Blue and Red and Black and White

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It happens only one or two days in February, a time when Grand Rapids, Michigan is usually pewter colored and cold and boring; the sun shines and the temperatures becomes almost spring-like and we shed clothing layers like awakened snakes shed their skins to suck in warmth and grow and feel alive. We enjoy apprehensively, nervously, because in this country we are firmly attached to Calvin and know in our Christian guts that no good thing goes unpunished—bad weather will return and make us pay. So I sat in a restaurant in the Amway Grand Plaza hotel—a four-star totem to Multiple-Level-Merchandizing, known commonly as a pyramid scheme gone legal, that has left in its wake many more victims than victors—and watched the ice break up on the Grand River, drift into the main current, and sweep away.

I finished my Caesar salad and was preparing to leave when groups of white, overweight, middle-aged women with waddling pendulous breasts entered the restaurant like formations of honking geese descending on a pond, looking for their next meal. They all wore the same red sweatshirt announcing "I'm from Bush country" and proved it with a map silk-screened on the front displaying large swaths of red shouldering enclaves of blue off the edge of the world (as they know it); the country's blue flanks projected out from each breast, leaving the middle as red cleavage. No matter they're from Michigan, which went against Bush both times; they're from west-Michigan—definitely Bush country—and they had just been teased by Dick DeVos, son of Amway Corporation co-founder Rich DeVos, scion of the Amway fortune, and major supporter of all things right, Republican and religious, that he may run for Governor of Michigan. They were excited and flush, and indeed are the body politic; for them this was better than sex, this heady blend of religion and politics—so what they had nothing in common with this billionaire and his father, who had purchased a heart in Great Britain as their husbands died on waiting lists; their man Dick—were thrilled; a possible Republican right-wing larvae were as tokens of appreciation for the wealthy?—a political redundancy before unification?

Once seated they beamed pleasant smiles, followed shirts cut from American wartime political propaganda, patriotic, a political redundancy before unification?

We of course all used to say that, but the unification caused me to think: what on earth is political propaganda, a political redundancy before unification?

Once seated they beamed pleasant smiles, followed shirts cut from American wartime political propaganda, patriotic, a political redundancy before unification?
Red and White

Abramajtys in February, a time
the sun shines and the
miles are spring-like and we shed
nakes shed their skins
and feel alive. We enjoy
in this country we are
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cred and White
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nakes shed their skins
and feel alive. We enjoy
in this country we are
ow

Once seated they became round-faced cherubs with
pleasant smiles, followed by portly husbands wearing
-shirts cut from American flags: didn't we get arrested in
the 70's for that? Who cares, things have changed.
We can be as fat and sassy as we want and nobody is tough
enough to hold us accountable, and we have Hispanics
and Blacks and lower class Whites to do our fighting if
they want a slice of the Dream; our own children are safe;
they wouldn't dare bring back the draft, that third rail of
American wartime politics. We don't care about walls: at
GITMO, at Abu Ghraib, at Basra, wherever. To hell with
rights. We DEMAND safety; safety is our right; we are
nothing without safety; we will kill for safety; life is safety:
physical safety, physical safety, bodily safety.

Q: Mssr. Foucault, you noticed
the women's shirts?
Michel Foucault: Yes, yes, of
course. These bodies are part of
a complicated machine, no? They
are moved and positioned and
articulated with others. Power
relations have grabbed them to
carry out tasks, to emit signs.

Q: And these women do not
control their bodies?
MF: None of us do. We are
involved in political fields.
We are marked and groomed
and trained, and tortured and
rewarded and directed to perform
ceremonies and complete tasks.
This is not something we often
even think about.
near children and endured the root canal of air travel: screaming kids who refused to shut up.

It was a night flight from Newark, New Jersey—an entirely forgettable airport, as are most in the U.S.—to the new terminal in Tel Aviv’s Ben Gurion airport, spectacular in its simple use of Jerusalem limestone to create vast, efficient, open spaces. In this land of arid heat there are many ancient archeologically interesting sites that have three important things in common, one of which is always a system to collect and store rainwater. The new terminal has a waiting area containing an immense circular atrium; one gets the sensation of a huge hole punched through the ceiling. When it rains, a system of collection channels directs the water to the lip of the hole where the water spills over the lip and descends as a circular curtain to a receiving pond in the waiting room floor. The drop is at least seventy feet and the water hits the pond with considerable force, splashing and dancing in wild, wet disarray. The noise grabs your attention; first a deep gut-resonating rumbling sound from the water moving through the collection ducts causes you to look far up into the atrium’s circular mouth: Is it God speaking to Moses? What is it you want us to do Lord? Can it wait until so-and-so comes back from the John? Then your eyes follow the flood-lit watery curtain to the waiting pond. And He has given you the first of Haim’s commandments: Conserve water.

Halfway up the beach I noticed a jetty containing fishermen so I grabbed my new camera and headed out. The night before, we arrived in Tel Aviv, met our guide, Haim, and Uri our bus driver, and had our first meal in our first Israeli restaurant: hummus, taboli, baba ganoush and an array of very tasty side dishes started us off. Wine and pita and skewered lamb and chicken sustained our conversation and laughter—there’s something about anonymity of late large group meals that allows you to melt into the cross-conversations and let the day slip away—and baklava, in one of its numerous Mediterranean forms, provided a proper finish. The baklava was sweet and syrupy and I ate it with mint tea sweet enough to make my teeth throb. To get to the restaurant we took our tour bus into Jaffe, the original ancient city that really didn’t get going until the streets got sanded and walk the remaining point we got off. An immigrant son said to the other, “You mean that was about a month ago.”

“You mean that was where a suicide bomber blew up about a month ago.”

“Aha,” I said. BG and obviously made the story of typical Israeli blur encounter, designed to personal information.

“You shouldn’t scan your mother.

“It’s OK,” I said. “I didn’t look like a market in reality sooner or later, but didn’t look like a market it was just a vacant space demolished long ago and next to put up. I tried to followings and body parts slapping off pavement, but I couldn’t.

BG’s comment lingered promenade toward the morning but already pe. On reaching the jetty I saw a cube covered with a painted me as I stood behind her، visualize her face. All she was wrapped in blue linen، dark sea. She didn’t turn to me without personal body. How do you live up any day at any outdoor like this woman buy being among the market’s deli، rising early in the morning، meditating—maybe every out of every day: If it’s got have the soft morning، body to the sea—the body to def Y the odds a
ancient city that really served as a seaport to Jerusalem, until the streets got so narrow we had to disembark and walk the remaining distance to the restaurant. At the point we got off the bus, BG, the Rabbi’s Israeli immigrant son said to me, “See that open space over there?”

“You mean that parking lot?” I said.

“Yes,” BG said. “That’s the Jaffè public market. That’s where a suicide bomber killed a large number of people about a month ago.”

“Aha,” I said. BG and I had just met and he had obviously made the statement for effect, an example of typical Israeli bluntness that I would frequently encounter, designed to elicit a reaction, to probe for personal information.

“You shouldn’t scare these people BG,” said his mother.

“It’s OK,” I said. “I expected to have to confront that reality sooner or later, but maybe not quite this soon.” It didn’t look like a market place and it didn’t look bombed; it was just a vacant space once occupied by a building demolished long ago and nobody had yet decided what next to put up. I tried to visualize a big bang and ball bearings and body parts slapping building walls and ricocheting off pavement, but I couldn’t.2

BG’s comment lingered as I walked along the beach promenade toward the fishing jetty; it was early in the morning but already people were strolling and jogging.

