



26/504
December 22, 1995
29 Kislev 5756

Sh'ma

A JOURNAL OF JEWISH RESPONSIBILITY

In this issue

**The official
period of
mourning is
over. But the
words still flow
from us, pour
from us,
rushing to the
wounded place
which as yet
knows no balm.**



May the lights
of Hanukkah
rekindle our
spirits.

A moment of reckoning Hana M. Blumberg

There are certain images that never go away. Here are some of them: the small boy with *payot* (sidelocks) and wide eyes, photographed by Roman Vishniac. His hands are raised before the approaching Nazis as if he might be guilty of something, but no, he is only pleading for his life.

Another image: the photograph of the soldiers who captured Jerusalem, 1967. They stand at the Kotel (Western Wall), still wearing helmets, wearing army uniforms; they lean against the Kotel, they weep. They weep and they pray. And years later, yesterday even, swearing-in ceremonies at that same wall. Young men in sharp lines, berets on their heads, boots on their feet. They receive in one hand a gun, in the other a Bible. Guns and Bibles; these are our soldiers and we are proud. "This is a different sort of army," we are taught. And we believe that.

Old photographs: young men and women on tractors plowing deserts, preparing them for seed; *halutzim* (pioneers) dancing together in embroidered shirts and dresses, sandals; men in *kippot*, *talitot* and army uniforms praying in the forest; rebuilding, irrigating, planting, fighting, praying.

This is the romance and the dream that we grew up on. *Eretz Yisrael Ha-Yafah* (the beautiful Land of Israel) we called it, and we sang its songs: *Shir Ha-Palmach*, *Chorshat Ha-Ecaliptus*, *Ani Mavtiach Lach*, *Lu Y'hi*, *Y'hiyeh Tov*. Songs for each war. Songs about loss and piety and desire for peace and love of old land and

pleasure in a new national language. We sang those songs and we trained our eyes on those images. We read the letters of Yoni Netanyahu and we wept at their poetry and we wept at his death, and we wept on the Mt. of Olives, Israeli military cemetery and we stood silently at our desks on *Yom Ha-Zikaron* (Memorial Day) and tried to understand so much death in such a small nation, in such a small family, among our friends.

And now more death, a different death. For me, and for many of my friends, it is the death of *Eretz Yisrael Ha-Yafah*. It is the beginning of a new time, a time in which those photographs, those images, songs and poems can no longer be innocent, can no longer go uninterrogated. What does it mean to get a gun and a Bible, what does it mean all those graves in rows, and mothers and younger brothers crying over them even as the younger brothers hope that they too can be paratroopers? And the soldiers leaning on the Kotel weeping, and Golda Meir—"We can forgive you for killing our sons, but we cannot forgive you for turning our sons into murderers." The nobility of her voice, and of her words. There is that too, still in Israel, but there is much else as well. There is a nation

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that is no longer a child with *payot*, standing with its hands up, pleading for its life.

That is not who we are any longer. And we are not ploughing deserts to plant flowers, and we are not writing songs of peace, and we are finding it difficult to accept a gun in one hand and a Bible in the other because they mean different things, and when they begin to mean the same thing, we find ourselves in seven days of national mourning.

We are finding it difficult to know who we are if we are not running for our lives, if we are not being attacked on all sides. We are still in disbelief that the flags of the United States of America fly at half-mast at the death of our prime minister, that Arab leaders can shed tears over our loss, that our state funeral brings the world's sympathy, if not all of our own people's.

But the one thing that we do know and that we continue to find that we do know, is: we know how to mourn. We know how to lose. We know, I think, how to hate murder, but we do not know how to stop it. And we do not know what the new images will be that will inspire a unified people, that will bring tears: "Those who sow in tears, will reap in joy" (from *Psalms* 126). Perhaps that is because any images that have the power of bringing tears, of instilling a nation's youth with pride, are problematic images, and it is only now that we are recognizing those problems.

Because even when an army is a restrained and educated mass of men and women with heightened sensitivity, an army is still an army. A gun is still a gun, a bullet is still a bullet, a command to shoot remains a command to shoot. And Israel was founded on battles fought by a special army, but an army nonetheless; and Israel, much as I have fought this knowledge, was founded on other people's losses—loss of life, of homes, of land where their roots ran deep, or self-respect.

