

Jew Approaching Old Age

by Moishe Garson

Chapter 1: Underground Aliya

My son, my only son, had finished his military service in Israel and was moping around Jerusalem wearing a black *kippa*. I had just had a heart attack and was recovering in a hospital in San Diego, hallucinating that I was in an 1890s drugstore. It was around Halloween 1996. I was discharged from the hospital on November 6th, and on November 17th I got on a plane for Tel Aviv.

My sister talked me out of just showing up at Dan's door unannounced. I splurged and called him from San Diego. "Danny?" I said when he answered the phone.

"Yeah."

"It's a matter of life and death." I trembled slightly while I listened to the electrons dancing through space.

He said it would be all right for me to stay with him for a couple of weeks while he looked for a more permanent place to stash me. He had roommates, and they had signed an agreement saying, among other things, that no guest could stay longer than two weeks.

My sister gave me the number of her travel agent and I booked on British Airways to Phoenix, then from Phoenix in one great swoop to London, a seven-and-a-half-hour layover in London and then London-Tel Aviv, arriving in Tel Aviv at 5:25 a.m. Ten time zones, almost halfway around the world in twenty-four hours.

Eating kosher food (my daughter's advice) seven miles above the tundra, with 300-400 other people inside a light aluminum shell screaming through thin air at almost the speed of sound, everyone apparently bored except me. *How do they do it?* Was the pilot bored? Was the navigator? I can't imagine the job of the navigator. And all the jet fuel and the aluminum and the shrieking electrons, and the factories where aircraft are manufactured, workers driving through slippery January snow to get to their jobs in factories out of view to most people as if they were fifty feet underground.

I was not bored, although I had brought nothing to read. I am rarely bored. When I smell boredom coming I sing. I sing on buses, I sing while walking, I sing in laundromats, I sing in bank lobbies...I have an ordinary but pleasant voice and I never strain it, I stop and listen to the silence whenever the silence intrudes. I sing mostly classic rock n' roll, interspersed with sixties-style radical raps. The fact that hardly

anyone can do such a simple human thing as singing (let alone singing in public) is proof to me that the people are oppressed, repressed and suppressed.

I went bareheaded on British Airways but I ate kosher en route because my daughter had advised me to. What difference does it make what you eat? Yoshke said it doesn't matter what you eat, you can eat pig or brown rice and veggies, what matters is what you say, not what you eat. The sixties rejected that. "You are what you eat"—but you don't necessarily believe that, you're scientifically minded, you're not a hippie. Are you really scientific and are you really interested in the question? Then experiment. Eat kosher for a year. I predict you'll see it makes a huge difference. There's an easier experiment: if you're male, wear a *kippa* for a month (and never stick it in your pocket); if you're female, go for a month in elbow-length sleeves and long skirts or dresses. You'll see if it makes a difference.

I got in a little trouble in London during my seven-and-a-half hour layover. A little girl had strayed far from her mother and looked to be on the verge of getting lost, so I sang to her—loud so as to be heard above the airport hubbub—a song I had made up and used to good effect (I thought) among little folk in San Diego:

Mind yer mama

Mind yer mama

Ain't it good when you

Mind yer mama

Soon after two security men with automatic rifles appeared and took up a fighting stance a few yards away from me. "Why were you shouting?" one of them demanded.

"I didn't know I was shouting," I said. (I knew quite well I had been singing, not shouting, but in a split second I had made the decision to retreat, not attack.)

"We could throw you out of here and you'd miss your flight," the talkative one said.

"I wouldn't like that," I said.

"Then go down there," he said, pointing to the departure lounge. I went without a word.

I should point out to the would-be street fighter that the ability to retreat is as least as important as the ability to attack, and that all strategy and tactics depend upon a correct sense of territory.

When I sat down at the Tel Aviv airport to wait for Dan to come on the first morning bus I suddenly felt a mild depression and knew it would last awhile.

Dan was depressed too. I could see it as he approached. We embraced and exchanged a few words. He was wearing a sweater—no jacket—and a black *kippa*. He put a *kippa* on my head and said, "It's not a knitted *kippa*. Don't wear a knitted *kippa*." I said nothing.

