

SHALOM

Jewish Peace Letter

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Susannah Heschel



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Stefan Merken

The Day I Was Shot

AFTER LISTENING to the different sides of the gun-control debate, it's important I express my thoughts. We've heard President Obama call for stricter controls about who can buy guns (with background checks), and we've heard the National Rifle Association's messages about the government supposedly taking away our Second Amendment rights. I believe the real question should neither be about limiting gun sales to those qualified to buy guns, nor about the right of every individual to own a gun. Instead, let's have a real debate about *why* even own a gun.

Some personal history: On a hot September night in the early 1980s, while walking out of Potter's House, a bookstore/café in Washington, DC, Sister Mary Evelyn Jegen, a member of the Sojourner Community of Washington, DC, and I, were approached by a young man who demanded money. We refused and walked on. He then pulled a gun out of his jacket and shot me in the middle of my forehead. I was rushed by ambulance to the Med Star emergency room. Much to the amazement of the medical staff I was alive and alert. The next morning the surgeon told me that the bullet had gone into my forehead, somehow been deflected inside my head, and came out through the top of my skull.

STEFAN MERKEN *is chair of the Jewish Peace Fellowship.*

Obviously I have given this incident a great deal of thought over the years. I'm lucky and grateful to be alive. But I'm still confused why an individual could not see the value



of the life of another human being (this time it was me) and could commit an act of violence with as little concern as one would have squashing an ant on the sidewalk.

Another gun story: My dear friend Charles MacKintosh came home one night to find an intruder who, after breaking into his house in Los Angeles, was piling Charles and his wife's belongings on the kitchen table, preparing to carry them away.

Much smaller, older, and weaker

than the intruder, Charles told the man to help himself to whatever he wanted but in the meantime he and his wife were going to fix dinner.

"Are you hungry?" Charles asked the would-be robber. "Then join us."

The intruder was shocked, but ate and told them why he was desperate enough to rob people.

At the end of the meal and the ensuing conversation, Charles drove the man home, helped him find a job, and they remained friends for years.

So much for guns to protect ourselves. We need to get rid of the idea that guns protect. Instead, we need to turn to some more love and kindness. ☆



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Susannah Heschel

My Father, Myself

I **ACTUALLY FEEL** as though I have three fathers: the one I knew and loved, who fathered me through my childhood and into young adulthood; the father who, after death, comes to my dreams and lives in my heart; and the father claimed by the rest of the world, the famous father, with disciples as well as antagonists who insist that they know him best, understand him best, indeed own him as their father. How often I used to hear, “Abraham Heschel was like a father to me,” even from young men (and it was always men) who had never visited my home and would certainly never have regarded my mother as their mother, nor me as their sister. (Indeed, I’ve long wondered why so many of those who claim to adore my father are so rude or at least disinterested in the two people my father loved most.) Of course, I always wonder, How would it be different if my father had had a son and not a daughter?

Can it be I was born a feminist? It certainly feels that way. I was always questioning, always try to understand the

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Susannah Heschel and her father, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel.

assumptions upon which conclusions were based. Inequality disturbed me greatly, but so did my exclusion as a woman from precisely those aspects of Judaism that my father

claimed were so important — and, indeed, that God wanted and even needed from us. Why should I not sit at the *Tisch* of my uncle, the Kopycznitzer rebbe, and learn his teachings, be inspired by the singing and praying? Why was I instead relegated to the kitchen, where I was simply an unnecessary child underfoot? In high school, I was once advised by a colleague of my father’s that chemistry was a useful subject for a girl to take — “It will help you one day with your cooking.” No professions were ever held up for my consideration; at most, I

should strive to earn a master’s degree — “to have something to fall back on, should something happen to your husband,” who would, of course, be the primary bread earner.

In some ways, I was raised in the Middle Ages. My father had no female colleagues, apart from an occasional librarian and a musicologist. There were no women professors or lawyers in my parents’ circle, and my mother made it clear that she would certainly never consult a woman doctor — how could she trust a woman to be as intelligent and well-trained?

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My body, too, was something unfortunate; the message seemed to be that I would be better off without one. I was warned by my mother not to run — or my womb might fall out. Bicycling and horseback riding were also dangerous, though eventually permitted to me.

Yet the message was contradictory: care of the physical body was unimportant, and certainly of little consequence compared to the cultivation of the soul. And yet it was the very existence of my body, as female, that hindered my soul's access to such cultivation. I sat next to my father in the synagogue we attended at the Jewish Theological Seminary, which at that time separated men and women. Though my parents encouraged me to think of myself as a young girl, not a budding woman, forbidding all the tokens of adolescence (makeup, heels, stockings), I was forced by the elderly women of the congregation to leave my father's side during Shabbat services and move to the women's section. Theirs was not an insistence based on warm welcome, but on disapproval, no doubt stemming from their own bitterness and resentment. To become a woman in that setting was not a moment of rejoicing and delight.