It seems to me now, at this moment when *Eretz Yisrael Ha-Yafah* is being called into question among ourselves, that we have no choice but to raise each image, each hopeful illusion to the light, and ask at what cost? at what cost?

The costs have been high, to ourselves and to others. Nostalgia can be dangerous; it can be as dangerous as a Bible and a gun. We need to write new songs, even as we sing the old ones. We need to catch up in our minds with the state of Israel as it exists today and begin again to ask what do we want? what do we owe? to whom? what illusions must be put aside, at least for a time? and, once we have put those photographs in an album and shut it

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and put it in our attic for our grandchildren to discover, where then can we find beauty? what then can we believe, and where then do moments of peace reside? □

The morning after

E. Noach Shapiro

What I think I will always remember about this moment in history is the silence.

I'll remember the silence of the taxi driver who told us the news in one sentence, started to say something, stopped, waved his hand at the radio in a gesture filled with longing and despair, and then silently returned to staring through the windshield.

Sh'ma A JOURNAL OF JEWISH RESPONSIBILITY

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Book reviews are by Eugene B. Borowitz.

Address all correspondence, subscriptions and change of address notices to *Sh'ma a journal of jewish responsibility*, c/o CLAL, 99 Park Avenue, Suite S-300, New York, NY 10016. Telephone: 212-867-8888; FAX: 212-867-8853.

Sh'ma a journal of jewish responsibility (ISSN 0049-0385) is published bi-weekly except June, July and August, by CLAL, 99 Park Avenue, Suite C-300, New York, NY 10016. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY. Subscriptions: \$29 for two years in U.S.; \$18 for one year; \$21 a year overseas; \$35 for two years overseas; bulk subscriptions of 10 or more to one address, \$9 per subscription; retired or handicapped persons of restricted means may subscribe for one year at half price. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *Sh'ma a journal of jewish responsibility*, c/o CLAL, 99 Park Avenue, S-300, New York, NY 10016-1599.

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December 22, 1995

I'll remember the silence of the next morning, lying awake, before I opened my eyes, knowing that the memory of the previous night would soon wash over me, breaking my heart all over again.

I'll remember the silence of the man who stood at 6 AM selling newspapers, headlines screaming chaos all around him—saying nothing, knowing everything.

And I'll remember the silence of our Beit Midrash, our rabbinical school, in those first early moments, as we all milled around, without direction, wondering consciously or unconsciously, 'how do you learn Torah in the after-mist of evil?'

I don't think all this silence is just about shock. There is a collective introspection going on: I have an image of several people standing around jostling a precious bowl between them, when suddenly it drops and smashes into a million pieces. There is a moment of spontaneous and profound silence which follows, while each person quietly wonders: what was my individual contribution to the destruction of the bowl?

After those shots were fired, the next sound we all heard was the sound of a door slamming shut with some fundamental part of our history behind it. Whatever and however it will be for Jews here and all over the world from 11:15 PM, 11th of Cheshvan 5756 on, it will never be the same as it was. And neither, in some important way, will we.

And so, embedded in silence, together with *cheshbon hanefesh*, there is grief. Grief for Rabin—warrior for peace, leader of Israel, grandfather—and grief for the parting of some thing, some small part of the *Shekhinah* (the spark of the divine), that although, perhaps, we can't write it down, box it up or place it in a column or paragraph, the permanence and violence of its departure makes us weep bitter tears—together, and alone. □

Religion and land: a litany of distortion

Jack Shechter

"Maybe God acted with me," proclaimed Yigal Amir, the assassin. "My goal was to awaken the Israeli people to the fact that a Palestinian State is being created here with an army of terrorists. According to *halakhah*, the moment a Jew turns over his people and land to the enemy he

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must be killed. I have studied Jewish law all my life and I have all the information."

Amir's arrogant reading of God's will and his confident take on the *halakhic* information are so painful and shameful precisely because they represent a dreadful distortion of the biblical and *halakhic* perspectives on the land of Israel as a religious category. Let me explain.