At the airport café we lifted our spirits a little by splurging on coffee. Soldiers were there, relaxed and alert, alert and relaxed. I wrote a little poem in my head—"The armed Jewish proletariat standing on tiptoe in the airport café"—and later mailed it to Dr. Jerry Rosenfield in Albion, California, a little town 150 miles up the coast from San Francisco. Dr. Jerry was part of our gang from the sixties and he, like so many others, has passed away. *Alav hashalom*. He kept his medical license up to date but he made a living trucking fish, growing vegetables, etc.

Dan opened up a few days later. "Wasted youth" was his self-diagnosis. Eight years out of high school and what had he accomplished? No wife, no children, no career...a worthless degree in History from U.C. Santa Cruz, a trip to India (big deal), army life in Israel ("a goyishe army full of Jews"), and now he was a beginning yeshiva boy. He did love Jerusalem, a smallish city in which he had walked probably a thousand miles, and he loved learning halacha, but his self-esteem, as they call it, was shot to bits. It broke my heart to hear him talk. But he had broken my heart and I had broken his heart many times before. Family life is like that. You build and you build and one day it all seems for naught, and that's when you have to have blind faith. I listened to him and kept a straight face. He did not make me feel I had to speak.

Dan was born on the 16th of Shevat 5731 (February 11, 1971) on North Haven island, off the coast of Maine, in the home of Dr. Miriam Hosmer. His mom's middle name is Joy and I'll call her that. We had about a thousand dollars and Spring was coming so we were sitting on top of the world, but we had no plans. Two members of the gang, Louie Levine and Joy's brother Stan, *alav hashalom*, drove cross-country in a VW bug and said they were going to take us back to California. Fine, we said. Stan decided to get off somewhere in New Jersey I think and we delivered Joy and Dan to Joy's mom in Chicago from where she and Dan flew to San Francisco while Louie and I took the land route. The car blew up near Flagstaff and we sold it for junk.

Louie took the bus and I hitchhiked and we all rendezvoused in Berkeley/Oakland/San Francisco.

I was a writer. I had made a living as a writer and as a printer and as a publisher, and now I sat in the Caffè Mediterraneum in Berkeley day after day, spending no money, drinking the free water, undisturbed by any waiters (there are none, it's cafeteria style)...thinking. I was writing all kinds of articles and columns and essays in my head. None of them were any good. Finally I decided it had to be a single paragraph and then a single sentence and then a single *word*. The word *Jews* floated into focus. So that was it. It made a kind of sense. It meant I belonged in vulgar Los Angeles, where the Jews were, instead of serving the sophisticated, beautiful *shiksa*, San Francisco. I had a vague idea I might work in a garment factory (hah!) but while hitchhiking south I decided I would just do the first thing that suggested itself, whatever that might be. I checked in with my Communist aunt in North Hollywood and found her entertaining an Israeli student. (If Mapam can love Israel and Stalin at the same time, so can my aunt.) I jibber-jabbered some nonsense to him and he said right away, "Why don't you come to Israel?"

So that would be it. I would have to live on a kibbutz and wear shorts or be a waiter in some stupid beach hotel. No Los Angeles, no Jews—exile to a totally square country. I was devastated. But in the days that followed the idea began to grow on me. I remembered a song that had been sung in the streets of Brooklyn when I was growing up:

Don't eat beans and gravy
Join the Jewish navy
Fight fight fight for Palestine.

I could make a living as a construction laborer (hah!). I had played with guns, responding to the Black Panther Party's appeal to its white sympathizers: "Pick up the gun." I had owned a .38 revolver and a 12-gauge shotgun. I had cousins living in Jerusalem and Haifa.

My cousin in Jerusalem had good connections but he had a TV set in the living room and Joy and I were not prepared to share quarters with a TV set. We camped in an Arab-run hostel near the Old City wall. We had entered on tourist visas and now we had to prove to Misrad HaPnim (the Ministry of the Interior) that we

were Jews. It's not easy when you've been raised in a thoroughly secular environment, when although you don't know it you're assimilated, that is to say, half-digested.

The Misrad HaPnim had been in religious hands since the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, and for good reason. In any case the computer had had me listed as a Jew since 1971, and now in 1996 Dan walked me with ease through the so-called Israeli "bureaucracy." They wrote my old ID number into my American passport, issued me a health insurance card immediately, and informed me cheerfully that since they had reason to believe I was crazy (they used that word) I would have to get a letter from any psychiatrist saying that in his opinion I was not a threat to the security of the state. It's not at all Kafkaesque. In fact, it's very reasonable.

