

# SHALOM

*Jewish Peace Letter*

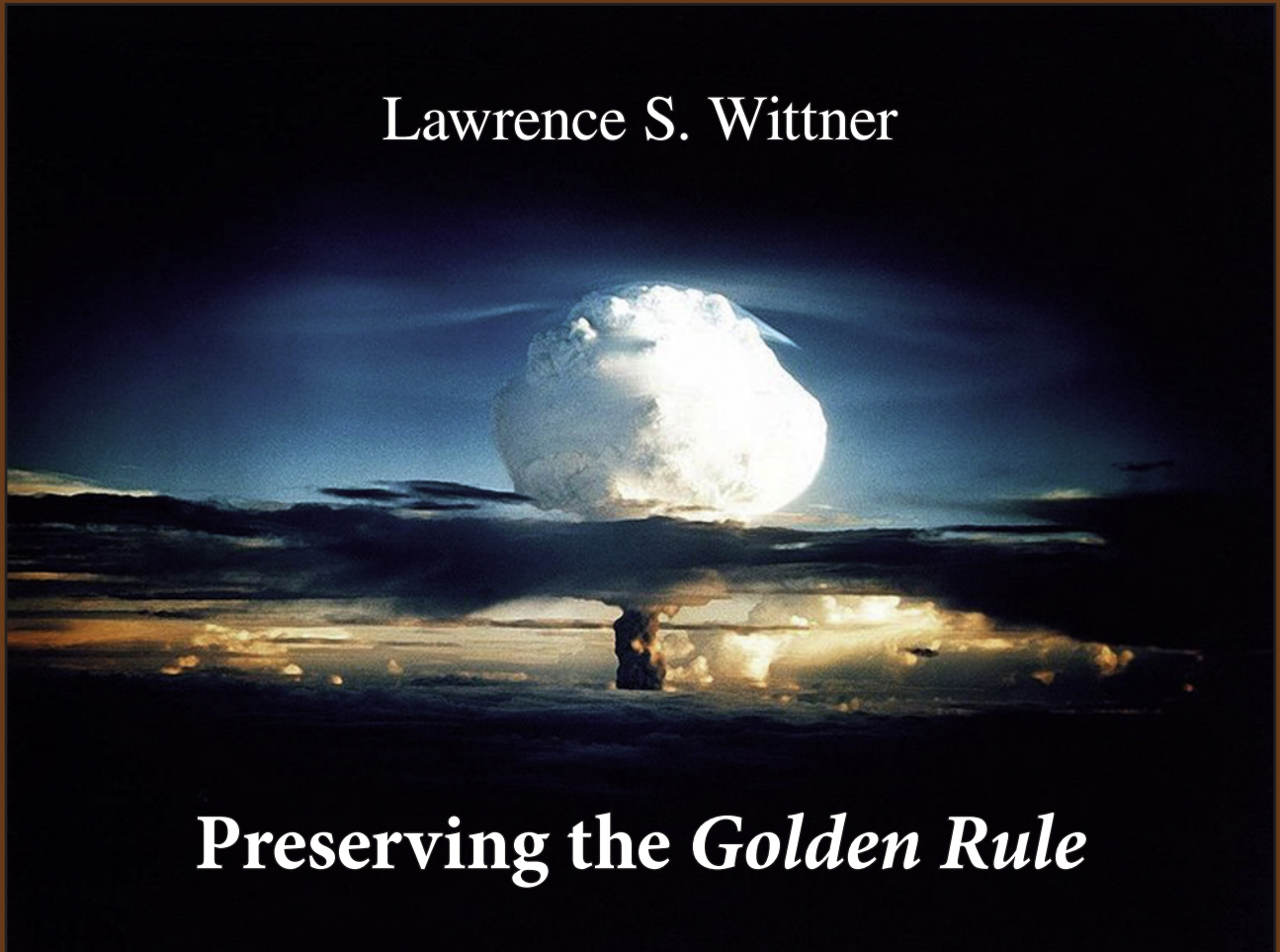
Vol. 39 No. 2

*Published by the Jewish Peace Fellowship*

March 2010

*"...our voices have been lost in the massive effort of those responsible for preparing this country for war. We mean to speak now with the weight of our whole lives."*

Lawrence S. Wittner



## Preserving the *Golden Rule*

*Plus*

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# Stefan Merken

## Notes From Where I Sit

Stefan Merken is chair of Jewish Peace Fellowship.

**J**ERUSALEM (AP) — ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS agreed to begin indirect, American-brokered talks, the U.S. Mideast envoy announced Monday — ending a 14-month deadlock in peacemaking and representing the Obama administration's first substantive diplomatic achievement here.

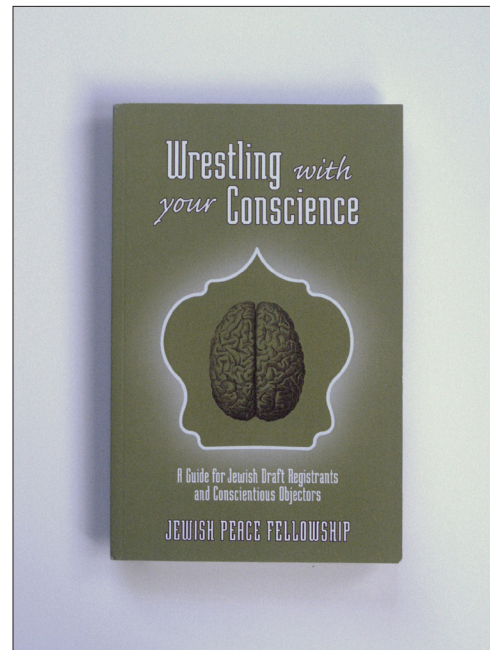
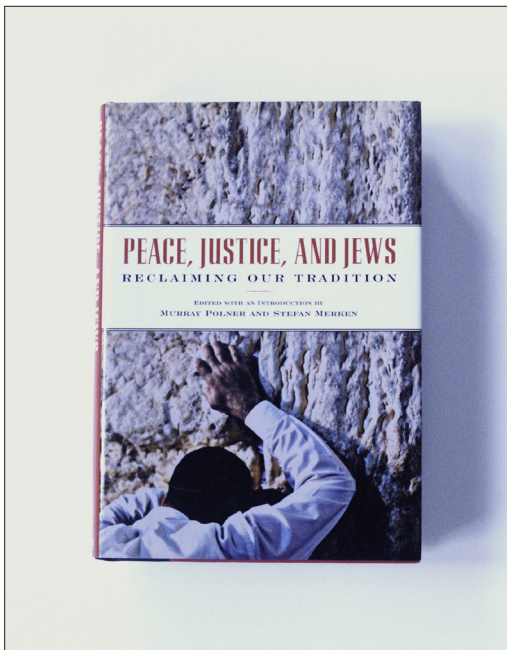
As I do most mornings; I turned on my computer and up came the news of the day. The above news item was the best news I could have read. At least they are talking — indirectly, American-brokered — but who cares? The two sides are talking. From talking comes understanding, from understanding comes compassion, and from compassion comes peace. Let us hope they keep talking.

