” from the Democrats’ health care bill. So instead, we tried a more positive focus: “The Caring Society: Caring for Each Other, Caring for the Earth.”

There were many more speakers and brilliant ideas than we could fit into this print section, so we will be putting up those speeches that are not here, either in transcript form or in videos, at www.tikkun.org and www.spiritualprogressives.org. We hope you’ll take the time to read the selections printed here, which we have adapted from transcripts of some of the conference speeches, and then go online to hear or read the rest!

ESRA: An Opportunity to Reshape the World

by Dennis Kucinich

IT IS SO NECESSARY TO BRING SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES INTO this world as a means of elevating this world, of enlightening this world, of helping to transform this world. Rabbi Lerner, I am so grateful to have had the opportunity over the years to work with you, and to continue to try to use the platform of a seat in the United States Congress to advance the principles that you and everyone in this room have been brought together over this weekend in Washington to celebrate.

We have been discussing how we can get members of Congress involved in an Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the Constitution (ESRA). And so what I did over the past few months was to look at the principles and to draft a resolution.

The idea is this: we take the principles in the ESRA, and we put them in a congressional resolution asking members of Congress to support the principles, and from there we can work to draft specific legislation for a constitutional amendment.

The structure of our government ends up informing who we are. All of reality is socially constructed and culturally affirmed, and every element of our government right now reflects an awareness—a consciousness—of one hundred, two hundred years ago. But as Thomas Jefferson understood, and as is emblazoned on the Jefferson Memorial, these institutions that are created by the human mind have to have the capacity to evolve as the human mind evolves. And so it is our responsibility to help

Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) chairs the House Domestic Policy Subcommittee. He was a candidate for the Democratic nomination for president in the 2004 and 2008 elections. His many principled actions in Congress have included bringing articles of impeachment against President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney and voting against the Iraq war.

our government evolve to get to the place that we know it can be, to be more than it is or better than it is, as a reflection of who we are as a people.

So much discussion in our country over the last twenty years has framed government as apart from us, rather than as an agency of us. When we buy into that view of the government as something external instead of something that is a manifestation of us, we come to a point where we actually reject ourselves. And that is part of the schism that is going on in this country. Then the whole idea of government of the people, by the people, and for the people does not even exist; it is a figment. But if government is through us, with us, and in us, and is an expression of our higher state of mind and being, then that government can lead us to that shining city on the hill and help us infuse into our everyday lives the moral and spiritual principles that will be the underpinning not only of our own lives, but also of generations to come.

I am absolutely flabbergasted about the apparent inability of Washington to seize the moment of this cataclysm in the Gulf of Mexico to take us in a new direction. For it is one thing to do the forensics—to say: “OK, we now have a good part of the Gulf that is dead; we do an autopsy, and how was it killed? How is the aquatic culture damaged for generations to come?” We know that. We knew that before it happened. It is another thing to understand that the path forward has to be connected to the deeper nature of what it means to be a human being, and to not separate ourselves from the rest of the world and from nature itself. And it is the separation from the natural world wherein we have abandoned Eden, abandoned every good thing that exists on this planet: the purity of our water, the cleanliness of our air, the beauty of our land, and what lies beneath our land. All of that is being stripped away and cartelized and being made part of wealth accelerated to the top and away from the great mass of the people. That does not have to be.

Ever since the oil spill happened, I’ve been thinking about what would be the appropriate response. And I think that this is the time that we need to rally the American people for a new era of sustainability and really look at the choices that we make with respect to the products that we use, the food that we buy, and how we get around—really look at our own individual responsibility. We can all, certainly, do better. We are all children of this consumer society. But we also see the limitations of it. We also see the impact of it on the globe. And that growing awareness, which we have right now, is something that we need to catalyze. I think that the American people are ready to respond to a new call, a clarion call for environmental responsibility.

The kind of the thing that you are doing in your call for, literally, a new constitution—not just an amendment, but a new approach to the way we live in our country and the world—is an opportunity for us to refashion our world. And it is not just about one person; we sometimes get in that trap where we put our faith in one person. It’s about faith in ourselves as individuals. About each one of us being a president of his or her own life and having the kind of agency that we have to use our talents and our abilities to focus on what is happening in our own lives at the moment, in our own neighborhoods and our own block, and to really use that energy to clean up America and clean up the world. There is so much that we are capable of doing, so I never lose hope in these kinds of circumstances, because I think that we still have, within our own hands, the power to reshape our immediate environment and, collectively, to reshape the world.

You have taken the principle of *tikkun olam* to a point of activism; to a point that ennobles each one of us and enables us to see our higher abilities to effect change. I came here to thank you for doing that, and I came here to let you know that I look forward to continuing to work with you. ■



The Gulf of Mexico at dusk (before the oil spill).

The first global 350 Day of Action, October 24, 2009
Australia



What It Will Take to Return the Globe to 350

by Bill McKibben

AS MUCH AS I LOVE THE NETWORK OF SPIRITUAL Progressives, I am not sure how much of a progressive I am. Seems to me that I spend almost all my time trying to keep things from changing, that in some deep sense I am a conservative—conserving the earth!

I wrote my first book about climate change, called *The End of Nature*, about twenty-one years ago. At the time we knew about everything we need to know about climate change. We knew that the molecular structure of carbon dioxide trapped heat that would otherwise radiate back out to space. And we knew that by burning coal, gas, and oil we were putting a lot of that carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. The only thing we didn't know was how quickly it was going to pinch.

Being human, we hoped it would take a while and be someone else's problem to deal with. But it has happened much faster than we anticipated a few decades ago. So far human beings have raised the temperature of the earth about one degree, which doesn't sound like an enormous amount, but it turns out that it is. It also turns out that the planet was more finely balanced than we would have guessed. One degree, which translates to about two extra watts of solar energy per square meter of the earth's surface, is enough to cause very large changes. Everything frozen on earth is melting fast. This June the national sea ice data center said satellite measurements show that we are ahead of the record pace of 2007 for the Arctic melt this year. Looks like we may end up with even more open water than we have ever had.

The earth already looks entirely different from outer space

Bill McKibben is cofounder of 350.org, an international grassroots campaign organizing people everywhere to spread the 350 number. He is also a scholar in residence at Middlebury College and author of Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future.

than it did forty years ago when those pictures came back from Apollo. Because warm air holds more water vapor than cold air does, the earth's atmosphere is about 5 percent moister than it was forty years ago. Which is an astonishing change in a basic physical parameter in a very short period of time. Because of that, we are seeing not only wicked drought all over the world, but also deluges.

This past summer, drought in the region of the Tigris and Euphrates got so bad that the flow along the rivers past the Garden of Eden became insufficient to keep the salt front from the sea from pushing back in. According to a June 12, 2010, article from the *New York Times*, once that water is evaporated up into the atmosphere, it is going to come down, so we see these incredible, unprecedented deluges. This year Tennessee had what meteorologists called the "1,000-year storm," the kind of storm that now comes every day in some place around the world. The first tropical storm of 2010, "Agatha," dropped absolutely record rainfall on Guatemala, killing all kinds of people. And this June in Arkansas about eight inches of rain in a couple of hours pushed the level of streams up so high that at least twenty people died in the campgrounds along the river. That rain was falling on a different world than those cabins, campgrounds, and bridges were built in. It is no longer the same world; it is mismatched. We think we live on the one we used to, but now we live on the one where it can rain eight inches in a couple of hours.

Even temperature itself is just plain out of control. NASA said last week that we just lived through the warmest twelve months on record, and that calendar year 2010 is almost certain to be the warmest calendar year we know about.

People in India and Pakistan don't usually complain about the heat very much because it is always so hot there. But they are complaining now. India is coming through the worst heat wave since the British started keeping records sometime in the early nineteenth century. Pakistan set the all-time temperature record for Asia: it got to 129 degrees. Never been hotter. That's what the world feels like right now.

Political Failure ... So Far

THIS SUMMER IN THE SENATE, WE CLAIMED A VICTORY OF SORTS because only forty-seven senators, including the entire Republican delegation, voted for a resolution saying that global warming wasn't real and that the EPA shouldn't be doing anything to regulate greenhouse gases. We managed to defeat that 153 to forty-seven, so that is the high-water mark of what we have accomplished.

Basically nothing has happened for twenty years. We have had a perfect bipartisan record of accomplishing nothing.

Barack Obama has done more in twenty-one months than all the presidents of the global warming era before him. He has done some of the things that we needed done. But I am afraid that it is sort of like saying, "I have drunk more beer than my twelve-year-old niece." The bar was set very low. Compared to the scale of what we need to do, almost nothing has happened. Clearly the political inclination of the people in the White House

is to do as little as possible for the moment because we are up against the single most profitable enterprise that human beings have ever conducted. ExxonMobil made more money last year than any company in the history of money. So it is no wonder that it is difficult.

No wonder that even with the incredible stain spreading across the Gulf of Mexico, what we mostly talk about is putting better blowout preventers on or paying for the cleanup. It doesn't yet rise to the level where we can address the real questions raised by that. People keep calling it an oil spill. That seems incorrect to me, unless you are going to call a knife wound a kind of blood spill. They punched a hole in the bottom of the ocean with no idea how to fix it if something went wrong. Their emergency plan was not to have an emergency. And then they did. It should be the great teachable moment, the moment when we have the kind of transformation that we need. So far, not.

Building the Movement—Starting with One Writer

THE ONLY WAY WE ARE GOING TO CHANGE THE SITUATION IS BY building a political movement strong enough to make sure that it changes. By nature I am not an activist at all. I am a writer. I live out in the woods. I only really started to think about trying to do something more activist a few years ago. I went to Bangladesh, which is a beautiful place, one of my favorite countries, but a place that is going to be in big trouble from global warming. The Bay of Bengal is rising. The glaciers that feed the sacred rivers of Asia are dwindling fast. But when I was there they were having an acute problem, their first major outbreak of dengue fever, a mosquito-borne disease that is spreading like wildfire across Asia and South America because mosquitoes truly dig the warmer, wetter world that we are building. While I was there I was spending a lot of time in the slums, so I eventually got bit by the wrong mosquito myself, and I got dengue. I didn't die, because I was strong and healthy going in, but many other people do die of it.

I remember going down to the hospital. There was a ward bigger than this room. There were cots lined up as far as the eye can see with people shivering on them. People were on the floor between cots, shivering, because there weren't enough cots. And my main thought was, "How unfair is this?" There are 140 million people in Bangladesh, so half the population of the United States. But when the UN tries to measure how much carbon each country emits, you can't even get a number for Bangladesh. It is just a rounding error. People take bicycle rickshaws when they need to go someplace and they aren't going to walk. Almost no one is connected to the electrical grid. So this is not their fault. The 4 percent of the human race who live in the United States produce about 25 percent of the carbon dioxide. About 40 percent of global warming is our responsibility because we have been doing it for a long time. If there are one hundred people in that ward, at least twenty-five of them are on us.

When I came back from that I wanted to do more. But I didn't know what to do at all. As I say, I am a writer—we are kind of

self-selected to sit in our rooms and type. We aren't good at this other kind of stuff. My initial plan was to call up my writer friends in Vermont and say: "Listen, here is what we are going to do—we are going to go up to Burlington. We are going to go up there and sit in on the steps of the Federal Building and get arrested, and there will be a story in the paper." Burlington is our main city, about 50,000 people—it's not so big, but it's all we have.

The other writers were as clueless as I was. They said, "All right, let's do that." Happily, one of them called up the police and asked them what would happen if we did this intrepid stunt. The police said: "Nothing will happen. Stay there as long as you want." So we had to recalibrate and I started sending out emails to people saying we were going to go for a walk. We left a couple of weeks later from Robert Frost's old summer writing cabin up in the Green Mountains, because he is kind of our patron saint. Off we walked. We slept in farm fields at night, and I called up all the Methodist Mafia so we had potluck suppers all along the way. That is kind of the Methodist sacrament. We got to Burlington after five days, and there were one thousand people marching.

You are all probably residents of cosmopolitan places, so that doesn't sound like much. But in Vermont, one thousand people is as many people as ever come out at one time in a single place, except maybe at University of Vermont hockey games. The march got everyone who was running for office to come down to meet with us and sign a piece of cardboard that we had been carrying across the countryside. The cardboard said, "If I am elected I will work to cut carbon emissions by 80 percent by 2050," which at the time was a very radical proposition. Only scientists were in favor of it, but the politicians all signed, even the woman who was running for congress on the GOP ticket and almost won. Two months before, when she started to run, she had said, "I am not sure global warming is real; more research needs to be done." It turned out that the research that needed to be done was on how many people would walk across Vermont and ask her to change her mind. Empirically, one thousand turned out to be enough. And she signed, which is great: that is what is supposed to happen.

The only problem was reading the paper the next day and seeing the paper saying that this thousand-person march was probably the largest demonstration about climate change that had yet taken place in the United States. I read that and thought, "Good God, no wonder we keep losing." We have all the kind of super-structure of a movement: we have Al Gore, scientists, policy people, economists, all the people you would need for a movement. The movement part is the only part we left out. So we asked ourselves, can we build this? And we decided to try to see if we could. By "we" I mean seven undergraduates at Middlebury College and me. We had no money or organization then.

That January, which was in 2007, we started sending out emails to people saying, "Do something like this." And it turned out that there were more people like us all across the country who had already figured out that changing their light bulbs wasn't going to change much. They wanted to do more. The



New Zealand



Guatemala

problem with climate change is it is just so darn big and one feels helpless in the face of it. They were attracted to the idea of doing something all together and at the same time. So in April 2007 we had 1,400 simultaneous rallies across the country in all fifty states. The rallies were beautiful and actually kind of useful: in the next couple of days, both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama changed their energy and environment platform and adopted this 80 percent thing.

We felt quite smug about our accomplishment, but only until the arctic started to melt six weeks later in the summer of 2007. I spent that whole summer getting phone calls from panicked scientists: "This is falling apart, right now. It is happening so much faster than we thought." By the time that summer was over, it became clear that our targets were out of date—that what happens in 2050 is not as interesting as what happens in 2020 or sooner. It also became clear that we are not going to solve this one light bulb at a time, or even one country at a time: we are going to solve it one planet at a time, or not at all. This is a scary thing to realize because global organizing is so hard.

So we were both relieved and horrified when in January of 2008 our best climatologist, Jim Hansen at NASA, and his team published a paper saying they looked at all the paleoclimate data and they looked at the observational data from the last few years and they were finally able to say that "any value of carbon in the atmosphere greater than 350 parts per million is not compatible with the planet on which civilization developed and to which life on the earth is adapted." That is strong language. And it is stronger still when you know that outside right

now it is 390 parts per million and is rising 2 parts per million per year. We are already way past where we should be. That is why the arctic is melting. That is why the ocean is 30 percent more acid than it used to be, and why it is beginning to unravel the marine food chain. It is why all of these things are going on. It is why we are really in the process of de-creating the planet in very powerful ways. So that is bad news.

One Writer and Seven Students Start a Global Campaign

THE SCIENTISTS' PROCLAMATION ABOUT 350 PARTS PER MILLION was good news to us as organizers because the two things that translate across the world's frustrating linguistic boundaries are musical notation and Arabic numerals. Having this number, 350, meant that we could try to build a global campaign, because 350 means the same thing in Warsaw as it does in Washington. We still didn't have any money, but by now the seven students had graduated from Middlebury. So they could work all the time on this. And seven was a good number because there are seven continents, so each one of them took a continent. The one who got Antarctica also had the Internet

because it is kind of its own continent. They set to work, which in our case just meant finding people like us. Some of them were environmentalists. Most were working on agriculture, on war and peace, on human rights, on public health, on all the things that were coming unraveled immediately as we changed the basic physical stability of the planet.

We planned our first big day of action for October 24, 2009, to try to drive this issue into the middle of things. And we told everybody to try to do something on October 24. We were hopeful but we didn't really know what it was going to look like. We had gathered our small core team in a couple of borrowed offices in New York about three or four days beforehand. Somebody lent us a couple of dingy offices down in lower Manhattan. We were there doing press releases but basically just watched the laptop. We had told people to send us pictures.

One thing we had done was to train people all over the world. We had training camps in Turkey for people in central Asia, we had one in the Caribbean, we even had one in South Africa for people from all across Africa—one or two per country. Most had never been on an airplane or left their country, but they came down to Johannesburg and then fanned back out across Africa. Then we didn't hear anything for about six months, because in much of Africa the Internet is still pretty notional. You can't Skype people all the time. And Skype was about what we could afford. But we knew they were working.

We got the first sense that our day of action was going to work on October 22, when we got a phone call from two sisters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. One of them was saying, "I am so sorry, the government told us we can't do this thing on Saturday." Ethiopia: not an especially nice government. "They won't let us do it, so we decided to do it today before they could tell us not to. We know we're not supposed to. We know we are jumping the gun. We hope we're not spoiling it—we are really sorry. And we have 15,000 people out in the street right now in Addis Ababa." So I was like, "OK, it's all right, Isha, you can relax, you have done great." And it was great. Soon we had a picture of that protest, and a couple of hours later another picture arrived, completely unexpectedly, from U.S. troops in Afghanistan who'd made a big 350 with sandbags—they sent a note saying, "We're parking our Humvee for the weekend to save gas."

For the next forty-eight hours, these pictures just started flowing in from all over the world. Incredibly big, beautiful rallies from all over the place. By the time we were done there'd been 5,200 demonstrations in 181 countries. CNN said it was the most widespread day of political action in the planet's history on any issue ever. I'd been told my whole life that environmentalism is something for rich white people who'd taken care of their other problems. But if you look at the pictures (there are 25,000 pictures on Flickr and a bunch on the 350.org website), you'll see almost all pictures of poor, Black, brown, Asian young people. There are a couple hundred pictures of women in full burqas, in Saudi Arabia or in Yemen, forming huge



Afghanistan

350.ORG



South Africa

350.ORG

human “350s.” For the first time all kinds of religious communities really began to come on board and do more than just say the right words. It was really fun for me as a writer to have this number sort of subsume some of our individual differences. We’re probably too good at writing manifestos and proclamations; it was good for once to just have something simple.

Two weeks beforehand one of my favorite religious leaders—the patriarch of the Eastern Orthodox, Bartholomew, who leads about 400,000 Eastern Christians—had given a sermon. I admire his straightforwardness. In his sermon he said, “Global warming is a sin, and 350 is an act of redemption.” It was good, solid language, and boy, did it help us organize across the sort of Transcaucasus there. It was good!

We had amazing help from every corner of the religious community. There are beautiful pictures from South Africa of the country’s Muslim leader and the indigenous, tribal religious leader, and Desmond Tutu’s successor as Anglican Archbishop at the head of this huge multi-faith procession.

I’d been in Bethlehem doing some organizing a few weeks before. It’s sort of a hard place to even get to, and it was really hard to get people from around the region there, but they all wanted to work together. The blockades and roadblocks made actually working together really hard, but the Dead Sea’s shrinking really fast as the temperature warms. So everybody decided that the Israeli friends should make a giant human “3” on their shore of the Dead Sea, and those in Palestine a huge “5,” and those in Jordan a huge “0.”

One of my favorite pictures is of three or four hundred people rallying at Wheaton College in Illinois. Now, it’s not that amazing a picture unless you know that it’s the most important Evangelical college in the country, Billy Graham’s alma mater. Two or three years ago there would not have been an environmental demonstration going on there—it would have been seen as kind of pagan or some such, but there they were.

The Setback in Copenhagen

I WISH I COULD TELL YOU THAT THIS HAD ALL CARRIED THE DAY. We got to Copenhagen six weeks later with all kinds of momentum. We had a church service in the cathedral in the middle of those two weeks: Archbishop Tutu and the Archbishop of Canterbury preached an amazing service and then rang the great bell of the cathedral 350 times. Thousands of churches across the world did the same thing later that afternoon—350. We convinced 117 countries to sign onto this 350 target, and that was really good because it’s a radical target. The problem of course is that it’s the wrong 117 countries, you know? It’s the ones who are poor and most vulnerable and getting wrecked. The ones who are richest and most addicted, led by our own, are not yet ready to get to brass tacks.

I was depressed and angry, frankly, that last Friday in Copenhagen, but glad that we’d brought the largest delegation to Copenhagen—350 young people from all over the world. They kept saying: “Look, we didn’t really expect to win right

away. We’ve only been doing this a year. We’re up against the richest force in the world. We’re just going to have to go back and get bigger and stronger and then see if we can give them a fight.”

Join Us Next October 10, Worldwide!

SO THAT’S WHAT WE’RE GOING TO DO. WE NEED YOUR HELP NEXT on October 10—that will be 10/10/10, so no excuse for forgetting the date. It’s a Sunday, but not a restful one in this case. We’re having what we’re calling a global work party, not quite like the global political rally we had last year. This time all over the world—in thousands and thousands of communities and probably as many countries—people will be putting up solar panels, digging out community gardens, and putting down bike paths. It’s not that we think we can solve climate change one bike path at a time. Sadly, we can’t. We can only solve it when we get political action at a global and national level to reset the price of carbon, when we in fact engage and defeat the fossil fuel industry. But the political message that we’re going to be trying hard to send on 10/10/10 is: “We’re getting to work. Where are you?” If I can climb up on the roof of a school and hammer in a solar panel, I expect you to climb to the floor of the Senate and hammer out some legislation. That’s the case we’ve got to make.

The truth is there’s no guarantee that this is going to work. There’s no guarantee that anything’s going to work. There are scientists who think we’ve waited too long to get started and that this heating has taken on a kind of irreversible momentum. The best science would indicate that we still have a narrow window, but not to stop global warming. We’ve raised the temperature one degree. There’s another degree in the pipeline from carbon we’ve already emitted. It’s going to be much hotter, but maybe if we do everything right at this point we can keep it from going up six or seven degrees, which is what the climatologists say will happen almost certainly if we do not slow things down right now. That’s a civilization-challenging number. Maybe that’s a polite way of putting it, actually.

There are political scientists who say that it’s just impossible, that the force on the other side of both inertia and vested interest is simply too large. And they might be right too. They’ve been right so far about that. If you were a betting person—Methodists aren’t allowed to bet—but if you were a betting person, you might be advised to bet that we will not solve this in time. But that doesn’t strike me as actually a bet that you’re allowed to make. We happen to be alive at a time when the worst thing that ever happened is happening, and if we’re conscious of it the only moral course of action is to work as hard as we possibly can to change the odds of that wager some, and then have some faith that having changed the odds, maybe we’ll catch a break.

So no guarantees at all. No guarantees at all except that around the world we’re going to fight as hard as we can all the way to the very end. ■

Obama and a Foreign Policy of Generosity

by Keith Ellison

PEACE BE UNTO YOU. GOOD MORNING, EVERYONE. WE have got to get some heart and some feeling into Washington, D.C., and that's one reason it's so important that you are holding the Network of Spiritual Progressives conference here. Our country badly needs your vision and your spiritual and moral energy to help us chart a path based on generosity, inclusion, and love.

The two things I want to talk to you about are where I think we are in our country and where I think we should go.

The Values in the 2008 Election

WE ARE MORE THAN A YEAR INTO THE TASK OF OVERCOMING A presidency that was marked by an economic system that rewarded the rich and punished the poor and that took away the rules that were required to restrain runaway capitalism. Where we are is a year into overcoming a pugnacious, assertive, even imperialistic administration that believed that its ability to impose its will through military domination was its moral right. We are a year beyond a mindset that is characterized by fear, by acquisitiveness, and even greed. And we have a decade full of evidence of where those things will land us. Where we are is more than a year beyond a period of time in which Americans said, "You know, we've seen what military domination and the will to dominate will get you: countless Iraqis dead, five thousand Americans dead, billions of dollars of our American money spent, countless diplomatic bridges broken." We've seen deregulation of Wall Street; nonregulation of Wall Street landed us in a financial catastrophe in September 2008, which this country is still trying to inch its way back from. We've seen these things. Where we are is a year-plus beyond that, when Americans came together behind a set of ideas that were marked by diplomacy over military domination; economic responsibility; and environmental stewardship.

Regardless of how you think President Obama is doing, he was successful in his election because he set forth a set of ideas that were in stark rejection of what we saw before. So that's what happened. That's where I think we are. Where we are is more than a year beyond that.

The measuring stick of how we are doing or how this country is doing or how this world is doing is not how Obama is doing. The measuring stick is whether or not we have aligned our ideals of generosity, inclusion, and love with our actions. And the president is not on the top of that—he is a part of our struggle to align our

conduct with these ideals. So he should not be the focus of our attention or the focus of our derision or the focus of our adulation. He should be one player on a team designed to create a society based on generosity, inclusion, and love.

Putting Pressure on Obama

SO THIS IS WHAT WE DO: WE DO NOT SPEND ALL OUR TIME BEATING him up or beating him down, or clapping for him or clapping against him. We spend our time building grassroots solutions that push a way forward that he has to conform to, that he has to get in line with. But we never make it personally about him, because it's not basically up to him.

When we had a movement that was about civil and human rights and dignity, and that movement was strong and that movement was moving forward, even a Republican president, Richard Nixon, had to sign civil rights legislation, environmental protection legislation, and the like. He had to—he had to get up there and talk about empowerment—he had to. Did he believe it? Clearly not, but he had to do it.

What can you and I do with a president whose heart is in the right place but who feels so entangled by divergent forces pulling him in every direction, some of which we know are pernicious and bad. But what can we do if we've created this wave and we have a president who wants to do the right thing? Whose instincts are right but who has bonds on him from the Wall Street types and the militarist types and who isn't clear enough about his own governing philosophy?

Equity in Foreign Relations and Trade

WHERE I THINK WE SHOULD GO IS TO ACKNOWLEDGE, IN OUR conventional conversation, that we depend too much on the military for foreign policy solutions, even though we know the merits and necessity of understanding that America has to be a country where security is important. None of us can say security is not important. We need to define what security is and how we actually secure our country. No security policy position can be premised on military might. It can't happen; it doesn't work like that.

The way it works is that we are a country guided by ideas of equity, generosity, and engagement in our relations with other nations. And those philosophical ideas create safe borders rather than armed ones. And, God willing, one day the border will become an irrelevancy.

Representative Keith Ellison, (D-Minn.), is serving his second term representing the Fifth District of Minnesota, which consists of Minneapolis and surrounding suburbs. He sits on the House Financial Services and Foreign Affairs committees and is a vice chair of the Progressive Caucus.



U.S. relations with Iran are an object lesson in how realpolitik misfires, when respect and equity could have built relations with a developing democracy. Left: Crowds cheer elected prime minister Mossaddegh in Tehran in 1951 for reiterating his oil nationalization views. Center: A U.S.-led coup in 1953 launched 25 years of dictatorship under Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, seen here with President Eisenhower in 1959. Right: The result was the 1979 Islamic Revolution and justified hatred of U.S. policy.

It is time for us to answer a critical question: how are we going to shape a progressive foreign policy agenda that provides a framework for the U.S. government in the twenty-first century? It simply is not enough to critique what others have failed to do properly. We have to envision a progressive philosophy of interacting with the world. And I submit to you that we should envision a philosophy based on equity, generosity, and engagement.

Equity: our commitment to equity means that we as progressives have never accepted the notion that it is OK for the powerful to wield power without regard for the needs of other people. As progressives we acknowledge that we are stewards for each other and for future generations. This is why I have introduced and cosponsored legislation at both the micro and macro levels that underscores the need for environmental and social responsibility.

There is one bill that I need you to know that I have been fighting for—a bill for the Global Marshall Plan. A bill for a Global Marshall Plan is about equity. How So? Equity means that when we engage with another country or another portion of the world, we are not looking at how to get the most and give the least. We are not looking at how to get their sugar, how to get their oil, how to get their uranium, how to get their stuff and either give them nothing or give the elites of that country a little bit so they can keep the others in line.