Chapter 2: History of the "Revolution"

Nineteen sixty was a presidential election year and all the people flocked to the polls. Actually half the people flocked; and actually people don't flock, sheep flock. The mass media produced the usual artificial election fever and no one was heard to speak out against voting. America was a corrupt dictatorship. Most Southern Negroes were forcibly kept from voting, but men of foresight and wisdom were occasionally heard to say that in 50 or 75 or a hundred years this might be rectified. They counseled moderation. Life stunk. There were places where people were sentenced to ten and twenty years for possession of a single marijuana seed. The candidates debated each other on TV—new evidence that American democracy was better than anything imaginable. The candidates debated about Quemoy and Matsu, artificial subjects which were never heard of again.

O children it was bad. G-d was nauseated.

Why don't people vote today? Even in a presidential year half the people abstain, even though the newspapers and television and the books and the rest of the filth all say *vote vote vote* or you're a criminal type. It's a disgrace they say. If they're so eager for 70% or 80% of the people to vote, then why don't they give the people a

day off from work on that fatal Tuesday in November? Maybe they never thought of it. Oh sure.

Jack Kennedy won the election. Or maybe he lost it. The election was very close, and there is ample evidence that Kennedy stole Illinois. Who cares? He was handsome, he was rich. Nixon stunk. You could smell his terrible body odor through the TV screen. We're glad Kennedy won. A new man. A new decade. Sure.

Fidel Castro was not tubby then, he was a lot younger and he was not yet a rich boy with his own private island (called Cuba); he was still lean and he had this big...*beard!* He was the armed beatnik only 90 miles from "our shores." He was a hallucination. In Greenwich Village, in Cambridge, in Berkeley, in North Beach, dying poets held their breath while at the smaller colleges plainclothes campus police checked up on students who sang "Michael, Row the Boat Ashore" too fervently. The revolution had begun.

G-d is great. He brings all things round. He plays a chord and the whole universe is the sound. This book is a hymn to G-d. Those who don't like it can lump it.

O children it is hard to speak. I choke on my words. Wouldn't you? Let me try to be calm. It won't be easy.

Presidents come and presidents go. No big thing. The president is not the sovereign. In a republic *the people* is the sovereign. We were truly revolutionary: We tried to destroy the people and create new people in place of them. The idea—one idea—was that there would be glory and salvation through the poemization of everyday life. Everyone's life was to be a poem; that was one demand. Youth, being the most malleable, was the most revolutionary class. We had incredible success. But to our children we passed on only a great mystery.

We did not start off in midair. For two hundred years before us the world had been in a state of revolutionary ferment. Did it start with the French? No, the U.S. had a revolutionary constitution in 1788, the year before the French Revolution broke out. The rich wrote the Constitution, and they did it over the dead bodies of the nobility of birth, the aristocrats. The U.S. dazzles the world and she has had her bloody revolution too. There was no Great Terror, there was no guillotine, but there was

rough stuff. Actually I don't like the American revolutionaries. They were all Indian-murderers.

For some reason the Marxists (may their names be blotted out) consider the U.S. Revolution to have been a little bit fruity compared to the Russian, French, Chinese, Cuban and Mexican revolutions. I accuse the Marxists of being lunkheaded, thuggish and arrogant. They are a pain in the neck, and Karl Marx was a pain in the neck, and the Soviet Union was a pain in the neck, and state socialism, including democratic state socialism, is a pain in the neck because it raises the state even further above society.

Communism died a surprisingly good death, submitting voluntarily to nonviolent revolution. Big capitalism's turn to go under may be next, and then perhaps we will have the reign of a world co-op community, in which much of the economy is made up of producers' co-ops, enterprises in which voting rights inhere in human beings instead of in shares of stock, each employee having one vote, investors welcome but labor sovereign. The economic system of producers' co-ops could harmonize nicely with the geographic-democratic political systems that have developed in so many countries over the last two hundred years.

In the Sixties we sometimes refused to be shamed. Even the Negroes—especially the Negroes (it was so shameful to be Negro before the Sixties)—came out into the streets and chanted. What did they chant? "Say it loud! I'm black and I'm proud!"

To sing and chant and to be photographed in public, mindful of one's black skin, while the bourgeois press was hysterically counseling moderation, took a certain amount of guts. Forget civil rights, forget black power, forget the sixties. Who today would sing any song in public, in the street, in a bus, in a hotel lobby, in a laundromat? How many dare sing at home—even in the shower? We are afraid to sing for fear of being shamed. And we call this *freedom*!