Throughout, my father miraculously agreed with me. When I wanted a bat mitzvah, he arranged it — not at our synagogue, of course, but at a nearby Conservative congregation led by Rabbi Joseph Sternstein. To mark my sixteenth birthday, I wanted an aliyah and he arranged it with Rabbi Alan Miller of the Reconstructionist congregation in New York City, the Society for the Advancement of Judaism. My complaints about exclusion from study and from synagogue life always met with his agreement; feminism was never a topic of argument between us. Indeed, it was my father who one day suggested that I become a rabbi! I had never even considered the possibility, since women were not yet being ordained. His suggestion was just one example of his insistence that Judaism has to change if it is to be authentic. He used to explain that he had decided not to become a Hasidic rebbe, in the footsteps of his father and ancestors, because the world needed something different from him. Judaism, he felt, was the least known religion and the obligation he felt was to reach not only alienated Jews but non-Jews as well.

THERE WERE OTHER, less direct ways that he also supported me. Throughout my childhood, the civil rights movement was at the center of our household as a source of inspiration. That Martin Luther King Jr. used the Exodus and the prophets as his central motif, rather than Jesus, was remarkable and gave us a sense of pride and inclusion. I grew up moved to tears when I heard Dr. King speak, and I was thrilled by the opportunities I had to meet him. That my father was involved seemed to me the most important thing a human being could do, even as I was also fearful at times for



March 1965: Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (center) walks with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (right) on a civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama.

his safety, especially when he left for Selma in March of 1965.

Civil rights formed the basis of my feminist claims. My parents invited Rabbi Louis Finkelstein, then chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, where my father taught, to Shabbat afternoon tea when I was twelve, so that I could discuss my wish for a bat mitzvah. I began by asking him about his commitments to civil rights, which he described with great pride and conviction. And then I simply said: "Since you believe in equal rights for blacks, you must also believe in equal rights for women; I want to celebrate my bat mitzvah on a Shabbat morning at the synagogue." Of course, he immediately backed away, suggesting instead that he would make a party at his home as a substitute bat mitzvah! Throughout, my father just sat and smiled, making no attempt to interfere, but letting me present my own arguments.

Something similar happened some years later, when I challenged Father Daniel Berrigan at the dinner table to support the legalization of abortion: how can you worry about the innocent civilians in Vietnam who are being killed when you are not concerned about the innocent women dying from illegal abortions, I argued. Again, my father listened quietly, smiling with pride that his daughter was speaking in a forceful manner.

DURING HIS LIFETIME, my father was an iconoclast. He challenged the assumptions of biblical scholarship; scolded rabbis, synagogue leaders, Jewish federations, and other leaders; argued that religion had declined because it had become insipid; spoke out on behalf of Soviet Jews, against white racism, condemned the war in Vietnam, went to Rome to meet with the pope and other Vatican officials — for all of which he was attacked, vilified, isolated, and held in contempt. My parents would sometimes read aloud to each other

the attacks on him in the Jewish press — English, Hebrew, Yiddish. And while an occasional colleague or student would go with him to a civil rights or antiwar demonstration, most of his closest friends disagreed with his positions, particularly against the Vietnam War and in support of George McGovern. His theological writings were received with far greater respect in Christian than in Jewish circles; he wasn't asked to present a paper to the Academy for Jewish Research or preach a sermon at the Jewish Theological Seminary synagogue services, and his work was often dismissed as "mere poetry" (tell that to T. S. Eliot!). Theologically, he was also an iconoclast, insisting that theologians need not respond to the challenges posed by philosophy. He wanted them to question the assumptions on which those challenges were built. He sought to develop new categories to describe religious experience, horrified by the reductionism of social scientific theories of religion that viewed faith as a psychological aberration, God as a human projection, and observance of halacha as a tool for family and community unity.

Yet once he died, my father was transformed, instantly, from iconoclast to icon. He became beloved, rather than a voice of challenge; a rabbi who advocated love of Jewish tradition, rather than a critic of how Judaism is practiced. For me, that transformation was a conflict: I was glad that my father was now loved, but I also realized that his critical voice was being stilled — and that was a betrayal of his message and his person. It also left me, as his daughter, condemned by many of those who claimed to love my father and now saw me, echoing his critical voice of contemporary Jewish religious practice, of racism, injustice, and sexism, as allegedly betraying his love of Judaism. That I still wanted to become a rabbi in the days before the Jewish Theological Seminary was ordaining women, then published a book on Jewish feminism, spoke out against elements of Judaism that stifled spiritual life — all those initial efforts on my part were considered an offense not only against Jewish life but against my own father! I could see in the eyes of some of his self-proclaimed disciples that I was not viewed as his heir but as an unfaithful daughter, an attitude that hurt me deeply even as I knew how utterly false and morally corrupt it was; indeed, how that dismissal of me was simply further evidence of the unfortunate state of Jewish life that my father himself had criticized.



Susannah Heschel.