For some of us in the progressive movement, the hair on the back of our neck bristles when we talk about trade. But you and I know that there is nothing wrong with trade in and of itself. Something is wrong when we have the attitude that “my oil is under your sand, so I’m going to get it from you and I’m willing to end your life and ruin your society to do it.”

Equity: the idea that we should trade value, things we need for things they need. This the American people will benefit from. Halliburton may not benefit from it, its leaders may not like it, and British Petroleum may not like it. You know Lockheed Martin may not like it; a lot of people may not like it. But you will like it because you will get things you need and other people around the world will get things they need. So we insist in our interactions with other nations, particularly in the commercial area, that we give value for

value. We want to drink coffee; we’ll pay you for it—no problem. This is the kind of approach we need to infuse into our trade policies. Diplomatically we’ve got to understand that it is not about imposing our will on other countries through economic warfare, as in all these sanctions that we are so fond of.

Equity has to guide our interactions with the rest of the world. Many of the problems that we are facing today find their roots in colonial relationships that are fundamentally premised on inequity. And the reactions of people in what we used to refer to as “the third world” to the inequity the West tries to impose are sometimes life-enhancing and sometimes ugly and reactive and revenge-oriented. We don’t operate on the basis of an illusion that everybody is going to react in the best possible way to the inequity the West tries to impose. What we are seeing in parts of the world that respond to us in a hostile way is a reaction to historical colonial relationships and neocolonial relationships.

When we discuss Iran, we should be discussing what happened in 1953 [when the United States overthrew the democratically elected government that threatened Western oil interests and imposed on Iran a tyrannical government by the Shah]. And that does not require us to say that the oppression of the Green movement in Iran is just fine. We can reject that abuse of human rights [by the current mullahs ruling Iran] as well. But we have to understand that we lit a fuse in 1953 that exploded in 1979 [during the Iranian revolution], and we are dealing with that problem right now. And we have got to set that relationship aright, and you can’t tell me that thirty years of not talking and thirty years of sanctions and then a few months of dialogue are going to solve the problem. It is going to

To join in the campaign for the Global Marshall Plan, please go to spiritualprogressives.org/GMP, download and read it, and then let us know where you live, who your representatives in Congress are, and whether you are willing to reach out to them. If you can’t download it, send us a note at gmp@tikkun.org with your mailing address, and we will send you a copy.

take a little longer than that to work out the problem, and we should not allow these neo-cons to abandon dialogue because it didn't work within a finger snap. We gave a long time to hostility and aggression. We didn't give much time to dialogue, and then we set time limits on it. We shouldn't set any time limits on it. And we shouldn't believe that somehow Ahmadinejad is a great moral force in the world. We don't have to say because we made mistakes in the past, that every reaction to them is a positive and good one. We can maintain a certain moral consistency.

The Global Marshall Plan

I NEED YOUR HELP ON H. RES. 1016, THE GLOBAL MARSHALL Plan. The plain fact is that Americans won't feel secure until people in the rest of the world feel like they are getting a fair shake. And this is about equity again. The United States of America, we can do this.

Last year on my trip to the northern region of Kenya, I saw effective health interventions helping people in extremely vulnerable situations. I also found the incredible people of Kenya helping to reduce HIV transmission, improve nutrition, and train midwives. And in Africa I also saw great progress in reducing mother-to-child transmission of HIV. I visited a town of AIDS orphans and women struggling to care for them. Kenya is a great case study for a smart global health policy, which we need to be in the mix of guiding. Not as charity, but in a way to help elevate the bottom billion or more, so they can interact as peers on a commercial scale with the rest of the world.

This partnership is one example of how you and I can shape our nation's foreign policy. We need to be active and engaged, because the people who don't agree with us are active and engaged, trust me on that. There is no way to improve the life chances of our world's burgeoning youth population that is undereducated, underemployed, and unengaged, without a commitment to equity. So I urge you to help me advance this idea of equity within the context of the Global Marshall Plan.

A Strategy of Generosity and Justice

SECOND I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT GENEROSITY. GENEROSITY is an often underutilized concept that is incredibly important. Being generous does not mean you are a sucker, or a spendthrift, or not careful with your money. Being generous originates in the spirit. Generosity of spirit, faith, confidence that there's enough for everybody—we all can eat.

A strategy of generosity demands that we as Americans and as progressives need to be far more inclusive and diverse in our thinking about development. A strategy of generosity needs to be based on the idea that we as humans are part of a web of giving and learning relationships. Taking generosity and justice as guiding principles for our foreign policy means challenging the view that Americans are uniquely entitled to global opportunities and resources. For example, claiming that the oil under the sand that those people over there are sitting on belongs to us. We've got to stop that idea; it's an ugly one.

Why do we insist on believing that those living outside our

borders are not OK, not entitled unless they profess the same worldview that we do?

How can we be generous as long as thirty-three cents of every dollar that we pay in federal income taxes goes to pay for war and only one penny is spent on diplomacy and the peaceful prevention of deadly conflict? Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are robbing the poor at the same time that we need every dollar just to sustain life and promote justice. A generous, progressive worldview promoting justice accepts that legitimate power and authority must be accountable to community, and the rule of law must matter to the powerful as well as everyone else.

Engagement for a Progressive Foreign Policy

FINALLY, LET ME TALK ABOUT ENGAGEMENT. PROGRESSIVE foreign policy means engaging with those with whom we disagree, sticking to the hard work at every policy level. President Obama's nuclear summit, I believe, is a symbol and an example of the United States trying to work together with other countries rather than dictating to them. Congress seems to be in a rut of passing resolutions of condemnation, as if the United States had the right to determine right and wrong for the rest of the world. President Obama's commitment to engage in discussions with other countries and pursue areas of concern is something that we as progressives, in my opinion, can and should support. Doing government right is hard work and requires time and commitment. We Americans have grown used to living in a culture where instant gratification comes at the push of a button. But real change, real politics, requires slow negotiation, compromise, grace under pressure, and some old-fashioned stick-to-it.

I look forward to working with you over the long haul to promote equity, generosity, engagement, and pursuit of a progressive foreign policy. But in the meantime I need you to make sure that your member of Congress is a signatory to the Global Marshall Plan. I need you to say that every single one of them needs to get their name on it so that we can really let our action align with our rhetoric.

And I want you to know that Rabbi Lerner, who basically wrote the Global Marshall Plan—all I did was put my name on it and introduce it as a bill—is a fellow who I believe has a lot to say to us, and so I'm very thankful to you, Rabbi. I also wanted to say before I give up the microphone—I'm a Muslim, but to borrow a phrase from the Christian community—that you, Rabbi Lerner, have had to bear the cross. So here's a Muslim telling a Jew he has to bear the cross. Bearing the cross means that because you are walking a righteous path of justice, love, and generosity, there are people who find that incredibly threatening, and along the way they will speak evil of you, they will threaten you, they will threaten your life, and they will make life hard for you. That has been happening to you, Rabbi Lerner. But faith will carry you through, my brother. And I want you to know that your courage and commitment encourage us. The fact is that if you will stand and brave these elements, we will stand with you. God bless you and thank you. ■

The New Zionist Imperative Is to Tell Israel the Truth

by Jeremy Ben-Ami

I'M REALLY PLEASED THAT I'VE GOTTEN THE CHANCE TO know Michael Lerner over the past few months and to discover that we share a very deep and personal bond in our goals related to Israel, to the passion to try to bring peace and justice. We do it in our own way.

I am a creature of Washington, D.C., for better or for worse, and part of the system that is broken. I've worked here for twenty-five years and know it inside and out. That is one of the reasons that I started J Street, because the system is so broken and you need to know the rule book to be able to fix it. Of course I would love to throw out the rule book. That would be the ultimate way to fix it. But until you all fix the rulebook, I know what the rules are and I know how to change, a little bit, the way in which this town works. So I thank you very much for the invitation to speak. I've told Michael that I'd like very much for the Tikkun Community and for him personally to participate in our next conference in February 2011.

This is an extremely interesting and terrible time for the issue that I work on, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We all had huge expectations from the new president on this issue. On day one he pledged that he would work diligently and energetically. He appointed George Mitchell, he made his first phone calls to Israel and to the Palestinian Authority, and so there was a glimmer of hope. I think it's fair to say that not only over the weeks since Israel's attack on the Gaza aid flotilla, but also since early 2009, that glimmer of hope has really diminished. I'd like to think together about some reactions to the flotilla incident and about where we go from here—what are the policy options, the implications for our politics, and, from my perspective, the implications for the American Jewish community.

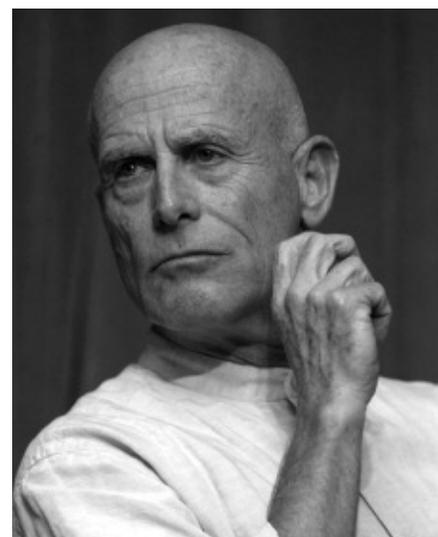
The Flotilla Tragedy

I SPENT THE WEEK AFTER THE FLOTILLA TRAGEDY WITH A MAN named Ami Ayalon, who was the commander of the Israeli navy for five years and the head of the Israeli Shin Bet, Israel's internal security service. During his thirty-five-year career he actually commanded the very unit that carried out the raid. I saw Ami speak in Philadelphia probably eighteen times over the course of six days,

and learned a lot from him about how Israel could have and should have dealt with this problem but chose not to.

The thing that I find so troubling and dissatisfying about the conversation about the flotilla is that the emails that come to my inbox focus on "Here's the video of what happened on the ship," and "Don't you see the gunfire erupting before the soldiers actually did something?" And on the other side they say, "Don't you see the soldiers opening fire before they even land on the boat?" The thing that I took away from the conversation with Ami was how this misses the point. We could spend all of our lives talking about blame and about who did what to whom in any tragic event that took place over the last one hundred years. But the issue that should be front and center for us, for all of the peoples of the region, and for all of the politicians and policy makers—especially in Israel—is, how do they intend to move forward? How do they intend to build a future?

When they sent those young men onto that boat, what did they expect? They sent the elite of Israel's trained warriors: bright wonderful kids, trained to be killers. And they sent them onto a civilian ship in the middle of the night and said, "take it over." If they didn't know that this was going to be the outcome, then what were they doing making these decisions? That's where the problem is. That's where the blame lies: with the politicians, the policy makers, and the decision makers. So I'd like us to think about some of the lessons that I hope we'll take from this, and I'll give credit to Ami.



Jeremy Ben-Ami draws five lessons from talks by Ami Ayalon (above), a former head of the Israeli navy and of Israel's internal security service who offered American audiences a different Israeli perspective on the May 31, 2010, flotilla raid.

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

Five Lessons to Inform Our Approaches

THE FIRST LESSON IS TO TRY TO HELP PEOPLE TO DISTINGUISH between victory and revenge. For too long in this conflict, the reaction has been, “You hit me, I’m gonna hit you harder.” Joe Klein in *Time* magazine today calls it Ari Ben Canaan Disorder or ABCD (Ari Ben Canaan is the macho hero of Leon Uris’ novel *Exodus*). It’s this desire to reflexively act tough and strong because you feel you’ve been picked on your whole life. If you feel that sense of victimhood and you feel you need to strike back, then you’ll take every opportunity to strike as hard as you can. I think the Israelis have lost sight of what it means to win. Victory to the Israelis and the Jewish people should mean a safe, Jewish, and democratic Israel, and that’s it. Every action they take should be judged by the standard of whether or not they are advancing the ball in that direction. Nearly every action that seems to be taken these days moves in the wrong direction, satisfying a lust and a need for revenge, rather than having a clear strategic eye on how to win and the actual meaning of victory.

The second lesson involves the concept of fighting Hamas. Hamas is an idea, and you can’t beat an idea purely with military force. To the Palestinian people, the idea of Hamas is about liberation, an end to Occupation, and independence. If the Israeli army can’t beat that idea, they need a better idea, and the better idea is peace, diplomacy, and the end of the Occupation. Surprisingly, according to Ami Ayelon—who ran Israel’s security forces and navy—the best way to beat Hamas is to pursue an immediate end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and watch Hamas shrivel up as a political force. Because if you empower Salam Fayyad and Abu Mazen and give them results, and show a true sense of progress for the Palestinian people on the path to independence and freedom, then there won’t be an attraction to a fundamentalist way of life that most Palestinians don’t fundamentally believe in. That’s the way to beat Hamas.

Lesson number three, from a military standpoint, is, don’t rely purely on force. Strength exercised in the absence of diplomacy is weakness. I thought that was extraordinarily important.

Fourth, we are not witnessing a (Samuel) Huntingtonian clash of civilizations. What we’re watching is a clash within all our civilizations, between people who are extremists and people who are moderates. If we tend to look at this conflict as the forces of good and the forces of evil, with somehow us in the United States and the Israelis as the forces of good, and “them”—the Palestinians and the Arabs on their side—as evil, we are completely missing the nature of the conflict. This is a fundamental flaw in the ways in which the American Jewish establishment views this conflict, the Israeli government looks at this conflict, and the U.S. government for the previous eight years approached its foreign policy. Misunderstanding a battlefield means you are doomed to lose the war.

Fifth, the role of the United States is absolutely pivotal to the end of this conflict. Left to their own devices, the Israelis and the Palestinians will not be able to come to a reasonable resolution. For eighteen years we have watched diplomacy fail time after time after time. An outside party must come into the mix and help the parties close the gap, understand what the differences are, and



The flotilla raid lost Israel further support around the world, sparking rallies from Istanbul to Islamabad to Geneva. Here a speaker leads protesters in New York on June 4, 2010.

bridge the way to a final peace agreement. Israelis look at the world and say, “We have offered everything, we gave up land, and all we’ve gotten in return is rockets and terror.” Palestinians look at the world, and say, “For eighteen years we have negotiated, and all we have is double the number of settlers that we had when we started this whole process.” So the two communities and the two peoples look at the world through extremely different lenses, and only somebody coming from the outside in the form of the United States, and this president, really has the chance to close the gap.

So this brings us to the fundamental question that I would have talked about if the flotilla hadn’t happened: the options that the United States has in addressing this conflict.



Joe Klein coined the term “Ari Ben Canaan Disorder”—the desire to reflexively act tough because of past persecution—after the hero of Exodus, played by Paul Newman in the movie (left) based on the novel by Leon Uris (right, on patrol in the Negev).

Settlement Freeze Ends



Proximity Talks End



WHY WE ONLY HAVE UNTIL MID-2011 TO CREATE A TWO-STATE SOLUTION



Obama's Window Between the 2010 and 2012 Elections

Abu Mazen Won't Run Again; Salam Fayyad's Two-Year Clock Ends



Why We Have Only Until Mid-2011

LET ME START BY SAYING WHAT I ASSUME IS OBVIOUS TO ALL OF you: time is of the essence. We are nearly out of time for the two-state solution. For those who hope to see a democratic and Jewish Israel on the one side, and a Palestinian state that is viable and contiguous on the other, time is nearly out. It is 11:59, and if we don't act now, I believe that one year from now we will not be able to have this conversation—that is how serious the timing is.

Here's why: First, the settlement freeze, which I call a settlement chill, is over in September, so from the Israeli point of view, a critical decision point is, do they extend the settlements? Second, from the point of view of the Arab world, they gave four months of cover to these proximity talks for the Palestinian side, and that period ends in August. Third, from the American political calendar, Barack Obama will have a narrow window between November of this year and probably the fall of next year, in which he can actually deal with this issue. In the heat of a political season, whether it is the midterms now or his re-election in 2012, he will not be able to deal in any meaningful way with this issue. And finally, fourth, from the point of view of the Palestinians, Salam Fayyad's two-year clock for creating the institutions of statehood runs out next August, and Abu Mazen is already beyond the time limit of his own personal presidency and has said he will not run for re-election. So all four of these clocks are running out and we can see them all heading toward a deadline at some point in the middle of next year.

Four Options for Action

SO THE QUESTION IS WHAT TO DO. I'VE HEARD FOUR OPTIONS.

Aaron Miller, who is the former number two negotiator for the American side, has said, "Give up, walk away, tell both sides to call you when they're ready." There are many within the administration, many in Washington, and many people like Tom Friedman who write prominent columns who have echoed that call. So that's one option, to simply say: "You know what? It isn't solvable. We can't do anything. They seem determined to kill each other—it's their problem and let's walk away." As you can imagine, I reject that option. I reject it not simply because I care about Israel and care about Palestinians, but also because I also care about the United States—the resolution of this conflict is absolutely fundamental to American interests, so we simply can't walk away.

Option number two draws on the fact that many people are ready to get very angry. I see this in the BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanctions) movement and in people who say: "Why don't we just cut off Israel? Why don't we just take away the \$3 billion of military aid? Amazingly quickly, we'll have a peace deal." I am not a big fan of approaches that rely on anger. I don't think that would be productive: I'm not at all convinced that, if the heat is turned up, we won't watch the Israelis draw even further into their defensive crouch and their shell. I think that is not the way to bring about very difficult and painful compromise that is necessary to achieve peace.

Option three is to impose a solution: the president of the United States or someone with the power of the United Nations behind them could just say, "this is the solution" and impose it. I don't think a peace deal that the two sides don't actually buy is going to solve this conflict. You can say it, you can vote on it, you can pass as many resolutions at the security council as you want, but if the people of the region haven't voted on it and accepted it themselves, then I don't think we've resolved this conflict either.

So I've just about eliminated every other track except the one that we're on, and that's not going so well, and that is the track of strong and assertive American diplomacy. I think the president needs to double down on the efforts that he personally is putting into this conflict. It isn't enough to send George Mitchell to the region or to have the secretary of state make comments. I believe it is time for President Obama to go to the region and speak directly to the people of Israel and to the people of the Palestinian territories and say: "Here's what peace looks like. You have a choice—it is in your hands." I believe the answer will be a resounding yes. The people of Israel and of the Palestinian territories want this to end, and everybody knows the outline of a reasonable solution. So it's time for the president to step up his game and do it in a timely manner. Everything that J Street will be doing in the coming year, during this critical window, will be to force that moment, to demand from this president that he step up to the plate on this critical issue that is vital to American interests, vital to justice, and vital to the stability of the region and the peace of the world. It is up to the president to step forward.

So that is our sense of the policy dynamic. The politics, however, continue to be the most serious brake on that happening.

J Street has made itself into a political machinery that attempts to change the dynamics of American politics on this issue. To me, the meetings that happen at the White House almost certainly don't have a lot of objections, on policy grounds, to what I've just outlined. The issue is the political team saying, "I don't think this is such a good idea for you, Mr. President, or for the Democrats up on Capitol Hill—it's going to turn against you, it's going to turn into a political football." That's why all we Americans (Jewish and non-Jewish) who actually believe that this issue must be resolved and that there must be peace and justice in the Middle East have to form a political constituency that can act as a counterweight to the political forces that have controlled this issue for far too long. That is what J Street is all about, and I invite you to join us in all of this.

What the American Jewish Community Needs to Do Now

LET ME FINISH WITH A COMMENT ABOUT MOVING FROM THE politics to the Jewish community. I know that a number of you here at the NSP conference are actively involved in Jewish communal life and are very deeply concerned about what is happening within the Jewish community on this issue.

People try to steer the conversation away from the larger questions and into the behavior of a few people on the deck of one boat, and to portray all of these events as a broader campaign to delegitimize the State of Israel: anything but focus on whether or not the larger strategy and policy are fatally flawed. My deepest wish for the American Jewish establishment is that they would spend a few hours with Ami Ayalon—the man I spent that week with, the commander of the Navy and head of the Israeli Secret Service—and learn a few things about what it means to be a true friend to Israel at this critical moment in the country's history. What Israel needs from its friends has changed. In the old days, they collected money in little tin cans. Then they came and they



To empower moderate Palestinians, Israel must end the Occupation and the conflict. Relatives mourn twenty-two-year-old Sharef Badir, who was killed in an Israeli airstrike in the southern Gaza Strip town of Khan Yunis, August 2010.

told us to make Aliyah. Then they told us, well, at least visit: send your kids on Birthright. But today the new Zionist imperative is to tell Israel the truth, even if it is painful. As Israel becomes increasingly isolated, as it becomes insecure and scared, it is finding it harder to see for itself what is truly happening, how its actions are deepening its isolation and dooming its chances of maintaining a Jewish and democratic home. I believe its future hangs in the balance in these next months and years.

Without a major course correction, American friends of Israel are poised to witness, on our watch, a tragic fate for the Jewish and democratic state that we have loved and supported over the past century. It is a true act of friendship for us to help Israel to see how critical it is to end the Occupation and create two states, to make this a centerpiece of American and Israeli policy, and to rely again on our people's moral compass to get us there. ■

Healing Is Not a Business

by Margaret Flowers

I'VE HEARD OUR HEALTH SITUATION (NOT A SYSTEM) described in a lot of ways: irrational, unethical, a failure, cruel, unjust. I've heard it said that the way our current health situation is set up, the incentives are to worsen our health by putting up obstacles to care, forcing people to wait, doing more procedures. Patients and caregivers have to jump through so many hoops—checking networks, getting authorizations, hours on the phone—to get or provide care that

it is creating anger and harming our healing relationships.

The United States spends the most of all advanced nations on health care, yet we are ranked thirty-seventh for health outcomes and fifty-fourth for fairness of financing. Roughly 50 million people are excluded, and tens of millions are underinsured and at risk of bankruptcy and foreclosure if they have a serious health problem. Of the advanced nations, the United States has the highest number of preventable deaths.

Dr. Margaret Flowers is a pediatrician who serves as the congressional fellow for Physicians for a National Health Program and is on the board of Healthcare-Now. She is one of the "Baucus 8."

Why is this? It's because we are the only advanced nation that thinks of patients as consumers and health as a commodity to be bought on the market. It's because we have tried to fit medicine into a business model.

Medicine is not a business; it is about healing, about caring and about practicing an art—a careful balance of science and humanity that is advanced by having access to accurate, unbiased information and having adequate time to develop the intimate and trusting healing relationship. Patients are not widgets. Every patient is unique.

We have been living a dangerous experiment of market-based and profit-driven health care. The evidence is clear: the market fails when it comes to health care. We cannot continue this experiment any longer. There are too many people suffering and dying.

This past year we desperately needed an open and honest debate about what our country requires to address this health crisis effectively. That is not what we had.

The health reform process was tightly scripted and tightly controlled by the leadership in Congress and the White House. It was dominated by capitulation to the private insurance, pharmaceutical, and hospital industries. In the end, it was more about creating the appearance of success than about solving our problems.

The reform that passed is designed to fail. It further enriches the worst parts of our health situation—the private health industries—without addressing the fundamental problems. Too many people will continue to be left out and the number of underinsured and financially vulnerable will grow. The result will be financially unsustainable. Already, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services predict that health care costs will rise faster under the new legislation than if we had done nothing. It is designed to fail, because it maintains a market-based model of health care and because the market is a failure. This legislation cannot be tweaked into effective reform.

The smallest increment of change that will be effective is to create a single-payer health system. Single-payer is the only way to provide universal care that is financially sustainable. And having a health system that is accountable is the only way to have a framework in which to make the many other changes we must make in a rational and coordinated manner.

The health reform process made manifest what we already know. Our political system is broken. Our government and media are dominated by corporations. Those who may have

been questioning whether this is true now see this corporate control, and it is the problem not just with health care but also with all issues of economic, environmental, and social justice.

I do not despair, because to despair is to give up and we cannot give up. It is too important that we end these injustices. I am hopeful for many reasons and I will share two of them with you: I am hopeful because I am seeing tremendous energy and enthusiasm among single-payer advocates. We

have not given up. We say “health reform—we are still for it!” And I am hopeful because

we have learned some very important lessons and so now we will be more effective. You can remember these lessons because the acronym is ICU (intensive care unit).

I—We must be *independent* as a movement and hold politicians accountable.

C—We must be *clear* in our demand that we will no longer accept a market model of health care. Health care is a public good and so must be financed through a single transparent and accountable public fund.

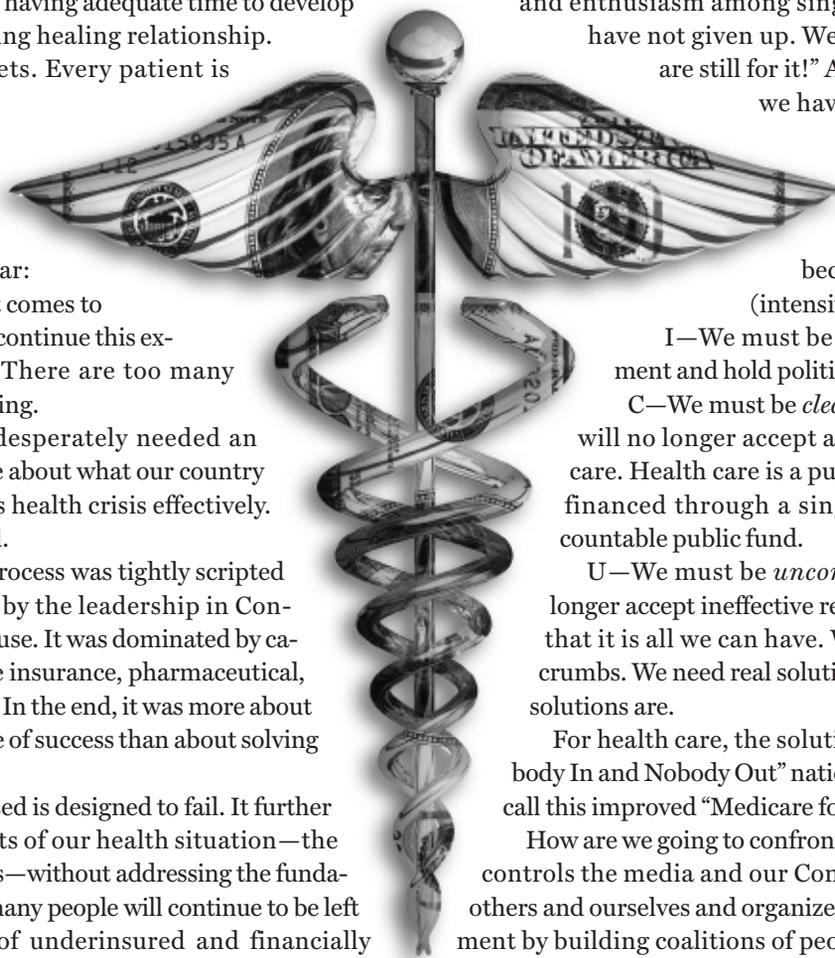
U—We must be *uncompromising*. We will no longer accept ineffective reform because we are told that it is all we can have. We will no longer accept crumbs. We need real solutions. We know what those solutions are.

For health care, the solution is a universal “Everybody In and Nobody Out” national health insurance. We call this improved “Medicare for All.”

How are we going to confront corporate power when it controls the media and our Congress? We must educate others and ourselves and organize a broad grassroots movement by building coalitions of people united for social and economic justice. As Rabbi Lerner has said, we must have a higher vision, the highest ethical vision, and so we are called upon to end injustice.

When it comes to health, only 10 percent has anything to do with medical care. The other 90 percent has to do with what we call social determinants—education, housing, a safe environment free of violence and free of toxins, clean water, healthy food, adequate income, and a life of dignity, being treated equally and with respect. To create a healthy and productive society, we must join together and work for all of these things.