The teachers shame the children and the children gang up on the teacher. School is hell, school is, without exaggeration slavery, for it is compulsory work without pay. You are so glad to be eighteen and to have that high-school diploma and to enter the paid labor force that you stand still for the most shameful treatment in the process of applying for work. The system operates smoothly (not so smoothly!) because hardly anyone is conscious of what is going on, distracted as so many are by phony issues like "equality," "diversity," and "algebra." Schoolchildren are workers.

They work, so they are workers. But they are not employees. They are slaves. Slaves in the Old South were said to have childish minds. It all connects. The "revolution" of the Sixties, actually a revolt not a revolution, was not made by children, it was made by youth. Has there ever been a revolution made by children? I can't think of one. Eight-year-olds shouldn't be allowed to drive cars. But shame can be diminished in the schools, "intelligence tests" can be abolished, liberal propaganda can be rooted out, and much, much more is to be done.

The Sixties were trippy. Trip means journey. After awhile we grasped the idea that every year was going to be ten times heavier than the previous one. "The revolution will not be televised" was a song/chant heard often on the radio. "There are no spectators in a revolution" was the word from France. During the student uprising of 1968 the main graffiti on the walls of Paris was "All power to the imagination." The revolution will be inhaled. A drug is a medium of G-d's expression, and different drugs are different, some are rattlesnakes, and the medium is the message.

How do you start something? How did Huey P. Newton start the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense? Well, he had one member, namely himself, so the organization already existed. Huey had, or had access to, a shotgun; and he owned, or had borrowed, a law book of some kind. He set about *patrolling the police* in the Oakland so-called ghetto night after night, carrying a law book and a shotgun. He enjoyed G-d's grace and was not killed, not until many years later, and the Black Panther Party as a mass organization was on its way.

G-d gave us so much and all He asked in return was a little recognition, which we never gave. We did not recognize G-d and we fell from grace and to our children we looked like lost souls. The mass media called us "losers"—we lost by default and the winner was Wall Street. Or maybe that was not it at all. Maybe the game was called on account of darkness.

Chapter 3: Introduction to the Sixties

January 1, 1959 the U.S. became de-stabilized when Castro's armed beatniks came rolling through the streets of Havana on tanks and trucks waving to the dancing

crowds and chewing on cigars. Beards! Facial hair! The Colossus of the North trembled.

It was an easy revolution. The Catholic Church was weaker in Cuba than anywhere else in Latin America. But still it was an honest-to-goodness revolution "only ninety miles from our shores." (They always said "shores," never, for example, "beaches." They became excruciatingly boring.)

The U.S., once it had been de-stabilized by Cuba, spun off on its own, or, as certain folks would say, developed according to its own "internal contradictions." What were the main contradictions? There was the black thing and there was the poverty thing, and of course they interpenetrated.

In those days it was an insult to say "black" in most contexts. The correct word was "Negro," which is the Spanish word for black. Nowadays one is being prompted to say "African-American," which is quite a mouthful, like "AFL-CIO." Keep it simple:

What did I do

To be so black and blue?

Blackness has been a curse; in the struggle against the curse, many black people become blessed. So it is not good to become a racist and curse all black people. One will be cursing some saints. At the same time it does no good to become racist and bless all black people. One may be blessing a villain or a fool.

Negroes might have remained all at the bottom forever had it not been for the help they got from the fringes of the Empire. Englishmen, Frenchmen, Italians, called upon to admire the beauty of American society, would say: "Yes, but what about the plight of the Negro?" Also there came criticism from the "educated classes" in the Third World. A single word in the right place can move mountains.

There was the "civil rights movement," starting in the fifties, and that was a bloodless, non-poetic name. It became Black Power in the mid- and late-sixties, and Black Power was something you could conjure with. Then, when "African-American" came along, "civil rights movement" came back. Black Power had been institutionalized and the name was now too radical.

The two main organizations of the Early Sixties were SNCC (the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) and CORE (the Congress of Racial Equality), both committed at first to non-violent action. Non-violent action made sense, and then violent action made sense, and then non-violent action made sense again.

SNCC activists got all dressed up in the most conservative suits and ties of their time and sat down at Southern lunch counters waiting for a cup of coffee that would never arrive. They were jeered, beaten and abused for the camera, and it was a fair deal—they were paying their dues to become the darlings of the Northern press. John Kennedy stayed neutral.