Often people fail to realize what a profound intellectual my father was. Not only was his knowledge extraordinary in breadth — he held in his fingertips the history of philosophy and Jewish texts from the Bible to the present day — but he had the gift of intellectual perspective: He never accepted ideas that were presented, but constantly turned them around, over and over, to examine their sources, methods, assumptions, dissecting the politics of ideas, of whose interests were being served and to what end they led. Scholarship was not the accumulation of ideas, but the ability to develop new paradigms that would enable us to better understand our topic. The study of history was always accompanied, for him, by an awareness of the history of historiography — where we stood in that chain of tradition, heirs to particular ways

of thinking that were themselves products of cultures, both enabling to understand and hindering us from understanding.

THE RESULT FOR ME was an attitude of skepticism. I took undergraduate courses in biblical studies and constantly questioned biblical scholarship: Were not Wellhausen and Bultmann permeated with Protestant assumptions? Why did Eliade speak of every religion except Judaism? Was not Yehezkel Kaufman an apologist for Judaism and hence trapped in the logic of the Christian scholars he was trying to refute? My initial decision to become a scholar of the Hebrew Bible, inspired by my father and Dr. King, quickly shifted to a desire to analyze the pathology of biblical scholarship: What history and politics underlay its construction? How could we free ourselves from the nineteenth-century German Protestant intellectual world that had established its parameters? My first book, on Abraham Geiger, a Jewish scholar of both early Judaism and early Christianity (as well as author of a highly influential book on rabbinic influences on the Qur'an), examined the difficulties for a Jew in "reversing the gaze," placing Christianity under the microscope of Jewish scholarship (in place of the standard practice, Judaism under Christian gaze). The hostility and near-panic Geiger's work aroused in Christian scholars alerted me to the anxieties Protestants felt about historicizing Jesus. Geiger had made clear that placing Jesus in historical context revealed that he had said and done nothing new or original, but was simply one of many liberalizing, democratizing Pharisaic

rabbis of his day. Indeed, their anxiety had driven them, it later became apparent to me, to make use of racial theory to preserve Jesus's uniqueness: that is, if his teachings could not be distinguished from those of Judaism, perhaps his alleged racial identity as an Aryan would preserve some semblance of difference. I then traced that tradition of Jesus as Aryan through German thought until it reached its climax in the Third Reich, when a considerable number of theologians who were pro-Nazi sought to de Judaize Christianity.

Constant striving to change perspective, not to accept the status quo, whether in religious practice or in scholarship, was precisely what informed my feminism. My father's approach to Judaism was no different from mine, though my position as female obviously raised new questions. That I should sit behind a curtain in the synagogue so that men would not be distracted from their prayers, as I was always told, was essentially the same as the Protestant bias governing the field of biblical studies: Where was the Jewish point of view? For Geiger, reversing the gaze, the subject position of the scholar, from Protestant to Jewish, was just what I was doing as a feminist, insisting that women become the subjects. Indeed, in 1983, when I edited my first book, *On Being a Jewish Feminist*, I wanted articles that would not describe Judaism's view of women, but rather feminists' views of Judaism, something that was considered radical at that time.

Even as Geiger was a household name when I was growing up — he was one of the founders of the rabbinical seminary where my father had studied in Berlin in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and he was always discussed as a great scholar — my second book, *The Aryan Jesus*, led me to reveal the Nazi activities of some of the very scholars my father had known in Germany. Indeed, I found a letter from one of them, Johannes Hempel, professor of Old Testament at the University of Berlin, addressed to my father — and then I

discovered, through archival sources, that Hempel had been one of the major figures who established a pro-Nazi institute of theologians to carry out the purging of all Jewish elements from Christianity.

Studying anti-Semitism, especially of the Nazi era, was also an outgrowth of my feminist work, which was similarly engaged with dissecting the racist bases of misogyny. The gendering of anti-Semitic images and the use of sexual language in Nazi anti-Semitism reinforced for me the moral necessity of placing feminism at the center of our work as intellectuals. Without understanding the issues of power that regulate relations between men and women on the most intimate level, we cannot understand the nature of racism and anti-Semitism. Feminism also helped me understand that religion and race are linked far more intimately than most scholars have been willing to admit; feminist analyses of discourses and images demand a subtlety and an attention to subjective experience that political analyses of race have often failed to recognize. Moreover, the insistence of feminist theory that we are constituted by bodies as well as minds brings a richness to political analysis of anti-Semitism that has been lacking. Ultimately, the argument of my book, that racism is a form of "incarnational theology" and that Christian efforts at de Judaization constitute a "theological bulimia," is profoundly informed by feminist theory, and reflects, in a way that is so obvious to me, my father's insistence on radical questioning, exposure of assumptions, and creative new categories of analysis. These fundamental principles bring me back to the father I knew and loved, the one who fathered me, body, soul, and mind, the father who was an iconoclast and who would smile with delight at clever arguments articulated in a strong voice. To me, he is an icon of love, support, and, indeed, of the power and brilliance of iconoclasm. ☆

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Ron Briley

It Can Happen Here

IN 1935 SINCLAIR LEWIS wrote a novel entitled *It Can't Happen Here*, depicting how the United States, following the example of many European nations, responded to depression and war by turning toward totalitarianism. Despite the emergence of demagogues such as Huey Long and Father Charles Coughlin, America in the 1930s did not descend into fascism. Advocates of "American exceptionalism" insist that, with the separation of powers found in the Constitution, "it can't happen here." However, the response of many Americans to Muslims following the terrorist attacks in Paris, and an examination of American history, gives pause and raises serious questions about this assumption.