The following e-mail arrived in my in-box from a neighbor. A few months ago I gave him a copy of *Peace, Justice and Jews*, a book Murray Polner and I edited two years ago (available from the JPF office), in hopes of influencing him to become more informed about the issues that drive the JPF. He is an old friend and when I moved into my current Seattle neighborhood I learned that he lived nearby.

*So I have this moment to thank you for making me buy a copy of your book, the one you edited and for which you contributed a piece on the AA/JCJ (African American/ Jewish Coalition for Justice). I couldn't help but read the piece by Rabbi Michael Robinson, the rabbi of our shul in Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y., when I was in high school. He was a real guiding force for me, and helped me work out the issue of draft resistance. In our small town, Peekskill, N.Y., where my dad owned a store and was chair of the Chamber of Commerce for a while. It was something like*

*heresy for me to apply to the draft board for CO status. Consider that I was a cadet at Peekskill Military Academy, graduated near the top of my class, and that Dad was a WWII vet. Yet with a little help from the Rabbi, I worked this out with my folks and my conscience . . .*

You can only imagine how surprised and delighted I was to have received his note. At the age of 17 I had turned to the JPF for draft / CO advice, and it was Rabbi Michael Robinson who had helped in the process of applying and my receiving a CO classification.



The JPF has re-edited and reprinted *Wrestling with your Conscience*. This is a guide for Jewish draft registrants and those who might one day consider applying for CO status should a draft be re-instated. (All young men *still* need to register within 30 days of their 18th birthday). We consistently get requests for this booklet from young people. In addition, *Roots of Jewish Non-violence* is being updated, re-edited and

reprinted and will soon be available from the JPF office in Nyack.

You are reading the second issue of the new online SHALOM newsletter. I am personally proud of the high quality and content of the articles that appear in this newsletter. The online aspect has allowed the JPF to continue to publish our newsletter. The mailing and the printing of the previous newsletter had become our largest budget item. *This brings me to the issue of donations.* The JPF needs your donations to continue to be a voice in the Jewish community and the peace communities. There are other voices of peace out there but none that have the history and the direction that the JPF holds. It is only with your continued support that we can continue to influence young people to hold the banner of JPF high. Please help us to keep going and to continue our voice. ☆



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E. James Lieberman

## The Personal Cost of Killing: A Comment

*E. James Lieberman, M.D., M.P.H., is Clinical Professor of Psychiatry Emeritus at George Washington University School of Medicine.*

**T**HE ANSWER TO WHY SO MANY SOLDIERS HAVE COMMITTED suicide since the onset of the Iraq War obviously has many pieces. Perhaps military and civilian psychiatrists should read *On Killing*, by Col. Dave Grossman (Little Brown, 2nd ed. 2009).

A military historian, psychologist and consultant on the training of police as well as troops, Grossman examines the revolution in military training that dealt with the fact that the number of troops who fired at a visible enemy in World War II and Korea (and before) increased. In Vietnam, thanks to new training methods, including sophisticated conditioning and even the use of psychiatric medication, 90 percent of our troops fired at the enemy, compared with fewer than 20 percent of troops — on all sides — in earlier wars.

U.S. Vietnam troops who effectively resisted killing visible enemies — or those who did in fact kill — later experienced post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at high rates. Grossman ties this outcome in the Vietnam era to the overthrow of natural inhibitions, coupled with inadequate preparation for reintegration to nonviolent life at home. In Iraq and Afghanistan the training is efficient, but the reintegration is fouled up by sequential tours of duty, and the whole war effort is cloaked in public ambivalence. Success and failure — i.e., making and breaking soldiers — depends upon training methods,

unit cohesion, public support of the mission, and gradual readjustment to civilian life while maintaining buddy contact.

The truth is that many recruits are de facto conscientious objectors who realize this only after it is too late to apply for that status. Grossman finds that only 3 percent of male soldiers are uninhibited about killing, and that these men show psychopathic

characteristics (lack of empathy, underdeveloped social conscience). They are a small part of the population but a relatively large percentage of criminals.

News and entertainment media exaggerate the ease of killing in general and the prevalence of psychopaths and violent crime. We have a distorted notion of how easy it is to kill in battle. It is only easy from a distance: artillery, warships, high-altitude bombers and, of course, drones. It is not easy for normal people to kill face-to-face. Ironically, restoring hardened yet battle-weary troops to civilian life is a major challenge because conscientious objection to killing is normal.

These findings shed much light on our military's current suicide problem. Clinicians and researchers — and citizens generally — must take full account of the disinclination to kill and the consequences of undoing that inhibition. To some, our inherent baseline nonviolence implies weakness. To others it reflects what most religions and humanists teach: respect for all of God's children, and a clear disjunction between warfare and

moral values. In any case, the phenomenon of innate — and socially essential — pacifism must be considered if we hope to succeed in reducing PTSD and suicide among our servicemen and women. ☆



*Normandy American National Cemetery and Memorial, Omaha Beach, Normandy, France. Photo: Storm Crypt/Flickr.com.*

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## Lawrence S. Wittner

# Preserving the *Golden Rule*

Lawrence S. Wittner is Professor of History at the State University of New York/Albany. His latest book is *Confronting the Bomb: A Short History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement* (Stanford University Press).

**T**HE *GOLDEN RULE* IS IN DANGER. NO, NOT THE FAMED ethical code — though proponents of selfishness certainly have ignored it — but a 30-foot sailboat of the same name that rose to prominence about half a century ago.

The remarkable story of the *Golden Rule* began in the late 1950's, as the world public grew increasingly concerned about preparations for nuclear war. In the United States, the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE) was launched in November 1957, and polls showed rising uneasiness about the nuclear arms race — especially giant atmospheric nuclear weapons tests that spewed radioactive fallout around the globe.

Although SANE quickly became the largest peace organization in the United States, smaller groups, committed to civil disobedience, sprang up as well. One of them, Non-Violent Action Against Nuclear Weapons, drew the participation of Albert Bigelow, a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy during World War II. With the bombing of Hiroshima, Bigelow had concluded that “morally, war is impossible,” and a month before he became eligible for his pension, he resigned from the U.S. Navy Reserve. Joining the Society of Friends, he plunged into the growing campaign of resistance to nuclear weapons.