Now poverty was a black thing but it was not only a black thing. John Kennedy had discovered it in West Virginia among mostly whites. He had discovered it for the election campaign of 1960 and—am I being cynical?—never intended to stick with it. What should he have done? The leader of his religion said: “Give all thou hast to the poor and follow me.” Fat chance. He also said: “It is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle.” Somewhat extreme I would say. (But then it’s his religion, not mine.)

In other words—drop out. It would have been asking too much. Those were, after all, the *early* sixties.

“The poor ye have always with ye,” said the leader of Kennedy’s religion in a cynical moment. Kennedy, I imagine, believed this, and it certainly seems to be true.

In the fifties the United States presented itself to itself as a Workers’ Paradise. “The Highest Standard of Living in the World” said the billboards and the magazine ads. Every worker had a car or two and even...a boat! There was room for everyone in the Workers’ Paradise, except for the blacks of course and the voluntary poor—the beats. The origin of the word is a mystery. I would guess it means those U.S.ers who were not victorious in World War II. Herb Caen, cute columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, coined the word “beatnik” and it went around the world. To the young it meant poetry, jazz, marijuana...the most of the spiritual life that could be offered up in a U.S. given over to gluttony. The basic idea seemed to be that everyone should be a poet, or, indeed, a poem.

The choice was between G-d and gluttony, and those who rejected gluttony chose G-d even if they said “G-d is dead.”

“G-d is great,” say the Moslems, and they’re right. G-d created the stars and the planets and the interstellar dust, the land and the sea, mountain and plain and jungle. He created bird, fish, mammal and insect, and above all of them to have dominion, humankind—male and female created He them. He adjusts His creation, intervenes in it. He is gracious. One does not so much “believe in” G-d as one *feels*

His presence. And one is blessed openly, or given a task or burden which is a blessing in disguise.

It can be said that life is suffering, and we, some of us, hope for a better world. The Sages say we suffer a thousand times a day, that even sticking your hand in your pocket and pulling out a nickel instead of a dime is a form of suffering. Why things should be so is a mystery perhaps understood fully by some Chassidim who dance joyfully long past midnight, who danced in the concentration camps and taunted the guards: "We will outlive you!"

Try to make a better world without G-d and you become dead socialists/communists/anarchists. G-d regrets the loss, He had hopes and plans and dreams for you but He has to be part of it. G-d is not impatient. G-d is Eternal. If the generation turns out not to be ready, there will be another generation...and others...He can wait. In the meantime He has options.

Poets run in gangs, not committees. Neal Cassady, Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Jack Kerouac—they were a gang, one among others. Their lives were magical. They were in the presence of G-d all the time even if they didn't know it. Half-blessed, half-cursed, while G-d waited for them to invoke His name.

The word hippie emerged in the beat headquarters, the city of San Francisco, just about the time the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense was forming across the Bay in Oakland. The hippies thought life should be art and the Panthers thought life should be politics, and there is often an "antagonistic contradiction" between art and politics, between beauty and power, but there was not then, not at that moment. The government and the system both looked very ugly and very weak at that moment, like some disgusting little cockroach, and there was an impulse to step on it. Not quite yet, though. Let the contradictions play themselves out...

If John Kennedy compulsively bullied women into bed with him, if Lyndon Johnson was a deranged murderer, if Richard Nixon seemed to be a physical coward and the worst kind of slimeball, could it be said that the republic had lost the "Mandate of Heaven?" It could indeed. For years the situation was one of constantly deepening chaos.

In the confusion we are forgetting that John Kennedy had been killed by someone, no one knew whom. Who killed Kennedy? Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone? Don't make us laugh. *Cherchez la femme!* Kennedy was sleeping with the girlfriend of a certain Mafia boss. The motive would have been jealousy and...*honor*.

With the Mafia you don't fool around. They think in terms of centuries. How would they have gotten Jack Ruby—a Mafia punk if there ever was one—to kill Oswald? The promise of a comfortable cell for the rest of his life compared to...

Interesting, isn't it, that we almost forgot about the Kennedy assassination. The most sensational news event of the decade seems fictitious in a sense. We were fed such big lies that weekend of November 22-24, 1963 that our bellies distended and time was bent permanently out of shape. The U.S. became a freak in November 1963, the most disgusting kind of freak—big, rich, fat, and crazy.