Many of the candidates for the Republican presidential nomination, along with members of Congress and many of the nation's governors, have called for the creation of a larger national security state as a response to threats of terrorism from the Islamic State. While some politicians are taking advantage of the terrorist threat to foster fear among the American people, they are abetted by a news media which feeds a twenty-four hour news cycle with images of death and destruction amid reports of possible further attacks. Demagogues running for the president nomination have suggested closing the nation's borders to refugees fleeing the civil war in Syria, closing some mosques, creating a national data base to register Muslims, increased surveillance of American citizens, and dispatching American troops to Syria. Implementation of such policies would threaten American democracy and potentially bring about the fascism that concerned Sinclair Lewis.

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And the US has had some close calls in the past.

After the notorious XYZ Affair of 1797-98, in which American diplomats were asked to pay a bribe in order to open negotiations with the French government, there was a



French Foreign Minister Charles-Maurice Talleyrand-Périgord. His agents demanded a bribe and a loan, setting the stage for the XYZ Affair.

national clamor for war over a foreign government's demand that the US pay monetary tribute. As the nation and ruling Federalist Party prepared for hostilities, there was concern that the Jeffersonians (then known as the Democratic-Republican Party), who seemed to draw a great deal of support from recent European immigrants, would not support the war effort. Accordingly, in 1798 Federalists in Congress attained passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts. These laws were enacted to silence Vice-President Jefferson and his followers. Jeffersonian support among immigrants was to be reduced by expanding the naturalization period from five to fourteen years; aliens who criticized President John Adams during the war crisis were subject to deportation, and citizens who were deemed to undermine war preparation could be imprisoned for sedition or treasonous speech.

In response to the Alien and Sedition Acts, Jefferson and James Madison composed the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions, in which the state legislatures of the two states declared the Federalist legislation null and void. A potential civil war seemed to loom. To avert a crisis that might topple the new nation, Adams reopened negotiations with the French, which led to the Convention of 1800. With the threat of war removed, the Alien and Sedition Acts were allowed to expire, and freedom of speech and political association survived.

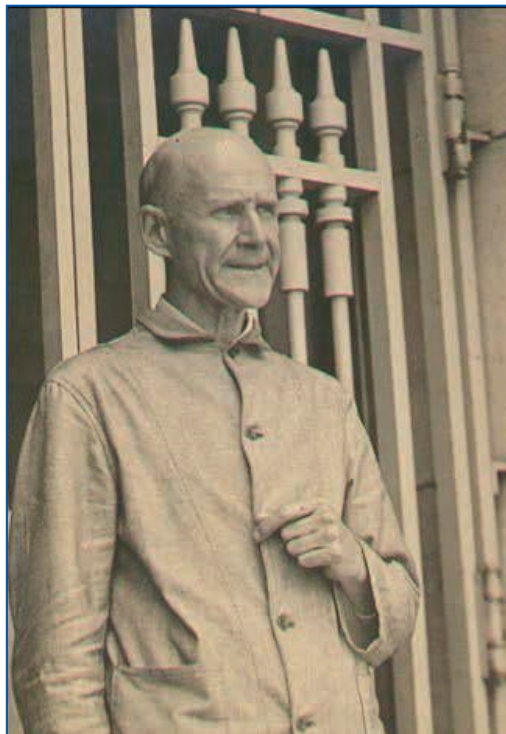
THE RIGHT OF DISSENT was also threatened by America's entrance into the First World War, which also fostered intolerance for German-Americans. When the US entered

the conflict in 1917, many citizens of German descent changed their family names when nativist mobs singled them out and forced them to kiss the American flag. Speaking German was forbidden in many states, and many schools and colleges suspended teaching the language. Just as the loyalty of German-Americans was suspect, so too were those who were perceived as radicals, such as members of the Socialist Party and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), who questioned American participation in the war. This intolerance became even greater following the Bolshevik Revolution and Russia's withdrawal from the war.

Vigilantes in the West lynched IWW organizer Frank Little, and IWW miners were forcibly deported from Bisbee, Arizona. IWW newspapers were confiscated and banned from the mails, while its leaders, such as Big Bill Haywood, were indicted for sedition. Socialist Party leader and presidential candidate Eugene V. Debs was imprisoned for violating the Espionage Act for encouraging resistance to conscription. The war hysteria was essentially employed to destroy the Socialist Party which had enjoyed widespread support among urban immigrants in the Northeast and Midwest as well as in Southwestern states such as Oklahoma. Indigenous American radicalism suffered a body blow in World War I from which it has never really recovered.