In January 1958, Bigelow and three other pacifists wrote to President Dwight Eisenhower of their plan to sail the *Golden Rule* into the U.S. nuclear testing zone in the Pacific. “For years we have spoken and written of the suicidal military preparations of the Great Powers,” they declared, “but our voices have been lost in the massive effort of those responsible for preparing this country for war. We mean to speak now with the weight of our

whole lives.” They hoped their act would “say to others: Speak Now.”

Of course, this was just what the government most feared. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) officials, and the U.S. Navy brass began frantic conversations on how to counter the pacifist menace. The U.S. commander-in-chief in the Pacific warned that this group of “Communists or misguided humanitarians” hoped to either “stop tests by preventing us from firing . . . or if we did fire and killed a few people” to “create additional anti-atomic test support.” Eventually, the administration decided to have the AEC issue a regulation blocking entry by

U.S. citizens into the test zone, while intelligence agencies swapped data on Bigelow, including information on his private telephone conversations and legal plans.

Meanwhile, captained across a stormy Pacific by Bigelow, the *Golden Rule* arrived in Honolulu, where a U.S. federal court issued an injunction barring the rest of its voyage. Nevertheless, the four pacifists decided: “We would sail — come what may. “And they did. Overtaken by the U.S. Coast Guard on



The “Baker” explosion, Bikini Atoll, Micronesia, July 25, 1946. Water released by the explosion was highly radioactive and contaminated many of the ships that were set up near it. Those which could not be decontaminated were sunk a number of miles off the coast of San Francisco. Photo: U.S. Department of Defense via Wikipedia.

their journey to Eniwetok, they were arrested, tried, convicted, and placed on probation. Undaunted, they set sail once more on the *Golden Rule* for the very heart of darkness, that section of the Pacific unilaterally cordoned off by the U.S. government for its hydrogen bomb tests. Once again, their voyage was halted by U.S. authorities, and they were arrested, tried, convicted and — this time — given 60-day sentences and imprisoned.

But their example proved contagious. An American anthropologist, Earle Reynolds, his wife Barbara, and their two children attended the final trial in Honolulu, and concluded not only that the government was lying about the dangers of radioactive fallout, but lacked the constitutional authority to explode nuclear weapons in the Pacific. As a result, determined to complete the voyage of the *Golden Rule*, they set sail for Eniwetok aboard their

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own sailing vessel, the Phoenix. On July 1, Reynolds went on the radio to announce that they had entered the nuclear testing zone. Soon thereafter he was arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced to a two-year prison term.

These events, which received considerable publicity, triggered a surge of activism. Picket lines sprang up around federal buildings and AEC offices all across the United States. In San Francisco, 432 residents — proclaiming that they were guilty of “conspiring” with crew members — petitioned the U.S. Attorney to take legal action against them. Reynolds, out on bail before a higher court ruled in his favor (and, implicitly, in favor of the crew of the *Golden Rule*), gave a large number of talks on radio and television, as well as to college, high school and church audiences, on the dangers of nuclear testing.

Not surprisingly, government officials were horrified. Appearing on CBS television, AEC chair Lewis Strauss, implied — as he often did when discussing critics of nuclear weapons — that the whole thing was part of a Communist conspiracy. “At the bottom of the disturbance there is a kernel of very intelligent, deliberate propaganda,” he insisted.

Subsequent events went badly from Strauss’s standpoint. Within a short time, he was ousted from office, and the Eisenhower administration — barraged by public protests against

nuclear testing — felt obliged to halt it and begin negotiations on a test ban treaty. In 1963, these negotiations culminated in the signing of the Partial Test Ban Treaty, which ended atmospheric nuclear tests by the great powers. SANE and other peace groups were delighted with this first nuclear arms control treaty, as was Bigelow, who only two years before had challenged authority once more, this time as a Freedom Rider.

As for the aging *Golden Rule*, it has now drifted into obscurity, and is currently housed in a small shipyard in Eureka, Calif., whose owner, Leroy Zerlang, would like to save it from destruction. If the Smithsonian or another museum decided to preserve the ship, it would provide a fine symbol to future generations of the courageous men who sailed it, of government efforts to halt their activities, and of a nation that ultimately turned against nuclear weapons and nuclear war. ☆

*A slightly revised version of this article was published in the History News Network [www.historynewsnetwork.org].*

*Cover photo:* Nuclear weapon test Mike on Eniwetok Atoll, the first hydrogen bomb ever tested, Nov. 1, 1952. U. S. Department of Energy/nuclearweaponarchive.org

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## Elaine G. Schwartz

### Gaza

What is so compelling as the eyes of a child?  
Crossing the green line of innocence, the eyes of a child

Cluster bombs scatter willfully across the schoolyard  
Bring a deadly game of hopscotch to the eyes of a child

Grains of white desert sand sift through broken fingers  
Measure time until bullets silence the whys of a child

Ancient tongues proclaim the death knell of olive trees  
Pomegranates bleed through the milky sighs of a child

The village tailor sews bones together again and again  
A basket of figs brings moon-silver delight to the eyes of a child

The pregnant white mare canters across the village square  
Her steaming nostrils caress the wind-tossed sighs of a child

Hold tight the ancient house key, the well worn walking stick  
Leather sandals stir the dust but cannot mute the cries of a child

The crescent moon sheds silent grace upon the village ruins  
And you, Esther, are lost in the questioning eyes of a child

*Elaine G. Schwartz lives in Aluquerque, New Mexico.*



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Rela Mazali and Ruth Hiller

## Silencing Dissent in Israel

*Rela Mazali is an Israeli researcher and feminist peace activist engaged in efforts to end Israel's occupation of conquered territories. She is one of the founders of New Profile.*

*Ruth Hiller is a founder of New Profile. Four of her children have refused to serve in the Israeli military; her oldest son, Yinnon, was the first Israeli pacifist to receive an exemption from the military via an appeal to the High Court of Justice.*

FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS, WE HAVE FACED A SERIES OF direct challenges to our longtime efforts to demilitarize state and society in Israel. In March 2008, New Profile was notified that its nonprofit status was under review by the official body in charge of nonprofits in Israel, the Fellowship of Societies Registrar. At the end of May 2008, New Profile learned that a right-wing nonprofit had petitioned the High Court of Justice to instruct the Registrar to revoke our legal status and effectively block our legal funding channel. Then, in September 2008, the State Prosecutor's office announced a criminal investigation of New Profile's activities.

Six months later, in April 2009, this was followed by a highly publicized police raid immediately prior to Israel's Memorial Day, which clearly drew on emotions aroused by the rituals commemorating military dead. Police knocked at the doors and searched the homes of six New Profile activists across the country, summoning them for interrogation. Personal computers, including some belonging to family members, were impounded and held (in most cases) for a month. Over the following two weeks, eight more activists were interrogated regarding their activities and connections with New Profile.