1) Yes, indeed, the land of Israel was promised to the biblical patriarchs and to their descendants, and the promise is a regular refrain throughout the Pentateuch. Yes, the people of Israel does have title to the land on the basis of the Bible. However, that very same Bible, from the Book of Deuteronomy on, repeatedly emphasized that the fulfillment of that promise, the realization of the vision, the implementation of the dream is *conditional*; it depends on the adherence of the people to the prescriptions in the Torah of belief and practice. The definition of such adherence is highly complex and difficult to determine; one can hardly claim that, at a given moment in history, these conditions have in fact been demonstrably fulfilled.

To make claims, therefore, about possession of the land of Israel on the basis of God's promise in the Bible while leaving the rest of the texts out of the equation is a fundamental distortion of the Bible itself.

2) To claim on the basis of scripture that the land of Israel is the sole possession of the Jewish people and that to live in it with non-Jews is impossible, is another serious distortion. The biblical account itself portrays the relationship between the Israelite and Canaanite populations. A careful reading of the texts shows clearly and unequivocally that the Israelites never supplanted the native Canaanites, that throughout biblical history—from the 13th century BCE down to the exile in the 6th century BCE—Israelites and Canaanites lived side-by-side in all the major towns and villages throughout the country. This was the "heyday" of Israelite history—the time of kings and prophets, of economic prosperity and high Israelite culture and religious creativity. To be sure, significant conflict and tension existed between the two groups during this period; but they did not have to destroy one another to flourish.

3) To invoke the *halakhah* as validating the Jewish people's sole right to all the land of Israel as "holy" land is another blatant distortion of Jewish law. The rabbis established criteria for the "holiness" of the land. The talmudic principle is *kedusha rishonah kidshah le-shatah ve-lo kidsha le-atid lavo*, the first sanctification (in the days of Joshua) was only for "its time" but was not permanent. Joshua's sanctification was temporary in

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nature and was abrogated upon destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE and the subsequent exile because he came into possession of the land through conquest.

By contrast, the second part of this principle is *kidshah le-sha-atah ve-kidshah le-atid lavo*, sanctification not only for “its time” but permanently. Ezra’s sanctification was permanent because he came into possession of the land not by conquest but through a peaceful return of the exiles from Babylonia. And, this is a crucial point: Ezra and his relatively small group of followers settled only in a limited area around Jerusalem and the Judean environs.

Jewish law is clear in defining the sanctity of the land as requiring *both* elements of the above principle: possession of the land both by conquest and non-conquest. And so, since most of the land was not, in fact, occupied by the Ezra returnees, the bulk of the land of Israel is not by definition “holy” in accordance with Jewish law.

It is, therefore, a fundamental misrepresentation of the *halakhah* itself to claim that refusal to relinquish any part of the land of Israel (outside of Judea which is today part of the “West Bank”) on the ground that it is “holy” is commanded by Jewish law. Such refusal is most assuredly not the requirement of the *halakhah*.

Quite aside from the separate, intrinsic moral issue of shedding the blood of another human being, it is apparent that to claim that God, the Bible, the *halakhah* legitimate slaying the leader of the State of Israel is to, indeed, betray the very pillars of the religion of Israel.

“I have all the information.” How false! How sad!□

Can there be Jewish vigilantism?

Reuven Kimelman

Recent events have again raised the question of a basis in Judaism for a zealotry that condones murder.

The case that comes to mind is Moses’ slaying of the Egyptian taskmaster. The issue was whether taking the law into one’s own hands in order to strike down the enemies of Israel is praiseworthy. The Torah adduces the incident as evidence of Moses’ commitment to his people and to justice despite grave personal cost. The Talmud and the Midrash, however, were wary of any such endorsement lest a precedent be set for vigilantism.

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Indeed, one Midrash saw in the incident a pretext for excluding Moses from entering the Promised Land. In answer to Moses’ query why he was to be excluded, the Midrash, *On the Death of Moses*, says:

“God said, Did I authorize you to slay the Egyptian?

Moses said: But you slew all the firstborn of Egypt, shall I die on account of a single Egyptian?

God said: Are you like Me? I take away life and give it back. Can you give it back?”