On reaching the jetty I saw a woman sitting on a cement cube covered with a pink blanket. She was unaware of me as I stood behind her for a short while and tried to visualize her face. All of her, including her head, was wrapped in blue linen, and she gazed at the still, azure dark sea. She didn’t turn around and remained faceless, to me without personality, a body, just a body, only a body. How do you live your life when you can be blown up any day at any outdoor market where simple people buy vegetables sold by simple farmers among the market’s delicious smells and sights? Perhaps rising early in the morning and walking to the sea and meditating—maybe even praying—wrings the most out of every day: If it’s going to happen today, at least I have the soft morning. Or maybe it’s just about taking the body to the sea—the act of propelling, willing one’s body to defy the odds and sit exposed to an expanse.
The fishermen were friendly—I have never met an irascible fisherman—like fishermen wherever I have fished, casting their lines from small personal spaces demarcated by folding chairs, tackle boxes, and coolers full of sandwiches and bait. “Boker tov (good morning),” I said to no one in particular—my first Hebrew words I had practiced on the plane. “You want?” one of the fishermen said as he handed me part of a sandwich. My First Hebrew elicited an English response; how bad is that? “Lo, lo, toda (No, no, thank you),” I said. The fisherman turned back to his pole and stuffed the sandwich into his well-worn dark brown jacket. “Kos te?” an old guy said and held out a cup of steaming something. “Ken (yes),” I said, deciding against pressing my luck by accepting nothing; It was hot tea, very sweet, just the thing to chase a morning chill. He used squid as bait and I watched him take a fair size one from his cooler, cut off a large chunk, thread it on his hook, and hand the rest of it to me on the point of his knife. “Lo, toda,” I quickly said, shaking my head and pointing to my camera. The whole group howled with laughter and the old guy threw the piece of squid at a gull that immediately devoured it. I decided to take advantage of my role as their morning’s comic relief. I held up my camera and they said “0 K” and I took several fast shots and was off before I wore out my welcome.

After a large hotel breakfast, selected from scores of different kinds of bread and pastries, platters of cheese, eggs served every way imaginable, mounds of fruit, and what would become the usual wonderful vegetable dishes—carrots, broccoli, onions, cucumber, eggplant, celery, tomatoes—we went to Israel’s Independence Hall, an unassuming building where Zionist leaders met to debate and sign the Israeli Declaration of Independence. “Humble” was the first thing that struck my mind. From these simple rooms came an amazing nation held together by who knows what, which has held hostage much of the world’s attention, if not occupation. We were ushered into a small auditorium and shown a video about the founding of Israel. When the lights came on a woman with an incredible body stood in the front of the auditorium and asked if we had any questions.

Somebody asked something but my attention was glued to her rather substantial left, tightly T-shirt clad breast, where the words “emerg” were printed.

And the other?

It was hard to tell the tale of the tree; it was weathered by years and still alive as evident below a crown of pale, alive seems to be what. Surely the tree wasn’t one of remnants of the first. A better bet is it may be, thousands of modern Israeli visitors are visiting this site of does, functional equivalent to it was planted fifty years ago, Haganah members who have 9 out their many terror out from Palestine.

We waited at the bus operator to finish his coffee and his coffee, and he: “Lo, you know Bella, personal power... personal power... personal power... personal power... all we can do for?” Haim said in Hebrew. We waited and you drink... you drink... you drink... be reckoned: an anthropologist army tank commander, jeans, tough cotton shirt, Polo Ralph Lauren; a leather hat stained by years desert for artifacts. He was a tour guide in an econ...

Intifada: He fought in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, four of his armored battle school and didn’t catch it; destroyed by a suicide bomb already on board; severe, experienced Intifada-ind...
where the words “emotionally unavailable” were neatly
printed.
And the other?

It was hard to tell the tree’s age. Like most in our group
it was weathered by years of attrition, yet was tough
and still alive as evidenced by scattered green leaves
below a crown of pale, dead branches—tough and still
alive seems to be what it takes to survive in this land.
Surely the tree wasn’t six thousand years old: the age
of remnants of the first civilization found at Masada.
A better bet is it may have been planted by one of the
thousands of modern Israeli youth movement pilgrims
visiting this site of doomed strength and courage—a
functional equivalent to our Gettysburg. Or perhaps
it was planted fifty years ago by some of the Jewish
Haganah members who often visited this place of
relentless glare to absorb the strength and zeal to carry
out their many terrorist attacks to drive the British
from Palestine.

We waited at the base of Masada for the cable car
operator to finish his coffee and take us to the top of
this arid, sun-drenched plateau. He was in control, he
and his coffee, and he savored the power he possessed
... personal power ... all his ... in a land where pow­
erlessness is all too common. “What are you waiting
for?” Haim said in Hebrew. “You have all these people
waiting and you drink coffee?”

Haim was a force to
be reckoned: an anthropologist, biblical scholar, and
army tank commander, he was tall, tanned, and wore
jeans, tough cotton shirts (except for the occasional
Polo Ralph Lauren; a concession to vanity or just the
ability to earn a buck?) and a wide-brimmed brown
leather hat stained by years of scratching the red dusty
desert for artifacts. He was our Indiana Jones and fond
of speaking in clipped parables: “Water, land, security,”
he would say. “Remember that.”

Haim made money as
a tour guide in an economy crippled by the
Palestinian Intifada: He fought in a tank in the Golan Heights
during the 1973 Yom Kippur war and lost three out of
four of his armored buddies; his son was once late for
school and didn't catch his usual public bus when it was
destroyed by a suicide bomber, killing dozens of children
already on board; several of his tour guide colleagues
experienced Intifada-induced economic bankruptcy.
and killed themselves. Haim carried a lot of baggage and often was withdrawn, aloof, self-absorbed; it was no surprise to learn he was recently divorced—a brick completing his personal wall.

From where we waited Masada rose from the Judean plain like the cracked back of some great animal that had died and had its juices sucked out. At the base of Masada the scabbed land sloped to the Dead Sea and both emitted waves of ghost heat, spirits of the many who died taking and defending this land, this Promised Land of broken promises, this land of changed minds and crosses and double crosses and star crosses. Water, Land, Security, (Oil): Haim is right; beneath these millennial struggles it’s always about some sort of practical advantage, religiously or ideologically supplemented, torn from the bare earth by the roots and adorned with signs and symbols and slogans of higher purpose, and held on high to march beneath until the blood of those marching soaks the Land, runs into the Water, and achieves a wispy, fleeting, often imagined Security. Or fails.

Finally the cable car operator relented and closed the car doors on far too many sweaty bodies, arms pinned to our sides, tits stuck in somebody's back. “You should not complain,” said a voice from the back of the car to Haim. “You should not complain about anything in Israel in front of foreigners. Everything in Israel is good.”

Masada, this dry wind-swept monadnock settlement-fortress, is where Jewish Zealots based their resistance to Roman rule, and from where they were among the first to introduce organized terrorism to the Middle East. The Romans called them Sicarii because they carried a dagger (Sica) used to assassinate Romans and Jewish collaborators. These Zealots were nasty characters, like today's terrorists, and ruthlessly used anything at their disposal to protect their religion and independence. In 68 CE (AD), during Passover, they even attacked a Jewish settlement at nearby En Gedi to steal food and water; in the process slaughtered seven-hundred Jewish men and women and children, pillaged their homes, and burned the entire place to the ground. Rome permitted the Jews to resettle Ein Gedi, an important source of fresh water surging from eight springs probing deep into the barren Judean mountains, but had to garrison 100 soldiers there to protect the Jewish settlers from future poaching.

But Ein Gedi is not Ein Gedi. Not after afternoon climbing its flowing stream formed from bleak escarpment of the Dead Sea. The contrast approached from higher along the Dead Sea, past salt break the desert monotonous way you to stop to answer questions soldiers (“Are you Jewish?” I said no, would then Jewish settlements number has no intention of every voluntarily. Both sides commercially bottled from the Dead Sea, which is modern historic level al (infusions) host the dead plants growing in Israel a small, juice apple-like used to fasten Jesus’ cloak of Acacia trees, one was rodent-like Rock Hyr tough pale-green leaves in this bitterly disput plants); rare orchid as Cyprus cane, common the water breaks free it cascades in wet veil holding ponds, inviting and cool your feet as curving horns, necks of try to mount smaller than I said. We sat in a semi-ruins of Masada's syn shade almost as hot as attack Masada?” He felt just as frequently not part of our group say poaching Haim's corners, trade,” one of us answered. Romans could have just said, “There was long red dust swirls. Haim
ried a lot of baggage
self-absorbed; it was
completely divorced—a brick
rose from the Judean
some great animal that
ounced out. At the base of
to the Dead Sea and
spirits of the many
Promised
of changed minds
and star crosses. Water,
ight; beneath these mil-
practically supplemented,
roots and adorned
ans of higher purpose,
the blood of
runs into the Water,
ized and closed the
bodies, arms pinned to
back. “You
in Israel in front
is good.”

aronnack settlement-
ased their resistance
they were among the
Middle
Sicarii because they
assassinate Romans
Zealots were nas-
s, and ruthlessly used
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passover, they
ient at nearby En Gedi
proccess slaughtered
women and children,
ent place to the
ers to resettle Ein Gedi,
water surging from eight
arren Judean mount-
siders there to protect
the Jewish settlers from their more extreme religious
brethren 18 kilometers to the South.