On Nov. 1, 2009, over a year after announcing a criminal investigation, the State Prosecutor's Office notified the High Court of Justice that it was terminating proceedings against New Profile for lack of culpability and lack of evidence. On Jan. 26, 2010, we received notification from the Registrar's office that its investigation too had been concluded. The Registrar recommended that the High Court announce its dismissal outright of the petition to declare New Profile illegal and ineligible for financial support. We still await the final decision of the High Court of Justice, at the hearing set for later this year, although, given the above, this official ruling is apparently a formality.

While we are clearly relieved that this turn of events has been resolved without incriminating the activities and activists of New Profile, the process has required a great deal of energy, attention and other organizational resources. Meanwhile, we are also witnessing intensified attempts on the part of other branches

of government to silence the dissenting voice that New Profile represents. The Ministry of Education is the leading player in a relatively new attempt to gag us.

Notably, on Dec. 1, 2009, hundreds of high school principals were summoned to hear Israel's Chief of Staff expound his views on the significance of education for enlistment. A peaceful attempt by New Profile activists to offer participants leaflets questioning the militarization of Israeli education was forcibly blocked by security guards and later by the police. Later, in mid-December, Hebrew media channels reported a directive from the Minister of Education that bars high schools from hosting New Profile speakers. This, in turn, led to the cancellation of New Profile participation in a series of high school events dedicated to human rights and civic freedoms, including freedom of expression. The series, organized by the highly respected Association for Civil Rights in Israel, was consequently cancelled altogether.

These moves are symptomatic of militarized considerations that increasingly constrict the space for free civil debate. Part of a declared government policy to stem a growing nonconscription movement, such educational policies intentionally feed future conscripts' propensity for uncritical, blind obedience, of the kind that can produce behaviors such as those seen in Gaza in December-January 2009.

The above steps are just a single part of a much wider drive to silence dissent and opposition that is being conducted by the government in tandem with its supporting (and very well supported) nonprofit groups. Some other aspects of this campaign include: a revamped, vitriolic public campaign against refusal to serve in the military; smear campaigns aimed at other nonprofits, and most pointedly at those that supported the findings and recommendations of the UN-issued Goldstone Report; personal witch hunts against progressively leaning personages such as former Knesset Member and current New Israel Fund president, Prof. Naomi Chazan; the arrest and imprisonment of Palestinian activists leading nonviolent protests; and, increasingly, detention and deportation of international activists.

Drawing on the vital resource of your support and encouragement, and despite the onslaught, New Profile continues its entire scope of activities. While maintaining a publicly voiced critical analysis of the militarization of Israeli society and, in particular, of Israeli education, we continue to support the young refusers who currently face increasing demonization, and to create safe spaces for young people who wish to discuss and examine their roles in state and society. ☆

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Patrick Henry

## Why We Need Heschel Today

*Patrick Henry is Cushing Eells Emeritus Professor of Philosophy and Literature at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington.*

**I**N OUR 21ST-CENTURY WORLD, WITH ITS NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION and longraging generational conflicts, there will never be peace until there is peace among religions. For so long, organized religion has been such an enormous impediment to peace that it is difficult to imagine a peaceful future without a major worldwide religious contribution.

Fortunately, on Oct. 11, 2007, in the form of a 29-page letter, entitled “A Common Word Between Us and You,” addressed to Christian leaders in the world, 138 Muslim scholars and clerics from across the globe issued a proposal for dialogue and solidarity. This invitation to work together for peace cites the Qur’an, the Torah and the Christian Scriptures and is based on the belief that Christianity and Islam “share the basic principles of worshiping one God and loving thy neighbor.” The authors argue that “Without peace and justice between these two communities” — communities that constitute 55 percent of the world’s population — “there can be no meaningful peace in the world.”<sup>1</sup>

On Nov. 18, 2007, roughly 300 Christian theologians and clerics signed their enthusiastic response to the Muslim initia-

tive. On Feb. 25, 2008, the same Muslim clerics and scholars addressed the Jewish community in “A Call to Peace, Dialogue and Understanding Between Muslims and Jews.” The wholeheartedly favorable Jewish response to the Muslim proposal, “Seek Peace and Pursue It,” was issued on March 3, 2008 by the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.

We need Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel today because no one better than he formulated the preconditions necessary for successful interfaith dialogue. In order to bring people of faith

together, he argued, people of faith must open themselves up to others at the level of faith. They must recognize that faith, love and understanding transcend dogma and unite all believers. The practice of detachment from one’s doctrines enables us to receive the viewpoints of others in new and profound ways. The fundamental principle of interfaith dialogue, writes Heschel, is that “God is greater than religion [and] faith is deeper than dogma.”<sup>2</sup> We do not have to give up our ideas, only our attachment to them, so that an excessive attachment to dogma does not prevent us from hearing the legitimate claims of others.

Religion, for Heschel, is a means, not an end in itself. One must not make a God of one’s religion which is only a means of tak-

ing us to God. “To equate religion and God,” Heschel reminds us, “is idolatry” (p. 243). When we recognize that we are all united by our faith in God, Heschel suggests, we are able to perceive the holiness and validity of other religions. Rather than wanting to claim that our religion offers the only way to salvation, we begin to appreciate the richness of other faiths and our spiritual connections to them.

During the 1960’s, no one took on the interfaith challenge



*Augustin Cardinal Bea (right) shakes hands with Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel at a meeting arranged in 1963 by the American Jewish Committee and endorsed by Pope Paul VI. Photo: American Jewish Committee archives/United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.*

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<sup>1</sup> “A Common Word Between Us and You” can be found at [www.Acommonword.com](http://www.Acommonword.com). See also “Loving God and Neighbor Together: A Christian Response to ‘A Common Word Between Us and You,’” *New York Times*, “Week in Review” (Nov. 18, 2007), 4. “A Call to Peace, Dialogue and Understanding Between Muslims and Jews” can be found at [www.mujca.com/muslimsandjews.htm](http://www.mujca.com/muslimsandjews.htm). “Seek Peace and Pursue It” can be found at [www.wfn.org/2008/03/msg00012.html](http://www.wfn.org/2008/03/msg00012.html).

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<sup>2</sup> Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, edited by Susannah Heschel (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1996), 287. All references to Heschel are to this edition and are inserted parenthetically in the text.