Seeking to reconcile the act of Moses with the legal and moral norms of Judaism, other sources focused on three concerns: the guilt of the Egyptian, the means of killing, and the intention of Moses.

Those who defended Moses’ act contended that the Egyptian had sexually assaulted a Hebrew woman. Having been found out by the husband, the Egyptian plotted to kill him. Moses came across the Egyptian plotting to kill the aggrieved husband (*Exodus Rabbah* 1:28). Thus, what appeared to be vigilantism on Moses’ part was actually a legitimate punishment.

The next issue was the means of killing. How did Moses kill the Egyptian? Some rabbis argued that Moses struck him with his fist as Isaiah says, “You strike the wicked with a fist,” (58:4). Others content that Moses slew him by means of the Divine Name (*Exodus Rabbah* 1:29).

Finally, how did Moses justify himself? The Midrash applies the verse, “Who has not taken without cause any life” (*Psalms* 24:4) to Moses. It argued that Moses had cause to take the life of the Egyptian, for it says he “looked this way and that way,” implying that he beheld a court of angels with which he consulted. Only then did he smite the Egyptian, as it says, “and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian” (*Exodus* 2:12). In other words, the act of Moses was court authorized. Lest there be any error, the Midrash adds that Moses perceived that a proselyte would never descend from this Egyptian (*The Midrash on Psalms* 24:7).

Why all these complications? Why not let the story stand as is? Moses, zealous to help his brothers in distress, and overcome by their suffering, strikes out impulsively to redress the wrong. As one rabbi said, “Moses saw no one expressing zeal for God so he slew him” (*Exodus Rabbah* 1:29).

Such an explanation could have received support from two verses of Isaiah that strangely sound like the Mosaic incident. They say, “The Lord saw that there was no man, He gazed, but no one intervened. Then...His victorious right hand supported Him...He clothed Himself with garments of retribution, wrapped Himself in zeal” (59:15-17).

If God wrapped in zeal, intervened precisely because no man did so, then it could be argued that just as “God clothed Himself with garments of retribution, wrapped Himself in zeal,” so did Moses. Instructively, the Midrash does not allow for any such emulation of the divine, arguing that zealotry and retribution are exclusive divine prerogatives (*Midrash HaGadol Genesis*, p. 619), for only God can keep them under control (*Genesis Rabbah* 49,8). Zeal is so prone to go amok, only God can be trusted to wield it.

Since zealotry cannot be used to legitimate extra-legal activity, Moses’ act had to be justified on other grounds. Thus the above sources seek to establish that the Egyptian was culpable of a capital crime, that Moses had consulted with a court, albeit of angels; and lastly, that Moses killed him either by the power of the Divine Name or with his fist. As a non-lethal weapon, the fist is mentioned to indicate that Moses meant to stop the Egyptian, not to kill him. The introduction of the Divine Name indicated that Moses’ destructive power was subject to divine approval not just human discretion.

These safeguards did not suffice. The Egyptian also had to be bereft of the saving grace of righteous descendants for when a man is slain unjustly, those responsible must answer “for his blood as well as that of his descendants till the end of the world” (*Mishnah Sanhedrin* 4:5).

The restrictions on the means of slaying and the demand that the culprit lack future righteous progeny are not immaterial. By setting superhuman standards, the Midrash precludes the incident from serving as a precedent for human behavior. Thus, a model for zealotry or self-help was eliminated through the introduction of divine checks, or legalized through the introduction of judicial restraints. Regardless of the status of the killer or the intensity of the zeal, killing is unwarranted. Thus our opening Midrash finds Moses’ case for slaying the Egyptian wanting. Lacking the power to restore life, Moses is in no position to usurp the divine prerogative to take life. □

We are not immune

Philip J. Bentley

The first time I noticed it was in 1981. I was on a post-convention tour of Israel for rabbis and their spouses. Our tour guide spoke of the Settlements as we travelled

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through the Occupied Territories on the West Bank. He showed us how much more modern and productive the Jewish farms looked than the Arab-owned lands. He did not attribute this to greater financial resources or greater knowledge of modern agronomy. He told us that the Land will not produce for the Arabs like it will produce for Jews, because this is our land and the Land knows its true people. He insisted that far from being a right-wing Likud-nik, he was a life-long member of the Labor Party although he lived in Ma’aleh Adumim which was built just outside of Jerusalem on land occupied by Israel in 1967.