The time is now to build a unified movement for social and economic justice so that any president, any Congress will be accountable to the needs of the people. We must shift the base of power back to the people. Join us in our work to create health justice! Go to pnhp.org and healthcare-now.org. ■



The Race to Save Civilization

by Lester Brown

IF WE LOOK AT EARLY CIVILIZATIONS THAT DECLINED AND collapsed—the ones whose archeological sites we now study, such as those of the Sumerians and Mayans—more often than not it was a shortage of food that brought them down. Until recently I had rejected the idea that food could be the weak link in our modern civilization; I now think it probably is. I'd like to look at global environmental issues through a food lens. If we look at the environmental trends that are undermining our future, almost all of them affect the food prospect. Deforestation, soil erosion, falling water tables, deteriorating grasslands, expanding deserts, collapsing fisheries, rising temperatures, melting ice sheets and rising sea level, melting mountain glaciers that disrupt river flows, and disappearing species—almost all of them affect the food prospect.

Three Major Threats to Global Food Production

LET'S CONSIDER THREE OF THESE THREATS TO OUR FOOD SUPPLY: falling water tables, melting ice sheets, and melting mountain glaciers. Water tables are now falling in countries that contain half the world's people, including the big three grain producers: China, India, and the United States. Water tables are falling because of overpumping, mostly from irrigation. Seventy percent of all the water we use in the world is for irrigation. Industry uses about twenty percent and we have ten percent for residential use. What we are doing is inflating food production in the short run by overpumping aquifers. But once the aquifers are depleted, then pumping is necessarily reduced to the rate of recharge. So in effect we're creating food bubbles in at least fifteen, maybe twenty countries in the world, including the two big ones, China and India. A World Bank study indicates that 175 million people in India and 130 million in China are being fed with grain produced by overpumping. This is a way of measuring the size of the food bubble. There are a number of other countries where the food bubble is either bursting or about to burst. One is Saudi Arabia, which has been pumping from a fossil aquifer and has been self-sufficient in wheat production for twenty years. That aquifer is now largely depleted. Fossil aquifers do not recharge. Saudi Arabia's wheat production has dropped 70 percent in the last three years and will probably be at zero by the year after next. Saudi Arabia is the first country where we've actually seen the food bubble

burst and production begin to decline. Yemen is not far behind.

The second environmental threat to food security is melting ice sheets. If the Greenland ice sheet were to melt entirely—and that would not happen overnight—it would raise sea level some twenty-three feet. If the west Antarctic ice sheet, which has started to break up, breaks up entirely, that will raise sea level another fifteen feet. The latest projections are of a rise of up to six feet during this century. But even a three-foot rise in sea level would inundate many of the rice-growing river deltas in Asia. A three-foot rise in sea level would put half the rice land in Bangladesh underwater. A three-foot rise would cover much of the Mekong Delta, which produces half the rice in Vietnam, which is the world's number two rice exporter. There are another nineteen rice-growing river deltas that would be affected in varying degrees by just a one-meter rise in sea level. It's an indication of the complexity of our modern world when ice melting on an island in the far north Atlantic can shrink the rice harvest in Asia, where half the world's people live.

The third threat is melting mountain glaciers in the Himalayas and on the Tibetan Plateau. It is the ice melt from those glaciers that sustains the major rivers of Asia during the dry season: the Indus, Ganges, Mekong, Yangtze, Yellow, and many smaller rivers. This ice melt sustains the flow of these rivers and the irrigation dependent on them. So what happens to those mountain glaciers in Asia is going to affect food prices for everyone in the world. Again, the idea that glaciers melting on the Tibetan Plateau could affect prices in U.S. supermarkets as China comes into the world market for massive quantities of grain is not something that's intuitively obvious unless you think a bit about it. But we're living in a very complex world now, with the interaction between the environmental system, the economic system, and the political system.

Why Demand for Grain Is Increasing

NOW CONSIDER THE DEMAND SIDE OF THE FOOD EQUATION. Population growth is at 80 million more people a year. That means that tonight there were 216,000 people at the dinner table who were not there last night, and it means that tomorrow night there'll be an additional 216,000 people at the dinner table.

Population growth is not new, but large populations

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Will our civilization one day fall to ruins for the same reason the Sumerian (left) and Mayan (center) civilizations collapsed: food shortages?

moving up the food chain is a relatively recent development in human history and evolution. It's only since World War II that livestock products—beef, eggs, milk, pork, and poultry—have begun to be produced largely with grain. Moving up the food chain takes more grain.

The third factor in increasing demand for food is the capacity we now have to convert grain into oil, i.e., ethanol. Last year we harvested 415 million tons of grain in this country. One-hundred-and-six million tons of that harvest went to ethanol distilleries. What this means is that the world price of grain is now tied to the price of oil, because if the fuel value of the grain exceeds the food value, the market will move the grain into the energy economy. This is new, and I don't think most economists have yet quite realized that if oil goes from \$80 to \$100, \$120, \$150, even \$200, the price of grain will follow it up in the absence of government intervention. If we leave it to the market, that's where things will go.

These three factors all generate an additional demand for grain. That's why we saw a few years ago a tripling of world grain prices, while grain prices right now are about 50 percent above the historical level. They've not gone back to the historical level, nor do I expect they will. So food is the weak link in the system. We see this not only with grain prices but also with the number of hungry people in the world, which declined until about the turn of this century and for the last decade has been increasing. That's exactly what happened with the Sumerians and the Mayans. The number of hungry people began to increase.

This is a trend that deserves far more attention than we're giving it. With rising food prices and more hungry people, the number of failing states is increasing, typically by another two or three countries a year. That lengthening list raises a disturbing question: how many failing states before we have a failing global civilization? The answer: we don't know. We haven't been here before. This is new territory for us.

A Viable Strategy

IN RESPONSE TO THIS SITUATION, WE'VE DEVISED PLAN B, NOW described in a new edition *Plan B 4.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilization*. Lets consider two components of Plan B (and there are more in the book):

1. Cutting Carbon Emissions 80 percent by 2020

We need to make this cut not by 2050, which is what politicians like to talk about, but by 2020. We didn't ask what would be politically feasible. We asked how much and how fast we need to cut carbon emissions if we want to save the Greenland ice sheet. And I use that as a metaphor for saving civilization, because if we can't save the Greenland ice sheet, we are in trouble. And it is still doable. For example, if we just went to the most efficient lighting technologies available now, worldwide—in most cases that's compact fluorescent bulbs, in some situations like streetlights it's LEDs, light-emitting diodes—we can close 705 of the 2,500 coal-fired power plants in the world from electricity savings, just completing the transition that's already under way, of shifting to the most economically available lighting technologies on the market today.

2. Restoring the Earth's Natural Systems

Forests, grasslands, fisheries, soils, and so forth all need to be restored. It's entirely doable. We worked out a budget. Restoration of natural systems, soil conservation, reforestation, eradication of poverty—which is one of the major components—and stabilization of population all together budget out at about \$200 billion of additional expenditures a year. That's quite a bit. But we're spending \$1.2 trillion (six times that) now for military expenditures. We need to redefine security. We have a mindset based in the twentieth century, which was dominated by two world wars and a cold war, so we think the threats to our future are military. The real threats to our future security and political stability are climate change, falling water tables, and rising food prices.

Let me talk for a minute about cutting carbon emissions. It takes a lot of effort.

Things are beginning to happen fast on the energy front in the transition from fossil fuels to renewable sources of energy, going from oil, coal, and natural gas to wind, solar, and geothermal. For example, China, a latecomer to wind energy, has been doubling its wind-generating capacity each year for five years. Last year it installed more new wind capacity than we did. The Chinese government is now committed to developing seven wind megacomplexes with a total generating capacity over 130,000 megawatts, equivalent to 130 coal-fired power plants. That's like building a new coal-fired power plant every week for the next two and half years. It is huge. We've never seen energy thinking in any field on this scale before.

And last year, while the governments of Europe were preparing for Copenhagen, a consortium led by Munich Re, a reinsurance company, and including Deutsche Bank, Siemens, and a dozen other leading companies, announced the Desertec Project. This is a project to harness the solar resources of North Africa and integrate them into a European-North African grid that would also include the wind resources of Northern Europe and the North Sea to largely power the economies of Europe and North Africa with renewable sources of energy. The potential here is huge. The Algerians point out that in their desert they have enough harnessable solar energy to power the world economy. That sounds like a mathematical error but it's not. Those of you who read the energy literature know that the sunlight striking the earth in one hour will



Saudi Arabia has depleted its fossil aquifer so deeply through irrigation systems such as this that its wheat production has dropped 70 percent in the last three years and is heading for zero. It's the first country to see its food bubble burst.

FLORENCE SHANLUNG

power the world economy for one year. So it's not a question of whether we have enough renewable energy, be it solar or wind (and I haven't even talked about geothermal). A recent U.S.-Chinese survey reported that China has enough harnessable wind energy to increase its current electricity consumption sevenfold. In this country, three of our fifty states—North Dakota, Kansas, and Texas—have more harnessable wind energy than we could ever consume. So the resources are there. The question is how to quickly make the shift from fossil fuels to renewables. Can we do it? I think we can.

There is one other major development in the energy field that does not get very much attention: the extraordinarily successful grassroots movement in this country, coordinated nationally by the Sierra Club, to ban new coal-fired power plants. As a result of that effort we now have a de facto moratorium on building new coal plants. I doubt we'll ever license another coal plant in this country. But beyond that the campaign is now moving into phase two, which is to close existing coal plants. I was working on a list a few weeks ago. There are now at least thirty, maybe more, coal plants in this country scheduled to close, either to convert to natural gas or to be replaced by wind farms or by investments in efficiency. We've still got a ways to go because we've got some 600 coal plants altogether, but thirty is a good start.

Can We Move Fast Enough?

SO WE'RE BEGINNING TO MOVE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION BUT we've got to move faster. When I see how much we have to do and how little time in which to do it, I go back and read the economic history of World War II. First, the extraordinarily successful—in military terms—surprise attack by the Japanese on the U.S. Pacific Fleet, part of which was anchored at Pearl Harbor. One month later, President Roosevelt laid out U.S. arms production goals. He said, "We're going to produce 45,000 tanks, 60,000 planes, at least a few thousands ships." We were still in the Depression mode economy at the time, and people could not grasp this, but what he and his colleagues realized was that at that time the single largest concentration of industrial power in the world was in the U.S. automobile industry, because even during the Depression we'd been making 2 million or 3 million cars a year. He called in the leaders of the automobile industry and said, "Because you represent such a large share of our industrial capacity, we're going to rely heavily on you to help us reach these goals." They said, "Mr. President, we'll do everything we can, but it's going to be a stretch, producing cars and all these arms too." He said: "You don't understand. We're going to ban the sale of cars in the United States." And that's exactly what we did, and we exceeded every one of those goals.

We're now in a race between tipping points—between natural tipping points and political tipping points. Can we cut carbon emissions fast enough to save the Greenland ice sheet? Can we close coal-fired power plants fast enough to save at least the larger glaciers in the Himalayas in the Tibetan Plateau? Can we arrest the deforestation of the Amazon before the forest dries out to the

point it becomes vulnerable to natural fire, when it will not be savable? Scientists think we're getting very close to that point now. So we're in a race between tipping points and time is everything. One of our difficulties is that nature's the timekeeper. Nature sets these thresholds. We don't know where they are. We don't know when the Greenland ice sheet melting becomes irreversible. The problem is we can't see the clock. We don't know how much time we have left.

We talk about saving the planet. Those of us working on environmental issues have been talking about the need to save the planet for some time. But the planet's going to be around for a while. The question is, can we save civilization? That's what's at stake now, and I don't think we've yet realized it. But we're seeing the stresses building. Climate stresses, food stresses, energy stresses, all of the environmental trends I talked about before are imposing more stresses, and the weaker governments are starting to break down under them. That's the bottom line.

Saving civilization is not a spectator sport. We all have a stake in the future. Most of us have children. Many of us have grandchildren. We all have a stake in the future, but we all have to get involved. Many of us are already involved, but if you're not, pick an

issue that's important to you. Is it stabilizing world population? Work with some of the groups that are working on that. Is it closing coal-fired power plants? There's a campaign under way and they could use your help to close existing plants. Or what about developing a world-class recycling program in your community? Save enormous amounts of energy. We forget how much energy we save having good recycling plants.

So my challenge to you is a very simple one. It is to get involved in these issues. This is not something that *may* happen at some distant point in the future. These are things that are already happening. We are now on a path that's headed toward economic decline and collapse. The question is, can we move off that path? Can we restructure the world energy economy quickly enough to stabilize climate, for example? These are our challenges. ■

VOLUNTEER TRANSLATORS

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Yankee Doodle Faced Big Oil

by Arthur Waskow

WE HAVE JUST HEARD FROM LESTER BROWN the very best of how the scientific enterprise has enriched us, not by chopping the world into little pieces, but by seeing the way in which those little pieces interweave. And yet, we know that scientific knowledge is not enough. If it were enough, we would be much further along than we are in protecting the Greenland ice sheet and healing the planet.

The Network of Spiritual Progressives has taken the initiative to pull together an amazing amalgam of religious, secular, and spiritual organizations. Why? Because what Lester Brown has taught us tonight—just to use the categories of Jewish Mysticism, of Kabbalah—is one of the four profound worlds of

reality. The spirit, the heart, and action, as well as mind, are crucial. That's why I'm going to invite you into a moment of painful and transformative spirit, emotion, and action.

(CHANTING)

Eicha, eicha—Alas, Alas—
How lifeless sits the seacoast.
Once filled with fish, with pelicans.
Once filled with the living fisher folk,
With livelihood, and way of life.
Now soaked in oil,
Each breath a gasp,
Bereft of life.

*Rabbi Arthur Waskow is the director of the Shalom Center (theshalomcenter.org), co-author of *The Tent of Abraham*, and author of *Godwrestling—Round 2*, *Down-to-Earth Judaism*, and a dozen other books on Jewish thought and practice, as well as books on U.S. public policy.*

What have I just done? I have tried to unite something very old and something, obviously, very new. The chant I used, the melody, the lament, is one of the oldest pieces of Jewish tradition. It's the lamenting melody with which Jews once a year chant the Book of Lamentations, the book about the destruction of the ancient Temples in Jerusalem. In our generation, the earth is a sacred temple—for all the peoples, all the cultures, all the species, all the life forms on our planet.

I said the words were new, but in some ways even they are not so new. The ancient interpretation of that sacred space was that the Temple was a microcosm of the world: the offerings of salt that were given there celebrated the mineral world; offerings of grain, barley, wheat, pancakes, and fruit celebrated the world of vegetation; the animals celebrated animal life; and the songs of the Levites celebrated the human ability to sing, to breathe, to turn breath into song. That's what the Temple was there for. And when it was destroyed, the sense of suffering and the sense of bereavement were about the sense of disconnection from the earth.

Everything that was brought to that ancient sacred place was food. We have driven that out of our minds when we learn in textbooks that it was “the sacrificial system.” What is that? It included, for example, pancakes: you read the biblical description, and it says take a handful of fine flour, mix it with oil, sprinkle spices, and turn it to smoke upon the altar—that's a pancake!

Earthy food was the connection to God. But food isn't the only connection anymore between human beings and the earth: coal, oil, plastics, uranium are the things that we “eat” nowadays. There was a reason for the emergence of the code of kosher eating—to eat food from sheep and cows and orchards

and rain, you have to have a sacred way of doing it, and that includes a sacred means of self-restraint.

The human race—not for the first time in our history—has lost the sacred sense of self-restraint. We smash the sacred mountains of West Virginia in order to get each last lump of coal. We rape the deepest recesses of Mother Earth—under a mile of ocean in the Gulf—to get the last gallon of oil. We gobble the planet though we know—both from the sacred teachings and from our history—that gobbling leads not to abundance but to misery and poverty.

What is happening on the Gulf Coast today is the Garden of Eden all over again, where God says to the human beings, the human race: “Here's abundance! Eat joyfully *and* restrain yourself! A little self-restraint, please?” But we don't restrain ourselves. And what's the result? The earth will give forth thorns and thistles, not abundance, and you will have to work with the sweat pouring down your faces to get just barely enough to eat.

There's another whole chunk of biblical teaching that has underpinned not only Judaism, but also Christianity and Islam. (The story of the Exodus—most of us don't know this—is something like a fifth or more of the Qur'an.) In that story, there are these things that most of us thought of as magic tricks when we learned about them in kindergarten or the first grade—these things called the Ten Plagues that were done by some Super Pharaoh in the sky. But they weren't magic tricks: they were the response of the earth to the oppression of human beings and of the earth. They were brought on by Pharaoh—by irresponsible, unaccountable, top-down power. And that's what we face today.

I meet people who say, “It's our own fault, we're the ones



AP PHOTO/CHARLIE RIEDEL, POOL

These people are going to tell us the truth? The Minerals Management Service (MMS) was corrupted by money, drugs, and sex into going easy on Big Oil. The inevitable happened. MMS (and Coast Guard) officials take the oath at a hearing in May concerning the explosion of BP's oil drilling platform in the Gulf of Mexico.

addicted to the cars.” True. There are people, millions—though fewer than there used to be—who are addicted to tobacco, but you know what, there were drug lords in the tobacco business, drug pushers who took billions of dollars of profit from our addiction. So we should be taking responsibility for our addiction, but that does not prevent us from noticing that there are drug lords.

When Big Oil uses sex, drugs, and money to corrupt a chunk of the U.S. government, the Minerals Management Service, it turns our attention away from the fact that Big Oil is also corrupting and bribing more than half the U.S. Senate. That’s even more important than what it did with the Minerals Management Service, because what we are seeing in the Gulf is just a microcosm of what is happening to the earth as a result of the corporate purchase of the Senate.

Turning Despair into Hope

THERE IS A RICHNESS IN ALL OUR RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL traditions that we need to draw on. They are not just bunches of rituals that we do in private. Somebody gets married; somebody grows up from a child to an adult; somebody gets baptized; the spring comes and there is Passover and Easter; the moon shifts and Ramadan comes—these are full of the possibility of action.

Consider the chant I chanted, the Lamentations chant. Midsummer—when it’s hottest not only here, but also in the stretches of the Middle East—is the day in Jewish traditions when the Temple was burned. That microcosm in the great scorching heat of the Khamsin wind is a microcosm of the planet burned. For 2,500 years since the first burning and 2,000 years since the second, Jews have fasted, have mourned, and have done something else, something quite extraordinary: reflected on our tradition’s assertion that on that day of despair and destruction, our messiah was born—not yet revealed, not yet come into the world, not yet ready to transform because *we* weren’t ready to transform the world, but born nevertheless. The beginnings of the possibility of hope.

Can we take this moment today and turn it from despair—which is the absence of hope—to hope? There is only one way to do that. Hope is not an emotion; hope is an action, a whole cluster of actions.

This morning I handed out a wonderful four-page leaflet on the first page of which is America’s thirteen-star flag of independence. Are we independent from the corporations? Are we independent from Big Coal? Are we independent from Big Oil?

Tikkun and the NSP have developed a whole constitutional amendment—I believe it’s actually longer than the whole Fourteenth Amendment, which is the longest of the constitutional amendments—to try to define what needs to be done to constrain the corporations, which have grown into an utterly undemocratic element. When the Supreme Court said, “Hey, forget about democracy, these are the real institutions that can govern

our society by putting money into election campaigns,” that was only the most recent step toward Corporatocracy. Can we declare our independence from the corporations?

I want to remind you, 1776 didn’t happen in a vacuum. In fact, years before the colonies agreed on a Declaration of Independence, they were challenging the British Empire, boycotting British wool. Why? Because it was a crucial element of the empire’s economy. And instead they said something we may associate with Gandhi two centuries later—they said let’s do homespun in America and create our own clothing. Wool is not the central issue today, but Big Oil is.

Can we begin by boycotting BP? Boycotting Big Oil, not just BP, by transforming the way we get around? Can we shake off our own addictions while at the same time directly challenging the drug lords of this business?

So we can begin from here and let it grow, and maybe next July 4 it can really be a challenge. This morning I shared a teaching I was taught by my father when I was a kid—he was a U.S. history teacher in a Baltimore public school. When I was eleven or twelve, he said, “You know this song, ‘Yankee Doodle?’” I said, “Sure!” And he said, “It sounds like a nonsense song—‘Stuck a feather in his cap and called it macaroni’—that’s a joke, right?” I said, “Yeah.” He said, “No, it’s not.”

He said the song began as a British Army song to make fun of the American Army. In the British army, officers got to put what they called macaroni on their epaulets; today we call it scrambled eggs ... that messy, mixed-up yellow stuff. Scrambled eggs, macaroni, gold braid—that was the way the British Army announced you were an officer.

These Americans, they would elect one of the farmers to be an officer and then he would stick a feather in his hat and they would call him an officer and that was that—isn’t that absurd? Well, to an imperial army, it seems absurd. To an army made up of farmers and Boston mechanics, it wasn’t absurd at all. They took the song back from the British and sang it with delight. And—they won! They won!

So here’s a new verse for the twenty-first century, in the same mood:

Yankee Doodle faced Big Oil,
Riding on a cycle:
“Your power don’t scare us today,
Your oil ain’t worth a nickel.”
Yankee Doodle keep it up,
Yankee Doodle dandy.
Mind the music and the step,
And for the earth be handy!

Every spiritual movement needs its songs. For sure this ain’t the only one we’ll need. But for those of us who dig it, for those of us who understand what it would mean to become independent of oil, this might be one of them. ■

Suicidal vs. Life-Giving Religious Narratives

by Brian McLaren

I WAS INVITED TO REFLECT HERE ON THE TOPIC OF “spiritual visions for social healing,” under the general heading of “creating a caring society,” but first, I’d like to turn the topic upside-down to look at religious visions for social suicide.

In the 1990s a group of respected scientists facing the accumulating data of environmental destruction, especially climate change, invited a number of religious leaders to meet with them. The meeting began with the scientists saying something like this: “Listen, we in the scientific community accumulate data that tells us we are in deep, deep trouble. But our forte is not motivating people to change their values and lifestyle—that’s supposed to be your specialty. So what we’re saying is, the future of the human race depends on us getting the ‘versus’ out from between ‘faith’ and ‘science.’ The future of the human race requires now that we leaders in science reach out to you people of faith and say, ‘We can bring the data to the table, but you have to bring the motivation to the table and a vision that would help people change their values.’” That to me is why the Network of Spiritual Progressives has been so vital in articulating this kind of a vision for social change.

Three Suicidal Religious Framing-Stories

IF WE DON’T FACE OUR CULPABILITY IN THE CREATION OF THE problems that we share, I don’t think we’ll be able to repent deeply enough and design an alternative vision that is profound and strong enough to solve them, so I would like to tell you at the core of this what I see our job as spiritual people has been. Religious communities, among the many contributions they make, infuse narratives into communities. I call them framing-stories.

Sadly, I think there are some framing-stories that are terribly destructive—stories beyond which we now have to evolve and develop and grow and mature. One of them is the us-versus-them narrative that builds on the idea that to have a strong identity, we have to be against people of other identities. We could call this a counter-dependent identity. Now, a lot of us grew up with that kind of identity. To be a Christian is to be out to convert everyone else to your faith. To be a Jew is to remember how Christians have mistreated you and to understand them in a contrary relationship.

So, our history and our theology have conspired to give us the idea that to have a strong religious identity sets us at odds with people of other strong religious identities. The time-tested solution to this, which is deeply embedded in American culture, is to say that the only way around the terrible struggles that result from “us versus them” in religious communities is to weaken people’s religious identities. And in some ways, that’s the dream of secularism: “If we could just reduce peoples’ religious commitments and their religious identities, then we’d all get along.”

Guess what we found out? It doesn’t work. When we remove religious identities, other identities emerge—whether they’re left/right political identities, whether they’re tribal or ethnic identities, or whether they’re regional or economic or ideological identities. In the absence of one kind of counter-dependent identity, others emerge. So, we who are spiritual progressives have a special obligation now to help form strong religious identities that provide an alternative to the us-versus-them religious identities that are so inherent in many of our religious communities—especially mine, as I come from a conservative protestant background.

That us-versus-them narrative leads to an identity of “I am right, therefore I am.” “I am right” is an alternative to “I think.” Unfortunately, this kind of a narrative is deeply embedded in our religious traditions.

The second narrative is based on the idea of “us versus nature.” I used to be an English teacher before becoming a pastor, and back in elementary school when we started learning about literature, we learned about the “man-versus-nature” theme in literature. Now we wouldn’t say “man,” but that narrative is still very much alive and well. We even play into it on those Discovery Channel nature shows about “Survivorman”—in fact there’s a show called “Man vs. Wild.” And we’re still intrigued by sharks and any animals with fangs and claws because they help us keep that ancient narrative alive.

One of the transitions that we’re having to come to terms with is that we’ve won the battle of humanity versus nature. Now the danger is that we’ve won and are going to continue winning, not that we’re going to lose—because by winning, we have the worst

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loss of all. But this humanity-versus-creation narrative is still so deeply embedded in many of our religious communities. No doubt it solved problems one thousand years ago or five thousand years ago, but now it's creating problems, and we have to find a way to transcend that narrative.

The third narrative, which is especially deeply rooted in our monotheistic faiths, is the "God-versus-us" narrative that sees God as our enemy and religion as saving us from God. I grew up with that. The purpose of my religion was to save me from an angry, scary God, who, whether because of holiness or whatever other reason, inherently was in opposition to my existence. This idea is deeply rooted in American history. Probably many of you (in an American literature context rather than a religious one) have read Jonathan Edwards' famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." This is a mainstay of revivalist preaching, and it's deeply embedded in Christian faith, especially in the Western tradition of Christian faith.

When we present God as enemy and religion as what saves us from a hostile God, religion becomes a kind of mafia and a protection racket. We know how protection rackets work: you live in a poor neighborhood and someone comes along and says: "Look, you can't trust the police and you can't trust those gangs and all those crooks. For a mere \$500 a month I will protect you from all those bad people." And you say, "I don't have it." Then you find out, "Well, if you don't pay me \$500 a month, you need to be protected from me, you understand?" That's what we call a protection racket. So when religion fosters the narrative of God as enemy, it becomes a forgiveness racket, an atonement racket. It needs to keep the narrative of the enemy God alive in order to have a product that you desperately need.

The first narrative, the us-versus-them narrative, says, "I am

right, therefore I am." The second narrative says "I consume, therefore I am" or "I exploit, therefore I am" or "I transcend nature, therefore I am." And then this third narrative says, "I'm an insider, therefore I am" or "I've figured out a way to get on God's good side to become one of the holy few—the saved, the favored, the blessed—and because I'm in, I exist and I can feel safe."

Those three narratives, to the degree that they fuel religious communities, continue to bend those religious communities into being part of the problem that leads us not toward social healing but toward social damage or maybe even social suicide.

These are suicidal narratives. That may help explain why so many people don't want to identify themselves as religious but are drawn to the word spiritual. Those of us who have made a living in religious institutions know better than anybody that organized religion doesn't have all the answers, and we know that secular institutions alone don't have the answers.

The Opposite, Life-Giving Spiritual Framing Stories

I BELIEVE THAT A HEALTHY, AUTHENTIC, DEEP, PROFOUND, VITAL spirituality provides us alternatives to those three suicidal narratives. Let's consider them in reverse order and take first the God-versus-creation, God-versus-us narrative. I feel that I should talk here as a Christian because one of the dimensions of the Christian faith that has been especially destructive is the idea that God wants to destroy the world as soon as possible. This is the *Left Behind* mentality that says, God's finished with this world, creation is a failed project, and the slate needs to be wiped clean as soon as possible. I mean, talk about a suicidal narrative. It's deeply rooted in a lot of American Christianity and certain strains of Islam (though I don't think there are many strains of Judaism that



McLaren's three life-giving narratives can be summarized as God for creation, people with nature, and religions with each other. Above: Ten faith traditions (Jewish, Buddhist, Baha'i, Unitarian Universalist, Catholic, and five kinds of Protestants) signed an EarthKeeper Covenant in Northern Michigan and in 2009 planted 12,000 trees across the region.

would have anything to do with that kind of narrative).

