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A conscious effort must be made to live together. Graduates of Yeshivot Hesder should better serve in mixed battalions rather than in segregated units. To make that possible, a greater effort to make religious life livable yet not invasive of secularists' privacy must be made. The Shenhar Commission's recommendations for revitalization of religious studies in the secular educational system should be pursued. The key is to take a pluralistic approach not to offer a missionary or standard Orthodox view only. Orthodoxy will have to stretch and grow to be able to offer itself as an alternative in a free society as against a monopoly in a coercive establishment. The left will have to grow to be self-respecting religiously (not to see itself as non-Orthodox) while becoming open to the positive values in the tradition that it rejects.

There are real short-term conflicts: over Arab trustworthiness, over government priorities, over the weight of religion in making political decisions. These contradictions were allowed to shatter the long-term foundation of politics—the covenant of democracy which undergirds all political action. Powerful but dissonant self-interests, given free rein, spun out of control—driving some on the right to breach the bounds of legitimate discourse and others to stand by silently, lest they lose some constituency. But on the left also, the sense of common fate was devalued—as if the opposition was paranoid and there was no risk in the peace process; as if intransigent settlers were the only threat to peace itself.

### Heshbon Hanefesh—Humble Self-Assessment

If we are to restore national unity in the face of the continuing deep conflicts over policy, then it is essential for each side to *criticize itself*. To change the political path of extremism and restore national trust, each side must repent for its sins—rather than just point out the others' wrongs. Each side must show its good will by using the other's self-criticism as a model to emulate in cleaning up its own act.

Restoring the sense of the covenant of fate is essential. Even if there is peace with the Arabs and even if the opponents of the peace process are more religiously oriented and historically minded, should the left allow itself to dismiss the common history, common suffering, common responsibility which it shares with the right? Even if it is convinced that the peace will work, is the left to really say "what have you shared with me lately" and declare that from now on it has more in common with Arab proponents than with Jewish opponents of peace? Peace should not induce amnesia. There is no

escape from the task of remembering what all Jews have in common to link up and to frame the arguments between us. □

## Have no fear

Yehudah Mirsky

Word of Yitzhak Rabin's murder knocked the bottom out of my mind and pushed me into animal silence. All I could think of was the line in Lamentations (5:16): "Woe to us, for we have sinned." Then I went to the bookshelf and pulled down a volume of Rav Kook's writings.

I began to read his *Ikvei Ha-Tzon, The Traces of the Flock*, a collection of essays published in 1906. And there I found this:

"Unbridled fear is the source of all material, moral and spiritual weakness...the shadows always pursue the light, and the greater one's capacity for understanding and enlightenment, the greater one's imaginary fears... 'Fear of the anger of the oppressor who seeks to destroy' (Isaiah 51:13) has diminished the soul of this heroic people, such that it lives in fear and trepidation of most every thought...and thus its spiritual weakness is truly weak indeed. Our people's greatest salvation in this time is the banishing of imaginary fears from the heart, to show as clear as the sun, that there is nothing, but nothing to fear."

Yitzhak Rabin's murder marks the culmination of a process that has been underway for years—the reemergence within Jewish politics of the configurations of prewar Europe.

Through the early decades of this century, Labor Zionism was by no means a self-evident or universal proposition within the Jewish community. Revisionism, socialist universalism, Orthodoxy, all vied with it for Jewish allegiance and command. The Holocaust stilled much of that debate, even as it vindicated Zionism's direst predictions.

The 1967 war ended the Holocaust's apotheosis of Jewish vulnerability, and since then the tripartite division between nationalist, universalist and halakhic identities has steadily reasserted itself. Why? Because the centrifugal forces of politics, economics and culture that have

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pulled Jewish ethics, peoplehood and faith apart from each other are all still very much with us. The dream of synthesis lies in ruins; and this *hurban* has come from within. As Yohanan ben Zakkai understood, only a return to the sources, to Torah in its richest sense, will return us to ourselves.

Political moderation, and the spiritual interaction it represents, is not a wishy-washy proposition; it is a principled stand to be affirmatively taken, defended and held against the extremes of both right and left, with no less fervor than the others, and with its own special courage, the courage to listen and to doubt. Lucidity is a moral value, dialogue is its own reward and the sanctity of religion demands that we desacralize politics.

We who are committed to halakhah should be brave enough to call the chauvinistic and violent elements of our tradition by their proper names, and brave enough to admit the legitimate claims of peoplehood, land and language—our own and others’—and brave enough to admit at times that we—and I mean all of us—understand nothing at all. □

## Jewish political conscience

Harold M. Schulweis

A few months ago, two prominent advertisements appeared in *The New York Times*. The first, under the banner “*Mazel Tov Newt*” was signed by rabbis and Jewish lay leaders convinced that the Gingrich “contract” reflected the “eternal values of Judaism.” The other advertisement, in refutation, maintained that the “core political commitment of Judaism” is the covenant to liberalism. Each claimed its own synonymy with authentic Judaism.

To validate the equation of neo-conservatism or liberalism with Judaism, each side exercised its own “gerrymandering” skills, carving out of the Bible strings of citations that make its jurisdiction safe from contradiction. The devil and his consultants can quote scriptures, and with a bit more erudition, cite passages from the Talmud as well.

### God Is Preeminently Political

The result of such column left, column right split thinking

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distorts the complexity and integrity of the biblical tradition that is as concerned with not favoring the poor as it is with not pleasing the rich (Leviticus 19:15).

Theological political gerrymandering fosters a partisan trivialization of important issues of social policy while caricaturing the adversary as either sclerotic Republicans or bleeding heart Democrats. For many, this “Crossfire” polarization engenders to a cynical dismissal of politics itself. “A plague on both your houses.” It encourages a spiritual isolationism that would separate the liturgical from political life and raises a *mechitzah* between the sanctuary and society.

Such a proposed apartheid of the sacred and the profane runs counter to the spirit of Judaism. God cannot be segregated. The God of the Bible, the prophets and the rabbis is not a Republican, Democrat or Libertarian. God is preeminently political. The God of history is deeply concerned with the way His children wield their power. The prophets are obsessed with the exploitation of the stranger, the fatherless, the poor, the afflicted.

### A Jewish Third Ear

But if we are not to exclude the moral, political concerns from our Jewish religious agenda, how can we avoid turning the synagogue into a hiding place for left or right parochialism? What resources do I, as a religious Jew, draw upon to take my stand on issues such as immigration, health care, affirmative action, minority rights?

I confess that I hear all partisan rhetoric with a pre-political Jewish third ear. There are Jewish theological and moral convictions that have cultivated my political sensibilities, and Jewish historic memories that inform my political judgment.

When, for example, I hear today from all quarters a new “realism,” derogating racial talents and competencies, the strident sounds of xenophobia directed against both legal and illegal immigrants, the resentment against governmental intervention to alleviate the anguish of the submerged communities, I hear echoes of earlier theologies.

One hundred years ago, a powerful political philosophy emerged in this country and abroad headed by such celebrated philosophers as Herbert Spencer and William Graham Sumner. They justified their insistence that the government not interfere in matters of social policy but should follow the wisdom of nature. They found in Darwin’s notion of “natural selection” and “the survival of the fittest” scientific validation of their political libertarianism.

### Parade of Social Darwinism

Learn from nature. “What happens when a sow has a recent runt in the litter?—She eats it. What happens to a mutant