I immediately recognized this theory for what it was—old-fashioned blood-and-soil fascism. When I tried discussing my distress at hearing this kind of rhetoric with my colleagues, they either dismissed my concerns or asked me not to make a scene. I kept quiet even when we were passing by Nablus and the guide remarked, “This is the ancient town of Shekhem where Shimon and Levi performed their heroic deeds.” Their heroic deeds? The massacre of a town full of men who had circumcised themselves so that their prince could marry Jacob’s daughter? The massacre that Jacob condemned even in his final blessing to his sons? What Torah did this man learn? It was surely not the same one I study.

Since Oslo, religious and secular leaders of this movement have called for armed response to government forces—whether Israeli or Palestinian—carrying out legal policies. They have called for the murder of government officials based on perverted interpretations of *halakhah*. Add this to their belief in a mystical connection between Jewish blood and Israel’s soil; their elevation of Jewish possession of the Land over all other values; their demonization of Arabs as “*Amalek*” and of Jews who support the Peace Process as traitors or worse; and their belief that God demands of Israel that it expel non-Jews from the land or subjugate them even if it means war because the Redemption depends on it.

Advertisements and public statements, since Yitzhak Rabin’s assassination, by Jewish groups opposed to the Peace Process all say the same thing. They regret that this has happened and that Jews should unite, but that no one should “use” this murder “for political advantage.” It is a time to promote Jewish unity, but not at the expense of once again ignoring the deadly cancer that exists in Israel and among some Jews the world over—fascism. The time has come to confront the ugly reality and to try to excise this ideological tumor that has grown among us.

Any rabbi in Israel who continues to call for violent opposition to the peace process must be removed from any official position by the Chief Rabbinate. Any American rabbi espousing such views should be publicly

censured by the American rabbinate. The rhetoric of violence should no longer be tolerated in our synagogues, community centers and schools. We must make public the true nature of groups raising money for the radical right-wing fringe groups that are causing so much mischief in Israel and in the Diaspora. Any settlement that engages in ongoing violence against Arabs or Israelis should be disbanded.

These extremists should not be allowed to stifle legitimate debate by continuing to poison the political atmosphere with their outrageous rhetoric. Public debate and non-violent political action on the issues of peacemaking must go on. There will not be peace if a significant number of Israeli Jews feels that its concerns have not been heard and taken into consideration. If the Peace Process is to work, as I hope and pray it will, it must be as the result of a free and open debate on the issues with all of the risks responded to. The ultimate success of the Zionist enterprise must be based on the security interests of Israel as well as on the prophetic principles of justice and peace which equally fired the commitment of Israel's founders. □

Of sad ironies and deadly bullets

Aaron I. Reichel

We now realize that the Prime Minister would have been spared his personal and fatal tragedy, and the nation would have been spared its unprecedented trauma, had the Labor government bowed to the will of the people and called for new elections or at least reassessed the "Peace Process" when it became apparent that a majority of the Jews in the Israeli Parliament voted against "Oslo II," in light of the realities and disappointments caused by Arafat's consistent violations of the spirit and the letter of "Oslo" and by his inability and/or unwillingness to stand up to the terrorists who are honest enough to at least be consistent.

I mourn the loss of a soldier and a statesman who rose to the top of both chains of command in service to his country, but I mourn, also, the fact that, after his Arab "partner" in "peace" openly and repeatedly revealed in Arab forums that his goal of annihilating the Zionists had not changed, a man as bright and as perceptive as the Prime Minister of Israel did not want to believe what he had heard, and did not opt to hear or heed the will of his co-religionists, but succumbed instead, to the will of an assassin, a will to kill, whose now infamous implementa-

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tion of this desire is likely, ironically, to serve only to give the Labor government further rationalizations to try to kill the spirit of Israel's most idealistic heroes on the West Bank, the settlers, many of whom left the comforts of home and the luxuries of America, *at Rabin's personal request*, and based on his personal promises of assistance and eternal appreciation.