A spiritual alternative is the narrative of God *for* creation, God *with* creation, God *in* creation. This healing narrative, it seems to me, is actually even more deeply rooted in our religious traditions, it's just that they've been subverted. This is clear when contrasting the creation narratives of Genesis with the other ancient Middle Eastern narratives, which generally involve a bunch of gods creating the universe in the middle of bloodshed and violence. My favorite is the myth of Tiamat, in which there's a giant primeval crocodile. There was nothing there before the crocodile—it was the reptilian, carnivorous, violent, terrifying threat that suddenly appeared out of the water, the chaos of water, the chaos of depth, and the chaos of a ravenous reptilian appetite. In that narrative, there's an argument among the gods. One of them takes the upper and lower jaws of the primal crocodile and splits the jaws open, and the upper half becomes the sky and the lower half becomes the earth. So we live, in a sense, in the aftermath of the violent creation of the universe in the midst of warfare at the highest and ultimate levels of existence.

You cannot find a more different narrative than the biblical story of a garden being created, and the story of the Word—"Let there be light." There's creativity, not violence, there. You might say the ultimate and most profound choice that human beings make is the choice between a narrative of a garden and a narrative of a fight. At the core of what I identify as authentic spirituality is the rediscovery of the God-for-creation, the God-with-creation, the God-in-creation narrative. It's deeply there in the Hebrew Scriptures, so beautifully pictured in the spirit of God, the breath of God, hovering over the waters. In the biblical account, the waters aren't the source of the crocodile that's going to come out and grab you by the leg; they are the source of creative possibility that will be evoked from them by the spirit of God.

The identity of Jesus in Christian faith is the revelation of God with us and God for us. It's the subversion of the God-as-enemy myth. It's the vision of the prodigal son returning to the gracious father who isn't going to beat the tar out of him but is instead going to welcome him back and throw a party. It's the subversion of that violent myth, not the reinforcement of it.

All of you who love Islam know that at its highest, Islam presents itself as a way of life: a way of ordering life toward peace and harmony with our fellow creatures.

So all of our religious traditions have at their deepest root this narrative of God for creation, God with creation, God in creation. That is something that we who call ourselves spiritual have to celebrate and elevate as a saving alternative to the suicidal narrative that's all too common among us.

Second, as an antidote and remedy to the us-versus-nature narrative, we have to discover the narrative of us for creation, us with creation, and us in creation. And of course, that's the narrative in the first chapters of Genesis: human beings caring for the garden and human beings having responsibility for the garden.

Finally, we can transcend the us-versus-them narrative, which makes having a strong religious identity synonymous with having



This image from the Basilica of San Clemente in Rome shows a tree of life—believed to date to the earliest centuries of Christian mosaic art—with spiraling green branches that hold scenes of daily life, animals, birds, and abundant fruit. The first millennium of Christian art celebrated Jesus alive in a world of beauty, never dead on the cross, so it is no surprise that the crucifixion was added after the eleventh century.

a counter-dependent religious identity with other religions. We can transcend it with another narrative expressed in a couple of different ways. One is to say, "There is no them." In the Hebrew scriptures, at the center of our three monotheistic faiths, there's not one God who creates some people over here and another God that creates other people over there, leaving us inherently irreconcilable. Instead, the story of Adam is the story of our shared common humanity, our common source. Even the idea of God as judge is a grossly misunderstood concept in most Western Christian theology because we lost the Jewish ancient understanding that a judge isn't the one who comes to condemn you, a judge is the one who comes to bring you justice. When you're an oppressed person, the bringing of justice is really, really good news. So this idea of God as the universal judge says God has every other human being's well-being in mind. God is interested in the interests of the other, not just our interests. And that realization changes the narrative: you cannot have an us-versus-them narrative.

Suicidal religious narratives have to be converted into these kinds of healing narratives—this has to happen in our faith communities so that we can begin to live in a way that makes a difference in our world.

There are three stories from the Christian gospels, the New Testament, that illustrate these narratives. One is the story of Jesus' encounter with a woman at the well. It's in John 4. It's a fascinating story because the woman is an outsider. She's a Samaritan, a member of a group that was considered sort of halfway out and halfway in, and those are the people liked the least. As someone who is a sort of a marginal evangelical, I find I'd be way better off if I were just known as a liberal, because being sort of on the fence means I mess up the boundaries of in and out and I get in trouble. This marginal threat is what the Samaritans represented—they were in the way. So, Jesus interacts with this

woman, and as soon as she perceives there's something spiritual about him, she asks him the hot-button divisive religious issue of her day. If it were today she'd say, "So, what do you think of homosexuality?" The hot-button issue at that time was, "Which mountain do you worship on? That mountain? Or that mountain?" And Jesus does something absolutely fascinating. He says: "Woman, a time is coming, and now is, when it won't matter which mountain you worship on. Because what God is looking for is people who will worship in spirit and in truth." The metaphor that Jesus weaves into that conversation is about living water. Now, if I were a better preacher than I am, I could go to town with this. I could talk about how she wanted to talk about mountains but Jesus wanted to talk about fountains. She wanted to talk about things that stick up out of the earth and are visible, and he wanted to talk about things that flow up from under the earth from the invisible. I could contrast the mountains that are fixed and static with the living water, fountains that are fluid and mobile—a contrast that to me represents this alternative between different approaches to our religious narratives.

The second story is about Paul and Silas coming to the city of Philippi, which is identified by Luke, the author, as a Roman colony. It's absolutely fascinating that this first encounter with the Roman Empire—you can read it in Acts 16—starts with the most

powerless, marginal, excluded person possible: not a man, but a woman; not an adult, but a child; not a free person, but a slave. A slave girl. And she is liberated from slavery. And then you watch the message spread upward until the magistrates of the city are confronted for their hypocrisy and their injustice. And so it becomes a message that comprises all of society, not just an us-versus-them part of society.

The third story is about a vision of the future, a vision that I actually don't think is as much about the future as it is about the present: the Apocalypse, or the Book of Revelation. It's a vision of a garden city: the cities of humanity are fused with the original garden, coming back into harmony with creation; human cities that have become the locus of oppression and evil are converted back into a garden city again. Christians celebrate this every year in the Christmas season with Handel's Messiah. In that beautiful piece of music, my favorite moment is not the hallelujahs of the hallelujah chorus. My favorite moment is the next line, which is so seldom appreciated, when the dynamic drops from fortissimo back to about mezzo forte and the basses and baritones come in: "The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our lord." It's this idea of the transformation of this world into a more equitable and just world. That's what spirituality is about and what spiritual progressives are about. ■

Brian McLaren on How to Build the NSP

Michael Lerner: Brian, I'd like your advice on how best to build the Network of Spiritual Progressives. We had hoped to get more open response from the various Christian denominations and the evangelical world, and we've found that the people who would be our natural allies, let's say those from the *Sojourners* world, haven't been open to us. There's a struggle that's going on in various Christian denominations between the Right and Left, but as a result the national leadership doesn't want to seem as though it's identifying with either side: it wants to stay neutral, which actually weakens it because it's not standing for very much. It's then very hard for us to come in and make alliances there unless we find the right path. So I was just wondering if you can give us advice on how to build a network, because we are certain that there are literally millions of Christians who would love to be part of a place they could go alongside their denominations (not in opposition to their denominations) to find others who share their spiritual and progressive vision.

Brian McLaren: The first thing that comes to my mind is not to underestimate how effective you in the NSP already are, because there is an inherent difference between what I would call a postmodern network and a modern organization. If you fail to make the distinction between a network and a traditional organization, you end up subverting the potential of a network because you measure its success by the measures of an organization.

The success of a network is measured not by how many people you pull together for events, but by how many people you touch and how many people have some connection to any node that has any connection to you. Connectivity is really the measure of success in a network.

I'm certain that the NSP has a much wider reach than people who are trying to get these key stakeholders involved would think.

I would say there is a great deal of work for everyone to do. I don't want to speak for *Sojourners*. I was on their board for several years and I have great respect for them; I just want to make it clear I'm not speaking for them. But here's something I think is true of almost all religious organizations: you sometimes have to make a choice between whether you will have your primary influence inside or outside your community. Because of the us-versus-them narrative, if you are seen as being too friendly with people outside, you're violating one of the identifying narratives of the insiders, and you lose your credibility with them because you're violating that narrative.

So what some people choose to do is to inhibit their involvement with outsiders so they can keep a hearing with insiders. Now, I'm not saying that's wrong, I'm saying it's probably necessary. To the degree that I, from an evangelical background, have violated that taboo, I am marginalized and the message is very clear: you are not welcome in our circles anymore. So, it's a choice

that people make. And my guess is, it's probably a fullness of time issue too. There is probably a right time for them to focus inside and there might be a right time for them—can I use some gospel language?—to shake the dust from their feet, in a sense saying, “I’m not stuck here, there are people who will listen if you won’t.”

Networks grow by pulling people in from the margins, not by pulling people in from the center. And that’s what my advice would be: the people at the center will be the last to come; it’s the people at the margins who will come. And the people at the center will find it possible to change their position once something close to a majority of their margins have already moved on.

One thing I’ve learned about these organizations is that the right wing of any group exerts disproportionate influence on the group. Let me say it this way: this could be just as true of “liberals,” but whoever is willing *to be mean* has disproportionate influence. They don’t have the self-restraint. Often what makes them mean is the fear of losing something precious. That fear causes them to be in a life-or-death battle. This is why I think the issue of religious identity is extremely important, because if people feel their only choice is a fundamentalist identity or no identity, then they’ll choose the fundamentalist identity. Or say it this way, choosing between a strong fundamentalist identity and a weak identity,

they’ll choose the stronger. That’s why I think we have to infuse people with the possibility of a strong but not counter-dependent identity. A strong—can I use a very biblical word?—*neighborly* identity, where at the essence of our religious identity is a call to love our neighbor. So that would be the basis of a lot of our conversations. There’s a fear that what we’re doing will weaken the identity, and what I’m trying to say is I think that our current strong identity is destructive and it has a limited shelf life, and I think there’s a new identity we have to find. You cannot be involved in discussions like this if you aren’t willing to be insulted, misrepresented, etc. You have to be willing to let that happen. If you take umbrage at that, then you’re out of the game right away. You just have to be able to say, this is going to happen. In this world that we seek to infuse with love, we can’t just be against the destructive narratives—we have to replace them with healing narratives. And this is our great challenge. ■

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A Politics Based on Soul Force

by Marianne Williamson

I THINK THAT IF YOU’RE LOOKING AT THE WORLD TODAY and you’re not heartbroken and you’re not grieving, you’re not conscious.

I also think that if you are not rejoicing in the miraculous possibilities that are available to us, then your outlook is spiritually immature. Lester Brown has described what China is doing with wind power, what Europe is doing. Considering these achievements increases the heartbreak because of the juxtaposition between what’s happening elsewhere and what could be happening here. But Lester Brown is also reminding us that we have the capacity: it is the eleventh hour, but it’s not midnight. So the question is, if we know these things can be done, what are we called upon to do?

There are some very deep metaphysical lessons that we have

been given by the great spiritual traditions of the world on how to beat ‘em when they’re so big—none more powerful than the story of David and Goliath. Goliath was a giant, and he was coming the next morning, and the fate of all Israel depended on the Israelites’ ability to somehow deal with him. Israel had amassed its most powerful, bravest, most courageous, most able warriors, and they were quaking in their boots because they knew they had already done all they could. It was not unlike how we feel when we sign a petition, give \$10, get involved—and we sort of thought we did all we could when we elected Obama.

So there’s this stunned moment, and we’re all dealing inside with the question of, “How do we take on Goliath?” Well, David showed up. David wasn’t big; he wasn’t, practically, more than a boy. David was a shepherd, a musician, a poet. David was *not* a

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warrior. He dealt from the right side of the brain and he said, “I’ll take on Goliath.” And they said, “What do you mean you’ll take on Goliath?” He was moved by spirit. He was moved by God. He said, “Well, I’ll take on Goliath.” They couldn’t imagine that David had what the biggest warriors didn’t have, and yet the warriors were too afraid and knew that their abilities were inadequate.

King Saul said to David, “If you are willing to do this for us, willing to take on the giant” (who is just laughing and waiting for tomorrow, when he will rip David in two), “then the least I can do is give you my coat of armor.” And he took off the king’s coat and he placed it on David’s shoulder. David put on the coat and then took it off and handed it back to Saul and said, “If I do this, I’m going to have to do it my way.” David didn’t have the great capacity of the warriors of Israel. He didn’t have the old war-making capacity—he didn’t even know how. What he had was a slingshot. Now the metaphysicians love this because that means that he had a little something that could go whoosh through the air. He had three stones, and the way he was able to bring down Goliath was by hitting him in the third eye. Why? Because in that place of moral truth, in that place of conscience, in that place of the holy and the sacred, the giant is completely vulnerable. The giant is completely defenseless when hit in the third eye, the seat of the soul.

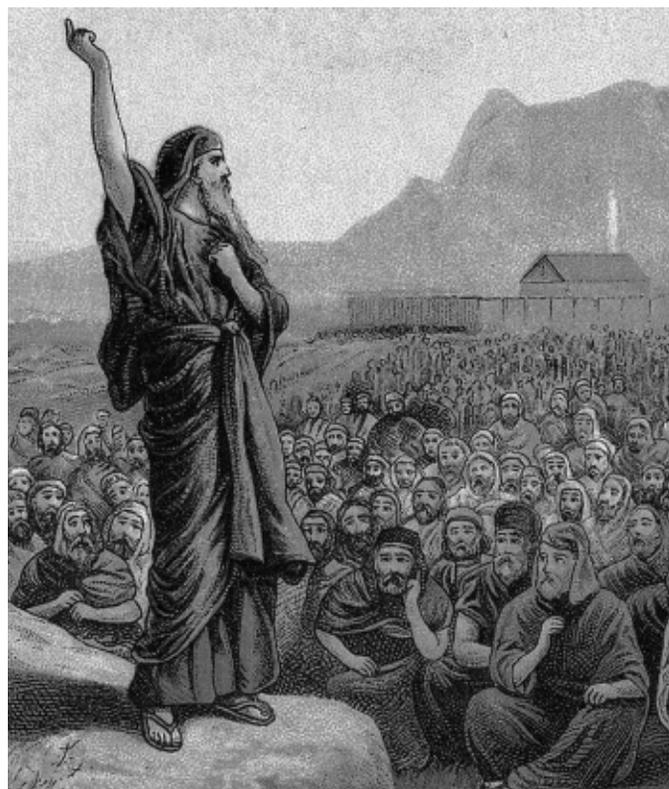
When Gandhi talked about a politics based on soul force rather than brute force, people wondered how the people of India at that time could possibly take on the colonial forces of England. And

how could the abolitionists possibly take on what in their time was the equivalent of big oil and big everything else—the heavily entrenched big institution of slavery? How could the suffragettes possibly take on the institutionalized resistance to give women any rights in this country, much less the right to vote? They had a better idea, which they stood for with conviction: that life needs to go that way. And as Martin Luther King said, “The moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends towards justice.”

Now, in the biblical stories that are told generation after generation by both the Jews and the Christians, I’ve never once heard a Christian say, “I’m not going to go to Easter services, I already know what happens,” and I’ve never heard a Jew say, “I’m not going to go to Seder this year because I know the story.” The stories don’t change, but we change. We change, so every year we meet the story from a bigger place. “Oh, I get what slavery means, I get what it meant that Pharaoh enslaved the Israelites: That’s my cocaine addiction. That’s my bankruptcy. That was my divorce. That was my cancer diagnosis. Oh, I get what the crucifixion is, it’s that my husband left me, it’s that my child is on drugs, it’s that someone close to me died.”

But the point of the stories (as important as it is that we recognize that we Jews were slaves in Egypt, and as important as it is that we recognize that Jesus died a horrible death on the cross) is that slavery was not the end of the story.

The consciousness of a man named Moses was such that in his



It is through what Gandhi called “soul force” that the weak take on the strong and win. Left: Textile workers show solidarity with Gandhi at Darwen, Lancashire, in 1931. Right: Moses pleads with his people, whom he has led out of slavery (image from a Bible card published in 1907).

presence deliverance became possible, even to the point of transcending the laws of time and space as we know them. And for the Christians, there was someone crucified on Jesus' left and on his right, but they were not resurrected—there was something different about the consciousness of Jesus. So what the Jews are told with the parting of the Red Sea and what the Christians are told with the resurrection of Jesus is that slavery in Egypt is not the end of the story. Do not worry, because Jesus on the cross is not the end of the story.

Just as David is saying to Saul, "I can't wear your coat of arms, I have to do this my way," so in the New Testament the story is, you cannot put new wine in old bottles. There's not only new wine streaming down, there's not only new wine in terms of consciousness, there's also new wine in terms of what is happening on this earth. The new wine of what we can do with wind. The new wine of what we can do with solar. We could turn the military industrial complex into a humanitarian industrial complex.

You can go to Travis Air Force Base in the East Bay of San Francisco and see that the same C17s, the same planes, the same pilots that deliver bombs to Afghanistan delivered food to victims of the tsunami, victims of hurricanes, and victims in Haiti. The same scientists and research labs used to develop nuclear technology could easily be used exclusively for humanitarian projects. The Course in Miracles teaches that "nothing is holy or unholy in this world except the purpose we ascribe to it."

We're Americans, and Americans are good with a to-do list. It's a character strength. During World War II, Roosevelt said, "This is what we're going to do." I lived in Detroit and I saw the ways the automobile industry was turned to wartime production. Americans have proven that if we're told what needs to be done, we will do it. If you looked at World War II and you looked at the Nazis and the Japanese Imperial Army, you could liken those things to operable tumors. Operable cancers that could be, and were, brilliantly removed surgically.

Turning Love into a Broadscale Social Force

TODAY OUR PROBLEMS ARE NOT SURGICALLY REMOVABLE—they're more like a cancer that has already metastasized. Yet we have already seen from our medical shift in paradigm to a holistic sense of healing that healing is not just the allopathic treatment of cells. Moral, spiritual, psychological, and emotional uplift are as much a part of the solution as are allopathic means. The same recognition is happening today when it comes to politics and society. That's what made Martin Luther King say Gandhi was the first person in human history to take love and lift it beyond mere interpersonal interaction and turn it into a broadscale social force for good. It's time.

What is terrorism if not hatred turned into a broadscale social force? What are many of these problems that we're talking about if not greed turned into a broadscale social force? History is urging us and life itself is inviting us to turn love into a social force for

good. It's already been done. We don't have to reinvent any wheels. Gandhi did it. Martin Luther King did it. We can turn love into a political force.

We know terrorists are not terrorists because it is convenient. All the presidents say, "This terrorist's cowardly deed will not be allowed to stand." Heinous, criminal, violent, horrifying, evil I can see ... but "cowardly"? The truth of the matter is that hatred has a perverse kind of courage. Terrorists will do whatever it takes to effectuate a hateful agenda on the planet.

We need to love with as much seriousness as those who hate. We need to say, "What is the loving thing to do?" The loving thing is to get off fossil fuels and to use clean energy systems. The loving thing to do is to take the 17,000 children who die every day from hunger (one every five seconds) and feed them. The loving thing to do is to uplift the bottom billion as they're called, the one billion people living on this planet on less than a dollar a day, the silent emergency. We're really good at addressing the screaming emergencies: The children are suffering in Haiti? We're on it. There are all kinds of reasons why we don't even recognize the bottom billion and the terrible desperation they endure every single day. Above them are one billion more who live on less than two dollars a day. I visited a slum in Nairobi, two million people living in an area of two square miles. Four hundred people for one latrine. I don't need to hate anybody to change the world. I've just got to say this has got to stop.

Everybody who is a parent in this room knows what happens when you have a feeling that your twelve-year-old is coming home with vodka or that the fourteen-year-old is using crystal meth. You say, "That *will not* happen in this house" in a way that will make the children go, "Whoa." I know, as a woman, that I used to think my mother's life was less important than it should have been because she spent her life loving her husband and her children and taking care of our home. I thought I could do something more important with my life. It took me decades to know that there's nothing more important than that. I realized that as a woman, as a daughter of God, and as someone living within the divine feminine archetype, you better believe I'm on this planet to take care of the home and to take care of the children. *This planet is our home and every child on it is one of our children.*

Parents don't have to get mad when they're dealing with those kinds of issues with their children. They have a sobriety and a consciousness within themselves when they say, "That will not happen in this house." We must have that kind of conviction. There are far more people on this planet filled with love than with hate, but those who hate have conviction. There are far more people who love than are willing to sell out this country or sell out this planet for the sake of a dollar. All we need is our conviction. We should sing and make music the way David did. We should probably give out some sandwiches or some pancakes the way David did. Then we'll take on our duty and know we're not going to do it the old way, we're going to do it the new way. We will do our part and I believe with all my heart that God will do His. ■

How Closed are “Closed Minds”?

by Sharon Welch

WHEN I MOVED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF Missouri after having worked in Boston, I found that approaches to racial and gender equality that worked in New England were counterproductive in our work with my white, conservative students in the lower Midwest. Many of my students in Missouri were first-generation college students, working class to middle class, and mostly from racially homogenous rural and suburban communities. In a study of these students’ resistance to multicultural education, doctoral student Jetay Arafakaro found that they did not see the necessity of learning about diverse populations, they denied the reality of oppression in the United States, and they thought that the professors who taught multicultural education neither respected them nor understood their world.

In one respect, they were right: Arafakaro also found that most progressive professors thought these students were prejudiced, closed-minded, and uninterested in learning. I worked with a team of educators that found ways to establish respect, to counter resistance. We built on the work of William Jones, a former professor of Black Studies at Florida State University. Rather than telling students that the views they had of their America were wrong, together we developed exercises that helped us see *our* America differently.

We began simply, asking students to share what they valued in their culture, what nurtured and sustained them. We then explored who had power in their communities, asking students to identify first the most powerful institutions—banks, churches, school boards, large businesses, media, government agencies. Then we asked students, now, pick an institution that you know (it’s one you have to know personally) and identify who has the most power in that institution, which individuals or group of individuals. And finally, report to the group as a whole. Identify those powerful individuals by race, class, gender, and presumed sexual orientation. Now the answers, obvious to us, were surprising to most of the students.

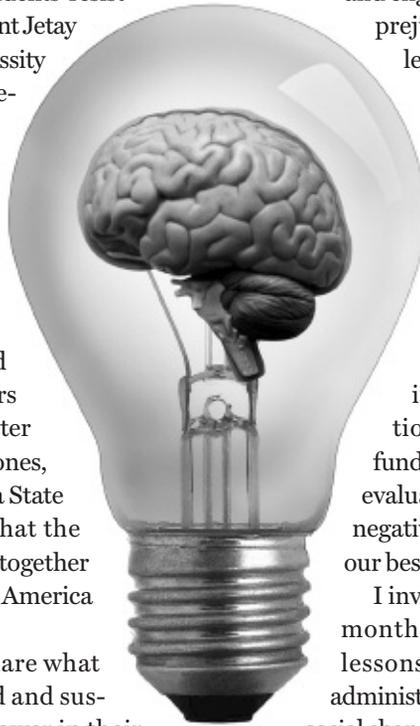
But with this recognition from their experience of the truth of power in their own communities, we could begin. What were the effects of these disparities? How did they arise? Where were they changing, and what strategies led to more equitable distribution of power? What were the typical forms of backlash and resistance that occurred as formerly excluded groups of people moved into positions of institutional power?

We experienced the joy of expanding circles of deliberation and engagement with those we had formerly seen as prejudiced, closed-minded, and uninterested in learning. We took up the work of deliberative dialogue as developed by David Mathews and Noelle McAfee, and began to learn together. We found that it was possible to move from divisive debate to transformative interaction through first hearing what was at stake in policy issues for those with different views.

We listened to personal stories. We were then able to move into a process of searching for the strength and insights in the positions of others. We opened our own fundamental assumptions for public scrutiny and evaluation. We explored *honestly* the positive and negative impacts of all solutions, and we submitted our best thinking to enhance the creativity of all.

I invite us in the next few days, and the next few months, and the next few years, to apply these lessons to our collaboration with the Obama administration and the collective work of fundamental social change. Our role is not only to provide advocacy for the policies that we so rightly value, but also to find ways to bring along our conservative colleagues, neighbors, and family members—to seek the best that is possible now, for us as citizens of a radically diverse place.

In our work as leaders, as citizens, stumble we will. Yet create, we may. Evoking the beauty and justice to be found in this group, in this nation, in this moment in time—this is our great challenge, our rich legacy, and our sustaining and empowering hope. ■



Dr. Sharon D. Welch is provost of Meadville Lombard Theological School (Unitarian Universalist). Her books include After Empire, The Art and Ethos of Enduring Peace, and Real Peace, Real Security: The Challenges of Global Citizenship.

A Progressive Religious Agenda Toward Gay Rights

A Response to “Ten Reasons Why Gay Rights Is a Religious Issue” by Jay Michaelson

by Noah Dzmura

JAY MICHAELSON AND I BOTH WANT RELIGIOUS PEOPLE to accept gay people, but our tactics are different: his approach is incremental and mine is progressive. I suspect the divergence is rooted in our definitions of queer community and our ideas about how much control one has over the contours of identity. He thinks gay people are born; I think we are shaped. His essay, “Ten Reasons Why Gay Rights Is a Religious Issue,” in the July/August 2010 issue of *Tikkun* was oriented toward moving traditional religious persons toward the middle; in contrast, I’m hoping our culture will take a sieve to notions of left, right, and center so each of us can learn undifferentiated compassion. Michaelson’s article suggests that liberals should persuade conservatives to support gay rights using entrenched liberal religious tactics, such as reinterpreting Leviticus 18:22 and mobilizing biblical compassion for the “other.” I suggest liberal religions have already done that work and have succeeded wherever it was possible to do so, and that the gender binary is the front line of the culture wars.

One way to parse Michaelson’s argument is this: those who employ the dominant religious narrative on behalf of change succeed. Those who instead provide alternatives to that narrative fail. He rightly points out that “many gay activists have justifiably relegated religion to the same mental basement as other repressive ideas,” but he goes too far in adding that “so far our current national debate regarding equal rights for sexual minorities ... has included religion on only one side of the argument.” This is not so. His article neglects the rise of powerful gay churches and synagogues and the huge gay rights victory that enables transgender, bisexual, lesbian, and gay (TBLG) people to argue their rights from pew and

pulpit, bench and *bimah* within mainstream traditions rather than from outside in the street.

For more than thirty years a liberal religious narrative has been successful in achieving gay rights. The significant evolution of beliefs and attitudes toward gay people and homosexual sex as a normal sexual practice can already in some part be traced to these liberal religious voices. I am referring to advances won by organizations like the TBLG-inclusive Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), which was founded in 1968. Other protestant denominations are fully inclusive: Unitarian Universalism has had an Office of Gay Affairs since 1973 and the United Church of Christ adopted a “Covenant of Openness and Affirmation” in 1985. Gay Catholics (via the national organization Dignity) have organized since 1969. The first gay Jewish organization began in 1972 (the World Congress of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Jews). These organizations and others like them exist because their founders believed in and promoted the ten points Michaelson lists in his article. At times, an entire denomination accepted the liberalizing narrative after much soul-searching. At others, in the face of opposition from their traditionalist forebears, the liberalizing narrative caused a split, and the MCC and similar organizations emerged as new entities alongside their conservative brethren.