But Ein Gedi is not easily defended. We spent an
afternoon climbing its steep trails, criss-crossing a fast
owing stream formed by its many springs spurtng
bleak escarpments overlooking the desert
Dead Sea. The contrast is remarkable; Ein Gedi is
approached from highway 90 after traveling South
ong the Dead Sea, past occasional vegetable farms that
reak the desert monotony, military checkpoints where
stop to answer questions posed by dour-faced sol-
diers (“Are you Jewish?” they often asked me, and when
said no, would then ask “Why are you here?”), and
Jewish settlements numerous enough to suggest Israel
has no intention of ever leaving the West Bank—not
voluntarily. Both sides of the stream (whose water is
mercially bottled and sold, and so never reaches
Sea, which is twenty or more meters below its
modem historic level and desperately needs restorative
usions) host the densest concentration of tropical
plants growing in Israel: Christian-thorn jujube yields
small, juice apple-like fruit and is said to have been
used to fasten Jesus’ crown of thorns; several species
Acacia trees, one with an umbrella crown in which
rodent-like Rock Hyrax are seen sunbathing or eating
ough pale-green leaves (true to the nature of things
bitterly disputed land, the Hyrax eats poisonous
sl); rare orchids; and wetland vegetation such as
yper cane, common cane, and sugar cane. Once
water breaks free from the arid escarpment walls,
asses in wet veils to clear, natural, multiple-level
holding ponds, inviting you to take off those hot shoes
and cool your feet as Ibex males with huge backward
curving horns, necks outstretched and lips curled back,
to mount smaller females.

“I need you must think about something,” Haim
said. We sat in a semi-circle as he held court in the
ruins of Masada’s synagogue, jockeying for patches
of shade almost as hot as the direct sun. “Why do Rome
attack Masada?” He frequently asked us questions and
just as frequently threw out wild guesses. A couple
not part of our group stood near the synagogue entrance,
poaching Haims commentary. “To control the salt
trade,” one of us answered. “No, no,” Haim said, “the
Romans could have just waited and starved the Zealots
out.” There was a long silence and the wind blew tiny
red dust swirls. Haim shuffled his feet and jammed his
And nobody knows why Rome attack this place, that sun-beaten, dust-choked, breeding ground for religious zealots and suicide murderers. Gaza: that future site of pilgrimage for Palestinian youth. And nobody knows why the Romans attacked Masada?"  

Walls are Israel: The Roman walls of Caesarea. The aqueduct [cover photo] of fluorescent tan Jerusalem sand—some with no obvious purpose—drives a Zealot to adorn himself to walk the minimalist Carmel corridor at the new Baha'i temple. Manuall written on a white tablet—"We go forward to defend freedom,"—is a lie. And is a murderous lie.

hands in his jeans pockets, his leather hat pulled low over his eyes. "Nobody knows why Rome attack this place," he finally answered himself. "Why they do this? Is it nowhere. When they defeat the Zealots they stay awhile and then they leave. They don't bother very long to occupy Masada. Is a mystery."

We were waiting for the cable car to take us back down to the modern, air conditioned reception building where we hoped to find restrooms. There were restroom signs in Masada pointing off in one direction or another, but they never led to restrooms. "I drink a lot of water," one of our group kept saying, "but I don't have to pee." Well I drink a lot of water I said to a friend standing nearby, and I fucking well have to pee like a horse. "Me too," he said, rolling his eyes.

To ignore the pressure I thought awhile about Haim's statement. I remembered reading an article on how the Israelis send tanks into Gaza after a suicide bombing to root out terrorist cells. Gaza, that god-forsaken place devoid of almost anything civilized, we are led to believe: that sun-beaten, dust-choked, breeding ground for religious zealots and suicide murderers. Gaza: that future site of pilgrimage for Palestinian youth. And nobody knows why the Romans attacked Masada.

CH: "Once we sign on for war's crusade, once we see ourselves on the side of the angels, once we embrace a theological or ideological belief system that defines itself as the embodiment of goodness and light, it is only a matter of how we will carry out murder."

Q: Murder? A strong word, no?
CH: Murder is used to describe unsanctioned, illegitimate killing: something outside the rule of law. Agreed?
Q: Agreed.
CH: And it is always based on some sort of personal belief used to justify the killing?
Q: Yes, however irrational.
CH: Indeed, however much a lie. "But the enduring attraction of war is this: Even with its destruction and carnage it can give us what we long for in life. It can give us purpose, meaning, a reason to live," and this attraction is founded on lies.
Q: President Bush exalts us: "We go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in the world."

CH: It invokes myths that maintain our intentions are pure and our enemies' prurient, that show our sacred community open to destruction, that declares whoever is not with us is against us, that stifles dissent and destroys authentic culture. "When we allow mythic reality to rule, as it almost always does in war, then there is only one solution—force. In mythic war we fight absolutes. We must vanquish darkness. It is imperative and inevitable for civilization, for the free world, that good triumph, just as Islamic militiants see us as infidels whose existence corrupts the pure Islamic society they hope to build."
Q: Yet we are talking about murder.
CH: But don't you see? "The goal we seek when we embrace myth is impossible to achieve. War never creates the security or harmony we desire, especially the harmony we briefly attain during wartime. And campaigns such as the one in Afghanistan, become starting points for further conflicts, especially as we find out we are unable to root out terrorism or maintain the kind of solidarity that comes in the days just after an attack." The potency of myth is that it disguises our powerlessness.
Q: And is a lie.
CH: And is a murderous lie.
And nobody knows what makes a Zealot, what drives a Zealot to adorn their bodies with explosives and meld their bodies in with those of their enemies; what causes them to explode their bodies and mix their parts with the parts of the hated—a globular mash of tissue and organs and vessels unavailable to those mourning behind; to those who must suck comfort from a martyr's birth, a hero's birth, a victim's birth—in a death embrace so firm and final and wet, so total and orgastic.

So deadly loving.6

There is first the old ultra-orthodox man studying and praying within three hundred feet of the Judaism's holiest spot, the Western (Wailing) Wall in Jerusalem—remnants of the Jewish Second Temple destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE: a camel back-breaking act galvanizing the Masada Zealots. His brown skin is set off by the white cap (kippah) and prayer shawl (tallith). Thick brown hands hold and write on a white tablet. He is at the Western Wall, as close as any Jew on earth can get to God. He knows this and is entirely at ease. He is studying about his God, preparing himself to walk the mid-distance to the Wall and actually talk to his God. He is at the most important place in his life, doing the most important thing in his life.

Walls7 are Israel: The huge wall in the broad arrival corridor at the new Ben-Gurion Airport terminal, made of fluorescent tan Jerusalem limestone—inspiring, overwhelming, intimidating; The barriers around buildings—some with no obvious attempt to conceal, others planted with flowers and shrubs fed by sinusous thin black drip irrigation tubes from which sparrows sip; the large street banners strung between buildings announcing entry to religious neighborhoods with warnings to women to "dress modestly"—signs and symbols of difference passed under by "immodest" tourists hermetically sealed in busses; The Roman walls of Caesarea where a bounding arched aqueduct [cover photo], outlined against a Mediterranean sea and sky, once sustained Herod's control of Egyptian commerce—just one of many walled betrayals known to this land; the Crusader walls at Akko built by the faithful sent by an ambitious Pope to purify souls by killing infidels—also a good way for the Roman Catholic Church to expunge European immorality, rid itself of embarrassing sexually active priests, and weaken the Greek orthodox Church, all though the application of a revolutionary concept of positive violence—the notion that killing is

6James Agee: “Moreover, these globular damages are of many kinds and degrees and colors and of infinite talent for deceit: being of as many kinds as that particular set of senses and that particular intelligence as their heart can perceive and can achieve and can react to and reflect upon: all that is 'physical,' all that is of the 'mind,' all that is of the 'emotions,' all that is of the 'economic' and the 'mental' and the 'glandular' and the 'medical' predicament, all that is of 'belief,' and is of 'habit,' and is of 'morality,' and is of 'fear,' 'pride,' need of 'love,' 'warmth,' 'approbation,' all that is attached in the 'meanings' of 'ideas,' 'words,' 'actions,' 'things,' 'symbols': all these apart, all these in orchestral complex wherein they interlock, interform one another, and conspire in their companionship still sharper fiercer stricter subtler more bonebiting traps and equations of destruction than is in the power of any one of them independent of one another.