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more directly, forcefully and creatively than Rabbi Heschel. Two fundamental ideas lie at the heart of his ecumenism: “No religion is an island” and “Holiness is not the monopoly of any particular religion or tradition” (pp. 237; 247). Working together with Christians, teaching at Union Theological Seminary with Protestant and Catholic students in his classes, created new possibilities for insights and learning. Heschel celebrated this atmosphere of increasing mutual esteem between Christians and Jews and, with a remarkable generosity and originality, reached out and embraced Christianity. Strikingly, in his March 1966 “Interview at Notre Dame,” he remarked: “A Jew, in his own way, should acknowledge the role of Christianity in God’s plan for the redemption of all men... I recognize in Christianity the presence of holiness. I see it. I sense it. I feel it. You are not an embarrassment to us and we shouldn’t be an embarrassment to you” (p. 387). Heschel was the first Jew to receive an honorary degree from a Catholic institution and the first Jew to hold the Fosdick Visiting Professorship at Union Theological Seminary. Two months before he died, in Rome, he spoke for the only time at an interfaith conference that included Muslims. He spoke in favor of dialogue, stressed the specific continuity between Islam and Judaism, proclaimed that “The God of Israel is also the God of Syria [and] the God of Egypt,” and predicted that “the enmity between [these] nations will turn into friendship.”<sup>3</sup>

Recognizing the holiness of other religions and our ability to

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<sup>3</sup> Edward K. Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical. Abraham Joshua Heschel in America, 1940-1972* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 366-367.

be spiritually nourished and transformed by them means ending all attempts to convert others. There will never be peace among religions until people of all religions are treated with respect and reverence by people of all religions. To that end, we must be on the side of dialogue, understanding and communion and opposed to exclusivist concepts of salvation, denigration of other religions, and attempts to convert others. Despite his embrace of Christianity, Heschel spoke out forcefully when asked about conversion of the Jews: “I’d rather go to Auschwitz than give up my religion,” (p. 405) he asserted. Heschel affirmed repeatedly that “religious pluralism is the will of God” (pp. 244; 254; 272) and objected to other religions being relegated to an inferior status: “Are the Jews and Mohammedans unable to pray or address themselves to God?” (p.381), he asks. Elsewhere he answers his own question by citing Pope John XXIII’s *Pacem in Terris*: “Every human being has the right to honor God according to the dictates of an upright conscience” (p. 288).

Like his friend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Heschel realized that peace will come when peace becomes the road to peace. Religions will be at peace with one another when the sanctity of the great religious traditions is mutually recognized and respected. This can only happen through a dialogue of equals which will lead to reconciliation, renewal, communion and a profound recognition that, as Heschel words it, “Christianity, Islam and Judaism are part of God’s design for the redemption of all men,” (p. 249) and that “God is either the father of all men or of no man” (p. 398). ☆

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## Carol Hoffman

# Nathaniel Hoffman, 1916-2009

ON DEC. 12, 2009, MY FATHER NATHANIEL “NAT” HOFFMAN died peacefully at his home in Laguna Woods, Calif. Nat was a staunch supporter of peace and equality for all people, and through his work and his life he served the peace and civil rights movements in many ways.

During World War II, Nat performed alternative service with the Civilian Public Service agency as a conscientious objector (CO). After being rejected by his local draft board, he had to appeal to the state appeal board and then the presidential appeal board. His experiences were featured in a chapter in Heather T. Frazer and John O’Sullivan’s *We Have Just Begun to Not Fight* (Twayne, 1996).

After his discharge, he was concerned about finding work, given that he hadn’t served in the military, in particular as a Jewish man in a war against the Nazis. However, as a CO he became

familiar with many Quakers and pacifists, including the Fellowship of Reconciliation. It was those contacts that became the basis for his CPA practice and clients, among them Friends World College, CORE and other civil rights organizations, the War Resisters League and the Jewish Peace Fellowship. His clients also included publishers, television executives, writers and artists of New York’s liberal community.

Nat is survived by his beloved wife of 61 years, Lotte (née Goldberg), and their three children, Carol, Peter and Janice; their partners and spouses, three siblings, three grandsons, and many nephews and nieces. Donations in Nat’s memory may be sent to the Jewish Peace Fellowship, POB 271, Nyack, N.Y. 10960, and to South County Adult Day Services, 24300 El Toro Rd., Bldg. A, Laguna Woods, Calif. 92637. ☆



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## Allan Solomonow

# Vietnam and the Jewish Peace Fellowship

*Allan Solomonow, a Jewish pacifist who has been working for Palestinian-Israeli peace issues since 1970, was one of the first advocates of a “two-state solution.” He has just retired after directing the Middle East peace program of the American Friends Service Committee (San Francisco office) for 25 years.*

**I**FIRST HEARD OF THE JEWISH PEACE FELLOWSHIP IN 1962. I was increasingly distressed by America’s still invisible but growing involvement in Vietnam and sought draft counseling in Berkeley, where I was studying.

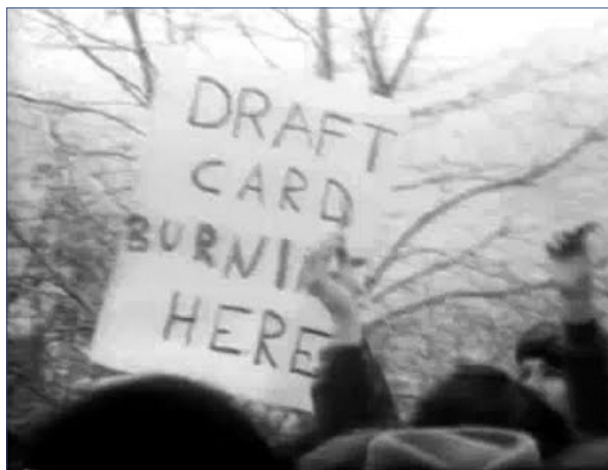
Admittedly, wrestling with my CO status was difficult. My father had been a colonel in the infantry and had seen combat in the Philippines, where he was wounded and received a Bronze Star. Once discharged, he became an officer in the Jewish War Veterans. His life inspired me to join the Reserve Officers Training Corps in high school with the hope of entering one of the military academies. Until Vietnam I thought I could reconcile my humanitarian passion with my great admiration for the military. But finally I recognized that my commitment to peace and justice would be severely compromised by military service, which led to my study of Judaism and to teaching it in Los Angeles’ Hebrew schools.

After working on my CO application someone referred me to the Jewish

Peace Fellowship in New York in order to strengthen my application. As a result I corresponded with Rabbi Arthur Gilbert in New York City, a contact for the Jewish Peace Fellowship. He was encouraging and helped with the letter I submitted to my draft board.

In 1965 I moved to New York City and visited Rabbi Gilbert at his office at the Anti-Defamation League. He invited me to attend JPF board meetings. To my delight I found people of like mind, though I was the youngest in the room. One of them was Rabbi Isidor Hoffman, the Columbia University rabbinical chaplain, who had just retired and who invited me to help assist in draft counseling.