A series of bombings on Wall Street following the war was blamed on anarchists from Southern and Eastern Europe. Fearing that this "new immigration" was a threat to American Anglo-Saxon democracy, Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer instituted a series of raids aimed against foreign radicals, many of whom were targeted for their ethnicity. Suspected foreign-born radicals, such as Emma Goldman, were arrested and deported. This, too, was the atmosphere in which Italian-immigrant anarchists Nicolo Sacco and Bartholomeo Vanzetti were tried and executed for murder and robbery, and the Ku Klux Klan gained a national following by labeling the "new immigration" as un-American.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR tested American tolerance following the Japanese attacks upon Pearl Harbor and the Philippines. Responding to fears that Japanese-Americans constituted a potential "fifth column" within the country, the US government removed residents of Japanese ancestry, regardless of citizenship, from the West Coast into isolated internment camps surrounded by barbed wire and guarded by soldiers. The excuse for this unprecedented action was fear of Japanese sabotage, although no such acts were ever con-



Socialist Party leader Eugene V. Debs while serving his sentence in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary for opposing WWI.

firmed. (This is somewhat akin to unsubstantiated claims that many American Muslims in New Jersey stood on rooftops celebrating the collapse of the Twin Towers on 9/11.) Japanese internment was, of course, challenged in the courts, but the US Supreme Court upheld a dangerous precedent in ruling that the president had the right as commander-in-chief to order the measure. By the time the camps were closed, many residents were unable to reclaim their homes, businesses and jobs. Under President George H. W. Bush, the US government finally got around to apologizing for this action. And yet: Could a terrorist attack today foster a similar action against Muslim Americans?

AMERICAN FREEDOMS were tested by the Cold War and fears of Soviet attack, subversion, and espionage. Citizens were forced to sign loyalty oaths; others lost their jobs in schools and universities for refusing to do so.

Hollywood actors, directors, and screenwriters (such as Dalton Trumbo) were blacklisted for refusing to inform on the political views and activities of colleagues. The House Committee on Un-American Activities, as well as Senator Joseph McCarthy, exercised their claims to conduct such inquiries. In 1950, the McCarran Act required Communist organizations to register with the US Attorney General, and included a provision giving the government power to incarcerate Americans suspected of advocating sabotage or espionage. FBI Director of J. Edgar Hoover encouraged surveillance of American citizens whose files could then be used to justify incarceration.

WHILE MASSIVE imprisonment of dissenters under the McCarran Act did not take place during the Red Scare and McCarthyism, opposition to the Vietnam War and unrest of the 1960s did lead the FBI to introduce a program known as COINTELPRO, in which government agents infiltrated and spied upon groups which Hoover deemed disloyal. Employing tactics later revealed to be illegal, the FBI encouraged divisions within the student and antiwar movements, and helped local law enforcement agencies launch attacks against the Black Panthers, which culminated in the murder of Chicago Panther leader Fred Hampton.

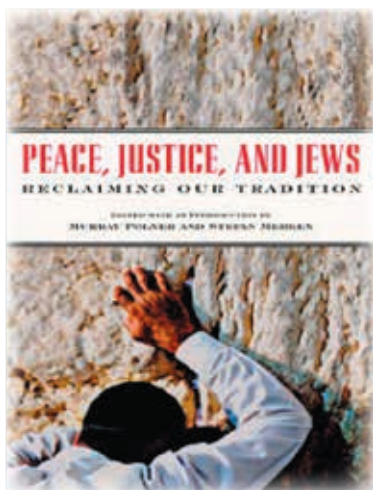
The Vietnam War protests, urban and campus unrest, along with the assassination of leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy terrified many Americans who feared a domestic revolution — fears which were fueled by the media. Politicians such as George Wallace and Richard Nixon

made “law and order” a key element of their appeals, which led to widespread militarization of police forces. But the forces of order overreached, and prominent trials of the Chicago 8, and of the Panther 21 in New York City, resulted in acquittals.

THE END OF THE COLD WAR, with the advent of international terrorism and groups such as Al Qaeda, provided no respite from fear. In response to the 9/11 attacks, President George W. Bush ordered military invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and Congress passed the PATRIOT Act, which increased the surveillance power of the state and limited judicial oversight. The invasion of Afghanistan toppled Taliban rule, but more than a decade later the Taliban continues to exercise influence in the country, and the US-backed Afghan government has major problems with corruption and is unable to form a formidable fighting force. In Iraq, which had nothing to do with the 9/11 attacks, the Bush administration used the spurious intelligence reports of weapons of mass destruction to precipitate a rush to war. Saddam Hussein was removed from power, but the invasion fostered a Sunni in-

surgency against a new Shi’a-dominated regime allied with Iran. After the war and withdrawal of American troops, poor treatment of Sunnis by the Iraqi government, along with a destabilizing civil war in Syria, led to the rise of the Islamic State group — a series of events set in motion by the ill-fated American military adventure in Iraq.

THE WORLD TODAY is a dangerous place, and another terrorist action in the United States is possible. The test for American democracy, however, will be how we respond to such a crisis. The Alien and Sedition Acts, World War I, the “new immigration,” the internment of Japanese-Americans, the Cold War and McCarthyism, COINTELPRO and dissent in the 1960s, and the aftermath of 9/11 indicate that in times of crisis the US has a history of giving into fear and abandoning liberty in favor of security. Abridgements of rights and freedoms in spurious exchanges for “security” and “law and order” suggest that it *could* happen here — and that citizens must be just as vigilant in protecting the rights of all Americans as we are in looking for terrorists. ☆



Peace, Justice and Jews: Reclaiming Our Tradition

Edited by Murray Polner and Stefan Merken.