Here, again, in the midst of all these, is this human creature, born, awaiting their touch.”

Q: Is it what they fight for, with, and against?

JA: It is.

7Van Creveld: “History shows that walls, provided people are prepared to do what is necessary to defend them and prevent other people from crossing them, by using lethal force if necessary, work. If not for technical reasons—there never has been, nor can be, such a thing as an impregnable wall—then for psychological ones; and if not forever and perfectly, then for long periods and to a very great extent.”
virtuous, your passport to paradise—a Jihadi gift from the Church, a political gift, put to effective use ever since; the wall at Rosh Hanika where light dances in aquamarine grottos filled with Mediterranean wave and tidal surges and the Palmach (an Israeli freedom fighter/terrorist group, take your pick) blew up the railway bridges, sealing a possible Lebanese invasion route; the walls of the Syrian fortifications in the Golan overlooking Israel, and the Israeli fortifications overlooking Syria, the overlooking done by the winner de jure; the new wall that starts somewhere in the Judean Desert as an electronically fortified fence and meanders purposefully to Jerusalem where it turns to concrete—reviled but not yet worshiped: a matter of time.

The Western Wall is massive blocks of Jerusalem Limestone piled very high. Small plants grow from between the blocks and little slips of paper are inserted in its chinks—the hopes and prayers of people who want to be heard. The Wall is seen as a living thing, something that listens in a world where often very little listening is done. People step up to it and place their hands on it and then place their foreheads on it. It is something to touch with the body, not to just look at. It is a friend, not a monument. It has ears and is embraced by thousands. It returns their touches with a warm glowing radiance. It listens.

I had been to the Western Wall and touched it, and turned to come back when I spotted him there. I took the picture and looked to my right and immediately saw Babs Jackson: a close friend, an American Reform Jew, a fellow tourist—her beautiful, dark, almond-shaped eyes glistened and tears eased down her cheeks. She has done many important things in life, but at this moment she was in this most important place, doing this most important thing.

There is an intensity elsewhere. It’s present in Jerusalem it gets strong Wall it is palpable. Many things at and around the Wall, like what you find can’t buy a little glass cup like you can of Christ’s hair. The Roman destruction of Masada, and the left the way open for the capture of Masada, and the Mes Que of the Golden left the open access to the core faith. After Israel captivated the Holy of Holies, after the Second Temple was destroyed, the tunnels, dams, cisterns and the as the Second Temple. We expect, the tunnel, thousand and one among the women who are secular, the other or another. There is an intensity elsewhere. It’s present in Jerusalem it gets strong Wall it is palpable. Many things at and around the Wall, like what you find can’t buy a little glass cup like you can of Christ’s hair.

Although they are both Jews, and share a common religious heritage and few common culture elements, an almost incomprehensible world of difference separates them: They both live in ghettos of their own making, he along narrow streets overhung with extolling banners, she in a manicured suburb dotted with golf courses laced with walking trails; his choice is to possess few things other than his holy books and black clothes and tallith and kippah, hers to buy expensive Judaica with which to adorn her home; his life is religion and he has chosen
to sacrifice much for a life of absolute certainty, her life is her work and is as uncertain as her religious quest is ill-defined. But they are both here and they are both Jews and they both know that in the right moment, in the eyes of the world, they will be treated the same—this, they are sure of.

Your eye slips from the observant old man to the automatic weapon slung across the young soldier's back. His arms are on his compatriots' shoulders and you notice his face; he's really only a baby, isn't he? Thousands like him have died in the many Israeli wars, or have been blown up while on leave waiting at a bus stop to go home, their remains left to be scraped off roads and buildings by white-suited technicians and delivered to their families. In all likelihood he is a secular Jew, very different from both the Old Man and Babs, and one among the eighty percent of Israel's men and women who are secular, enter the army at age eighteen, and remain in the army for the rest of their lives in one capacity or another.

There is an intensity in Israel that I've not experienced elsewhere. It's present everywhere, but as you approach Jerusalem it gets stronger, and as you near the Western Wall it is palpable. Many people are doing many different things at and around the Wall, but it is all focused on God and war. There are no souvenir shops or gift shops at the Wall, like what you find at Christian holy sites, and you can't buy a little glass case with a strand of Moses' beard or the Masque of the Golden Dome, thus denying Jews unfettered access to the core physical representation of their faith. After Israel captured Jerusalem in 1967 it commenced underground excavations running the entire length of the Western Wall, 488 meters. The digging produced a long tunnel that exposed the "Foundation Stone," the Holy of Holies, the site from where the Jews believe the world was created, as well as streets, water tunnels, dams, cisterns and quarries, some dated as far back as the Second Temple, 516 B.C.E. As one might expect, the tunnel, though well-lit, is damp and claustrophobic and smells about what one expects two-thousand year old streets and sewers to smell. What one doesn't expect, at least I didn't, was to find people standing and

"CH: "But war is a god, as the ancient Greeks and Romans knew, and its worship demands human sacrifice. We urge young men to war, making the slaughter they are asked to carry out a rite of passage."
Q: But the Israeli Defense Force is truly admired.
CH: As is the Palestinian Martyr. "The soldier, neglected and shunned during peacetime, is suddenly held up as an exemplar of our highest ideals, the savior of the state. The soldier is often whom we want to become, although secretly many of us, including most soldiers, know that we can never match the ideal held out before us. And we all become like Nestor in The Illiad, reciting the litany of fallen heroes that went before to spur on a new generation. That the myths are lies, that those who went before us were no more able to match the ideal then we are, is carefully hidden from public view. The tensions between those who know combat, and thus know the public lie, and those who propagate the myth, usually ends with the mythmakers working to silence the witnesses of war."
Q: Yet the lie continues?
CH: Because "the task of carrying on violence, of killing, leads to perversion. The seductiveness of violence, the fascination with the grotesque—the Bible calls it 'the lust of the eye'—the godlike empowerment over other human lives and the drug of war combine, like the ecstasy of erotic love, to let our senses command our bodies."
The reinterpretation of history of the hatred and dangerous. But it is the bedrock and Jews are 'perverted,' and that Jews leads children learn 'infidels' pictures of Christians are 'perpetrating' and paint of the rest of Old Jerusalem the streets were more narrow and dark and the buildings less maintained. Adults walked close to building walls while children ventured out and played. Cooking smells permeated the air and whetted my appetite. Pictures of Arafat were everywhere. I have been in Arab cities—on the streets, in the bazaars, on the public transportation—and got caught up in their gritty raucosity:

The tunnel excavation is a major project and generated major interreligious conflict in a city where the smallest modifications are controversial. The tunnel is seen by Muslims as burrowing too close to the Mosque of the Golden Dome, as well as running under and exiting into a Muslim neighborhood: sort of like having a Mexico tunnel under San Diego for religious and archeological purposes.

"We will exit in the Arab section," Haim warned, "but I assure you there is no danger. Everything will be OK." Everything was OK, but our group was as nervous as a pack of small emerging rodents, blinking in the sunlight. We exited onto the Via Dolorosa—the route Christ carried the cross—and walked briskly through the neighborhood passing stations of the-cross placards embedded in building walls; there was no interaction between us and the Arabs—something as strange in an Arab area as a silent group of Italians. There were many people about and the silence was awkward, unsettling. Compared with much of the rest of Old Jerusalem the streets were more narrow and dark and the buildings less maintained. Adults walked close to building walls while children ventured out and played. Cooking smells permeated the air and whetted my appetite. Pictures of Arafat were everywhere. I have been in Arab cities—on the streets, in the bazaars, on the public transportation—and got caught up in their gritty raucosity: the people's desire to encounter you, to see who you are and size you up and know what you're doing. But these Jerusalem Arabs barely communicated with each other let alone with the measured steps of institutional orderlies; people trapped in an aberration; people surrounded by their slogans scrawled on walls and hung above doorways, by their martyr's pictures, by the "other." 9

Yasser Arafat had just died and Israel was on increased security alert, but I didn't want to walk briskly. I have been in Arab countries and although this was a bit edgy, there was something very familiar about it. I fell behind taking photos and caught the young boy's eyes. Standing next to a poster of Arafat, he maintained what I called from my years working in American prisons an x-ray look: A measured defiance, piecing together your story, recognizing you as an "other." People know when I'm in a prison, they know what I'm in.