All this time my draft status had been pending. My draft board in Los Angeles simply didn’t know what to do with a draft refusal based on Jewish values, and kept deferring me. Even so, at a peace demonstration in Connecticut in the summer of 1967, I tore my signature off an extra copy of my draft registration card. The following spring I was sentenced to a year in federal prison for “mutilating” a Selective Service document. For this “crime” I entered Allenwood Federal Prison in October 1968. I was not alone. About a quarter of the prisoners were refusers, mostly Jehovah’s Witnesses, but there were no Jews. As I had a teaching cre-



**Draft Card Burning Here.** Antiwar demonstrators protest in New York City’s Central Park and march to the United Nations building, October 21, 1967. Photo: Vidcap from Universal-International Newsreel, via <http://publicdomainclip-art.blogspot.com>.

## SHALOM *Jewish Peace Letter*

Published by the Jewish Peace Fellowship • Box 271 • Nyack, N.Y. 10960 • (845) 358-4601  
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*Established in 1941*

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*Signed articles are the opinions of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the JPF.*

dential I was assigned to help teach basic literacy to moonshiners and inner-city blacks in the prison's educational program.

The late 60's were a time of growing resistance to the draft and opposition to the war in Vietnam. Many members and leaders of the antiwar movement were young Jews, and the JPF emerged as an active player in religious opposition to the war, though until then it hadn't been an "activist" organization.

By 1969, following my release from Allenwood prison, Naomi Goodman, one of the more prominent members of the JPF's board, a writer, feminist historian and poet, offered my family her summer home in East Hampton as a place of rest and reflection while I returned to "normal life." While driving to Naomi's on Long Island's East End, she told me how the war had placed great pressures on the JPF. There were not enough Jewish counselors in the New York area and virtually none around the country. Clearly we needed to produce printed materials as quickly as possible. Naomi then broached the possibility of my becoming JPF's first paid staff person.

At that time we knew several Jewish CO's from my work with the Workshop in Nonviolence in New York City, but very few who had based their conscientious objection on Judaism and its moral and ethical teachings. Most young Jews I encountered felt their only option was to evade the draft through medical deferments or by leaving the country. As for myself, I filed my CO application years earlier and had spent much time refining it in my own mind with the help of the JPF and, in particular, Rabbi Michael Robinson, who had become JPF's chair. So, in the fall of 1969 I became the first national program director of the JPF.

The more I contacted peace groups around the country, the more it became clear that we needed vastly greater resources to support draft counseling for Jewish men. At first glance, Jews appeared to be the single largest religious segment of the antiwar community. Within the first few months JPF found three activists willing to help coordinate draft counseling in different parts of the country: Jim Kugel in Cambridge, Joe Tuchinsky in Chicago, and Rick Sherman in Los Angeles.

By far the greatest problem remained almost universal rejection by draft boards skeptical of any Jewish claim for nonviolence and conscientious objection. The only available supporting materials were the letters other applicants for CO status had submitted to their draft boards. As would-be Jewish CO's came before the draft boards, invariably two questions would be asked of them:

- *What would you have done during the Holocaust?* (A trick question. What could any Americans have done? The Quakers, for example, the Protestant villages of Le Chambon and others who sought to rescue European Jews risked their lives to save Jews, as many American Jews would have done had they been in the same situation.); and

- *If the Arabs attacked Israel once again, what would you do?* (Another trick question, designed to catch would-be Jewish CO's.)

Our second challenge was to publish a book explaining a Jewish moral stance against war. With the help of Rabbi Everett Gendler and JPF board members, I edited *Roots of Jewish Non-violence*. Draft copies were available in 1970 and by 1971 it was

in print and sent to all draft boards in the country as part of our major effort in establishing the rights of Jewish CO's. (*Roots* is in its fourth printing and a revised and enlarged edition is now in production and will soon be available from the JPF.)

Yet as our activism increased, our struggles became more daunting. Moreover, we still did not have a network of counseling centers. Most synagogues avoided draft counseling, fearing that antiwar sentiment would be construed as critical of U.S. foreign policy (this while their young men were being conscripted) and imperil the U.S.'s continuing support for Israel. So much to our dismay, most Jewish counseling took place in churches, American Friends Service Committee (Quaker) offices and Catholic Worker houses.

By the spring of 1970, however, hundreds and hundreds of young Jews were seeking our counseling all over the country. To help manage our growth, Paul Schiffman and his bride-to-be, Liz Yeats, a Quaker, joined the JPF staff in our office in Manhattan, in a building owned by the War Resisters League. This activism gave the JPF a prominence it had never had, but it also took a toll on JPF's board members, who were not accustomed to political activism. The board was quite content as long as we were educating people about nonviolence, but reluctant to associate with public programs or work in coalitions with others. All the same, we also supported young men who chose prison rather than the military.

Then, too, as draft boards pressed young men on anti-Semitism, the Holocaust and the Middle East, we felt an increasing demand to explain how our nonviolent stance related to the Israel-Arab conflict. Since we were aware that this was the most loaded issue we might raise, some of us proposed that JPF appoint a subcommittee to draw up a brief statement of two or three paragraphs on the Middle East.

Discussion was postponed to the next meeting, which rejected the idea. There was strong feeling that we could not say anything new or different about the Middle East without getting into trouble. One member felt that we received very modest support from national Jewish organizations, and any statement would eliminate that. So the JPF at that time did not compose a statement on the Middle East. However, I felt that we had to confront the Middle East. Paul then agreed to continue as staff director and I left the JPF at the end of 1970 for the Committee on New Alternatives in the Middle East (CONAME). In 1973, though, JPF began to co-sponsor Israeli draft resisters on tours of the U.S., and in 1974-75 JPF endorsed a two-state solution, refusing to hold either side to blame. In 1975 JPF and the Fellowship of Reconciliation sponsored the first interreligious tour to the Middle East. JPF's early peace work, even when it could not always quite rise to the challenge, did become a jumping off point for a variety of Jewish peace initiatives.

Now, 40 years later, I am moved when I meet or hear from Jewish men who still remember the JPF counseling they received. Today the Jewish commitment to nonviolence is taken to heart in the U.S., and the Israeli movement of CO's and refusers is now well-established. ✨

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Sam Smith

## Amoral Reasons to Oppose War

*Sam Smith is editor of The Progressive Review.*

**T**HERE ARE PLENTY OF MORAL REASONS TO OPPOSE WAR. But I would like to mention some amoral reasons to favor its abolition — beginning with the problem that even when you win, there are downsides.

Consider the two countries we defeated in World War II. Between 1950 and 1980, the per capita GDP of West Germany grew twice as fast — and Japan three times as fast — as that of the U.S. By 1995 both countries surpassed America's per capita GDP.