Notwithstanding the most unsettling manner in which Rabin's voice has been silenced, let the further irony not go unnoticed that what most opponents of the late Prime Minister's policies objected to were not merely his unilateral concessions to Arafat in exchange for Arafat's unilateral violations of the letter and the spirit of the "Peace Accords." The people who are now in the Opposition are especially aggrieved, as well, by the Labor government's flagrantly anti-democratic and sometimes cruel and selective censorship of some media and suppression of some dissent and political rallies of opposition groups even after these groups went to the trouble of painstakingly obtaining permits to demonstrate and/or formally requesting permission to conduct peaceful demonstrations in situations wherein permits were and are not required by law. How ironic that Rabin might still be alive today had the Labor government, like its predecessor governments, simply permitted free speech and assembly without exceptions for political reasons. How further ironic that the assassination occurred precisely at a demonstration the likes of which the Labor government was denying to many of its Jewish political opponents. □

Of zealots and hanukkah

Cary Kozberg

As we come to terms with the meaning and repercussions of the Rabin assassination, an act that most Jews view as heinous and virtually unthinkable, we find ourselves in the midst of a holiday commemorating a war of survival which began when the observant, faithful Jew Matithias (a *kohen*, no less!) did "the unthinkable"—he killed a fellow Jew.

But in the Hanukkah story, it was not unthinkable; it was "a *mitzvah*". The account in *I Maccabees* compares the action of Matithias to that of an earlier "fanatic", Pinhas ben Eleazar, whose zeal for God during an earlier time of chaos and confusion also motivated him to kill

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one of his own people. Like Matithias, Pinhas is regarded by tradition as a hero. He was rewarded with a promise that the priesthood will always be in his family, because he was "zealous for My sake among them" (cf. *Numbers* 25:1-13).

Pinhas ben Eleazar haKohen, Matiyahu ben Yohanan haKohen, Yigal Amir: all three deeply religious men; all three believing that the present situation of Judaism was most precarious; all three convinced that circumstances posed a mortal danger to the collective physical and spiritual well-being of the Jewish people; all three acting on the tenet, "drastic times justify drastic measures."

Yet the former two are remembered as heroes and holy men. The last is regarded (at least by most of us) as a criminal. Does time transform so completely?

On further consideration, we are given even more pause, remembering that while Pinhas and Matithias took the law into their own hands and are praised for the spontaneity, Yigal Amir seems to have been more deliberate in going through the normal, *halakhic* channels.

We read that as a consequence of the Golden Calf, Moses commanded the Levites to slay those of their kinsmen who had participated in that act of apostasy. Three thousand died. Commenting on this episode (Exodus 32:29), Rashi explains that by slaying their fellow Jews, the Levites had dedicated themselves to God's service. The word Rashi uses for "dedicate" is *tithankhu*—related to the word "*hanukkah*." Commenting on the weekly portion "Pinhas," and why it is never paired with another portion in the reading cycle, Rabbi Y. Eger states it is because Pinhas was a zealot, a loner. He did things his own way. But woe to the generation in which zealots unite.

This year, as we observe the Festival of Lights, we are beckoned to own up to, to confront and to ponder the phenomenon of zealotness in our tradition, to understand what summons it, and when it is appropriately summoned. May the Holy One bless us with the zeal our ancestors felt for Judaism, but enlighten us to know when using it is not a desecration, but a truly sacred act. May this be the Great Miracle that happens for us. □

But others say about...

Yitzhak Rabin

In his forceful reminder that assassinations can and do happen even in democracies like Israel and the United States (*Sh'ma* 26/502), Irving Greenberg unfortunately

Ta sh'ma

We invite you to send us your favorite text and comment. Submissions should not exceed 200 words. Be sure to include proper citation of sources. Hebrew will appear in transliteration.

Marc Baker

Simmeon, his son said, All my days I have grown up among the wise, and I have found nought of better service than silence; not learning but doing is the chief thing; and whoso is profuse of words causes sin.