Young, lovely, doors

About a thousand meters above the level of the canyons and the snow-capped mountains, is Safed, maybe Zefat. It's hard to say. No one says Zafat, it's Israel, and some say Zafat, it's Zefat. Israel is the same looking at the same group of people. Perhaps Gertrude Stein was right. A Zafat is a Zafat.

Safed is a place to play and dance drunk in. Arab children and hand pushed merry-go-rounds are seen in pocket parks where adults play in sleepy colonies, where numerous artists who live in Arab towns and some Jews are huddled together. Some shops are upscale and dark and the buildings less maintained. Adults walk close to building walls while children ventured out and played. Cooking smells permeated the air and whetted my appetite. Pictures of Arafat were everywhere. I have been in Arab cities—on the streets, in the bazaars, on the public transportation—and got caught up in their gritty raucosity: the people's desire to encounter you, to see who you are and size you up and know what you're doing. But these Jerusalem Arabs barely communicated with each other let alone interlopers emerging from tunnels below their houses. They went about their business with the measured steps of institutional orderlies; people trapped in an aberration; people surrounded by their slogans scrawled on walls and hung above doorways, by their martyr's pictures, by the "other." 9

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measured defiance, piercing through you to nothing, recognizing you as an "other," not needing your attention; I know when I'm in a prison, yet this was a boy on the street in his neighborhood.10

Young, lovely, doomed.

About a thousand meters above sea level, in the Galilean mountains, is Safed ... or maybe it's Zafat ... or maybe Zefat. It's hard to tell; a peculiar thing about Israel is the same location can have different official names or the same name spelled in different ways. Perhaps Gertrude Stein would have handled it: A Safed is a Zafat ... Or is it?

Safed is a place to play, where children and jungle gyms, and hand pushed merry-go-rounds, and teeter-totters are seen in pocket parks tucked between narrow streets where adults play in shops selling products made by numerous artists who have recently moved into town. Some shops are upscale and others are definitely not — they carry kitsch of varying interest, and they add a comfortable, seedy homeliness. It's a working artists' colony and you wander through it as the sun sets on a rose-hued Galilee and old stone buildings glow warm.

Zafat is also a holy place where 2nd and 3rd century Jewish scholars were influenced by the mountain mists and wrote mystical texts known as the Kabbala, and where another group of Sephardic Jewish scholars settled after being driven out of Spain in 1492. Shul is the Yiddish term for synagogue and Zafat is full of them, small ones, reminiscent of storefront evangelical churches found in American ghettos squirreled away in old stone buildings. Some Shuls are bigger than others and have an upper gallery to which women are relegated. Zafat is a place where old men sit amidst stone pavement painted with blue lines to keep out Satan, and a place of orthodox religious study and learning and oppression and pornography, where men and women study and pray in vastly different circumstances.

We had just finished visiting several Shuls—a step back in time to old world ghetto Germany or Poland—and were looking out over the Galilee reclining in an evening haze. We stood at the edge of a small promontory and one of Zafat's many green scrub-covered hills sloped gently away. Just below the promontory, at
the top of the slope, we saw a woman with a child sitting amidst the weeds and dirt reading the Talmud. Haim looked at them for a long quiet moment, and then said, "You can see this sight all around Zafat. She is reading the Talmud." We continued to watch her and she didn't move; sensing us, the child turned and looked at us with soft intelligent eyes. "Let me see if I have this right," I said in response to Haim, "the men are in the warm comfort of the Shul, and the women are in the dirt with the children." A long silence followed and Haim said nothing. Then, as we turned to leave, Katie, her wonderful red hair aglow, stared at me and said, "That's exactly the way it is Joe." Katie is another Reform Jew and this Judaism was as foreign to her as it was to me. Who are these Ultra-orthodox Jews, these people whose religiosity exempted them from Israeli military services and held the nation captive to an ancient myth of land and water and security?

A realization I came to in Israel is that my life has been as much a religious odyssey as it has any other kind. I agree with Graham Greene's statement that "...it takes years of brooding and of guilt, of self-criticism and of self-justification, to clear from the eyes the haze of hope and dreams and false ambitions." But unlike the Ultra-orthodox religious people in Zafat, all my hard work has left me without a religion, and perhaps with nothing. Maybe it's because I'm not willing to sacrifice enough. Like most Christian and Muslim fundamentalists, the Ultra-orthodox Jews have given up a lot. Religion dictates every aspect of their lives down to its daily minutiae and tedium: what is to be eaten, to be worn, to be done. I understand the human need for simplicity and absolutes, the need to feel that nothing will go right until the world is united in the "right" religious beliefs, and the devotion to prophecy as a means of controlling the otherwise unknowable future, particularly in times of war. But what I don't understand is after all the worldly freedoms are denied or cast aside in search of the surety and freedom of religious ecstasy, why then do the men in all such groups turn to their families as that final property they are unwilling to cast free? And why does their "care" of that property and their interpretations of the "law" always take the form of an obsession with women's bodies and imposed purity that seems just as pornographic as anything in secular society?

Global religious porn.

Tova approached Demis and members, near the electronic bulletin board, the Inbal Hotel. The Inbal Hotel during Sabbath (sundays) two of its four elevators automatically stop at the basement and do not allow the hotel guests to use them without having to press a button. "It's one-thirty," she asked Haim. "Are you referring to the injunction against sex during Sabbath?"

"I'm waiting for someone else from England for a tour." Tova was of medium height, two-piece, long and slim, her dress she had on a winter white, by a square multi-colored print. Her hair matched her earrings, pedic and set off by white booties, just above her knees.

Sensing the possibility of a challenge, she said, "Would you like to sit?"

"Yes," Tova said and pulled a pair of stuffed chairs in the corner of the lobby near a square table.

"Are you Jewish?" I asked, not hesitating to ask even if it seemed to be a "challenge."

"No," said Demis. "Then you don't know, do you?" Tova said, "At least in other religions, didn't it die and the IDF waged war against such beliefs?"

"Were you born here?" Tova's slight British accent was still evident.

"No, I came to Israel for my marriage."

"I can understand why you wouldn't stand a challenge of Tova's slight British accent and a challenge of being a natural-born citizen of Israel."

"What is this you're wearing?" Tova said, "I can understand why you wouldn't stand a challenge of being a natural-born citizen of Israel."

"I'm an American Jew."

"And why do you believe the Ultra-orthodox Jews are willing to give up so much for the sake of their families?"

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"And why do you believe the Ultra-orthodox Jews are willing to give up so much for the sake of their families?"
Tova approached Demis, another of our tour group members, near the elevators in the lobby of Jerusalem's Inbal Hotel. The Inbal is a kosher hotel, which means during Sabbath (sundown Friday until sundown Saturday) two of its four elevators are programmed to automatically stop at every floor so Orthodox Jews can use them without having to push buttons and thus break the injunction against work on Sabbath. “Do you have the time?” she asked Demis; evidently there is a similar prohibition against reading watches. “Yes,” Demis said, “it’s one-thirty.”

“I’m waiting for my mother,” Tova said. “She is here from England for a wedding. She’s not Orthodox though.” Tova was obviously Orthodox; her dress was two-piece, long and navy-blue with a print pattern of squares outlined in shiny green thread. Under her dress she had on a white turtleneck sweater accented by a square multi-colored pendant on a gold chain that matched her earrings. Her shoes were black and orthopedic and set off by white stockings probably extending just above her knees.

Sensing the possibility of local color, Demis said, “Would you like to sit while you wait?”

“Yes,” Tova said and they moved to the arrangement of stuffed chairs in the lobby.

“Are you Jewish?” said Tova—a question Israelis don’t hesitate to ask even in introductory conversations.

“No,” said Demis.

“Then you don’t understand what’s happening here do you?” Tova said. “Are you Israeli?”