Then there is the problem that the cost of conducting diplomacy based on one's military can be extraordinary. For example, we spend over \$100 billion more on our military than the whole rest of the world combined. By contrast, how much did it cost George Mitchell to resolve an ancient conflict in Ireland?

Then there is the historical record. Since 1945 we have bombed Korea, Guatemala, Indonesia, Cuba, Congo, Peru, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Grenada, Libya, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, Iraq, Sudan, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, and Pakistan. Yet we have had only a single unqualified military triumph: We brought Grenada to her knees.

Which brings up another problem with war. We act as though war is inevitable, but history tells us otherwise. For example, the Human Security Report published in 2006 by the Human Security Research Group at Simon Fraser University, in Vancouver, British Columbia, said that since 1992 the number of wars had dropped 40 percent. The number of battle-deaths per conflict per year went from 38,000 in 1950 to just 600 in 2002.

In fact, according to the mid-point of the tallies compiled by Wikipedia, the only serious challenge to the number of war and

genocide fatalities in the 20th century occurred during the first two centuries AD. If you combine all the major conflicts in the three centuries ending in 1900, you still fall short of the deaths during the 20th century. From the second century AD to 1900, the combined death toll was only 25 percent higher than that of the 20th century.

Why is that? Were we that much more evil in the 20th century

than we were a few centuries ago? I think not. One big culprit is technology. It is just far easier to kill. Today you can sit at a desk and bomb Pakistani wedding parties with a drone. But we don't talk about how technology encourages us to have wars.

War can be seen as an endeavor creating what Erich Fromm called *homo mechanicus*, a creature "attracted to all that is mechanical and inclined against all that is alive." Becoming, in fact, a part of that machinery — willing to kill or to die just to keep it running. On the first day of the Battle of the Somme during World War I, the British lost 60,000 men and half the officers assigned to them. But the internal bureaucratic logic of the war did not falter at all; over the next six months, more than a million British, French and Ger-

man soldiers would lose their lives. The total British advance: six miles. No one in that war was a person anymore.

It is no accident that Hitler and Lenin turned to the teachings of American technocratic apostle Frederick Winslow Taylor to carry out their evil, or that the Nazis used IBM cards to help manage their death camps.

Consider also that the system doesn't even need evil icons anymore. It just runs itself.

There are other problems, such as how many Humvees does it take to defeat a religion of over a billion members? Or consider the problem of the moat: Thanks to things like catapults, tradi-



*The Joint Chiefs of Staff, January, 2001. From left to right: Vice Chairman of the JCS Gen. Richard Myers, U.S. Air Force, Chairman of the JCS Gen. Henry Shelton, U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Michael Ryan, U.S. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Eric K. Shinseki, U.S. Marine Corps Commandant Gen. James L. Jones, and U.S. Navy Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Vern Clark. Photo: DoD photo by Scott Davis.*



tional warriors were deprived of safety behind their castle walls. And now we are no longer safe flying to Detroit. Our moats have once again failed us.

Then there's the matter of who will sign the surrender papers in a war against an abstraction known as terrorism?

Finally, one trade — the military — not only hogs the word courage, but its members wear endless, self-awarded rows of ribbons on their chests as proof. When I see a photo of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with their pectoral pretensions, testifying on the

Hill, I think of the gold stars my teachers used to paste on pieces of paper I had filled out correctly.

What if everyone were to show up with ribbons for everything they had done that they considered worthwhile or brave? What would we think? Probably that they hadn't quite grown up yet. And that is part of what war is about: the politics and diplomacy of the immature.

Just a few things to consider about war before you even get to the question of morality. ☆

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## Murray Polner

# Shalom Books

*Murray Polner is co-editor of SHALOM.*

**D**AN FLESHLER, A DOVE ON ISRAEL AND American FOREIGN policy, believes that far more American Jews than ever have reached the conclusion that the Jewish establishment's old line organizations, the heart of Israel's American lobby, do not act or speak on their behalf.

*Transforming America's Israel Lobby* (Potomac Books), Fleshler's thoughtful survey, asks why we Jews, overwhelmingly liberal to moderate, have permitted hard-line right-wingers, Christian Zionists and neocons to speak in our name on Israel. "Precisely where have all the Jewish doves been hiding all these years?" he asks. "What accounts for their collective tongue-biting?"

Good and necessary questions. This was never more evident than in the nearly universal assault on John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt's *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007). Given the overwhelmingly negative response it received one would think latter-day Cossacks had crossed the ocean to pillage and rape all Semites. Mearsheimer and Walt's unpardonable sin was to ask if unquestioned support for every Israeli policy is always in the American national interest and whether serious public debate on the question is possible. And without debating the content of Richard Goldstone's report to the UN regarding the Israeli-Gaza conflict of 2008-2009, much the same happened during the near-universal vilification aimed at the South African Jewish Zionist jurist for supposedly betraying Israel.

Until the organization called J Street came along, not many Jewish groups had taken on the lobby and survived direct and in-



direct assaults. But technology and the digital revolution have begun spawning Jewish challengers. Blogs and Web sites such as Magnes Zionist, Tikun Olam, Mondoweiss and BernardAvishai.com, for example, plus the writings of Rabbi Henry Siegman, former head of the American Jewish Congress, and the progressive columnist M. J. Rosenberg, offer critical and incisive alternative views.

So why the reluctance to challenge the domination of those who allege that any criticism of Israel must really be Jew hatred in disguise? Fleshler never offers a direct response, but he does argue convincingly that recent generations are more assimilated and acculturated than their elders, while overt, public anti-Semitism — despite its usefulness in fundraising — is passé. Fleshler quotes Tom Dine, who once led AIPAC, saying the traditional organizations are obsolete: "These people have to go. These people have stayed too long." All the same, "these people" have the money, and lots of it, and their mantras are that any and all criticism of Israel is motivated solely by hatred of Jews, that Israel is always endangered, and that American anti-Semites are everpresent. Still, there is hope, or so Fleshler implies.

Today's J Street members, now merged with Brit Tzedek's 30,000 members, are also younger, better educated and more secure in their Americanism than the old-line Jewish organizations' members. What they have done so far is to convince more politicians and journalists (if not the White House and Congress) that publicly questioning and even opposing Israel's occupation and settlements is valid and reasonable. Moreover, J Street raises money for political candidates, which only alarms defenders of

everything Israel does. As a result, J Street has not only managed to stay alive and even succeeded in annoying Israel's far-right government, which never fails to disparage J Street. Because of this, as the progressive columnist M. J. Rosenberg contends in his foreword to Fleshler's book, "any president can pursue Middle East peace without fear of the Lobby, because the overwhelming numbers of American Jews are not hardliners... Few of us take our cue from the Lobby."