Michaelson believes it may now be viable for some of us to use these same ten points to persuade conservatives, but I believe a more effective strategy is to pursue a bolder path. Leviticus 18:22 read through liberal eyes won’t help a congregation welcome a lesbian transwoman on the women’s side of an Orthodox synagogue (nor indeed will it make the congregation any more palatable

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to her). A rent boy who's putting himself through law school might feel comfortable claiming only one part of his complicated reality when he's invited for Shabbat dinner. While "compassion" might help traditional religionists welcome an old man and his son to synagogue, the discovery that they are not related but rather are in an intergenerational relationship might strain things. A child at summer camp who wants to be recognized as genderqueer rather than male or female by his peers and counselors might find himself on a bus home. Consider nonmonogamous relationships, divergent political views, lesbian separatism, the right to claim partners of both sexes in one's triad marriage. Bears. Radical Faeries. Leatherfags. A parade's worth of differences remain unsung in Michaelson's careful strategy to persuade middle Americans.

Some might see Michaelson, a prominent figure in the domain of gay spiritual life, as a spokesperson for the entire community. I was moved to write this article because I felt his strategy could be seen as *the* queer strategy, rather than one strategy among many. I wish he had acknowledged the liberal religious traditions in his article—liberal traditions that have made possible so much of our work as queer religious persons. These traditions are valid and effective in the world. As transgender Rabbi Reuben Zellman reminded us at his ordination service this May, liberal religious institutions save queer lives every day.

Why do I find Michaelson's ten points to be a painful compromise with religious tradition? His first point, "It Is Not Good to Be Alone," has already been employed by Orthodox Rabbi Steve Greenberg, in *Wrestling With God and Men*. Greenberg used that argument to help convince Orthodox Jews that homosexual pairings should be acceptable in Orthodox communities if men partner monogamously and omit from their sexual repertoire the specific act of anal penetration. While some parts of the Modern Orthodox community are moving closer to the center in such a way that "Orthodox homosexual" is no longer entirely an oxymoron, I am not convinced that all queer Orthodox believers would choose to go this route. My concern is that "Not Alone" is typically understood in terms of monogamy and marriage, and Michaelson does nothing to distance his presentation of gay identity to his conservative audience from that norm. It's as though his proposal for tolerance carries alongside it the closet for hiding homosexual "deviance." He writes "For many people, the only way toward healing the split recognized in Genesis 2:18 is in a loving, same-sex relationship." While that might be true for some, for many others "monogamy" and "marriage" don't enter the queer lexicon.

When Michaelson writes that "banning homosexuality because of its potential for 'abuse' would be like banning heterosexuality because of prostitution," he isn't making a bold argument in favor of the spiritual value of sex work (which another spiritually-minded queer writer might do), and the quotation marks

Michaelson places around the word "abuse" aren't nearly strong enough to suggest that the traditional world sees pretty much anything homosexuals do as "abuse." This is too watered-down a strategy for many queer spiritual people to apply without doing damage to their own souls. If the way to persuade conservatives to accept gays is for gays to conform to traditional marriage and fidelity norms, then many of the most vital queer spirits will be left out of the strategy. Michaelson doesn't say that only the married need apply, but he doesn't do enough to argue against the "good gays" approach either. I understand that when he uses words like "lust" and "licentiousness" as pejoratives he is trying to make contact with the conservative worldview, but these are words that TBLG people might use to convey a sacred, life-affirming, sex-positive worldview.

I also take issue with Michaelson's description of gay identity as inherent. Essentialist arguments make it easier to win compassion from heterosexuals, who may understand themselves to be "born that way," and alleviate anxiety in persons who understand sexuality and gender to remain fixed throughout a human lifetime. But these essentialist arguments don't reflect reality. Moreover, they discount the *power* of choice.

Often people say, "If sexuality were a choice, why would I choose to be scorned?" Clearly, Jews and other religious minorities do "choose" to be denigrated in order to pursue authentic expression. For many of us sexuality and gender identity are a choice in the way that Judaism is a choice. The landscape of human desire is more complicated than our current model and language limitations allow it to be. Today, in many states, transgender people need not choose "sickness" to obtain permission to receive hormones and surgery, but may instead choose "authenticity" as the reason to reconfigure their bodies. Vast communities of people choose to be intimate with particular persons or behaviors rather than with a particular sex or gender identity. There is an entire world of possibilities. We disempower choice at our own peril.

Let us instead create worship and community that celebrates all our relations. We can take a lesson from *Siddur Sha'ar Zahav*, the prayer book of San Francisco's TBLG synagogue, which contains a blessing for intimacy with a stranger and blessings for gender transition.

A progressive Jewish agenda would dismantle the central tenet of Jewish practice: one must be either a man or a woman in order to be a Jew. All hierarchies are founded on that one. Until this one gets smashed, the entire parade of human variation has to sit outside traditional religions. Destroy one plank and the wall will come down, though. Men having sex with men is viewed as sin in Jewish law because it converts the penetrated partner into a category that is no longer a man, but rather "like a woman." Until "being penetrated" or being "like a woman" is seen as part of the normative definition of maleness, gay rights, women's rights—human

rights—can't move forward. That's what gay men should be fighting for. The best hope for advance in *all* civil rights struggles is to seek rights for intersex and gender variant people. The basic inequality between women and men must be removed. Bodies that blur those boundaries can help us to locate basic human rights in all bodies. Such discussions will invariably broaden the knee-jerk sex binary, the assumption of sex/gender

congruence, and properly locate the Kinsey 0 and the Kinsey 6 at opposite ends of a spectrum. We know the polar opposites. We need to recognize ourselves within the middle majority.

A truly progressive strategy renders marginal the idea that homosexuality is sin. The very number of our recombinant possibilities reshapes the body contours of normalcy and counts anew the ecological niches in which humans might flourish. ■

Response to Noach Dzmura

by Jay Michaelson

NOACH DZMURA AND I AGREE ON MANY THINGS, even on where we disagree. While I would characterize his approach as “radical” rather than progressive, we agree that it is quite different from (and I think complements) the more moderate, liberal arguments I made in my article. Clearly, progressives need both: mainstream arguments to engage the “movable middle” of America, and further-left arguments to push all of us along in our thinking.

The question is which we need more right now. I agree that my arguments will not help the (presumably non-passing) transwoman, rent boy, intergenerational partners, and genderqueer campers whom Dzmura imagines. In my view, gender-nonconforming and more or less traditional-morality-nonconfirming people pose a serious challenge to the fundamental structures of our society. As well they should! And more power to them! It is true that to include all of these and more, we need different arguments from the ones I propose.

Yet we do not need such difficult, radical arguments to transform the lives of millions of LGBT people or to move our society one incremental step closer to full inclusion for all. Dzmura's arguments stand no chance of being adopted by the American mainstream in 2010—or 2020, I think. Thus, if we want to “move the needle” of public opinion, we need to make different ones.

That needle right now is pointing toward liberal religion. Dzmura is right to observe that “liberal religious institutions save queer lives every day.” But he is wrong to think that such voices are the predominant ones: poll after poll tells us that

Americans still believe in “God versus Gay.” The Metropolitan Community Church, the Unitarian Universalists, the Catholic group Dignity—all are wonderful allies, but they remain on the margins of American religious discourse. Most of America does not resemble the San Francisco Bay Area, or even New York City. (Indeed, even within liberal San Francisco, the very blessing for “intimacy with a stranger” that Dzmura praises, which a good friend of mine authored, has come under blistering attack.) So, if we want to make change “on the ground” for millions of people, we need something less than revolutionary rhetoric. We need to engage with the plurality of Americans who are sincerely Protestant or Catholic and sincerely grappling with what they perceive to be a contradiction between faith and liberated sexuality. Yes, to some religious progressives, many of my arguments may indeed seem old hat. But I am not preaching to the converted. I am asking spiritual progressives to engage in a conversation about God and sexuality that meets skeptical moderates on common ground.

Toward the end of his piece, Noach writes that “a progressive Jewish agenda would dismantle the central tenet of Jewish practice.” This is not my definition of “progressive”; it is my definition of “radical,” and if dismantling central tenets of religion were the only way forward for progressives, we would be in a lot of trouble. Dreaming such dreams is much needed, especially in the friendly pages of *Tikkun*. But far away from the islands of liberal religion, there are still kids killing themselves because they've been told that God hates them because they are gay or lesbian. Those are the ones I'm trying to reach. ■

Jay Michaelson is the author of Everything is God: The Radical Path of Nondual Judaism and other books. He is also a columnist for the Forward, the Huffington Post, Zeek, and Reality Sandwich magazine, and is director of Nehirim: GLBT Jewish Culture & Spirituality.

Culture

BOOKS | FILM | MUSIC

[BOOKS]

Eco-Enchantment and the Limits of Conservation

A REENCHANTED WORLD: THE QUEST FOR A NEW KINSHIP WITH NATURE by James William Gibson, Holt, 2009

CONSERVATION REFUGEES: THE HUNDRED-YEAR CONFLICT BETWEEN GLOBAL CONSERVATION AND NATIVE PEOPLES by Mark Dowie, MIT Press, 2009

Review by Roger S. Gottlieb

"We have to show the enemy we are serious about defending what is sacred."

—Earth Liberation Front, 1997

"First we were dispossessed in the name of kings and emperors, later in the name of state development, and now in the name of conservation."

—Indigenous Delegate to World Parks Congress, 2003

"REENCHANTMENT," JAMES Gibson tells us, is a "fundamental rejection of the most basic premises of modern thought and society" embodied by those "who long to rediscover and embrace nature's mystery and grandeur." This profound spiritual shift is manifest in people's willingness to sacrifice themselves to protect individual redwood trees by sitting in them for months, or to risk jail to liberate lab animals. It's manifest in people who, in this industrial age, find God in the ocean, or who pray to eagles or wolves.

The various cultural sources of the reenchantment movement range from a new embrace of Native American attitudes toward the land, a generalized rejection of the worship of corporate profit and scientific reductionism, and a sense that even traditional religions contain long-neglected teachings that value and celebrate the natural world. Gibson tells the story of our reenchantment through a wide variety of sources—from Disney movies to animal theme parks, from nature writers to forest-ranger-turned-ethicist Aldo Leopold,

from the Gaia Hypothesis to the emotional impact of seeing our planet from space. He also offers a generally sympathetic account of some of the more "extreme" wings of the movement, "eco-warriors" willing to turn to anti-property violence in defense of the wild.

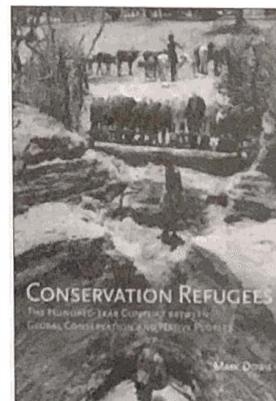
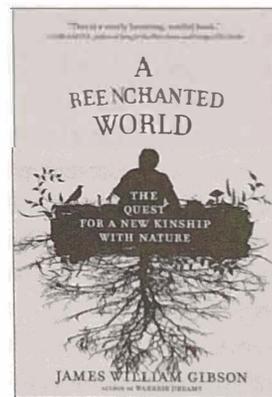
The challenge to conventional beliefs and social structures embodied by reenchantment, not surprisingly, provoked a counterattack, and some of Gibson's best writing details clearly and frighteningly the anti-environmental actions of the Bush administration and its allies. He also describes development within the reenchantment movement. Most important, perhaps, is the idea that "nature" need not be identified with wilderness "somewhere far away," but with the trees, water, and animals right in front of us. It is as crucial to clean Boston

Harbor as to preserve tigers in India, and it is as crucial to exchange the over-chemicalized American lawn for native plants as to worry about orchids in Bolivia.

Gibson's story has been told before in different ways—for example, by historian of ideas Roderick Nash's description of our expanded sense of the rights of nature or by religious scholar Bron Taylor's recent account of nature as sacred in *Dark Green Religion*—but it is certainly worth telling again. Gibson's broad learning, personal

connection to the material, and lively writing make for valuable reading. And some of his insights—that reenchantment has given rise to a virtually new form of discourse combining scientific knowledge with poetic or spiritual insight, or that as we take it for granted that people will die for country or faith we should not find it strange that they will sacrifice themselves for whales or rainforests—are powerful and important.

Yet, these strengths notwithstanding, Gibson's account is not wholly satisfying. I wondered at its comparative exclusion of both large environmental organizations and the environmental justice movement.



The many inspiring stories of individuals motivated by enchantment could have been joined by some of the powerful victories won by environmental groups that protect habitat, restore landscapes, lobby, and educate. Even the environmental justice movement, which might be defined as concerned with people rather than other species, began with a commitment to the “sacredness of Mother Earth” and resistance to the poisoning of the land, as well as concerns about human community.

Gibson is at times uncritical of some of the self-indulgence and aestheticism of the reenchanting sensibility. He admires the surfer who loves the power of nature at a beach in California but who nonetheless has to drive there and use artificial materials to make his surfboard; or the hunters who “reunite” with nature in the hunt but do so with modern weapons and Gore-Tex jackets.

Further, Gibson shares a common problem with many who would reject the entrenched industrialism and anthropocentrism of modernity. The culture of enchantment, he tells us, meets human needs in the face of a looming environmental crisis and a spiritually dead technology. But so did, and does, the culture of *disenchantment*. While Gibson sees that culture as the villain, surely we need to understand both its historic and its continuing appeal if we hope to supplant it. What realities of illness, food production, transportation difficulties, etc., made so many of us so eager to treat nature as an object to be controlled? Moreover, which forms of control are Gibson—or any one of us—willing to give up? Or does Gibson think that we can reenchanted the world without sacrificing things like jet travel, antibiotics, abundant supplies of varied food even when the local harvest fails, or the (remarkably energy-hungry) Internet?

In Gibson’s account, conservationists and environmentalists are the heroes, and while they may have occasional failings—e.g., a tendency to glorify charismatic megafauna and dramatic landscapes at the expense of less dramatic elements of nature—they are, he is certain, on the right side of history.

Journalist Mark Dowie’s powerful,

often depressing but essential narrative brings that certainty into question. *Conservation Refugees* carefully documents many of the painful, oppressive situations in which the pursuit of an enchanted nature has led to the victimization of human beings, reporting on how native/indigenous groups have been expelled from lands being conserved for and by people of other races and ethnicities.

For Gibson, John Muir’s celebration of nature and work to create Yosemite National Park are a crucially important step on the road to a new relation to nature. For Dowie, Muir is a patron saint of “fortress conservation,” which typically banishes or denies the presence of indigenous peoples in the “wild places” it wishes to preserve. Ironically, Ansel Adams’ splendid and influential photos of Yosemite were intentionally constructed to leave out the Indians living there at the time. Even “ecotourism,” Dowie argues, is often both environmentally destructive (requiring jet travel, hotels, and food, etc.) and a disaster to natives—whether in Brazil, Tanzania, Jordan, or Thailand—who are forcibly displaced to make room for foreigners hungry for a little natural enchantment.

With the export of the American model of exclusionary conservation to the rest of the world, the pattern has been repeated countless times, typically with the cooperation or even the management of the big, international NGOs such as Conservation International, World Wildlife Fund for Nature, or The Nature Conservancy. Dowie’s story is a familiar one of Western and white wealth, arrogance, control, and domination, often aided by complicit local governments and large corporations. The latter benefit from the publicity they get by supporting conservation in one place while destroying ecosystems in others, and find it easier to gain access to “parks” when natives who might resist the poisoning of land and water have been removed. Conservation biologists, enamored of endangered species and ignorant or contemptuous of “untutored natives,” add their voices as well. In the end a modernized world is destroying biodiversity though human-induced global warming, world-wide pollution, mining, logging, the

introduction of ecosystem-destabilizing exotic species, jet travel, and so forth—and it is hundreds of millions of seminomadic, non-acquisitive, rotational farming tribal peoples who are asked to move, change, and sacrifice. The most vulnerable are being asked to pay the price of the damage caused by those with the most political, economic, and military power.

Dowie is a passionate and engaged writer, highly respected for his broad knowledge and principled political commitment. It is hard not to share his outrage when he describes a tribe evicted at gunpoint as its members’ fields are destroyed and their small dwellings burned; an exiled indigenous hunter-gatherer from southern Africa who can only return to visit his ancestor’s burial sites when tourists are not “viewing the elephants”; or the Karen community removed from a designated park area in Thailand so that golf courses—*golf courses*—can be built there.

Conservation Refugees provides powerful arguments against the usual justifications for exclusion. For the most part, native groups have been excellent stewards of local ecosystems over the hundreds or thousands of years in which they coexisted with them, typically having cultural/religious reasons to appreciate and protect their environment. They have also developed a priceless accumulation of “traditional environmental knowledge” that remains in many cases an essential element in successful conservation. As well, the impulse to “bring these poor savages into the modern money economy” typically leaves natives desperately poor, living in degraded resettlement camps, turning to alcohol or prostitution, or becoming hunted “poachers” on land they used to live on.

Despite its depressing catalog of oppression and injustice, and the at times overly detailed account of institutional resolutions and international congresses, *Conservation Refugees* does offer some hope. The good news is that a deeply important global shift in attitudes and practices is occurring, in which “indigenous protected areas” or community-based conservation works to preserve both

biological *and* cultural diversity. Prompted by indigenous self-advocacy and activism with sympathetic support from some Western friends, this development includes the Caring for the Country movement in Australia, where Aborigines are resettling the land, drawing up their own conservation plans, and regaining rights to ecosystems that they had been preserving pretty well for thousands of years. Similar projects, involving millions upon millions of acres of protected lands, at times with biologists and big international NGOs in important supportive roles, see tribal peoples in the driver's seat in parts of the Philippines, Melanesia, Brazil, Colombia, and many other regions. The general principle is that unless local people are involved in, benefit from, and have rights over protected areas, biodiversity—whatever the maps say about “parks” and “preserves”—will fail.

Despite their different emphases and concerns, Dowie and Gibson are on the same side. Dowie concludes with the suggestion that we should stop separating out small bits of the world to save while consigning the rest of it to irreversible degradation. Perhaps the whole world should be saved because the whole world is sacred. Such a change in perspective is necessarily political and economic, but it is spiritual as well, precisely the reenchantment that Gibson describes.

In the end we will save the whales, elephants, and rainforest only if we save ourselves as well. And the fight to protect native self-determination and survival is also dependent on massive changes in industrial communities. The tribes may still have some of their land today, but unless the larger world societies change their structures of power, consumption, and self-understanding, they won't have it very long. This is spiritual, this is political, and it is the struggle of our time, a struggle these excellent books help us understand. ■

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UNDISCOVERED NO LONGER

THE UNDISCOVERED PAUL ROBESON: QUEST FOR FREEDOM, 1939-1976

by Paul Robeson Jr.

John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2010

Review by Paul Von Blum

THE FIRST VOLUME OF *THE Undiscovered Paul Robeson*, written by the performer's son, did a marvelous job of restoring Robeson's legitimate reputation as one of the greatest renaissance persons in American history. Effectively drawing on private letters, the unpublished diaries of Paul Robeson and his mother Eslanda Robeson, and the author's own memories, that volume, which chronicled its subject's life from 1898 to 1939, recounted Paul Robeson's magnificent development into a world-class athlete, stage and film star, scholar, linguist, and political activist. It also provided a revealing glimpse into Robeson's private life, including his troubled marriage, his various infidelities, and his problematic parental commitment.

Robeson Jr.'s latest book, a second volume that recounts his father's story from 1939 to his death in 1976, further succeeds in resurrecting his father's reputation following the monstrous blacklisting of the McCarthy era, when his father's sterling accomplishments were in effect stricken from the historical record. This tragic erasure, reminiscent of Stalinist-era removal of “enemies” from photographs and other official Soviet records, has denied millions of Americans the opportunity to discover this multifaceted genius of American cultural and political life.

This second and final volume presents a comprehensive treatment of

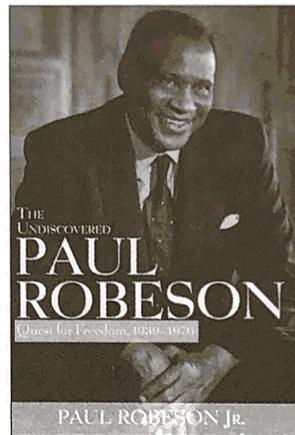
Robeson's mature life as an artist and activist. Among other topics, it discusses the world-class artistic roles that made him one of the most visible African Americans in U.S. history. The author deals extensively with his father's singing career, including his many decades of concert performances and his stunningly popular radio presentation of Earl Robinson's populist “Ballad for Americans.” This performance made Robeson an unofficial voice of America until his blacklisting after the allied victory in World War II.

The book also reports on Robeson's record-breaking performance of Shakespeare's *Othello*. Reaching a half million people on Broadway and another half million on tour, this play highlighted Robeson's brilliant performance as the

tragic “Moor,” presenting a thoroughly modern dilemma of an accomplished black man in a fundamentally racist society. Robeson's effort established him as a dramatic actor of the highest stature.

Not surprisingly, this latest volume focuses substantially on Paul Robeson's extensive political commitments. In America, many people, including highly educated laypersons and even scholars, reduce those commitments to his sympathy with the United States Communist Party and the Soviet Union and his leadership role in the 1948 left-wing Progressive Party presidential campaign of Henry Wallace. Doubtless, these sympathies and activities played a major role in Robeson's overall political life, and the book details Robeson's complex involvement with domestic and foreign communism with admirable detail and candor.

Still, that controversial feature of Robeson's life constituted only one facet of a much larger range of political consciousness and activism throughout his life. *The Undiscovered Paul Robeson* addresses many of his other political struggles, which set a moral tone with powerful implications even for the present. Like his



friend Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, Robeson was one of the early leaders in the struggle against American racism. His son chronicles Robeson's major contributions, including his early and vigorous opposition to lynching, his struggles for equal employment opportunities for blacks, and his repeated protests against segregated facilities in concerts, workplaces, the armed forces, and elsewhere.

The author tells a little-known story about how Paul Robeson led a delegation to the Commissioner of Baseball in 1943, seeking to break the disgraceful color barrier to African American participation in the major leagues. Although this meeting yielded no immediate results, it planted the seed that led to Jackie Robinson's entry into the national League in 1947. And he tells of how Robeson's rarely recognized commitment to the most marginalized populations encouraged him to include them in his own concert tours. In 1941, for example, he became the first major concert artist to perform for an audience of prison inmates at San Quentin. Seven years later, he sang for the leper settlement on Molokai Island in Hawaii, an event that moved him deeply and that also reflected the deep humanism underlying his entire political life and work.

He also details Robeson's extensive involvement in the struggle against colonialism in Africa. For example, his was one of the earliest prominent voices to oppose the apartheid system in South Africa.

Paul Robeson revealed great courage in his personal struggle against McCarthyism and its insidious manifestations during the early Cold War era. Unlike many other persecuted artists, radical intellectuals, and other dissenters during those troubled times, Robeson remained defiant, refusing to cooperate with a process that trampled on the Bill of Rights and that disgraced American traditions of fair play and freedom of political expression and belief. The author does his readers a profound service in reproducing substantial excerpts from Paul Robeson's remarkable 1957 testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee.

The book details the horrific persecution that Robeson faced in the 1950s, including denial of his passport (leaving him without the major source of his income), systematic blacklisting from concert stages and recording studios, and relentless pursuit by FBI agents. Perhaps the worst of all occurred when he and his supporters were brutally attacked by right-wing, racist mobs at a concert in Peekskill, New York, in 1949. All of this took a profound toll on his physical and mental health, although Robeson never wavered in keeping his political faith through the worst of his ordeals.

This book also provides readers with valuable information about Robeson's extremely close connection with the Jewish community, a perspective especially valuable now in an era of increased tensions between African Americans and Jews. Some examples from the text are especially revealing and diminish the widespread belief that Robeson was an uncritical adherent of Stalinism, including its egregious anti-Semitism. At a Moscow concert in 1949, Robeson sang, in Yiddish, the Warsaw Ghetto resistance song of the Jewish partisans, "Zog Nit Keynmol." His rendition evoked thunderous applause and it was also broadcast to 180 million Soviet people. And after his close encounter with the racist mobs at Peekskill, Robeson paid special tribute to the union guards who protected him, noting that "we Negroes owe a great deal to the Jewish people, who stood there to defend me and all of us yesterday."

The most poignant part of the book concerns Paul Robeson's extensive bout with mental illness in the late 1950s and early '60s, which included substantial medication and more than fifty administrations of electroconvulsive therapy. Robeson Jr. alleges that the CIA may have drugged him during a visit to Moscow and played a role in his ineffective and even destructive treatment in a London hospital. Given what we now know of the CIA during those times, it is certainly plausible, but definitive evidence is unlikely to be discovered. What is remarkable is that Paul Robeson accomplished so much despite his severe depression, even maintaining his strong

interest in the growing Civil Rights Movement during that difficult period of his life.

In 1998, the world celebrated the centenary of Robeson's birth. The events that occurred that year helped to restore him to the honor and stature he deserved. The United States Postal Service's decision to honor him with a stamp in the Black Heritage Series in 2004 further contributed to his historical resurrection. With the publication of Robeson Jr.'s second biographical volume, it is now finally possible to say, at least cautiously, that Paul Robeson, that truly remarkable American giant, is undiscovered no longer. ■

Paul Von Blum teaches African American studies and communication studies at UCLA. He is the author of five previous books in addition to his memoir, A Life at the Margins: Keeping the Political Vision, which will be out in September.

THE MYRIAD GLEAM IN MY LAMP

WAIT by C.K. Williams

Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2010

Review by David Wojahn

CONTEMPORARY POETS ARE preoccupied with many things, but no subject seems to engross them more than the problem of consciousness—how can writing capture the turbid eddying of sensation, attention, memory, anxiety, and the maddening white noise of experience that constitutes our thinking process in these times? Consciousness as we experience it at the present moment is generally not about focused thinking, not about what the mystical tradition calls mindfulness. It is instead about multi-tasking, something that neurologists insist the mind is not well suited for: hence, texting while driving is arguably more dangerous than smoking or consuming inordinate amounts of red meat. Yet if you are reading this now, you are more than likely to be doing so on the treadmill at the gym, where the screen on your control

panel is beaming CNN with the sound turned down; maybe you're intermittently reading the crawl at the bottom of the screen, all the while listening to your iPod, and making note of what stations the other gym-goers are watching.

At least since the 1960s, American poets have sought to respond to conditions of this sort, and today's most honored and admired poet, John Ashbery, has gained his esteem in no small measure because early in his career he made his poetry into a *model* of our new mode of consciousness. His poems are a jittery hodgepodge of statement, narratives that end when they've scarcely begun, campy asides, and various other allusions to popular culture, with a diction that shifts from the highfalutin to the colloquial and back. The white noise of experience is in some respects his only subject, and he renders its cacophony quite brilliantly, though perhaps too faithfully. It is hard to read Ashbery in large doses; he reminds us that our minds are everywhere at once so incessantly that the poems often seem like highly polished odes to attention deficit disorder. And of course they exemplify why so many people who are not readers of poetry complain about its obtuseness—poetry, they are apt to tell you, is too self-involved, positively solipsistic. I happen to love Ashbery's poems, but they also unerringly typify such complaints.

I love the poetry of C.K. Williams much more than I do that of Ashbery, however. He too has made the problem of rendering contemporary consciousness his principle concern, but he addresses the matter through an approach quite different from Ashbery's and in a manner that the general reader is apt to find refreshingly accessible. Williams is also one of but a handful of living poets whose work will likely endure. This makes the publication of any new Williams book an event, and *Wait*, the eighteenth collection of his now storied career, is one of his best volumes.