“No,” Demis said, “I’m American.”

“Well then you really don’t understand.” Arafat had died and the IDF was on alert. The worst was anticipated.

“Were you born here?” Demis replied, now aware of Tova’s slight British accent, and warming up to the challenge.

“No, I came to Israel from Britain. It was an arranged marriage.”

“I can understand why,” Demis later told me, “she wouldn’t stand a chance otherwise.” Tova’s face was exceptional in that it was both chubby and hatched shaped, and held the outline of a faint five o’clock shadow. Her dark eyes were close-set and ferret-like and crowned by black eyebrows that grew together and didn’t match the light-brown cheap wig she wore.

Orthodox women are allowed to wear a wig instead of a hat to cover their hair—exposing one’s hair is thought to be sexually provocative, so it’s cut like a nuns and covered. She was plump… no, fat… and had a nervous habit of wiping her face with her left hand; she started on the left side of her nose, moved across her cheek, and ended by brushing her cheap wig. On the offending hand was a gold wedding band and a substantial diamond solitar. As another member of our group said sometime later, “She put the Jewish frum into frumpy.”

As Tova spoke her eyes darted, monitoring everything going on in the lobby. She talked, with little encouragement from Demis, about how dealing with the Palestinians was hopeless, and how Israel had a right to all the biblical lands, and how they should drive the Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank and be done with it. As she spoke and continued to ask even in introductory conversations. But unlike people in Zafat, all my Israeli military services friends, these people whose religious beliefs are an ancient myth of land. As Tova spoke her eyes darted, monitoring everything going on in the lobby. She talked, with little encouragement from Demis, about how dealing with the Palestinians was hopeless, and how Israel had a right to all the biblical lands, and how they should drive the Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank and be done with it. As she spoke and continued to ask even in introductory conversations. But unlike people in Zafat, all my Israeli military services friends, these people whose religious beliefs are an ancient myth of land. As Tova spoke her eyes darted, monitoring everything going on in the lobby. She talked, with little encouragement from Demis, about how dealing with the Palestinians was hopeless, and how Israel had a right to all the biblical lands, and how they should drive the Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank and be done with it. As she spoke and continued to ask even in introductory conversations. But unlike people in Zafat, all my Israeli military services friends, these people whose religious beliefs are an ancient myth of land. As Tova spoke her eyes darted, monitoring everything going on in the lobby. She talked, with little encouragement from Demis, about how dealing with the Palestinians was hopeless, and how Israel had a right to all the biblical lands, and how they should drive the Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank and be done with it. As she spoke and continued to ask even in introductory conversations. But unlike people in Zafat, all my Israeli military services friends, these people whose religious beliefs are an ancient myth of land. As Tova spoke her eyes darted, monitoring everything going on in the lobby. She talked, with little encouragement from Demis, about how dealing with the Palestinians was hopeless, and how Israel had a right to all the biblical lands, and how they should drive the Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank and be done with it. As she spoke and continued to ask even in introductory conversations. But unlike people in Zafat, all my Israeli military services friends, these people whose religious beliefs are an ancient myth of land.
Q: Yet this

MF: Yet such a limited obsession.

"The marriage relation was the most intense focus of constraints; it was spoken of more than anything else; more than any other relation, it was required to give a detailed accounting of itself. It was under constant surveillance: if it was found to be lacking, it had come forward and plead its case before a witness."

Q: But what?

MF: But this is far different than modern society, distinguished for the past three centuries by "the wide dispersion of devices that were invented for speaking about it (sex), for having it spoken about, for inducing it to speak of itself, for listening, recording, transcribing, and redistributing what is said about it; around sex a whole network of varying, specific, and coercive transpositions into discourse."

Q: So because we the enlightened—such as Reform Jews, Secular Jews, Humanistic Christians, Liberal Muslims—talk about sexual things so much we are no better off than the religiously sexually repressed?

MF: I don't know that. But what I do know is we are as much or more (sexually) observed, studied, known and controlled by the relations of power "ensured and relayed by countless economic interests which, with the help of medicine, psychiatry, prostitution, and pornography, have tapped into both this analytical multiplication of pleasure and this optimization of the power that controls it."

Q: And does this have much to do with war?

MVC: Yes, "from the vantage point of the present there appears every prospect that religious attitudes, beliefs, and fanaticisms will play a larger role in the motivation of armed conflict than it has, in the West at any rate, for the last 300 years. Already, the fastest growing religion in the world is Islam. While there are many reasons for this, perhaps it would not be so far fetched to say that its very militancy is one factor behind its spread."

A pretty scary thought, Demis later recalled, but instead said: "So the burden is on women to maintain purity?"

"Yes, of course. The woman distracts the man with inmodesty. It is the woman who is sometimes unclean."

"Unclean?"

"You know, when she has her period."

"She is unclean?
""Yes, and men are not allowed to touch an unclean woman."

"How do they know?"

"How do they know what?"

"When a woman is unclean."

"They don't. That's why they must never touch a woman who is not their wife."

"You mean not even to shake their hand?"

"Yes, of course."

"Doesn't that take a lot of concentration and energy?"

"What does?"

"Carrying on each day figuring how to avoid touching women."

"But it's what God wants."

"And you know that how?"

"It is written, it is the Law. And where would we be without the Law?"

Q: War against what?

MF: Not war against what, but as a strategy to regulate, to control."

Q: To control our bodies.

MF: To control our bodies and souls; to penetrate and know us."

Q: Yet this belief of women's impurity is Medieval.

MF: It is rooted in old codes of conduct, in the law, that "were all centered on matrimonial relations: the marital obligation, the ability to fulfill it, the manner in which one complied with it, the requirements and violence's that accompanied it, the useless or unwarranted caresses for which it was a pretext, its fecundity or the way one went about making it sterile, the moments when one demanded it (dangerous periods of pregnancy or breast feeding, forbidden times of lent or abstinence) its frequency or infrequency and so on."

Q: Quite obsessive.

MF: Yet such a limited obsession.

"The marriage relation was the most intense focus of constraints; it was spoken of more than anything else; more than any other relation, it was required to give a detailed accounting of itself. It was under constant surveillance: if it was found to be lacking, it had come forward and plead its case before a witness."

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God's laws, women's bodies.

We sat in a semi-circle with our backs to a large array of floor-to-ceiling windows and Jerusalem spread out beyond. The room was large, with white walls and blond woodwork, and the windows curved and framed a lovely city where sun and shade rippled together. Two women sat side-by-side in front of us as our center of attention: One was Leslie Sacks, Associate Director of World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUP); the other was Anat Hoffman, Executive Director of Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC).

"In Israel you make facts," Hoffman said, as she adjusted the sleeve of her gray tunic. She heads an organization whose literature claims is trying to achieve "Human Equality, Social Justice, and Religious Tolerance." From what I can tell, IRAC performs many functions the ACLU does in the U.S.

Like so many people in her business, she is dedicated, she is on a mission, she is a true believer, and she draws her strength from two sources: her grandfather, and her savvy of how things work in this part of the world. Hoffman's grandfather wrote extensively to her during his life. "Echoing in these letters is the voice of a magnificent generation of fighters and dreamers," Hoffman has written of her grandfather's letters, "pioneers who sanctified their lives in the building of a Jewish state in Eretz Yisrael. What comes through most clearly in my grandfather's letters is his basic perspective on life: 'We love those for whom we have done something, more than those who have done something for us.'"

But what of the savvy? What did she mean by "In Israel you make facts"?

A famous biologist once addressed a high school assembly in the U.S. and said: "The lifespan of a fact is shrinking." He explained that a long time ago facts would live as long as empires or kingdoms, or as long as the myths in which they were enshrined. But now facts have a much shorter half-life, lasting only as long as a war, or a term of office, or an economic recovery or depression. Once God's word was accessible and knowable and absolute, and the sun rotated around the Earth, and it was all created in six days. Today we manufacture our facts to last as long as we need them, and replace them with other facts when our needs change.