If Fleshler, Rosenberg, J Street, et al. are right, then serious changes are on the horizon. But — and a giant-sized "but" it is, given the considerable power the lobby retains in the Congress and the reluctance of the White House past and present to defy it — it's a gigantic "if."

## SO WHAT'S A SHTETL?

The snug little village depicted in "Fiddler on the Roof"? Not according to Yehuda Bauer. Czechoslovakian by birth and raised in Israel, he calls the play "a distorted bowdlerized" version of Sholem Aleichem's short stories, pointing to other shtetlach (plural, in Yiddish) portrayed by classic Yiddish writers, with its poverty, misery, class conflict and religious fanaticism. In truth, while it may not have been "Fiddler," it was no worse than its surrounding non-Jewish rural communities. What made it worse, however, were malevolent governments, persistent anti-Semitism and unrelenting economic misery that hovered over them, which millions of the luckier ones managed to escape only by emigrating.

In his admirable *The Death of the Shtetl* (Yale) Bauer, a preeminent historian of the Holocaust, empathetically scrutinizes these small town and village Jews of eastern Poland, Byelorussia and the Ukraine before and during the arrival of the German armies. (One third of Poland's Jews were shtetl dwellers, and represented 25 percent of all victims of the Holocaust.) Surrounded by anti-Semitic populations and their equally anti-Semitic Catholic and Orthodox churches, they were trapped between bitterly contested ethnic and religious hatreds and a disastrous economic situation. They lost out in the end to murderous armies and local killers. When the slaughterers from the west arrived, there always were a few saviors, such as the Old Believers and an exceptional individual here and there, but otherwise they were simply abandoned.

The few who managed to endure the invasion and mass murders were the young who fled into the forests, some to fight as partisans. When the war ended, "some of them thought [their

survival] had been the work of God, but most knew better: the same God, if he existed, had failed to protect their loved ones," writes a disdainful Bauer. More bitterly, in searching for responsible parties, he adds, "the vast majority of Germans, both in Germany and in the German forces in the USSR, were in agreement with the policies of their government." It's probably true, given that all Nazi political opponents were early on dispatched to the camps and their inevitable deaths. All the same, how many otherwise decent citizens then and now remain passive and silent in the face of the substantial harm their governments inflict on others?

In any event, in July 1944, when Soviet armies on their way westward toward Berlin passed through the region, there were almost no Jews left alive. The shtetl, the authentic shtetl, was gone forever.



**Bataan Death March.** This picture, captured from the Japanese, shows American prisoners using improvised litters to carry those of their comrades who, from the lack of food or water on the march from Bataan, fell along the road. Philippines, May 1942. Photo: National Archives (208-AA-288BB-2).

NOT MANY AMERICANS remember the Japanese conquest of the Philippines in 1942 and the horrors of the Bataan Death March. The islands were an economic and strategic prize seized by the U.S. in an imperial war at the turn of the century. The Japanese victory represented the largest single defeat in American military history until then. Vietnam veteran Michael

Norman (who wrote *These Good Men*, a model for memoirs about wartime friendships between soldiers) and Elizabeth N. Norman (author of two highly original works about nurses stranded and captured on Bataan and a later generation of nurses during the Vietnam War), brilliantly portray the military blunders, crimes of war, suffering of ordinary soldiers, and the vengeful, perhaps unjust execution of two Japanese generals, in *Tears in the Dark: The Story of the Bataan Death March and Its Aftermath* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux).

Before Pearl Harbor, thousands of Americans in the Philippines lived lives of colonial ease, much like the 19th-century British in India. At its summit sat the imperious, egomaniacal proconsul General Douglas MacArthur, for whom the authors' deep distaste is very evident. When his troops retreated to the Bataan peninsula, MacArthur mistakenly "left behind" most of the rations they would need, abandoning them to hunger and sickness. He refused to leave the neighboring island fortress of Corregidor in Manila Bay, with its big guns absurdly pointed out to sea. Soon he was ordered by Washington, which cynically considered its troops expendable, to leave for Australia, to which he took his family, personal entourage and servants. To the Normans this

was inexcusable (“A soldier never leaves another soldier behind” they insist) and, to those he abandoned, betrayal.

In May 1942 the Bataan force of 76,000 Americans and Filipinos, 22,000 of them ill or wounded, surrendered. Meanwhile, MacArthur was celebrated throughout the U.S. as the “hero” of Bataan by worshipful Americans and a government desperate for heroes. Books were written extolling his virtues, babies given his name, and he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. To their credit, the Normans never lose sight of what happened to the 88,000 prisoners he left behind, especially those who survived the hazardous sea voyage to Japan and their confinement in slave labor camps.

The authors also spend time with a Montana artist and former Bataan soldier and POW, Ben Steele, whose revealing and remarkably vivid sketches of what he passed through bring a stark and realistic look to the pages of the book. Steele emerged badly hurt from his wartime experiences on Bataan and in Japanese

prisons, and he tells them, in the Normans’ words, “There was no therapy for war, no drugs or talking cure to blunt what war leaves behind in the minds of men [and women too] coming home from battlefields and prison camps.”

The authors also take a detour and follow the trial and execution of two Japanese generals held responsible for the death march. Those trials, conclude the Normans, were “kangaroo courts.” Unlike the Nazi criminals at Nuremberg, these men were convicted in proceedings where no evidence had to be “verified or supported by direct testimony.” Obviously, someone had to be punished for Bataan. Still, were they guilty? Before he was executed, General Masaharu Homma, who seemed to have little responsibility for any war crimes, told the officer in charge of his firing squad, “I’m being shot tonight because we lost the war.” Homma understood that only losers are ever held accountable.

*Some portions of these reviews originally appeared in [www.historynewsnetwork.org/books](http://www.historynewsnetwork.org/books). ☆*

### *Internship for youth 18-28 years old*

Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb has written us that this summer, from Aug. 6-31, there will be openings for young people at the Community of Living Tradition (CLT), an intentional multifaitth residential community dedicated to the study and practice of nonviolence, in Stony Point, N.Y.

Interns will study nonviolence and faith-based community organizing, plant and tend gardens, enjoy hiking, kayaking, drumming, ropes courses, big puppet making and good food. Interns will co-create their time together with elders from each tradition and will support CLT’s Multifaitth Family Peace Camp at Stony Point Center, July 25-31. Interns will receive a \$300 stipend, plus room and board. They are responsible for their own travel to and from Stony Point Center.

If you are interested or know anyone who might be, please contact Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb at [lgottlieb@stonypointcenter.org](mailto:lgottlieb@stonypointcenter.org).

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