Williams gives his poems their particular pungency by adding one simple yet vital element to the Ashberian project of making poetry a model of consciousness—an understanding that consciousness and perception, at least in our culture, are chronically afflicted by guilt and shame,

those grimly persistent legacies of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Williams's poems are always acutely observant of the world in which he dwells, but more importantly they are relentlessly self-interrogating; his mode of autobiographical testimony eschews all the easy blandishments and smug certainties we have about what constitutes the self and its relationship to memory and to politics. And when he combines this stance with that long, capacious line that has become his signature—a line that can run to twenty or more syllables and yet never seem anything but taut and inevitable—he offers up a body of work that is like no other in American verse: it's rangy, ambitious, morally serious, and as accurate a representation of how consciousness works as anything we have seen in this country's poetry. And it knows the limits of the self as well as its majesty. Somewhere Jung says we can never know the self, we can only *circumnavigate* it. If that is true, then C.K. Williams is one of

those voyagers who have been around the world innumerable times; and, although he is in his seventies now, Williams hasn't mellowed. Over and over, his poems brood upon their speakers' actions and choices, be they trivial events of the previous morning or transgressions that occurred decades in the past. The new collection offers a typical catalogue of such regrets, among them a gaffe made at a funeral the speaker attended in childhood, an awkward encounter with a woman over who gets a seat on the metro, and the speaker's remorse over his response to a girlfriend's backstreet abortion in the days before *Roe v. Wade*. Williams revisits his past with the sort of pedantic doggedness you see in the forensic scientists on *Crime Scene Investigation* shows, and for Williams, motives exist mainly to be questioned. True, sometimes this stance seems less one of valor than one of mere claustrophobic obsession, of a soul crying out for Xanax. Witness the opening of "Brain," written in his

characteristic long line:

I was traversing the maze of my brain:
corridors, corners, strange, narrow
caverns, dead ends.

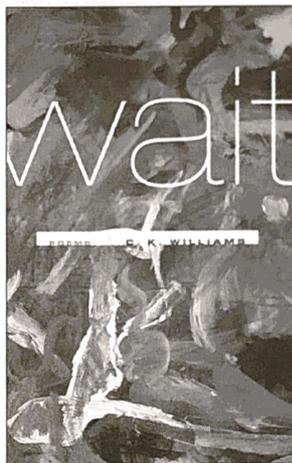
Then all at once my being like this in my brain, this
sense of being my brain
became unbearable to me.

But even in a somewhat problematic stanza such as this we hear something of the sonic qualities that make Williams unique. He has an unerring ability to take a long line that should seem prosy and invest it with considerable metrical interest. The

trochees and caesuras enact anxiety in a way that most of us find uncomfortably familiar. Like Beckett, a figure who seems to have crucially influenced him, Williams feels called to remind us again and again of the conundrums and numbing repetitions that form so much of human behavior, and he does so through a stylistic minimalism that is at the same time surprisingly supple. In one of

Wait's most emblematic poems, the speaker encounters a wasp that has been "banging his head on the window for hours." Williams avoids making any trite connection between the wasp's plight and the human condition, largely through a highly controlled sort of free verse that recalls the strict form of the villanelle. The word "hammer" is repeated thirteen times in the sixteen-line poem, a risky gesture, surely, but Williams brings the poem off with panache.

Writers of a certain age, especially those who have found unique voices, invariably run the risk of self-imitation, and in his recent collections Williams has not been immune to this problem. But *Wait* is perhaps Williams's most stylistically varied book. Although the collection contains plenty of the long-lined Whitmanic efforts that are his signature mode, Williams also offers poems in short and quirkily enjambed lines, many of them written in deftly flowing free verse couplets and tercets. The new stylistic variety of the



THE DAY CONTINUES LOVELY

With *Fear and trembling* I studied my Kierkegaard, with *Sickness unto Death* I contemplated with him my spiritual shortcomings, and it didn't occur to me then but does now that in the Kierkegaard I've read he never takes time to actually pray. Odd... This isn't to question his faith—who'd dare?—but his...well, agenda. All those intricate paradoxes of belief he devotes his time to untying, re-tying. Can it be that Kierkegaard simply *forgets* to pray, he's so busy untying, re-tying? I understand that: I have times I forget to remember I can't pray. *Can't. Pray.*

This June morning just after sparkling daybreak and here I'm not praying. My three grandsons asleep on their mats on the floor of my study, shining, all three, more golden than gold, and I'm still not. *Not praying.* Why aren't I? Even our dog Bwindi sprawled beside Turner, the youngest, Turner's sleep-curved fist on her back: why haven't I prayed about them? I can imagine someday something inside me saying: *Well, why don't you? Something inside me.* As though suddenly would be *something inside me.*

There's a Buber story I'm probably misrepresenting that touches on this. A Rabbi spends endless hours deciding whether to do good deeds or pray. He thinks this first, then that: *This might be good; maybe that would be better,* and suddenly a VOICE that can only be God's erupts: *STOP DAWDLING!* And God, he thinks: he's been chastised by God. *STOP DAWDLING!* And what happens then? In my anti-Bubering of the tale, everything's lost, the fool's had his moment with God—even Moses had only how many?—

and he's squandered it because all he could do was stand stunned, mouth hung metaphorically open, losing his chance to ask for guidance, but he'd vacillated again and *What happens now?* he wonders in anguish. *Maybe I should get out of this business, find a teaching job, write a book, on my desolation, my suffering,* then he hears again, louder, *STOP! STOP!* but this time it's his own voice, hopelessly loud, and he knows he'll forever be in this waiting, this without-God, his glimpse of the Undeniable already waning.

And me? Leave aside Kierkegaard—who did, I've heard, pray—and Buber: just *me.* Haven't I spent my life trying to make up my mind about *something?* God, not God; soul, not soul. I'm like the Binary Kid: on, off; off, on. But isn't that what we all are? Overgrown electrical circuits? Good, bad. Hate, love. We go crazy trying to gap the space between on and off, but there is none. Click. Click. Left: Right. Humans kill one another because there's no room to maneuver inside those miniscule switches.

Meanwhile cosmos roars with so many voices we can't hear ourselves think. Galaxy on. Galaxy off. Universe on, but another just behind this one, one more out front waiting for us to finish. They're flowing across us, sweet swamps of being—and we thrash in them, waving our futile antennae. ...Turner's awake now. He smiles, stands; Bwindi yawns and stands, too. They come to see what I'm doing. Turner leans his head on my shoulder to peek. What am I doing? Thinking of Kierkegaard. Thinking of beauty. Thinking of prayer.

— C. K. Williams

collection is accompanied by a much wider range of subject matter and approach than we are accustomed to seeing in a Williams collection. Williams has often tried his hand at a kind of protest poetry, but these attempts have tended to be heavy-handed. Not so the efforts in *Wait*. The venality and crassness of contemporary American culture—seen with the acuity of perspective that may come from Williams's decision to live for much of the year in France—is explored and condemned with some highly skillful invective, most notably in a long poem occasioned by the fortieth anniversary of the King assassination. And the administration of the younger Bush inspires some particularly pithy outrage. A poem called "Lies" ends with a condemnation worthy of Catullus:

The politics of relation, call it, or, more depressingly,
Just politics: a president with features like a child,
So blankly guileful in his lying that one might
half-believe
he half-believes himself, though not, never not,
for long.

Longtime readers of Williams will also be surprised to encounter pieces that in a guarded but affecting way could be called love poems—not a genre this seethingly introspective poet has been especially known for. More importantly, the book contains a splendid series of elegies and homages to Williams's literary masters, among them Coleridge, the great Polish poet Zbigniew Herbert, the Russian poet and Stalin victim Marina Tsvetaeva, and the Romanian-Jewish poet Paul Celan, whose "Death-Fugue" is perhaps the best known poem to emerge from the Holocaust. There's a tenderness in these poems that is new for Williams. Somehow, perhaps because of the longer perspectives that can come with age, he seems to be becoming a poet not only of consciousness but also of a far more oldfangled subject for poetry, empathy. In "Light," one of *Wait's* most majestic efforts, Williams evokes the Dante of the *Paradiso*, lamenting that heaven's "troop of the blissful blessed" is a company that we can never join. But then the speaker suddenly recalls

a visit to a bat cave, where a single bat, "perfectly still among all the fitfully twitching others, / was looking straight at me, gazing solemnly." The poem does not end with a vision of paradise, but its conclusion is nothing less than visionary—breathtakingly so:

... and once more the bat and I,
our lives at that moment together, our lives, our *lives*,

his with no vision of celestial splendor, no poem,
mine with no flight, no unblundering dash through
the dark,

his without realizing it would, so soon, no longer exist,
mine having to know for both of us that everything
ends,

world, after-world, even their memory, steamed away
like the film of uncertain vapor of the last of the
luscious rain. ■

David Wojahn's eighth collection of poetry, World Tree, will be published by the University of Pittsburgh Press in 2011. He teaches at Virginia Commonwealth University.

LOVE THE LIFE—AND ACTIVISM—YOU'RE IN

AWAKENING JOY: TEN STEPS THAT WILL PUT
YOU ON THE ROAD TO REAL HAPPINESS

by James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander

Bantam Books, 2010

Review by Margie Jacobs

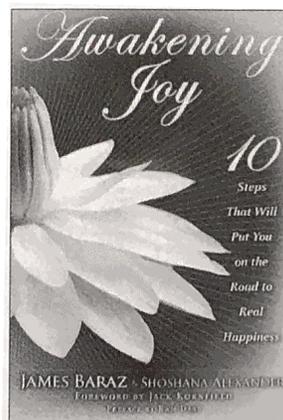
ACCORDING TO THE nineteenth-century Hasidic master Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, it is a great mitzvah to be joyful always. Yet, the pursuit of happiness may be challenging in a world where there is so much poverty, injustice, and suffering.

In *Awakening Joy: Ten Steps That Will Put You on the Road to Happiness*,

authors James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander suggest that living in a state of joy is not only possible but also valuable. They are referring to a "general feeling of aliveness and well-being that is characterized by engagement with life, meeting its ups and downs with authenticity and perspective." Truly happy people have the capacity to be present with suffering and, by acting wisely, to mitigate it. In order to most effectively engage in *tikkun olam* (the healing of the world), we must also attend to *tikkun hanefesh* (the healing of our own hearts). This approach encourages a focus on our capacity to effect change, however limited, and our caring and compassion for those who are suffering, rather than becoming stuck by our frustration and our sense of being overwhelmed.

Baraz and Alexander are not alone in their interest in this topic. In recent years, several leaders in the fields of psychology and meditation have turned their attention to the exploration of happiness. Former American Psychological Association president Martin Seligman, who for many years studied the learned helplessness theory of depression, has since pioneered the field of Positive Psychology, investigating how to achieve *Learned Optimism* and *Authentic Happiness* (the titles of two of his books). Sylvia Boorstein and Rabbi Sheila Weinberg have also each written engaging books on mindfulness and joy.

Awakening Joy is based on a course on the topic that Baraz, a founding teacher of Spirit Rock Meditation Center, has been leading for several years. I had the good fortune to take the class in person (it's also available online at www.awakeningjoy.info). Walking into the room for the second session, I already noticed a marked increase in the level of enthusiasm and enjoyment among the 250 participants, a testament to the efficacy of the course material and to James Baraz's ability to transmit his own warmth and easy, joyful engagement with life. Like



the course, the book takes readers through an exploration of ten steps by which to cultivate qualities that foster and reflect a joyful perspective. While reading the book itself may be temporarily uplifting, the key to real transformation is in “working” the steps—using the inspiration of the personal stories, neuroscience research, and Baraz’s accessible, authentic tone to be motivated to actually do the concrete exercises in the book on an ongoing basis. It is possible to become a happier person, to cultivate more useful habits of the mind and heart, but it takes time, attention, and intention.

Rooted in Baraz’s three decades of teaching Vipassana meditation and informed by other spiritual traditions and neuroscience research, *Awakening Joy* is both accessible and substantive, encouraging each reader to find an authentic, unique engagement with the material. The chapter on mindful awareness offers suggestions for applying mindfulness to moments of joy and well-being in order to

deepen the experience, as well as clear mindfulness meditation instructions. The book cites research on the mood-enhancing effects of mindfulness practice, or moment-to-moment attention to our direct experience. All of the other chapters in the book describe practices to cultivate states of well-being such as gratitude, contentment, compassion (beautifully described as “the quivering of the heart in response to suffering”), and the equanimity that allows for compassion without burnout.

The first step is “inclining the mind toward joy.” By verbally expressing a desire to be happy (in one’s own words), readers are encouraged to shift their focus from the experience or object that they believe will make them happy to the possibility of more joy in any situation. The authors write:

Awakening joy isn’t about fulfilling goals or changing particular circumstances. It’s about training the mind and heart to live in a way that allows us to be truly happy with our life as it is right now. Not that we stop aspiring to grow and change in positive ways, or that we remain in harmful situations, but we begin to find the joy inside us right where we are.

A guided meditation in which readers remember a time when they were truly happy makes joy an emotional and physical experience rather than merely an abstract concept. An exercise that I find particularly useful is creating reminders of the intention to be happy. I’ve put the words “*ahavah* (love), *rachamim* (compassion), *chesed* (lovingkindness), *v’shalom* (peace)” on my computer screen saver: a reminder of these qualities and of the moment they were chanted to a beautiful tune as I walked down the aisle at my wedding. Many of the exercises are simple; the real challenge and the real payoff are in continuing to do them over time so that ultimately they are integrated into one’s life and become habitual. Reminders and the accountability of a “joy buddy” and a “joy journal” help to

maintain focus and motivation in busy life.

The personal stories of class participants are an inspiring reminder of the role that the successes and challenges of others play in cultivating our happiness. The stories capture the supportive experience of being in the course. Baraz himself was “a gloomy existentialist” in college and this book is a reflection of his growth into a teacher who exudes happiness and loving-kindness. In the book, Baraz tells of the recent transformation of his ninety-one-year-old mother after Baraz persuaded her to add the phrase “and my life is truly blessed” to the end of every kvetch (see the humorous video of his mother talking about her experience on the Awakening Joy website). The teachings in the book and in the course have also been personally useful to me, both in my own life and in my work as a rabbi. To date over 9,000 people have taken the course, and the numbers continue to grow, with many participants reporting a life-changing impact.

As the High Holidays approach, we are reminded of the verse from Deuteronomy: “I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that you and your seed may live.” *Awakening Joy* encourages readers to choose life, to notice the blessings in our lives and the good in the human heart, and to act accordingly. Baraz and Alexander quote the following from late historian Howard Zinn:

What we choose to emphasize ... will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places ... where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. ■

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[FILM]

LEBANON, 1982: FACTS AND FILMS

WALTZ WITH BASHIR,

Sony Pictures Classics, 2008

LEBANON, Sony Pictures Classics, 2009

Review by Ralph Seliger

DRIVEN BY A NEED FOR personal catharsis and the economic necessity of small budgets, two veterans of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon have made innovative feature films about their war experiences. The first, *Waltz with Bashir*, a 2009 Oscar contender for Best Foreign Language film, tells filmmaker Ari Folman's story in the only way it could without incurring production costs on a massive Hollywood scale—through animation.

The second, *Lebanon*, conveys the experience of writer-director Samuel Maoz as part of a tank crew in an astonishingly apt way—almost entirely from within a tank. Viewing the dismal landscape of war from inside a tank is literally myopic, but no less horrifying. In fact, the mechanical whirring sound of the turret lent an added dimension of dread to the scenes of devastation that the crew traversed—mostly destroyed by air strikes—as well as the deaths and destruction that the tank itself spewed forth and absorbed in turn. This searing winner of the Golden Lion award at the 2009 Venice Film Festival began its U.S. commercial run this August.

These films are rooted in a political history that is important to remember. After being mauled by King Hussein's Jordanian army in September 1970, the Palestine Liberation Organization ensconced itself militarily in southern Lebanon, in a de facto occupation that helped trigger the Lebanese civil

war in 1975. This area became known to Israelis as "Fatah-land," for Yasser Arafat's dominant PLO faction. The PLO's heavy hand drew the ire of both Shia Muslims and Christians living in the south.

Attacks were launched from Fatah-land, including the spectacular raid that killed thirty-eight civilians and wounded seventy-one along the Tel Aviv–Haifa coastal road in 1978 and the massacre of a family in the Galilee town of Naharia in 1979. But an informal truce had been reached with the PLO when the Begin government seized upon the wounding of Israel's ambassador to Britain in an assassination attempt in England by a dissident PLO faction as the trigger for its massive offensive in June 1982.

Israel's initial armored thrust in 1982 was greeted warmly by some Shias and with enthusiasm by most Christians. But the Israelis soon overstayed their welcome and their initial political gains proved illusory. Christian Phalange leader Bashir Gemayl was assassinated almost instantly after being named Lebanon's president, and with him soon died Israel's expectation that Lebanon would become a full-fledged, Christian-dominated ally. By 1983, Hezbollah bombings drove Western armed forces out of Beirut, killing hundreds of U.S. Marines, French soldiers, and others in the process.

Hezbollah began its rise as a dominant force in Lebanon, and the Shia became hardened enemies of Israel—for the first time. Israel lost hundreds of soldiers during its eighteen-year occupation of the "security zone" along its border; it suffered over 150 more deaths (mostly civilians), plus widespread damage and dislocation to northern Israel, during the ill-fated second Lebanon war in 2006.

My first official activity as a left-Zionist occurred in that fateful summer of 1982, hardly a month after Israel's invasion. I was

part of a young adult tour hosted by the Mapam (socialist) party and the National Kibbutz Federation (*Kibbutz Artzi*). One of our guides, a jovial forty-something kibbutznik, joined us a day or two late, after fighting in Beirut.

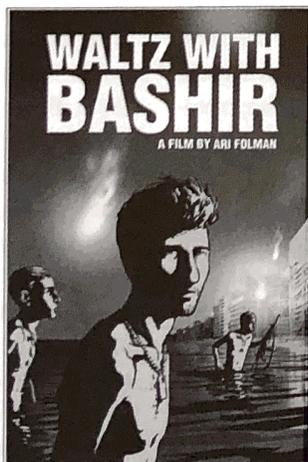
The 1982 war was Israel's first as a regional superpower that could not be defeated militarily. But it was also the first war in which Israel's broad national consensus of support was breached.

Our hosts that summer, twenty-eight years ago, Mapam and its aligned kibbutz federation constituted the only Zionist movement that opposed the 1982 invasion from its inception. The movement itself was divided between a faction that advocated refusal to serve militarily (which mostly coalesced around the short-lived Sheli party in the Knesset), and the majority, who favored serving in the war but demonstrating against it upon their return. The mainstream Mapam argument was that service in the army—i.e., not undermining its cohesion as an institution—was necessary to the small nation's survival, but that it was also an obligation to work politically as citizens for a better national policy.

Mapam formed a key component of the *Shalom Achshav* (Peace Now) movement that rallied hundreds of thousands of Israelis to protest the slaughter of Palestinians by Christian Phalange militiamen permitted to enter the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps under cover by Israeli forces. It is little remembered that no less a pro-Palestinian voice than the late Edward Said noted the irony that the only Middle Eastern city where masses of people protested this massacre was Tel Aviv.

"Shooting and Crying"

BOTH *LEBANON* AND *WALTZ WITH Bashir* have been criticized by pro-Palestinian partisans and some left-wing Israelis as part of a long tradition of *yorim ve'bochim*—of liberal Israelis "shooting and crying," as if they were the victims. What would be courageous, this criticism goes, is for an Israeli filmmaker, perhaps teaming up with Palestinians, to



make a film from the perspective of the Palestinians and Lebanese who lived through the invasion, or perhaps creating a film that alternates the experience of Israelis with those of Lebanese and/or Palestinians. Otherwise, these critics argue, the Israeli invader is the only one given subjectivity, and the Lebanese and Palestinians are wholly “other,” without voice or feelings, and the terror that they experience is rendered invisible.

Since these films do not flinch in depicting the carnage Israel inflicted on *Lebanon*, this last point seems to be unfair on its face. For example, *Lebanon* depicts a Christian family held under gunpoint in their bomb-damaged home by gunmen who confront the Israelis. Despite the tearful pleading of the family not to fire, the tank releases one shell, killing all but the distraught mother, who tumbles out of her home screaming for her little girl; she stumbles upon burning debris that ignites her house-dress and the soldiers strip her naked to save her life. This scene alone leaves its mark on the viewer.

In *Waltz With Bashir*, Ari Folman suddenly jumps from animation to actual footage to depict the horrendous aftermath of slaughter and grief at Sabra and Shatila, with which he concludes his masterpiece. Perhaps this event was too true in its monstrous reality for the filmmaker to bear approaching it from the remove of a cartoon, however artful his work was with this form until that point.

To respond more completely to the “shooting and crying” charge, one needs to consider what makes a war movie into an anti-war movie. In *Saving Private Ryan*, the bloodletting (especially at its beginning and end) is so unrelenting and so realistic that in no way can it be depicted as pro-war propaganda. I wonder how many actual lives were lost or shattered (say in Vietnam) as a result of youngsters being seduced into uniform by the war movies of John Wayne and other cardboard action heroes who starred in such films in the forties, fifties, and sixties. One would hardly expect that *Saving Private Ryan* motivated young people to want to go to war. The

same is true of HBO’s recent TV mini-series, *The Pacific*, co-produced by Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg, the star and director respectively of *Saving Private Ryan*.

These works associated with Hanks and Spielberg quite properly honor the fighting men who served their stint in hell to defeat Hitler and his rapacious Imperial Japanese ally. By way of contrast, there is nothing in the least bit redemptive or even patriotic in how the filmmakers Folman and Maoz have presented their material—surely representing their verdict on the war that they fought.

It would be great if one day Israeli and Palestinian filmmakers could collaborate to show the truth from a variety of standpoints. The collaboration of a Palestinian Israeli with an Israeli Jew to make *Ajami*, Israel’s recent finalist for an Academy Award, is evidence that this may yet happen. In the meantime, Folman and Maoz should be given credit for having made remarkable cinematic statements from their personal experiences.

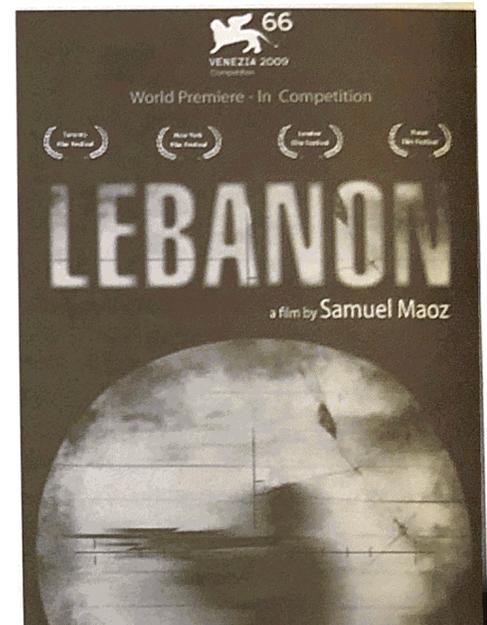
The Big Picture

GIVEN THAT THE INNOVATIVE QUALITY OF *Lebanon* is that it’s almost entirely set inside of a tank, its power is to show how what happens before the soldiers’ eyes (the “small picture”) undermines the “big picture.” The tank commander initially has faith in the larger strategic design that motivated Israel to attack, as he explains by using these very words to his men, until losing his nerve in a general panic that seizes the entire Israeli contingent late in the movie—both the tank crew and the squad of paratroopers they’ve linked up with—when they realize that their small force is behind Syrian lines.

Still, in the larger realm of fact, Israel’s invasion in 1982 illustrated how it had become invincible against conventional Arab forces. Yet the inglorious end of Israel’s long, unhappy Lebanese sojourn, with its unilateral withdrawal in 2000—commemorated cinematically in yet another highly-acclaimed recent

Israeli film, *Beaufort*—shows how Israel is vulnerable to the “asymmetric warfare” of well-organized and well-motivated irregular forces fighting on its home ground.

The Likud government’s decision to go to war in 1982 was widely believed, by the leftist elements we visited that year, as intended to forestall a political process with the PLO—building upon the short-lived ceasefire that the invasion brutally pushed aside—nearly a decade before negotiations finally began at Madrid in 1991, and then in Oslo and



Washington, D.C., in 1992 and 1993. If Israel went to war in 1982 to sabotage a possible peace process with the PLO, it is a cruel twist of history that its enemy in the north is now a more capable and fanatical foe in the form of Hezbollah.

It can be cogently argued that Israel fought for its survival in 1948, 1967 and 1973. The twists, turns, and failings of peace efforts to date have not all been Israel’s fault, but the 1982 war was the first of a series of wars of choice, rather than necessity. Interestingly, Israel has unambiguously prevailed only in conflicts when it has absolutely had to. ■

Ralph Seliger is editor of Israel Horizons, Meretz USA's print publication, and a blogger at www.MeretzUSA.blogspot.com.

SARTRE

(continued from page 11)

spark of cultural (or countercultural) inspiration and also the irreducible power of human freedom exerting itself against its own self-reproducing constraints, human beings could break through the reciprocal imprisonment of the series to form what he called “the fused group”—a movement toward mutual freedom and solidarity would overwhelm the external conditioning that renders us passive, atomized, anonymous (in the sense of lacking in authentic presence and lost in robotic roles and routines), and interchangeable. Drawing on the inspiration of revolutionary historical moments such as the seizures of the Bastille and the Winter Palace, the rebellion of the Kronstadt sailors, and the spontaneous sit-down strikes through which workers during the labor movement suddenly reclaimed their own sense of collective power and agency from the factory machines and their owner-operators that had turned them into passive objects, Sartre’s description of the emergence of the group coming into fusion provides a social-ontological and intersubjective foundation for the possibility of transformative social change that goes beyond the external categories of much of social theory—for example the external category of “class struggle” within the history of Marxist theory itself which could not account for how the revolutionary class would recover its agency as a living social process. And Sartre’s new concept prefigured exactly what would take place five to ten years later during the upsurge of the sixties, when human beings (like myself) who had been trapped in the passivity and distance of our socially separated and artificial lives, would emerge into authentic groups in which our essential Presence to each other could suddenly become visible, and through which we could generate an extraordinary social energy that could “move” into a movement, ricocheting invisibly but decisively from Berkeley, to Mexico City, to Prague, to the general strike of May ’68 in Paris.

The social paralysis of being trapped in and of being an unwitting agent of the series, and the always potential transformation of the series into the group-in-fusion

through which we can overcome our alienation and recover our reciprocal presence to one another as Here and as One (or as “the common individual,” in Sartre’s terms)—these are very important ideas that Sartre has contributed to establishing the link between the transformation of spirit and the egalitarian and ecological transformation of the material world. But as Gerassi brings out in his interviews, there was something essential that was lacking in these later formulations that was becoming apparent in the world itself in the early 1970s—in the very decay and gradual dissolution of the movements of the sixties that was beginning to take place at the time of the interviews and that is palpable in them.