MISHNA AVOT, CH. 1, V. 17

Rabbi Hertz, former Chief Rabbi of the British Empire comments that "not learning but doing" gives expression to a main characteristic of Judaism. It does not dispute the high place assigned to learning the Torah; right doing depends on knowing what to do and how to do it. "Study is most important, because it leads to deed," was the decision of the historic synod at Lydda, in 133 CE. This principle is a *drash* on the meaning of the covenantal formula that "one must do what is just and right". Judaism's distinguishing characteristic is its insistence on the integration of one's thoughts and deeds, that ideas must be actualized in order to test the validity of moral principles. The aim of the Torah is practical not theoretical; above all else its purpose is to regulate conduct. Not knowledge, but practice is of decisive importance; but the practice flows from knowledge.

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makes a mishmash out of a melancholy dimension of American history.

He writes: "Every American president elected in the 20 year intervals from 1860 to 1980 was shot or died in office; six of the seven were shot." Actually, this peculiar 20 year cycle began in 1840 and ended in 1960. Moreover, of the seven presidents elected in those years divisible by 20, four (Lincoln, Garfield, McKinley and Kennedy) were killed while three (W. H. Harrison, Harding and F. D. Roosevelt) died in office peacefully. Although Greenberg's theme is clearly assassinations, perhaps he includes 1980 because of the *attempted* killing of Reagan—something that tragically happened to presidents elected in other years as well—but, as we know,

Reagan lived out his full two terms and thus broke the 20 year jinx.

Greenberg's basic point is correct; his evidence should be accurate too.

Daniel Mann
Bethesda, MD

Endthoughts

On names and hanukkah

Arnold Stiebel

As a rabbi, I meet Jews, many Jews, who do not know their Jewish names, or who may never have received one. Often, I either attempt to discover their lost Jewish name (chances are pretty good that if they were named after Uncle Morris, it usually meant their Hebrew name was Moshe), or allow them to choose a new name, a name that they now prefer to use as part of their Jewish identity.

Although I might give them their "new" Hebrew/Jewish name at a convenient Shabbat service in which they are called to the Torah for the first time by that name, I prefer to have a consecration service and ceremony in which to bestow their new name and give them an opportunity to tell why they so picked it. I have found that when one makes the time and effort to choose a name, it reinforces a real Jewish identity.

Even though any time during the liturgical year is appropriate, I believe that the festival of Hanukkah, the holiday of "Dedication or Rededication," may be the most auspicious time to bestow a new name. On Shabbat Hanukkah, we call the individual up to the *bima*, and bestow the new or reconsecrated name before the open

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ark. A sample service for naming children follows. Appropriate changes can be made responding to the status of the ones being named:

"A good name is better than fine rubies" (Proverbs 22:1). We are told that a person has three names; the one his parents gives him; the one his friends call him, and the one he calls or thinks of himself.

We Jews hold names to have a special relationship. Since we, traditionally, divide the holy from the profane, the secular from the religious, it stands to reason that we make a similar distinction in the one, uniquely identifiable aspect of our personalities; our name.

Consequently, we maintain a tradition that we have both a civil name, one we reserve for worldly pursuits, and a Jewish name, one by which we are called in the holy community of Israel.

Tonight is Hanukkah, the festival of light and the celebration of our victory of Antiochus and the Greek rule over Israel. But, this word "Hanukkah" literally means dedication or rededication, and it becomes the pervasive theme of the holiday. For 8 days and nights, we commemorate a rededication of our ideals and moral spirit.

As a symbolic rededication of our lives, we are honored to "officially" bestow a Hebrew name upon _____. I invite _____ to the *bima* to receive their new and "official" Jewish names, names by which they will always be known among the congregation of Israel.

Our God and the God of our ancestors, sustain these children. We declare their names will henceforth be called among the congregation of Israel: _____. May their parents rejoice with them all the days of their lives. With love and wisdom may they be privileged to teach them the significance of their names that they formally received this day. May they be inspired to practice righteousness in speech and deed and to seek the truth and ways of peace throughout their lives. May they grow into adulthood as a blessing to their family and to the people Israel. As they have taken a Hebrew name tonight, may they be privileged to attain the blessings of Torah, a happy Jewish marriage and life of good deeds. And let us say: AMEN. □

Sh'ma a journal of jewish responsibility

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