A landmark collection of contemporary progressive Jewish thought written by activists from Israel, the U.S. and the U.K.

Publishers Weekly called it “literate, thought-provoking” and “by no means homogeneous” and which looked at “from all angles, the idea that editors Polner and Merken believe reflect the most basic attitude in our Jewish heritage.”

Publishers Weekly concluded: “There is much to learn here for anyone, Jew or Gentile, interested in global issues of peace and justice.”

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Hadas Gertman

An Incident at Gan Shmuel Junction

LET'S BEGIN with an event which took place in early afternoon at Gan Shmuel Junction during a routine vigil of "Women in Black," in which I participate.

Three very young men drive by us, hurling strings of curses at us, to which we are quite accustomed. Some minutes later they come back from the opposite direction, turn left into the shopping compound behind us, yelling at us again and wishing us dead. A moment later they show up on the pavement where we stand, one with an Israeli flag, the other filming. The one with the flag gets down into the road and dances in front of us, risking his life in the traffic, hopping and jumping, waving his flag and roaring "The people of Israel lives!" and trying to approach us up close. When I retreat, he advances even more, nearly touching me. Around us cars stand at the stop-light. At best, drivers ignore the scene. More commonly they honk, clap, cheer and yell that we deserve it, making obscene gestures. One woman, out of the ordinary, rolls down her window and says to the young man, "But no violence!" His buddy films the scene and they both scream at us that we are to blame for all the stabbings and run-overs and murders and why don't we demonstrate against *that*, and then wish us dead...

Out of my wits, shocked. I simply lose it.

A man approaches with a camera, telling them he wants to film, too. They give him a big show and then he tells them he's a journalist and that he filmed them in order to show the police and public that they're violent and dangerous. He also summons the police. They evaporate immediately. The police arrive, and finally the policeman scolds us: Got a permit? Who's responsible? If you don't lodge a complaint what do you want? Why are you cynical?

I was born in 1966, a year before the Six-Day War. I



grew up under the Occupation. Until I completed my military service I had no political identity. The day after my discharge the First Intifada broke out. I began to ask, understand, think, have opinions and I discovered I was a leftie.

Fast forward.

During Operation Defensive Shield in 2002, I joined "Women in Black" at Gan Shmuel Junction. A veteran shift has been standing vigil there for over twenty-five years now, every Friday, between 1 and 2 p.m. We are not many and not that young. I have already disclosed my age, and I'm one of the younger ones.

It's not easy to stand there every week, and it doesn't much help either, or so it seems. Really?

Over the years I have experienced all sorts of unpleasant moments. Eggs were thrown at me, a stone hit me in the head, we have been endlessly cursed... This is routine and familiar and we more or less brace ourselves for it. We answer our assailants in various ways, but at least I tell myself that our weekly Sisyphean presence is mostly for our own sake so that we don't forget the Occupation, so that the word Occupation would not be erased from the vocabulary of public space. People used to ask us: What Occupation? 1948? 1967?

By now this word has been erased. Children grow up not knowing there is an ongoing Occupation. And how would they know it if they're not taught it? The Occupation started when I was a baby and, as I've already said, I'm no spring chicken. And in fact I wasn't taught either...

At every escalation the situation is reflected at the junction. The curses get louder, anger at us seethes, as if we, by the fact of our standing there, are the cause of terrorist attacks and violence. As if we are not citizens of this state. As if our own children are not in the same school system that sends them into the army. People wish us harmed, our families injured. Then we'll know...! Yet sadly some of the women standing with me have experienced terrorist attacks, even been victims, and still insist on saying: "Enough!"

HADAS GERTMAN *lives and works in Israel.*

This most recent event at Gan Shmuel Junction shocked me. I was terribly scared. I was afraid they were about to lose it. Another moment and they'd have touched me, hurt me. And I didn't want this. Not for me, not for them. Not for whoever's waiting for them at home, nor for those waiting for me at home.

I feel at the edge of the abyss. I am very frightened, not only for myself but also for all of us. How could such violence, towards an opinion and, of course, towards women be accepted with such sympathy? (Would they have jumped at us like this if a man were standing with us? I doubt it. After all, when the journalist showed up and faced them, they simply evaporated).

Although I am afraid to go back, I think I should. This

voice of ours should be present, even if it is unpopular right now. People have to know there is still an ongoing Occupation, that we are still oppressing nearly two million people, and that this oppression exacts terrible prices, besides being outright immoral.

It corrupts us, makes us unwillingly violent. It endangers our children and all of us on the everyday level of personal safety, as well as in the deeper sense of the kind of society we are. What happened (and surely happens all the time to others) has revealed the face of a violent society that treats women, opinions, minorities, and weaker persons with fundamental disrespect, lack of appreciation, brutally, cruelly and roughly.