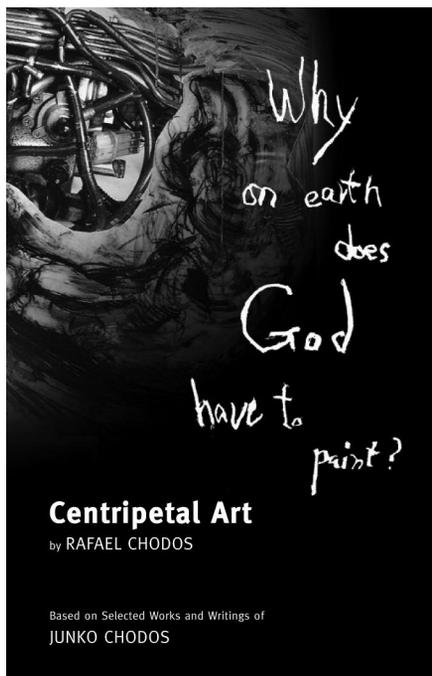
In one key exchange, Sartre has been describing as a kind of illustrative mini-example of the group-in-fusion a bus ride in which a group of bus passengers who had previously been merely a disconnected series, a line of people waiting for the bus at the bus stop, had transformed themselves into a fused group by persuading the driver to go off his normal route and to drop each of them at their destinations, which in turn leads to the able-bodied passengers taking pleasure in assisting an old woman in a wheelchair to get off the bus and get into her home, and to an overall atmosphere of joy and free conversation erupting into the dead space where there had previously been merely a collection of anonymous strangers. Gerassi responds by saying, in effect, that’s all well and good, but those passengers will inevitably go home and the next day they’ll be back in line, the weight of historical forces will again overwhelm and condition them, and their hot moment will go cold—just as the sans-culottes of the French revolution returned their power to the elites and lost their transformative energy, just as the Paris Commune had failed to sustain itself, and just as the youth of the sixties were seeing their groups dissolve into internal squabbles or get co-opted by the political parties or become overwhelmed, as we would say in *Tikkun*, by the legacy of generations of Fear of the Other more powerful than the momentary unity made possible by the moment of fusion. “To avoid defeat the group-in-fusion must remain in fusion,” says Gerassi. “But

how? ... If the group-in-fusion is always bound to fail, no matter how much of a residue it leaves around the edges for historians to contemplate, why risk starting it again?”

It is difficult to read these words and not feel that this is exactly the worldwide dilemma of the present moment, that because of the failures of prior social movements and the defeats or distortions of the fused groups that these movements were formed by and inspired, we are unable to risk starting it again and to surrender to the radical hope that this requires of us without a new step in theory to guide and express some new form of social practice. Sartre’s own answer to Gerassi is that the process is not circular or hopelessly repetitive, that each such transformative experience is internalized as a historical memory that is passed on, however silently, in the culture and moves the ball forward and furthers the liberatory development of humanity. But even if there is some hope and validity to be found in that response, it seems clear to me that the Sartre of the early 1970s could not yet have grasped that his own thinking was inherently limited by the secular nature of his own conditioning, by his failure to realize that the breakthrough permitted by the fused group can only truly be sustained if it is accompanied by a distinctly spiritual elevation of the heart that requires another and deeper form of communal self-recovery than is conveyed by the idea of the revolution, the rebellion, the instantaneous and sudden rupture of the artifice of the status quo. What is needed is a theory and practice of human connection that has sufficient spiritual depth to gradually heal the Fear of the Other that has been installed in our hearts by the shocks of our generational and personal conditioning and to elevate the fused group into a beloved community. Sartre helped us by showing that we are always connected even when we imagine we are most separated, and that by turning toward each other in meaningful, life-giving social action we can become the source of each other’s completion. When will we have gone far enough beyond his formulations to actually take the next decisive steps toward this redemptive end to “risk starting it again”? ■

JOSEPH STIGLITZ
(continued from page 14)

What we discovered was that many Americans resented welfare not because they didn't care about poor people, but because they felt that the Democratic Party solution, welfare, never solved the problem of poverty but only ameliorated it. The Democrats who supported it, of course, did so because they wanted to be "realistic" and thought that it would be better to achieve some help than no help, so instead of fighting for a program to eliminate poverty, they fought for minimal increases in levels of aid to the poor. Yet this approach eventually caused a great deal of resentment among the American people, who felt that they were throwing endless money down a sinkhole that would never solve poverty anyway, so they asked themselves, "Why should I pay higher and higher taxes for a program that potentially keeps people in poverty rather than eliminating it, and that leads those who receive the support to feel angry rather than grateful for the help they are receiving?" That same dynamic



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would occur on a global level unless we develop a full-scale program to eliminate, not simply reduce, the global poverty, starvation, hunger, homelessness, etc.

JS: I think a GMP would be a very good idea. And I hope we can marshal support to do that.

The irony is how many Americans actually think we give more money than we do. Surveys show that most Americans think of themselves as generous, think of themselves as giving a lot in foreign aid and giving a lot more money than we are actually giving. So on one level there is a lot of support for the idea, but on another level there is a lack of understanding about how little we actually do give. A dose of realism, though—I think that even spending 2 percent of global GDP or the U.S. and Europe's GDP on a Marshall Plan is not going to be enough to alleviate poverty in the developing world in ten years. The problems are more deep-seated than that. But unless we do something of that scale we won't be able to make significant progress. So even though I am not as sanguine as you that it will eliminate poverty, I still think it is desirable.

Your remark about ameliorating poverty: I remember a meeting I had with Clare Short, who used to be the head of aid in the U.K. government. She said very forcefully that they wanted to end poverty, not ameliorate it. And I think that's the right mindset to have. And I think we can do it. But it is not something that will happen in twenty years. But we can make huge progress. To put it in perspective, China has reduced poverty by between 300 million and 500 million people over the last thirty years. But it has taken them thirty years and enormous investment, close to 50 percent of GDP, with significant amounts going to poverty alleviation.

ML: Part of our proposal is that the United States would take the leadership in convincing other leading industrialized societies to make a similar commitment to join in this Global Marshall Plan.

Let's move now to focus on the present realities in America. We saw what happened with both parties' actual responses to the economic crisis. What would have happened if instead of that, the Democrats

had said: "No, we are not going to do this, we are going to once and for all test out the theory that Republicans and conservatives have been articulating that the marketplace will solve all problems. We want to let the banks and Wall Street work their own problems out rather than rely on big government. However, if that isn't working, we would like to set up a U.S. national bank funded with a few trillion dollars to give loans to those enterprises that cannot get loans from the failing banks, on the biblical principle of no-interest loans. Similarly, the national bank would give loans to ordinary people who would otherwise be reliant on the existing banks that are in the current moment dealing with the fallout from the free marketplace. And we will give no-interest loans to projects that have some social value, whether that be to fund education, to help families deal with impossible-to-pay mortgages, or to enable small businesses and other enterprises to expand employment." What if that had been the response? I know that at the time, we were told that the sky would fall and all rational behavior on the planet would be over.

JS: I am very sympathetic with the major thrust of *Tikkun's* thinking on this question. I think that if we had taken most of the money that we spent on the big banks and lent it out to homeowners to redo their mortgages at a low interest rate, to businesses to give them access to capital, to ... new banks focused on venture capital to create new enterprises, and to small and medium-sized businesses, I think we would have had a much stronger recovery than the one we did. And I think our social cohesion would be much stronger. Instead, we wound up in a bailout that has not restarted the economy and certainly not restructured anything in a way to make things more fair or efficient. So I feel the major thrust of what you are saying is true, but I worry a little bit about the disruption that might have occurred in many of our enterprises if we had simply let all the big banks fail under the ordinary rules of capitalism. It would have been very disruptive and very costly. But I do think that if we intervened with

these big banks, we should have effectively used the laws of capitalism, which means: “If you can’t meet your obligations, you go bankrupt. And if you go bankrupt, you convert debt into equity, and if you don’t have enough debt, the government, through deposit insurance, will take over the banks.” It is a standard procedure we do all the time. So one of my main criticisms is that we suspended the ordinary laws of capitalism, and that was really a very big mistake at the time and as a matter of precedent. It has undermined the fiscal strength of the economy. ■

CUBA SÍ

(continued from page 21)

movement as doing less damage to the earth’s creatures and ecology than gas-powered machinery. Transportation is a pastiche of the incredible, ranging from the now neon-painted signature cars of the American fifties to the patched Ladas, clunker Ural motorcycles, and strange hulking, fume-belching trucks of the Soviet bloc period, to a few contemporary vehicles, particularly trucks, often Korean in origin. Occasionally, a new, well-manicured Audi roars past, dark windows speaking of unknown privilege. Driving the roads of Cuba, one sees few cars and barely any amenities, not to mention little commerce. Whole families are hitchhiking, so offering to give rides, often over the long stretches between cities, is a great way to meet people. We pick up thirty-five people by count during the drive—the arrangement is great for directions in this nearly sign-less country, great for getting independent views of the culture, and terrific for getting a feel for people’s lives and aspirations. And we are a very novel couple for our hitchhikers—few ordinary people in rural Cuba have contact with U.S. folks, given the stringency of the embargo on travel from the United States. Pigs are led across the potholed, sometimes divided, six-lane Autopista—the main artery of Cuba, unfinished for the eastern third of the country—that without much warning often joins into a three-lane course, along with cowboy-driven herds of goats and cattle. Disturbing is the lack of products being transported, reflected in the still minimalist

stock in grocery stores and in the visible lack of working people, agriculturally and industrially. Throughout the days of our time in Cuba, urban streets are thronged with people, young men and women especially, who could be engaged in productive work. True estimates of unemployment are unobtainable.

With the decades of suppression of privatism (economic activity for private profit or personal gain) signs of self-improvement are minimal. Cubans dress well and decoratively. But on the average, the exteriors of homes are brutally ugly, with infrequent signs of gardening in this lush tropical land. I revisited a *finca* (rural property) on the outskirts of Havana where three generations, soon four, live together in a run-down mansion that had once belonged to a dentist who went bankrupt—long before the revolution—and was scooped up as a bargain by the great-grandfather. There is much land and plentiful water. The views of the Caribbean are beautiful and the wind is fresh and moves the great trees. Twenty-one years ago we sat on the veranda and discussed growing vegetables for home and neighborhood consumption—there are a few farms with livestock on the ruined road to the *finca*—and again we have the same discussion. Rusting machinery litters the ground surrounding the house, where tomatoes, corn, and other staples could be produced in abundance with small effort. My friends, who are truly thoughtful people—the woman a doctor, her husband an engineer—use the same excuses as on my long-ago private visit: no pesticides, no seeds, government discouragement of private cultivation. The house itself is melting into the ground. During the Special Period, after Soviet support for Cuba ended like a train crashing into a cement wall at the end of the tracks, when there was nothing to be had for food, they had a secret pig stash on the second floor above their living quarters and raised pigs for their consumption—this was happening all over Cuba, as if survival had to be hidden. The last pig was butchered a year ago, and times have changed a bit for the better. There is a decrepit comfort here, a leisure, and a Breughel-like naturalness that is wholesome and warm. Friends come and sit on

the veranda. The door to the sea is open and a motorcycle sits perched as if to fly to the blue water.

The Successes of the Revolution: Health Care and Education

CUBA HAS NO MISSILES TURNED TOWARDS the United States, no army ready to invade, no proxy wars being fought in Angola and Ethiopia, the Cold War periphery, as it once did. Its implacable resistance is against U.S. domination, so it seeks to ally with other governments that oppose U.S. hegemony—at present, principally Venezuela and Bolivia. Cuba’s main export is no longer sugar. Cigars are still strong. Nickel and chromium contribute. Coffee production is surprisingly stagnant. Citrus is a factor.

More importantly, it is the peaceful provision of physicians and medical experts in dentistry, nursing, and community health care to its allies and other countries, the export of engineers, literacy educators, and teachers of other subjects—exports of educated, helpful humans to developing countries—that appear primary. In Haiti, several hundred Cuban medical personnel supported health care for all Haitians long before the devastation of the earthquake. These health workers stayed on after the disaster and tended to patients in diverse parts of the country—unrecognized, unsupported, and often thwarted by U.S. hostility to Cubans. There is even a U.S. program to get Cuban doctors abroad to defect, using dollar inducements, of course. Cuba has the highest ratio in the world of physicians to residents: 78,000 to 11 million or so in 2007. That’s 6.5 doctors for every thousand people, compared to 2.4 per thousand in the United States. And Cuba’s truly community-based health system distributes health workers evenly, caring for the poorest towns and neighborhoods as much as the more affluent. There is a medical school to train students from other countries, and Cuba has an exalted history of providing health care to other countries as direct aid.

When I was in Negril, Jamaica, in the seventies, before there was much of a resort, the Cuban doctor was the main health resource for the local population, and it was my distinct pleasure to make rounds

with him and witness the fine work he did for Jamaican people. He was a blessing in an impoverished area deemed unattractive by domestic physicians, who were too few in number and tended to seek better money in more well-heeled areas of the island. That tradition of service continues unabated despite Cuba's own economic problem.

With so many well-educated people, far in excess of the quality of work available that can use those rich minds, Cuba's main resource is just that: an educated, thoughtful populace. To continue to develop this capaciousness requires a clear policy of resource allocation. The blockade has hampered the availability of high speed Internet. Fiberoptic cable between the United States and Cuba would aid this, but that does not appear to be forthcoming from the Yankees. Cuba desperately needs to solve the problem of distributing computers and Internet access to its population or it risks falling further behind in providing for the development of its human resource. E-mail is available to a few, but computers are uncommon and the access to the Web is even less common. Social solutions that enable sharing of hardware by computer co-ops—for example, radically expanding access to the country's Internet cafes—would be a step in the right direction and would avoid the enormous expense of full individualization of computers, yet make possible popular access. Cuba needs to spread the Web over the island.

Parsing out the successes of the Revolution is not difficult. The social successes amount to an astounding welfare state—though it is limited by its poverty, the economic miasma, and its political centralism. Cuban society supports quality education and full literacy; health care for all, with an average life expectancy of seventy-seven years; home and apartment ownership; support for the arts; a guaranteed food allotment as baseline; cultural access for all; and legal equality for all persons, regardless of sex and race, not to mention a commitment to wage equality, even though full equalization has yet to be achieved practically. These are extraordinary achievements and serve as a reference for all societies.

How the Revolution's Promise Could Still Be Fulfilled

WHAT'S MISSING FROM CUBAN SOCIETY IS satisfying politics and democratic participation at all levels of government. Democracy in Cuba is thought of by the exiled Right as the restoration of full monopoly capitalism with its puppet elite in power with their privileged, foreign-dominated economies. In their view, under democracy the nationalized sectors would be privatized and the government would offer the nation's exiled elite reparations and restoration of lost properties. Health care for all, as with the other welfare-state sectors, would become corporatized and for profit. I believe that if the exiles could, they would erase the Revolution from memory. Presumably the Right believes that the majority of Cubans would want this and that the class structure would revert to one in which the lucky few had the happy opportunity to become wealthy.

From the Communist Party of Cuba's side, democratization is also viewed as the restoration of the U.S. imperialist regime with all its attendant horrors, as above. The Party argues that democratization that proceeds too quickly—meaning the opportunity for all citizens to elect their officials and have access to the larger policy issues, particularly the economic—would just open the door to the gobbling behemoth across the Gulf.

This polarization does not reveal the Middle Way, yet that has been the direction necessarily taken by the Cuban government as the practical realities engendered by the economic catastrophe have caused conversion to private cooperatives, particularly in the agricultural sphere. Roughly 60 percent of Cuba's total agricultural output is currently produced on just 35 percent of the island's agricultural land, and some individual agricultural initiative has taken root outside of the formerly totally monolithic state sector. Unfortunately this economic pastiche remains under top-down control, and that top end has yet to be rationalized by full participation of all sectors in economic decision making.

The forcible creation of the state sector as the single and overarching monopoly of power, creativity, resource development and allocation, and the obliteration of the

individual as a creative force by fiat seems to lack the power to lead to economic and political success historically, in Cuba and everywhere else. There is no evidence that the political form—"democratic centralism" as Leninism has called it—has produced anything viable or more transformative than the best examples of democratic social welfare states in Scandinavia. The historical record of oppression under democratic centralism is horrific—with Cuba as a relatively benign example—and it continues to serve the interests of domination and single-person leadership regimes. Paternalism in the Cuban situation expresses itself currently in the oft-repeated party line that "with the beast breathing down our necks from across the Florida Strait, political transformation needs to go slowly." The Party record of leadership, particularly in the economic sphere, seems to me as much or more the cause of the Cuban miasma than is the blockade. The two have fitted together to justify suppression of a creative citizens' dialogue that could serve for economic transformation of Cuban life. Eschewing cooperative formats for state control is a grievous mistake. Removing and penalizing individual personal initiative is a terrible mistake that serves state centralism and the concentration of power. The "New Man" as was envisioned in the late 1960s in Cuba and forced into a format on the Isle of Pines (renamed the Isle of Youth) was a failure. Consciousness cannot be mandated. It has to be created, have a basis in relationships, be validated and absorbed, and include some sense of pleasure in being alive and productive.

Indeed, it is possible that a collapse of the Cuban central state—which does not appear to be in the offing—could open the door to the gobbling behemoth across the Gulf. If so-called "free elections" meant a huge influx of money, glamour, and media, and this was not resisted, then people might be swayed from one kind of perversion of democracy—"democratic centralism"—to another, "the best democracy money can buy."

On the other hand, as an educated, revolutionized population, Cubans surely have the capacity to govern themselves democratically and to move from near-total

state domination into a self-governance uninterested in giving away Cuba's gains and independence to predatory foreign corporations and governments like the United States. And Cubans need to create the economic conditions that lead to their prosperity while maintaining their interconnectedness and generosity to other peoples, the internationalism that truly feeds. If after all this time, the people are not up to this, so be it. The experiment has to move toward validation of concept. Either the Revolution has created a more loving and conscious group of people, or it has failed to do so.

There is almost nothing for the capitalists to buy in Cuba—perhaps beachfront property. Aside from the already expanded foreign tourist resort sector, profitable investment in Cuba would require costly investment in infrastructure, which would have to be created nearly from scratch. Cuban democratic transformation of government is unlikely to lead to a sieve with extraordinary holes that invites the gangsters back and looks forward to a Meyer Lansky in charge of Havana.

Investment in Cuba must support capital development within a framework of self-sufficiency and popular self-determination. Cuba's values—and its population's training—have been in self-sacrifice, sharing of scarce resources, cooperation, critical thinking, compassionate internationalism, and interconnectedness. All populations have thus far preserved self-interest and individualism, no matter the form of government or its length of time in power. The greatest moments of creativity and motivation in human history have been at the time of revolution, before power is reified and the initiative taken from the political/spiritual life of mobilized masses tasting their power and freedom. This is when true excitement and the breath of new life suffuse. True, you can't have this all of the time. You have to work and dig in. But the attempt must be to preserve the joy-in-the-moment attitude that comes with full participation and a sense of brotherhood/sisterhood and communalism. Break the back of alienation and crass materialism!

These qualities exist among Cuban people much as everywhere else. Under

conditions of poverty and want, the pressure for individual solutions increases—alongside the pressure for collective, participatory solutions. Both trends will persist historically in Cuba no matter what. Suppression of individual problem-solving by hierarchical domination only increases alienation, departures for other lands, and a sense of disempowerment. Governmental economic penalization and a psychological/sociological, denigrating critique of collective private or non-state-owned solutions engendered by popular cooperative action is the opposite of what true state support really means—encouraging and engendering popular formations that grow the economy and the people, that train people to communicate and work together. The begrudging yet desperate central government support for popular cooperatives, fairly well limited thus far to the agricultural sector, needs to be expanded to a wholehearted interest in new economic formations and solutions that consist of social welfare and central production units, popular cooperatives, and individual economic formats with encouragement for linkages and planning participation and oversight by everyone at all levels.

The collapse of the Soviet Union into its gangster government phase after 1991 was the actual result of decades of violent suppression by the Soviet government of real collective consciousness—human connection based on caring and cooperation without force, for the greater good, the heart of our spirit connection possibility. This suppression left the door wide open for privileged elements of government to expropriate the means of production for their own personal gain and for a rule of the strongest wolves.

Persistence of the Cuban special case with a transformation to popular government has the possibility for a different outcome: a country that is based on cooperation and cooperatives with a democratically elected state that preserves education, health care, and freedom from landlords and that generates and supports the joy of equality and participatory democracy at all levels. ■

WHY A NEW TRANSLATION?

(continued from page 32)

unique guiding scripture and also the foundation book for all Christians.

The Gospels' Drama: Jesus vs. the Jews

THE READER NEED NOT BE A BIBLICAL scholar to notice something awry when Yeshua, a Jew, speaks in the voice of a later gentile admonishing Jews of terrible punishment when Rome, four decades after Yeshua's death, will destroy Jerusalem. In the Jewish War (66-70), the city and temple were razed; its vast library, comparable to the Greek libraries in Pergamon and Alexandria, burned; thousands and thousands crucified; and Jews and Christian Jews expelled from the city. This horror—for Jews, Christian Jews, Jerusalem, and history—Yeshua tells us, is deserved and appropriate. No one—man, woman, or child, he warns—will be able to hide in forest or mountain from the apocalypse of punishment and death.

As the gospels, through the voice of Rabbi Jesus, tell of eternal punishments of the Jews for not recognizing that he is their foretold messiah, we soon realize there are only two major contending characters in the gospels: Jesus and the collective Jews. Jesus is the good; the Jews are the bad. As for God, in contrast to God's character in the Hebrew Bible, where God speaks and appears in whirlwinds, God in the New Testament is absent. He utters no word, no idea or command, and he remains unseen. Others speak for and through God. Mary makes quick entrances at the beginning. Then disappears. As for the disciples, they are also minor and for the most part treated as doubting bunglers ever being corrected by Jesus for mistakes, weakness, and vanity.

Peter, a Polonius figure, is more developed as an unreliable disciple (or "student" as the Greek reads) whom Jesus reprimands when he hopes to have a favored seat next to God and Jesus in heaven. In the end, as Jesus predicts, Peter denies Jesus in his time of peril three times before the cock crows. The divinity figure is Jesus, ambiguously, since he is also a man. The drama of the cross occurs because Jesus suffers as a man, with no apparent awareness of being

divine. He implores God not to forsake him (Palms 21:1) and gives up the ghost in despair at his abandonment. Jesus, not God, is the singular character. He is everywhere, in virtually every scene. In Matthew, Luke, and John, he carries on after his death, walking the roads of Judea, again testing his incredulous disciples.

Jesus is the god of the New Testament. His enemies, on virtually every page, are the forces of evil, the malicious Jews, the other main character. They are his foil. They question him. He answers with contempt. He takes the whip to them in the Temple. The Passion is the tragic culmination during which Romans, implausibly egged on by the collective Jews in the street, shout their own villainy—"his blood be upon us and upon our children" (Matt. 27:25)—and hence their forever tribal condemnation on earth. Ironically, the good Roman centurion who has just crucified Jesus becomes the first human to recognize his divinity and that he has risen. Another gift to the later Roman Catholic Church. Like a *deus ex machina* figure in Greek drama who is saved at the last instant, Jesus is rescued through the divine intervention of the resurrection. The Jewish conspiracy to end the work of Jesus has failed. The Jews are left to wander as the accursed people through all generations.

In these fearful contradictions of good and evil the Jews are accused of murdering their fathers and their prophets, killing Jesus, and, most serious of all, deicide (murdering God). The latter is absurd if God is God and goes on being God. This relentless calumny has led contemporary theologians to make corrective comments. In *Meeting Jesus for the First Time*, the Christian theologian Marcus J. Borg corrects at all levels:

Jesus was deeply Jewish. It is important to emphasize this obvious fact. Not only was he Jewish by birth and socialization, but he remained a Jew all of his life. His Scripture was the Jewish Bible. He did not intend to establish a new religion, but saw himself as having a mission within Judaism. He spoke as a Jew to other Jews. His early

followers were Jewish. All of the authors of the New Testament (with the possible exception of the author of Luke-Acts) were Jewish.

Though I find it hard to believe, some Christians are apparently unaware of the Jewishness of Jesus, or, if they are aware, do not give it much weight. Moreover, Christians have frequently been guilty of conscious or unconscious anti-Semitism, identifying Jesus with Christianity and his opponents with Judaism, and thereby seeing Jesus and the early Christian movement as anti-Jewish....

The separation of Jesus from Judaism has had tragic consequences for Jews throughout the centuries. The separation is also historically incorrect, and any faithful image of Jesus must take with utmost seriousness his rootedness in Judaism.

These are ecumenical days, calming old furies of division. In her book *The Bible: A Biography*, former nun and religion historian Karen Armstrong writes: "A thread of hatred runs through the New Testament. It is inaccurate to call the Christian scriptures anti-Semitic, as the authors were themselves Jewish." She is right to state that the authors were themselves Jewish, but the texts, as we have them, remain deeply and pervasively anti-Semitic. More, while Armstrong asserts that Jesus, his family, and followers are Jews, the texts conceal this essential information from the normal reader, enabling a deceptive presentation. The scriptures are anti-Judaic just because Jews are falsely slammed in "words" that "for centuries inspired the pogroms that made persecution of Jews an incurable disease in Europe."

I address this dire and central question of disenfranchising Yeshua of his religious identity in two ways: by restoring the probable Hebrew or Aramaic names to biblical figures and framing anti-Semitic passages in a historical context in the introduction and abundant textual annotation.

Why I Use the Ethnically Appropriate Names

TO CLARIFY ETHNIC IDENTITY, I HAVE restored the probable Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew names of all personages, of Yeshua (Jesus), his family, and followers. Hence, we will not see Peter, Paul, and Mary performing in Jerusalem but Shimon Kefa, Shaul, and Miryam acting their parts in Yerushalayim. We will know that the tale of Jesus occurs in the Near East, with no ties to Europe other than that the Kingdom of Judaea (Israel) was occupied by the Romans. We will know that Pilate, a Roman tetrarch, ordered Jesus's death, and his Roman centurion and soldiers crucified a Jewish messiah. The English name Jesus is from the Greek (transliterated as Iesus), from the Aramaic (Yeshua), which was a later form of the Hebrew (Yehoshua).

A few historical notes. Although the extant gospels are in Greek and Yeshua speaks Greek in the gospels, Yeshua did not use Greek as his everyday language, if indeed he had any knowledge of it. His language was Aramaic. On the cross Yeshua cried out his forsaken state to God in Aramaic, a Semitic language close to Hebrew. As the lingua franca of the greater Mesopotamian region, Aramaic had by and large become the spoken language of the Jews after their return to Israel from the Babylonian defeat (538 BCE). Hebrew remained the language of the temple and religion. Yet we have Greek, not Aramaic, names for the Jews. Yohanan becomes John (though the Germans retain the Hebrew as in Johann Sebastian Bach). Somehow Yaakov or Jacob in the Hebrew Bible becomes James in English and Miryam becomes Greek Maria. When the Hebrew and Aramaic names of these figures are recovered, the Semitic origin and climate at last surface in the gospels and may ameliorate the confusing and relentless fury of anti-Judaism. As the Homeric names Zeus, Athena, and Artemis are finally heard in twentieth-century translations and no longer romanized as Jupiter, Minerva, and Diana, so too the Jewish names of Yaakov, Yeshua, Yosef, and Yohanan are used here rather than their irrelevant and misleading Greek or anglicized forms, James, Jesus, Joseph and John.

Any change in standard orthography

takes a while, but, like a new currency it is quickly absorbed and accepted. This restoration does wonders to afford a truthful perception of the identity of New Testament peoples. It will help us recall, as Bishop John Shelby Spong among others has observed, that the New Testament was originally a Jewish document written for contemporary Jews and no one else. Though largely unread by Jews, it remains the last major Jewish text of biblical Judaism, the parent religion of Christianity and Islam.

The Gospels Portray an Intra-Jewish Conflict as an Anti-Jewish Conflict

I HAVE ALSO WORKED AGAINST TRADITIONAL anti-Judaism in my historic introduction and annotations, which contain the philology of each proper noun in Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew. In many ways the inflated rhetoric may be seen as a result of inter-family rival sects within Judaism, each seeking dominion during Yeshua's life. Yet missing from that early scenario is that by the time we receive them in present form, the rival sects have been depicted as salvific Christians and hell-bent Jews.

The gospels were not fashioned in Greek until late in the first and early second centuries, with many unknown hands copying, redacting, and emending the stories and recreating conversations as they wished the politic to be. The authors must have had access to Sherlock Holmes-style magic to record the secret deliberations that allegedly took place behind the walls of the Sanhedrin. By the time these texts were finally accepted by religious councils in the fourth century, what had been a first-century controversy between Jewish groups, between Pharisees and messianics, was now seen ahistorically as a conflict between Jews and later Christians, "Christian" being the word "messianic" or "messianist" in Greek translation. By then, in name and thought, Christianity was politically separated from Judaism, though it retained the Jewish Bible (Old Testament) as its own Christianized Bible, to which it added the Jewish scriptures of the New Testament.