Israel is a fact. In fact, in our age it is THE FACT. Hoffman's grandfather and his compatriots came to
British Palestine and established Israel—they made a fact. They laid claim to the desert and turned it into an Eden, an achievement that Hebrew Bible times would surely have recorded as a miracle, and the New Testament as a fishes and loaves sort of thing. They plunked settlements where they wanted Israel to be and further defined THE FACT. They made Israel a technological and military fact because they understood the transitory nature of today’s facts, and that this fact called Israel would last only as long as they were willing to fight and die. They took the two thousand year fact of the Jewish Diaspora and made it an anvil, and the fact of the Holocaust and made it a sledge, and hammered out THE FACT of Israel.

Israel is a Jewish state, created by Jews for Jews: that is a fact. It was not created for the half-million or so Christians or Druze, or B'hia living in Israel, nor for the million Arabs also there; it exists for the four and a half million people who live there and consider themselves Jews. Most of the Jews in Israel, eighty percent, consider themselves secular—they do not practice Judaism. Only twenty-percent are devout, practicing Jews and they seem to be divided into as many sub-groups as there are stars in Jerusalem’s ancient night sky.

Despite their relatively small numbers, Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jews exert a powerful influence over Israel's government and Israeli daily life. On Shabbat no public transportation operates, no business is conducted, the country pretty much shuts down. Israel is a parliamentary democracy and the three major political parties, which are secular, split the vote; this means the party with the most votes, but not a majority, must go to the right-wing religious parties to form a governing coalition. In return for their cooperation, the religious parties demand and get an extraordinarily potent injection of religion into government—for a democracy, that is. If we put the mixing of church and state on a simple continuum, it would probably look something like this:

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<th>Iran</th>
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“Orthodox and Ultra-orthodox don’t believe men and women can worship together,” Hoffman explained, “and they believe women must not worship at the Western Wall holding the Torah and shawl. A group of women entered the Wall with the Torah and covered their heads, and thus were declared unclean. We complained to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and he ruled, ‘Women cannot enter the Wall and pray with a man.’ So, from a god’s point of view, our tour group—all but two—men—complained and were most displeased.

“So we continued to complain, and of course we could use a section of the Western Wall for any thousand year old gathers and we took their case to the court. We couldn't have done that in the U.S. or West Europe, and we took their case to the court. And the court heard the case and there were no women in the group, and tenderly ran her hand down the cheek of Leslie, received her hand, witnesses all were weeping into Leslie’s eyes, and Leslie has been much supported.

“The women had to take this robustly, ” Hoffman explained, “this was the final step, and for all resolve the matter this is the Supreme Court—this is the final step. The Supreme Court found for the ministry of religious affairs made such a decision and the court must hear their appeal. And the court, in the end, go of Leslie’s hand. “This is the Supreme Court decision of the Supreme Court who said it’s OK for Russian Israelis—let them eat pork.

Israel’s morale is being eroded by political unrest and corruption spreads at the highest levels. ‘The chiefs of staff have not been replaced by equal as they were twenty years ago; the chiefs of staff have not been replaced by equally as they were twenty years ago and their replacements have not been deemed as capable, as competent. Last, but most significant, is the climate—We must remain committed and the climate—We must remain committed and the climate—We must remain committed and the climate—We must remain committed...’
Israel—they made the half-million or so Jews living in Israel, nor for the four and a half million Jews worldwide to consider themselves anything but eighty percent, consider themselves practicing Jews and they were willing to be segregated into sub-groups as there would probably look

... and turned it into an Israelite garbage dump. The women refused and we took their case to the Israeli Supreme Court. We couldn't have done that without the hard work and wonderful support of Leslie," and she reached over and tenderly ran her hand down Leslie's arm until she received her hand, which she continued to hold. Looking into Leslie's eyes, Hoffman smiled and said, "Leslie has been much support and a wonderful friend."

"They wanted to know if this was the final step, if the Supreme Court would once and for all resolve the matter. Our lawyer said to them this is the Supreme Court—note the word 'Supreme'—this is the final step, there is no other. Well, the Court found for the women...but then the religious parties made such a stink that the Court decided to hear their appeal. An appeal!" said Hoffman, as she let go of Leslie's hand. "Who ever heard of an appeal of a Supreme Court decision!" This is the same Supreme Court who said it's OK for Kibbutz to raise pigs to sell to Russian Israelis—pigs, mind you!"

Let them eat pork.

Israel's morale is being undermined, its government is becoming less effective as lawlessness and corruption spread, and civilian control over the military is weakening as several successive chiefs of staff have made direct appeals to public opinion. Economically speaking the situation is equally bleak. Israel's GDP has begun to decline, causing its economic situation to worsen both in comparison with some Arab countries and, a fortiori, other developed ones; this is the first time in twenty years that has happened. With unemployment standing at 12 percent, immigration has all but ceased. Last, but not least, human losses are mounting."

Q: This would seem to be a fallback to the law to regulate through repression.
MF: Perhaps it is or perhaps it is a mixing of strategies, old and new.
Q: What do you mean?
MF: This was done quite publicly, no? It used modern media and organizations to involve the nation in a great sexual discussion. It remixed and linked religious, political, and judicial mechanisms of power to categorize, and examine, and isolate these women. It may have acted in their disfavor, but perhaps ultimately it may find it better to provide or tolerate an illicit space for them, while at the same time defining them as an exception; something outside the norm, unusual, extreme; something to be studied and 'worked with'; something to eventually be marginalized as is the Women's Movement in the U.S.
Q: These seem to be the strategies now used to control Palestinians, which also now involves a wall.

MVC: "Israel has no choice. Either it builds an iron wall and ridst itself of what Moshe Dayan once called 'the blemish of conquest'—even Ariel Sharon, in his more conciliatory moments, agrees or at least says he agrees there is simply no other way—or else it can have no future." Israel's victories have resulted in its occupation of Palestinian territories and "caused it to become bogged down in an endless counterinsurgency campaign against the much weaker Palestinians; as Napoleon used to say of Spain, the conflict has turned into a running ulcer."

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Israel is tribal: that is a fact. Each religious group lives in its own section of Jerusalem; even different sects of Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox live in different neighborhoods. On a national scale this is reflected by groups living in different towns: Christian towns and Druze towns and Moslem towns. Only in large, modern cities such as Tel Aviv and Haifa do Israelis mix to any extent; otherwise you have a nation of tribal people living parallel lives.

Tribalism is centered deep within the Israeli psyche. Hadassah Hospital is in Jerusalem and like many hospitals it contains a chapel for the sick and terrified. What makes this chapel unique though are the Chagall stained glass windows that frame its upper atrium; there are twelve very large windows, representing the original twelve tribes of Israel, and their colors mix and radiate like heat from glowing embers. Each window is an artistic masterpiece and must be considered by itself, as must each tribe. But stand in the middle of the chapel and rotate slowly and let the windows move by as if you were on a carousel: they blend together as the product of one creator—the ideal Israel.

Yet, despite the fact of mosaic Israel—many tribes, ethnic and religious groups—I wondered what it was that served as the lead strips holding all the Israeli pieces together. Israel has no constitution; the various tribes can't agree on one. It has little in the way of a body of common law; it's been in existence only since 1947. And although it has a Declaration of Independence, like all such documents it is better suited to fomenting a revolution than supporting a stable government. When I put the question to Haim, he said, "We have the Bible. That is our body of common law." Well, OK ... I guess. Except twelve tribes will interpret the Bible in twelve different ways, and yield twelve different sets of absolutes—hardly a foundation for a modern state's jurisprudence. No wonder one gets rulings like: the Wall is offended by women's voices.

Then I remembered something in *Culture Shock: Israel*, a book I read to prepare for this trip. It said the Army, the Israeli Defense Force, was the common experience that bound Israelis together. Almost all Israelis, men and women, must serve in the IDF; Arabs, Orthodox Jews, and Ultra-Orthodox Jews are exempt from the draft and that eighty percent fight.

But armies by their very nature hold a nation together: we have an army, but the reason we have an army in particular: the enforced solidarity of Israelis as a nation. Israel is in an almost constant state of war with other Arab terrorist groups.