I have run out of words. ✧

Tair Kaminer

Why I Refuse to Serve in the IDF

MY NAME IS TAIR KAMINER. I am nineteen. A few months ago I ended a year of volunteering with the Israeli Boy and Girl Scouts in the town of Sderot, on the Gaza Strip border. In a few days I will be jailed.

For the year I volunteered in Sderot where I worked with children living in a war zone. It was there that I decided to refuse to serve in the Israeli military. My refusal comes from my commitment to the struggle for peace and equality.

The children I worked with grew up in the heart of the conflict and experienced severe trauma. This has generated great hostility, which is quite understandable, especially in young children. Many of them in the Gaza Strip and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territories live in an even harsher reality and have learned to hate the other side. They too cannot be blamed. When I looked at these children, I saw pain and trauma. And I now say, *Enough!*

TAIR KAMINER, a nineteen-year-old Israeli, received a draft notice requiring her to show up at the Israeli Army Induction Center ("Bakum") in Tel Hashomer, east of Tel Aviv, at 12 noon, Sunday, January 10, 2016. She arrived at the stipulated time and place, and informed the recruiting officers of her refusal to serve in the military. As of publication, she had been jailed. This is her public statement, condensed and edited for style.



Tair Kaminer.

There's no peace process in sight, no attempt to bring peace to Gaza or Sderot. As long as the military path prevails and violence continues, we are creating generations of hatred on both sides, which will only make things even worse. We must stop this now.

I therefore refuse any active role in the occupation of the Palestinian Territories and the injustices perpetuated on the Palestinian people under occupation, though I am willing to perform alternative civilian service.

In talks with people close to me, I have been accused of harming democracy by not obeying the laws of the State. They tell me I am evading my responsibility for the security of Israel. There were those who expressed anxiety about my personal future in a country where the army is so important. They suggested that I serve despite my convictions, or at least desist from a public refusal. But despite all the difficulties and anxieties, I chose to re-

fuse publicly. This country is too important to me to agree to be silent. I was not educated to worry only about myself. I hope that my refusal, even if I have to pay a personal price, will help put the Occupation on the Israeli agenda, because many Israelis are unaware of the Occupation or ignore it. I want to remind my people that we do have an alternative: negotiations, peace, optimism, a genuine desire to live in equality, security and freedom. ☆

Postmortems

Murray Polner

Why We Invaded Afghanistan and Iraq — and Lost

INSATIABLE NEED FOR OIL and the Cold War's bitter rivalry drove the US to become deeply entangled in the Greater Middle East. In 1953, for example, the CIA and its British counterpart ousted Iran's democratically elected leader, Mohammed Mossadegh, and replaced him with the shah. The ayatollahs arrived after the shah fled. By 1980 the US was supporting Saddam's Iraq in its war against Iran. A decade later, the first President Bush dispatched more than half a million US troops to force Saddam's army from Kuwait after Iraq invaded the emirate. The Greater Middle East remains as complex and confusing as ever.

Fortunately, *Understanding the US Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan*, edited by historian Beth Bailey, who directs the University of Kansas' Military and Society Center (and has authored *America's Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force*), and Richard H. Immerman, a Temple University historian (whose books include *Empire for Liberty: A History of US Imperialism from Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz* and *The Hidden Hand: A Brief History of the CIA*), makes a determined if hardly definitive effort to comprehend events since 9/11.

Their book, a collection of well-crafted, at times grim, but always thoughtful essays, aims to re-examine the two wars' origins, their complexities, limited successes and fail-

ures, and the cost in lives and money — which, in 2008, Linda Bilmes and Joseph Stiglitz estimated to be \$3 trillion for the Iraq War alone.

Not all of the book's contributors agree, and there is a good deal of nuance in their arguments. Most striking is the portrayal of a "woefully misinformed" American public in the essay, "Limited War in the Age of Total Media," by George Mason University's Sam Lebovic. Why "misinformed?" There were, of course, a number of reasons, but Lebovic cites the fact that foreign perspectives were largely ignored in the run-up to Iraq (remember "freedom fries"?), and also "pro-and anti-war positions were not presented equally," which led to "simplistic understandings." Easily forgotten, too, is that most pundits, talk radio shows, newspapers, especially the influential *New York Times*, and politicians in both political parties rushed to back the war. (The *Times*, unlike many of the aforementioned, later apologized for much of its prewar reporting and prowar editorial support.)

Now, with the rise of ISIS, there is the haunting fear that, in pursuit of it and similar groups, the blind will once again lead the blind and the crucial lessons to be learned from the past decade and a half will be ignored. Aaron O'Connell, associate professor of history at the US Naval Academy, a Marine Corps reservist, and a former special advisor in Afghanistan and the Pentagon, observes: "It seems that when charting a course for the future, the American government is either un-

MURRAY POLNER is co-editor of *SHALOM*.