There is enormous, sad irony in these separations and conflicts based on misunderstandings and contentions of power.

Jews and Christians share one Hebrew Bible. Christians read the last great biblical document of the Jews, the New Testament, composed by Jews for the emerging sect of messianic (Christian) Jews. With so much vitally in common in terms of people and philosophies, and believers sharing the same invisible God, why such division and history of hostility? Yet this initial rivalry between Jew and Christian Jew, and in the next century between Jew and Christian, was to be repeated again and again in the inevitable schisms and sectarian wars within Christianity.

Trumped-Up Passion Story and Passover Plot

THE KEY ELEMENT IN THE PASSION STORY is the Sanhedrin conspiracy. We know nothing about what might have happened that night. Who was there to record the conversations? This one was invented by the evangelists at least forty years after the happening. Historically, we know that leading members of the Sanhedrin were enlightened, headed by Rabbi Gamaliel, Hillel's grandson and the beloved teacher of Saint Paul, who was also a Pharisee. So esteemed was Gamaliel by later Christians that he was incorrectly said to have converted to Christianity; and as the stories concerning his kindness to Christians grew, he was declared a saint by public acclaim in Roman martyrology. After 1900 years of sainthood, in 1956 his status, still in highest esteem, was put on hold for further investigation. So much for the head of the Sanhedrin and his assembly that was supposed to have plotted the death of Jesus.

Who can believe that a Jewish mob on the first night of Passover is in the street shouting to a reluctant prefect, "Crucify him!" followed by "Let his blood be upon us and upon our children"? Would anybody shout a curse upon themselves and their children? The notion is silly but noxious and has followed the Jews for two millennia. The curse is selectively applied in that it has exempted Yeshua and his followers, who at this critical moment escape the epithet of Jew and the collective religious and racial curse. At the instant before his death, Yeshua cries out to God his despair of abandonment in Aramaic, his own tongue. At this supreme moment—the moment of

Yeshua's death as a tortured Jewish man dying by Roman crucifixion—he may be "King of the Jews" in Roman mockery, but to the evangelists and future followers he is seen as the Christian God, not the Jewish *mashiah* (messiah). Moreover, by inventing a scene of mass Jewish guilt that he as a Jew notably does not share, Yeshua at once ceases to be perceived as a Jew. He is defrocked. He is stripped of his robes of faith and tradition as a messianic Jew preaching redemption.

In character with recent historical criticism on killing the man Yeshua, William Nicholls writes in *Christian Anti-Semitism: A History of Hate*:

Did the Jews kill Christ? We shall discover that the stories in the Gospels that suggest they did are exceedingly improbable. The Jews did not kill Jesus because they had no reason to do so. He was not guilty of any religious offense. It is in the highest degree improbable that such a trial before the Sanhedrin as we read of in the gospels of Mark and Matthew ever took place. What we read in the gospels about the trial of Jesus is the project of later Christian imagination, and it reflects Christian, not Jewish, views of the nature of the Messiah.

As a summary of the crucial questions of the Passion that have haunted the Jews, I cite two powerful and succinct paragraphs from the chapter on Judas from John Shelby Spong's *Liberating the Gospels: Reading the Bible with Jewish Eyes*: "Judas Iscariot: A Christian Invention?" After twenty pages of detailing incongruities in the betrayal story and indicating the source of the spurious betrayal story in Midrashic scripture, Spong concludes:

I only want to register now that it is a tragedy of enormous dimensions that, by the time the story of Jesus' arrest and execution came to be written, the Christians made the Jews, rather than the Romans, the villains of their story. I suggest that this was achieved primarily by creating the narrative of a Jewish

traitor according to the *Midrashic* tradition out of the bits and pieces of the sacred scriptures and by giving that traitor the name Judas, the very name of the nation of the Jews. As a result, from that day to this, the blame for the death of Jesus has been laid on the backs, not just of Judas, the Jewish prototype, but of the entire people of the Jews themselves. “His blood be upon us and upon our children.” That was a biblical sentence of death to untold numbers of Jews.

I raise this possibility to consciousness in the hope that as you and I are awakened to the realization of what this story of Judas has done to the Jews of history, we Christians might rise up and deal a death blow to the most virulent Christian prejudice that has for 2,000 years placed on the Jewish people the blame for the death of Jesus. If that result could be achieved, then the darkest clouds that have hung over the Christian Church in our history might finally begin to lift (*Liberating the Gospels*, 276).

To Bishop Spong’s lucid words, I add a few thoughts. Those who were messianics close to Yeshua were still decades away from being referred to in Greek as Christians. Yeshua, his family, and his followers were Jews, not strangers from another solar system. Since the Passion tales in the four gospels declared all Jews forever guilty of a horrible crime, Yeshua and the early saints, all Jews, must share this ignominy of hate. If only the true identity of the actors in these scenes that shaped worlds were commonly known, the scaffolding of anti-Judaism would collapse.

Let Us Reverse the Identity Theft and Speak Only of Yeshua

FRANK KERMODE IN THE JULY 15 *NEW York Review of Books* notes my “untraditional and adventurous” translations. I suggest that while compared to other versions the *Restored New Testament* is not traditional, I hope my new version may be seen as traditional in a larger domain

of understanding ancient literatures and may become a traditional model for later biblical versions. The new versions should hold to the premise of restoring the original Semitic names to proper nouns of person and place.

In a true way traditional versions break common law. Their concealment of the Jewish identity of Jesus, family, followers, and early saints is a legal felony of *identity theft*. It is ironic that “scriptures of love” incite the killing of “the unfaithful.” I wonder how the cruel dishonesty in casting the biblical players has not been commonly apparent to fair readers and theologians. The great traditional readings and translations, however beautiful, the King James Version and Tyndale remain suspect aberrations of disguise. We all wish for a grander peace amid all faiths. Such peace will come with knowledge as well as goodwill, but without knowledge good spirits are doomed. My common dream is that beauty and knowledge, not anger, infuse each precinct of religion. As for those who hear scripture as musical literature, I wish that the note in these scriptures in English be close to the original song chanted in Greek Orthodox churches.

There is a plain lesson in all this. In the end all people are people, and no people should ever be classified for whatever reason as less than another. Any marker of sect and theology that targets a people adversely is unfriendly error. So the gospels and Apocalypse should not be seen for the momentary and external conflicts they may contain but for their greater universality of spirit in a world desperately poor in coming to terms with human consciousness within the perishable body. Happily, the call to spirit is deep and needs no name and no divisive emblem. The New Testament is a book of the mind; it is infused with compassion and courage and the great questions of being, death, time, and eternity. Luke’s “Parable of the Lost Son” and Paul’s discourse on love in Corinthians 1:13 remain at the summit of literary creation. Yes, the New Testament maltreats an entire people. At the same time, the amazing human spirit that pervades the books eludes name, dogma, and even word to reside in the silence of transcendence. ■

ESRA Q&A

(continued from page 42)

government contracts will be given to corporations that can, while proving they can carry out the terms of the contract at a reasonable price, demonstrate a satisfactory history of environmental and social responsibility. The desire for such contracts will have an impact throughout the economy and extend the benefits of the ESRA to many corners that will not be at risk of losing their corporate charters like the super-large corporations will, but may nevertheless face competitive disadvantage by failing to be environmentally and socially responsible.

The first sentence of Article Two makes it clear that social and environmental responsibility toward others and the planet is an obligation of everyone, even though only very large corporations are subject to the re-chartering and jury review requirements. It states: every citizen of the United States and every organization chartered by the United States or any of its several states shall have a responsibility to promote the ethical, environmental, and social well-being of all life on the planet Earth and on any other planet or in space with which humans come into contact.

Doesn't the ESRA demonize people in corporations, as though they were all bad people?

Not at all. We recognize that there are many, many people in the corporate world who are fully ethical and ecologically sensitive. Many of them feel bad about decisions made by the corporations for which they work. They may go home and in their personal lives join environmental organizations like the Sierra Club or Greenpeace or the Natural Resources Defense Council. But at work they feel powerless to change anything, for one very important reason: the laws and Supreme Court decisions of the United States require corporations to do their best to maximize profits, and corporate leaders can be sued for failing to make a good faith effort to do so! So people working in the corporations quickly learn that they cannot put the needs of saving the planet above the need to make profits for the corporations.

When the ESRA comes into the picture, the hands of these many environmentally sensitive corporate leaders get immensely strengthened. With the ESRA, they are now empowered to say to their boards of directors and to their stockholders: “In order to protect your investments, we had no choice but to take extraordinary measures to be environmentally and socially responsible so that we would have a strong record to show to a jury that might, without such a record, take away our corporate charter and put your investments at risk. So in order to maximize your profits from investing in our company, we had to make it more environmentally responsible.” In other words, with the ESRA in place, the many good people inside corporations will have a powerful legal ally on their side to make corporations more environmentally responsible.

What’s the point of Article Three: the “Positive Requirement to Enhance Human Community and Environmental Sustainability”? Can community and sustainability be legislated?

A constitutional requirement for Congress and any educational institutions that receive public funds directly or indirectly to pay attention to and give serious priority to these issues can in fact be legislated, just as we were able to legislate equal rights for people of color and for women and LGBT people.

The central point here is that we cannot expect the people of our country to be able to rationally deal with the problems of the global environment unfolding in the twenty-first century without providing them with the relevant skills and supporting the values that will make global cooperation possible. Requiring schools to teach these new skills and values is essential to making it clear that the matter of preserving Earth is not just an issue of private opinion or subjective choice but rather expresses the democratic will and legal legitimacy of the people as a whole. In this respect, mandating environmental literacy is equal in importance to the decision to mandate students’ ability to read and write and learn basic arithmetic.

We are facing the possibility of the end of civilization and human life on this

planet, and unless we take this challenge as the primary national emergency, we, our children, our grandchildren, and many nonhuman species will not survive. This requires a fundamental reorientation of our educational priorities. It may no longer be as important for “success” in the twenty-first century that students have mathematical skills above the level of advanced algebra or that they be able to memorize a set of facts as it is that they know how to care for each other’s health and emotional well-being and for the earth, and know how to grow food, build homes, create activities and produce goods that are safe rather than destructive to the planet, are committed to nonviolence and to cooperation with people around the globe, and learn how to be genuinely respectful of others with different religious, political, and cultural norms.

Won’t the wealthy and the large corporations just move their base of operation outside the United States, should the ESRA ever pass?

Many will find that impossible, because the United States can require the same terms for corporations that operate outside the United States but function inside the United States to sell their goods or to engage in commerce or sale of stock. Article Four makes this kind of escape very difficult, because it would require that any corporation seeking to move in this way would have to get permission from a jury that would be empowered to seize all of the assets of that corporation if its move significantly hurts the environment or the communities in which it has been operating.

Won’t the Supreme Court decide that this amendment is not constitutional?

That’s the beauty of a constitutional amendment: it controls the Supreme Court, not vice versa.

But this ESRA violates the terms of the international trade agreements made by the United States.

Yes. It suspends all of those agreements made by the international representatives of the capitalist class who concocted a set of agreements to limit our democracy and to

impose trade regulations that would favor the rich over the poor. The ESRA revokes them to the extent that they are in violation of the terms of the ESRA. International agreement breaking has been the stock-in-trade of the political Right. Now it’s time for us to break economic arrangements written to advantage the corporations and disadvantage the planet Earth and most of its inhabitants.

What’s the worldview behind this ESRA? Is it really just a front for some other alien ideology?

The underlying worldview has been with us for thousands of years in the major religious and spiritual traditions of the human race. It is a worldview that challenges the notion that money and power are the most important aspects of life and that we should orient toward the world primarily from the standpoint of how much we can “get” from other human beings and from the planet to satisfy our own needs. Rather, it affirms the centrality of love and compassion—or what we in the NSP call “The Caring Society”—caring for each other, and caring for the earth.

We in the NSP have another way of labeling it: we call it the “New Bottom Line.” Instead of judging institutions or corporations or social practices or government policies or even our personal behavior to be “rational, productive, or efficient” primarily to the extent that they maximize money and power (the old bottom line), we insist that they also be judged efficient, rational, or productive to the extent that they maximize love, caring for each other, generosity, compassion, kindness, forgiveness, nonviolence, respect for difference, and ethical and ecological sensitivity, as well as enhance our capacities to treat others as embodiments of the sacred and to respond with thanksgiving, joy, awe, wonder, and radical amazement at the grandeur and mystery of the universe. If you can buy this New Bottom Line, then, whether or not you believe in God, from our standpoint you are a “spiritual progressive” and we encourage you to join us!

Is this whole thing just a clever way to say goodbye to the capitalist system?

There are people who say that this is

compatible with capitalism, and there are people who say it is not. We welcome both to support the ESRA. From our standpoint the key is this: not what you call the economic and social system, but the criteria you use when making decisions in the boardrooms of our corporations, in the halls of government, in the bureaucracies, in the community organizations and professional organizations and unions and political parties, and in our own personal lives. To the extent that the institution uses the criteria of the New Bottom Line, we don't care what label you give to the social or economic system. And to the extent that the New Bottom Line is not, in the final analysis, what determines the outcome of your deliberations, it's not the system we support. Call it what you will—we are not interested in nineteenth- and twentieth-century debates about capitalism, socialism, or communism. We are interested in building a society that is environmentally sustainable and filled with love and generosity, social justice and peace, and joy and celebration of all that is. We are interested in building institutions that preserve the earth for future generations.

What's the point of struggling for something that seems so outside the political mainstream and hence so "unrealistic" at a time when the country has other pressing problems?

Every significant change in American history has seemed completely "unrealistic" and outside the mainstream until people decided to struggle for it. Abolition, women's suffrage, the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement, the women's movement, the movement for rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transsexuals—all were dismissed as totally unachievable in the first few decades that people fought for them. But today they are all seen as just the inevitable outcome of social processes. So it will be with the ESRA. However, there's one difference: we don't have time to let the corporations do more damage to the earth. At a maximum, we've got ten to twenty years before we may have to accept that human civilization is doomed. But we are not there yet, and so there is a certain urgency to take the minimal steps proposed in the ESRA.

But isn't politics "the art of the possible"—so why fight for something that seems so far from the current reality?

Yes, politics is the art of the possible, but one never knows *what is possible* until one puts one's energy, time, and money behind goals that are necessary for the well-being of the human race and the planet. It's only in the course of those struggles that we learn how many things dismissed as impossible are actually possible because they correspond to the deepest need structure of the human race and of the planet.

Does one have to be part of the NSP to be part of the campaigns for the ESRA or the Global Marshall Plan?

No. We encourage NSP members to form coalitions around support for the ESRA and the Global Marshall Plan as long as we stick with those specific proposals. We encourage a wide variety of groups to endorse the ESRA and Global Marshall Plan and to become actively involved in any way that they see fit to build public support for those campaigns.

So what concretely can we do?

Well, it would help us immensely if you did join the NSP, which is the organization that developed the ESRA and the Global Marshall Plan (you can join the NSP and read about the Global Marshall Plan at spiritualprogressives.org).

Here are additional steps you can take:

1. Talk to neighbors, friends, family, church groups, labor unions, professional organizations, and civic organizations and get them to officially endorse the ESRA or sign the statement online and/or donate to the NSP so that we can hire people to work on this campaign.
2. Create a local group of people backing the ESRA and meet with locally elected city council members to get your city council to endorse the ESRA. Then do the same with your state legislators and your congressional representative and U.S. senators. Each year, go back with more and more people whom you've convinced to support this effort.

3. Set up a monthly meeting to discuss articles in *Tikkun's* Web magazine and involve people in the worldview that is behind the ESRA.
4. Create a monthly celebration of all who are engaged in social change activities.
5. Go door-to-door and get people to discuss and then sign the ESRA.
6. Create a caucus of spiritual progressives in your local political party, whatever that might be, and focus on building support for the ESRA and the Global Marshall Plan and the New Bottom Line in your political party.
7. Help us financially—organize fundraisers, approach people with money and help them understand why what we want is what is ultimately in their own best interests, and approach foundations and corporate organizations and seek to bring them on board as well.
8. Continually challenge the mainstream media and the mainstream politicians—and be as respectful as possible and/or as rowdy as possible, whatever works best with your own personality, so long as you keep it 100 percent nonviolent.
9. Help us create local conferences of spiritual progressives to give one another support and deepen one another's understanding of the tasks that confront us. And create celebrations, holidays, picnics, outings to cultural events, and anything else that nourishes your soul and the souls of others you've managed to recruit to the NSP.
10. Take time to nourish your own soul and make sure that your political work for these tasks is done in a manner consistent with the goals we ultimately seek to achieve. We must be compassionate for each other's failures and moments when we do not live up to our highest ideals, but we should always strive to make our movement more and more an embodiment of the love and generosity we seek to create in the larger society. Love and compassion for ourselves, each other, and the planet come first and must be central to the way we live our lives and the way we present ourselves to others. ■

To Yehuda Amichai (on his tenth yahrzeit)

I said Kaddish when you died, a month of
Yitgadal v'Yitkadash
 to give thanks for the Torah of your life and art,
 to begin a new religion
 out of your sad and gentle wisdom.
 For you brought something new
 out of the terrible *chad gadya*
 machine of Jewish history.
 You gave us psalms of every day—
 of the builder who cheated you,
 of the plums you brought home as a sweet offering,
 of the lover who gave fresh towels
 as you walked in her door. Together,
 you became Bathsheba and King David
 and conquered the land with love-making;
 wherever you left your clothes in your haste—
 your caves of Nahal David, your forests
 of Jerusalem, your beach at Caesarea—
 became mounds of witnessing like Joshua's
 at Gilgal.

You remembered your wars,
 but didn't forget the peace,
 when the man under his vine calls up
 the man under his fig tree.
 You commanded us, "Thou shalt love."
 And after fifty years of tearing down
 idols of the God you didn't believe in,
 you at last gave a name to your god:
 "*Mah nishtanah?* What has changed.
 Everything will change. Change
 is God." And "death is His prophet."
Ata avinu—You are our father
 of this and the coming age.
Yitgadal v'yitkadash
shimkha, Yehuda.
 May your name remain great
 and revered among lovers of life
 and god-wrestlers everywhere.

— Herb Levine



How to Have a Civil Conversation About Israel

BY JOSH KORNBLUTH

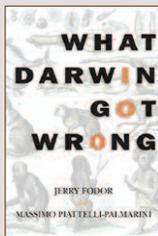
1. Give up.
2. Devote a large portion of your life to avoiding the subject.
3. Respond to a mid-life crisis by seeking comfort in tradition while at the same time avoiding the constraints of religious practice.
4. Watch *Fiddler on the Roof* and sigh at the memory of your grandmother playing “Sunrise, Sunset” on the record player while crying her eyes out about how your father ended up so rotten.
5. Consider going to temple.
6. Nap.
7. Renew *Golda* biography from the library again. Promise yourself that you will read it.
8. Remember how the last time you tried talking about Israel was with your friend Peter, who started yelling and driving erratically while you sat in silence and pondered your own mortality.
9. Wonder how Peter has been doing these past fifteen years.
10. Re-renew *Golda* from the library.
11. At a social event, subtly broach the subject as follows: “So the [LOCAL SPORTS TEAM] sure aren’t doing too well this year, huh?” When your interlocutor replies, “Tell me about it!” follow up with a casual, “And how about that situation with Israel?” From this point on, agree with everything your interlocutor says, occasionally inserting such phrases as “No, they never get it right, do they?” and “And so it has been for thousands of years!” End the conversation with a big embrace and the mutual promise that you will not rest until there is a just resolution to the Middle East conflict.
12. Rest.
13. While working out on an elliptical trainer, psych yourself up to possibly disagree with someone about Israel. Become distracted by the thought that your *beliefs* seem to be elliptical as well—initially bold ideas that inevitably get derailed by doubts and confusion and fear of being yelled at, until finally they trail off into nothingness ...
14. Shower.
15. Seemingly out of nowhere, suddenly become seized with a terrible existential fear that this idea you never really took seriously—this thing that you thought you could take or leave—might actually vanish, be wiped away from the face of the earth.
16. Simultaneously be seized by a terror of this now-beloved thing being appropriated by those who would see you as “the Other.”
17. Call Peter and arrange a meeting, specifying that it should not take place in a car.
18. Prepare for the meeting by doing deep-breathing exercises and visualizing agreement.
19. First ask Peter about the [LOCAL SPORTS TEAM] and strenuously agree with his assessment. Then inquire as to how Peter has been doing for the past fifteen years: work, family, etc. Finally, raise the subject of Israel.
20. Listen to Peter’s lengthy response.
21. At an appropriate moment, interject, “But what about—” and then be cut off as Peter’s voice rises in ever-increasing indignation. Later, interject, “But you have to admit that—” and then settle in for a long while, sipping water or coffee as needed.
22. Bid farewell to Peter with a curt handshake and without meeting his eyes, realizing you will probably never see him again.
23. Slouch homeward.
24. Pick up *Golda* biography; admire its heft. Put book aside and lie in bed, unable to sleep. Recall the time when you brought your prized Super 8 projector to your second-grade public-school classroom and showed your classmates a silent movie about Israel. Recall their delight at the footage of a man floating on his back in the Dead Sea with his coffee cup and saucer floating right there next to him. Think of how you felt—a combination of pride and wonderment that such a place existed.
25. Dream.
26. Wake up. Make coffee. Sit down at the breakfast table. Read articles and blog items and emails about Israel. Decide that from now on you are going to say exactly what you think, regardless of your insecurities and fears. Go stand in front of a mirror. Begin, and never move. ■

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

WHAT DARWIN GOT WRONG

Jerry Fodor and Massimo Piattelli-Palmarini
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010

IF THERE IS ONE TRULY SACRED ELEMENT IN THE contemporary commitment to an empiricist/scientific belief system—which demands a religious level of adherence—it is the holiness of Darwinian and neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory. To dare to challenge certain core aspects of evolutionary theory is to risk being dismissed as a right-wing fundamentalist fanatic. Yet as Jerry Fodor, a cognitive scientist, and Massimo Piattelli-Palmarini, trained as a biophysicist and molecular biologist, persuasively argue, neo-Darwinians may have successfully described the evolution of species, but the theory of “natural selection” is not yet a satisfactory explanation, and so the actual driving force behind evolution has yet to be explained. Finally, two scientists have the courage to say it: “We don’t know what the mechanism of evolution is.” They nevertheless hold fiercely to the core scientific belief: that evolution is not an intentional process; it is something that just happens. We’ll have more comments on this in the November/December 2010 issue of *Tikkun*.

**UNDERSTANDING RELIGION AND SCIENCE**

Michael Horace Barnes
Continuum, 2010

A REASONABLE GOD

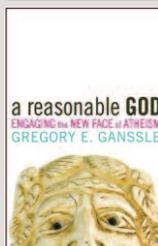
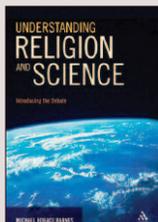
Gregory E. Ganssle
Baylor University Press, 2009

IF THERE IS AN ARGUMENT BETWEEN SCIENCE AND religion that engages your interest, these two books give you the foundation to talk about it intelligently.

Michael Barnes’s introduction to the debate carefully and systematically lays out the self-understanding of many in the scientific and religious communities in ways that make them comprehensible to the layman but in a sophisticated manner that will satisfy many who have been thinking about these issues throughout their lives. He also considers the possibility of fundamental differences in the minds of those who believe in scientific rationality and those who ultimately rely on faith. Unfortunately, while praising the value of “good and extensive evidence,” he does not present a sufficient account of the kinds of evidence garnered from religious and psychedelic experience.

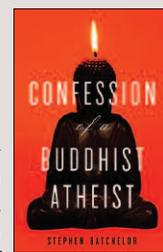
Gregory Ganssle is more explicitly polemical in intent, “engaging the new face of atheism.” Nevertheless, Ganssle respectfully presents the ideas of Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens and patiently and often convincingly shows where they have made serious mistakes in their arguments, doing so in a restrained and intellectually serious way.

The major problem with both of these books is the extent to which they accept visions of God that the mystics and contemporary renewal theologians in Judaism and Christianity are no longer talking about.

**CONFESSION OF A BUDDHIST ATHEIST**

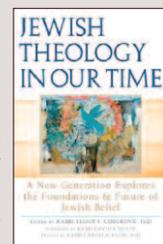
Stephen Batchelor
Spiegel & Grau, 2010

STEPHEN BATCHELOR WAS A MONK IN THE TIBETAN AND Zen traditions, and his personal spiritual evolution away from the dogmas and mechanistic vocalization of prayers will resonate with people from all faiths who have sought to reconcile their own spiritual intuitions with the constraints of an organized religious system. His account of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, is of a revolutionary who developed a new relationship with the impermanence and temporality of life. The mindfulness he championed was not concerned with anything transcendent or divine. As Batchelor puts it, this kind of awakening “serves as an antidote to theism, a cure for sentimental piety, a scalpel for excising the tumor of metaphysical belief.” Unlike those who take Buddhism to be a path of inwardness, Batchelor favorably cites Gautama’s calls for a transformed relationship with others: “Whoever would tend me, the Buddha tells us, ‘should tend to the sick.’”

**JEWISH THEOLOGY IN OUR TIME**

Ed. Rabbi Elliot J. Cosgrove
Jewish Lights, 2010

RABBI SHAI HELD, IN HIS ESSAY “LIVING AND DREAMING with God” (one of the twenty-four essays masterfully assembled and beautifully presented by Elliot Cosgrove in this inspiring volume), tells us in true Heschelian form that “to be created in the image of God is to be born with a hunger for God, an inner yearning for closeness with the One who brought us into being and sustains us in life. Ideally, the life of covenant will nurture this innate but often inchoate connection, making conscious and explicit what too often remains unconscious and implicit.” The essays in this book are an important step in that direction. Subtitled “A New Generation Explores the Foundations and Future of Jewish Belief,” this book brings together some of the most creative thinkers in the organized Jewish community today, and they offer insights and challenges that hopefully will permeate the discussion of God in that community. That there is still a certain timidity in grasping the insights of the Jewish Renewal movement or in addressing the primary forms of idolatry flourishing within the American Jewish religious community (worship of Israel, worship of power, unbridled materialism, and selfishness) should not detract from the important advances this book makes and the ongoing service to Jewish thought provided by Jewish Lights publications.

**THE FEMINIST PROMISE: 1792 TO THE PRESENT**

Christine Stansell
The Modern Library-Random House, 2010

CHRISTINE STANSELL TELLS THE STORY OF THE development of consciousness about the oppression of women and the struggles to alleviate it. She does so with a balance between obvious support for this movement and historical objectivity about its flaws and errors, as well as its triumphs and brilliance. Many women today who think of themselves as post-feminist, and every man on the planet, would benefit immensely from reading this carefully reasoned history of the struggles of women in the past 212 years. The feminist promise has not yet been fully realized—as is apparent to anyone who knows anything about the continued existence of wage gaps, workplace discrimination, misogynistic violence, and gender disparities in our governing bodies. Male privilege continues to exist and, like racism and homophobia, is a significant barrier to the creation of a just society. Until that equality is achieved in the economics, culture, and psychodynamics of all societies, the struggle for political, economic, and spiritual liberation will be severely limited. Yet the advances that have been made already lead us at *Tikkun* to call feminism one of the most significant revolutions in the history of the human race.





We are in our twenty-fifth year. Looking back over the past editions of *Tikkun*, there's much to remember about where we've been. This is a legacy we can only continue with your help! Please donate to *Tikkun* at www.tikkun.org.