Israeli and U.S. conflicts (LIC) with Arabs can never win because they can never win. No nation has ever won a war with a terrorist or guerrilla enemy do. You have to continue to fight an enemy, a nation, or an entire culture or ethnic group on their own terms or the U.S. can afford to just pack up everything they consider their own and start over. I said... I guess... I was looking for the binding force... The Army... I think it was the Army... I thought it was the Bible... I thought it was national tension... Maybe it is just internal conflict that since its inception has been leading to war with other nations... But this is something different... a binding force... Two thousand years ago the Romans didn't have a monopoly on holy war: they used to be monotheistic cultures... But the wars that were able to function were the wars that happened to the Diaspora. They couldn't but hate... Perhaps there is a way to look at the binding force and define your nation though your internal conflicts... perhaps ultimately you define your nation through your authentic culture and religion and govern as you develop that can on one hand internalize conflict, or
Religious group lives in different sects. Even different sects live in different towns. This is reflected by Christian towns and only in large, modern Israelis mix to any proportion of tribal people.

Israelis in the Israeli psyche. Like many, they are sick and terrified. Though are the Chagall upper atrium; there representing the original colors mix and radiate each window is an considered by itself, as middle of the chapel move by as if you father as the product Israel—many tribes, considered what it was all the Israeli pieces the various tribes the way of a body of only since 1947. of Independence, suited to foment­able government. he said, "We have a law." Well, OK interpret the Bible twelve different sets or a modern state's readings like: the Wall

So, since its inception, Israel has had the tragic luxury of existing in an understandable world of black and white: Individual conflicts have been minimized or sublimated; group conflicts simmer below a surface tension of national purpose and unity. The FACT is that since its inception, Israel has never had an opportunity to see if its different tribes can work well enough together to actually remain a nation without the help of the binding force provided by an ever-present enemy. Two thousand years have passed since the Jewish people were able to function as a nation. A lot of things have happened to the Diaspora in between, some so horrible they cannot but have had a severely wounding and perhaps ultimately self-defeating effect.

Perhaps there is a lesson to take: When you decide to define your nation through wars you can't win, you destroy authentic culture and your ability to exist without being involved in constant warfare; As the intimacy between religion and government increases, explosive pressures develop that can only be released through destructive internal conflict, or controlled through involvement in

from the draft and few serve voluntarily, which leaves that eighty percent group of secular Jews to do all the fighting.

But armies by themselves don't necessarily bind a nation together: what does the cementing is not the army, but the reason for the army (and this army, in particular): the enemy. It is the Arab enemies that bind Israelis as a nation. Since its formation Israel has been in an almost constant state of war, either conventional war with other Arab states, or the more morally invidious and destructive low intensity conflicts with Arab terrorist groups.

Israeli and U.S. involvement in Low Intensity Conflicts (LIC) with Arab terrorists are conflicts neither will ever win because they are wars without decisive battles. No nation has ever won an LIC, because the terrorist or guerilla enemy doesn't have to win—they just have to continue to exist and fight. To overcome such an enemy, a nation has to be prepared to destroy an entire culture or ethnic group or race, and neither Israel nor the U.S. can afford to do that without also giving up everything they say they stand for, thus destroying their own culture. 

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13CH: "War makes the world understandable, a black and white tableau of them and us. It suspends thought, especially self-critical thought. All bow before the supreme effort. We are one." In wartime the state seeks to destroy its own culture . . . By destroying authentic culture— that which allows us to question and examine ourselves and our society—the state erodes the moral fabric. It is replaced with a warped version of reality. The enemy is dehumanized; the universe starkly divided between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. The cause is celebrated, often in overt religious forms, as a manifestation of divine or historical will. All is dedicated to promoting and glorifying the myth, the nation, the cause."
"Power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms. Would power be accepted if it were entirely cynical? It must flow behind intentions masked as safety and order producing; it must regulate, demarcate, and arbitrate.

Q: With Israel it is, as always, the wall. But with the U.S. was it 9/11?
MF: No, it was when Kenneth Starr et al., hammered together new strategies, using existing mechanisms of power, that "invented a different kind of pleasure: pleasure in the truth of pleasure," wrote large via global media, "the pleasure of knowing that truth, of discovering and exposing it, the fascination of seeing it and telling it, of captivating and capturing others by it, of confusing it in secret, of luring it out in the open—the specific pleasure of the true discourse of pleasure."

Q: And linking this new religious-political-judicial-media arrangement to the tried and true dogs of war.
CH: Yes. First came 9/11: "War finds its meaning in death. The cause is built on the backs of victims, portrayed always as innocent. Indeed, most conflicts are ignited with martyrs, whether real or created. The death of an innocent, one who is perceived as emblematic of the nation or the group under attack, becomes the initial rallying point of war. These dead become the standard-bearers of the cause and all causes feed off a steady supply of corpses."

Q: And then the new arrangement is linked to the martyrs and folded back against itself to yield a willingness to accept yet another myth of moral certitude.
CH: "The moral certitude of the state in wartime is a kind of fundamentalism. And this dangerous messianic brand of religion, one where self-doubt is minimal, has come increasingly to color the modern world of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Dr. James Luther Adams, my ethics professor at Harvard Divinity School, used to tell us that we would end our careers fighting an ascendant fundamentalist movement, or, as he liked to say, 'the Christian fascists.' He was not a scholar to be disregarded, however implausible such a scenario seemed at the time. There is a danger of a growing fusion between those in the state who wage war—both for and against the modern state—and those who believe they understand and can act as agents for God.

"History is awash with beleaguered revolutionaries and lunatic extremists who were endowed with enough luck and enough ruthlessness to fill power vacuums. The danger is not that fundamentalism will grow so much as that modern, secular society will wither. Already mainstream Christianity, additional or continuous wars. But is there anything to look toward as a predictor?"

Let's take a hint from Haim and use what will likely be the most important source document referenced by the builders of Israel's future: the Old Testament. The social structure that this Bible establishes is both paternalistic and tripartite—and rigidly so in both respects. It differentiates those areas accessible to the mass of people from those accessible to the priestly class, and from those accessible only to God and His prophets, with but one—that of the masses—allowing women: a Jewish biblical structuring of social space inherited by both fundamentalist Islam and Christianity.

Tough, very tough.

Praise the Lord!
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty firmament!
Praise him for his mighty deeds;
praise him according to his exceeding greatness!
Praise him with trumpet sound;
praise him with lute and harp!
Praise him with timbrel and dance;
praise him with strings and pipe!
Praise him with sounding cymbals;
praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord!
——Psalm 150

(Parchment found at Masada)
there anything to
use what will likely
stament. The social
respects. It differs
ness of people from
ish biblical structur-
d. The current
battle between us and our Islamic radical foes can only
increase the reach of these groups.

"But whether the impetus is ostensibly secular or
religious, the adoption of the cause means adoption
of the language of the cause. When we speak within
the confines of this language we give up our
linguistic capacity to question and make moral choices."

11Robert Alter: "What enables this whole process
is a mode of ordering reality that (Mary) Douglas
characterizes as 'analogical thinking' . . . In analogous
thinking, reality is seen as a complex system of
correspondences in which given components may
throw light on their counterparts or actually symbolize
them.

"Leviticus, then, in Douglas's view is not in its deepest
concerns a series of regulations for butchering
sacrificial animals, purifying contaminated persons
and substances, and keeping unfit people away
from the sanctuary. Rather, it is an articulation of the
tripartite sacred architecture of creation. Its model
is the arrangement of space in the Sinai epiphany
as reported in Exodus: a large area at the foot of the
mountain in which the teeming multitudes of the
Israelites are assembled and from which they are
forbidden to go out; the lower slopes of the mountain
to which Aaron and seventy elders are permitted to
ascend and where they share a sacred feast in God's
presence; and the summit of the mountain, where
Moses alone may go. Douglas proposes three sets of
correspondences to this paradigmatic tripartite
structure. The first is the deployment of the sanctuary
and the zones around it, in which the vertical
scheme of the Sinai is transposed to a horizontal plane:
on the outside, the outer court, to which the people have
access; then the smaller area of the sanctuary proper,
restricted to the priests; and, within, the still smaller
site of the Holy of Holies.

Q: But why has this not been recognized before
Douglas?

RA: "She contends that, beginning with the separatist
party of Ezra and Nehemiah, who became the
conservators of the new scriptural canon, readers of
the priestly literary achievement were able to see it
only from the perspective of their own preoccupation
with fencing themselves off from the surrounding
people and preserving themselves from external
contamination."

Q: Yes, it's always about fences and walls and safety,
isn't it?

MF: And bodies.
REFERENCES


Israel Religious Action Center: www.irac.org