Naval Air Station North Island, San Diego, Calif. (May 2, 2003) — Sailors aboard USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) man the rails as the ship pulls into NAS North Island to a cheering crowd of family and friends during their port visit to off-load the ship's Air Wing. Lincoln and her embarked Carrier Air Wing Fourteen (CVW-14) are returning from a 10-month deployment to the Arabian Gulf in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Operation Iraqi Freedom is the multi-national coalition effort to liberate the Iraqi people, eliminate Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, and end the regime of Saddam Hussein. U.S. Navy photo by Photographer's Mate 3rd Class Juan E. Diaz.

willing or unable to be mindful of the lessons of the past.”

Co-editor Richard Immerman reveals that before the invasion of Iraq, the CIA “had little reason to doubt that Saddam had hidden in Iraq a stockpile of WMDs. The Intelligence Community collected no evidence disconfirming this assumption. But neither did it collect conforming evidence. So it hedged its judgments. The effect on an administration that had already rushed to judgment was inconsequential.” Immerman also warns that even after the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan “the danger of battle-hardened insurgents — and the Islamist state is only the latest exemplar — gaining access to Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal will be no less severe.”

Michael Reynolds, professor of Near Eastern studies at Princeton, returns to 1979, when Americans were held hostage by Iranian radicals, the Soviets began their ruinous war in Afghanistan and ultra-Islamists, armed with US military weapons, turned back the Soviets, and then, as Taliban fighters, probably used the same weapons against US invaders.

Reynolds offers a rarely-heard comment. “One cannot understand why the US went to war in Afghanistan,” since the “reason why a non-state organization led by two Arab citizens of nominally pro-American states assaulted the US and why that organization was based in Afghanistan are anything but straightforward.” Two years later, Washington’s bellicose theorists, “woefully ignorant of the course of history in the Greater Middle East,” promoted the invasion of Iraq, and some accused Saddam of ties with the 9/11 killers.

Conrad Crane, director of the US Army Military History Institute at Carlisle Barracks, offers an informative essay decrying many contemporary books on the Iraq and Afghanistan wars as “instant histories,” cautioning that “the military histories appear decades after events.” He then wisely concludes: “Perhaps the best legacy of Iraq and Afghanistan for American strategy is that even brilliant military operations cannot salvage a bad strategy produced by flawed assignments and shorted policies.”

What these military operations produced, however, especially in Iraq, writes Lisa Munday of the University of St. Thomas, in Houston, Texas, were forty-four hundred dead US soldiers. And after President Bush landed on the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln for his triumphant photo-op declaring “Mission Accomplished,” twenty-four hundred more would die and many more would be wounded, some grievously so. Reports of PTSD, traumatic brain injury, amputees, suicides, broken marriages, homelessness and drug addiction swamped the mass media. David Kieran, of Washington and Jefferson College, also covers this topic, reminding us that these veterans may need decades of government support. Meanwhile, the Department of Veterans Affairs, overwhelmed by America’s addiction to war, serves as a convenient scapegoat. Munday tartly adds that “the experiences of going into combat, coming under mortar fire, and feeling concussive blasts from roadside bombs were strikingly familiar in Iraq and Afghanistan. These experiences set the women and men who served apart from those who know about the wars only from the safety of home.”

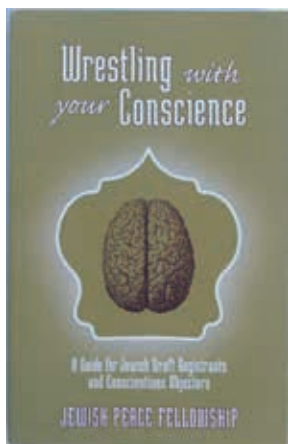
So why were there no Sixties-style protests? David Farber, of the University of Kansas, explains why antiwar movements were unable to replicate the Vietnam era. For one, 9/11 meant that vengeful Americans approved of intervening in Afghanistan. Even when it dragged on “most expressed only weariness with the war, not a sense of betrayal or a belief that the US had made a fundamental mistake in sending troops

to Afghanistan.” Iraq was quite different but never brought many protestors into the streets or onto college campuses.

Other essayists include Jonathan Horowitz, the Open Justice Initiative’s legal officer, who writes in his chapter, “Human rights as a Weapon of War,” that US personnel who violated human rights “led to the erosions of the military’s reputation at the local and international levels, which then prevented the US from claiming a high moral authority.” And Louisiana Tech’s Andrew C. McKeivitt, in “Watching War Made Us Immune: The Popular Culture of the Wars,” makes the essential point that the US’s “global war on terrorism” policies “encouraged fantasy worlds that competed with reality and left many Americans immune to the real consequences of US foreign policy in the post 9/11 era.”

Perhaps most compelling section of the book is “Legacies and Lessons,” where Vassar College’s Robert Bingham asks: “Now that ISIL [ISIS] is on the march, can the Obama administration [and its successors] convince voters and allies that Iraq [and the Greater Middle East] is again worth saving?” And to those hoping for reintroduction of US troops against ISIS and Assad, Aaron O’Connell offers his level-headed rejoinder. “How shall the American military and government avoid similar errors in the future given the fact that the ones committed here were already repetition of earlier mistakes?”

Does no one in Washington remember the layperson’s definition of madness: Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different outcome? ☆



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