In a tremendous empire like the U.S., Control sometimes gets distant from things controlled. There are autonomous regions, areas of low pressure. Such was the New Left of the Early Sixties. It said "Left" and that was, in those days, an appeal to the consciously ideologically minded, those willing to associate themselves with a tradition that had been consigned to the graveyard. It said "New" in order to distance itself from State Department socialists, Stalinist criminals, and insane or futile anarchists. Youth was its constituency, and youth movements are a tricky business because youth grows old. It had an organization, Students for a Democratic Society, with its slogan of "participatory democracy."

What does youth want? The capitalist who has an answer to that question can become filthy rich. The socialist opportunist who has an answer can make a name for himself in coterie politics. G-d is not so moved as we are by the beauty of youth. He values truth, wisdom, justice over youth, beauty, wealth. And He may not read the daily newspapers.

Huey Newton, may he rest in peace, started the Black Panther Party with a shotgun and a law book. He took it upon himself to *patrol the police* in black poverty areas of Oakland, certainly ready to die and counting on his acting skills to stay alive. To the police he was a hallucination, with his book and his gun and his feet light as a dancer's. He earned a reputation in the black community. He ran into Bobby G. Seale, a standup comedian at a time when it was very hard to be a black standup comedian. Huey Newton recruited Bobby Seale. There was Eldridge Cleaver, who Huey made Minister of Information of the Black Panther Party. Cleaver, in Folsom Prison many years, was author of a best-selling book called *Soul on Ice*, a mournful tale which mentioned, in passing, Cleaver's crime: Rape. Serial rape. Serial rape of little girls. He said reluctantly that he was sorry. It had been a mistake to take Cleaver in, but the

bourgeois press was beating the drums for him as a great literary genius, and Huey was in a hurry.

The Black Panther Party held legal armed demonstrations at the state capitol, the Black Panther Party armed the black community, the Black Panther Party organized a free breakfast program for black children. It defined blacks as an internal colony of the white mother country. To "white mother-country radicals" (white sympathizers) it said four words: "Pick up the gun."

Are blacks the Chosen People? So many American Jews seem to think so. It breaks my heart.

I remember the New Politics Conference, at the Palmer House in Chicago in August 1967. It was not integrated. A "Black Caucus" separated itself out, and that made sense. The Black Caucus met in closed session and let the tension build. Finally it emerged with ten non-negotiable points for the whites to consider. The first eight seemed to me incomprehensible. I voted for them. Point Nine backed the Arabs against the Israelis. (It was a few months after the Six Day War.) I voted for it. Who cared about the Middle East? Point Ten called birth control a "genocidal plot against black people." I voted for it. It was shameful. I would do anything to get into the black thing. Yet I was not a self-hating Jew. The blacks promised "soul," and that meant more to me than Jewish history or the State of Israel, which I knew nothing about. Who would want to be "soul-less?" Not I. And G-d loved me for it, and forgave me my ignorance.

"What's so special about the Jews?" say some young Jews. It breaks G-d's heart. The Jews love the U.S. so much and they know Him so little. The lost child raised by strangers. Want proof? What was the name of the mother of the founder of Christianity? Okay. Now what was the name of the mother of the founder of Judaism (Moses)? Ask U.S. Jews. In ancient Egypt, the Rabbis tell us, 20% of the Jews left in the Exodus, while 80% stayed behind.

In the U.S. groupthink, repeated so it seems endlessly, the good citizen is to eschew racism, sexism, homophobia (*what?*) and anti-Semitism. But the main enemy of the Jew is not anti-Semitism, it is assimilation. Is there a way to express this truth in a groupthink litany? Perhaps not. All the more reason then to bear it in mind.

The U.S. is a vast cemetery of Jewish souls.

From a U.S. point of view the Jews are marginal, an interesting case but a bit too slippery for the mind to grasp, a small minority, only 2.5% and rapidly shrinking as intermarriage and assimilation accelerate.

From a Jewish point of view the U.S. is an interesting case, technologically unprecedented but historically no more stable than the Persian, Babylonian, Roman, Greek, British, etc. empires that preceded it. The U.S. is not eternal. G-d is eternal.

There is a need for an explicitly Jewish, explicitly religious, explicitly left movement. By "left," I mean a movement which rejects the rule of money, which insists that money be a tool and not an object of worship or the ruling power.

We were not G-d-fearing during the sixties, but we were G-d-seeking and He liked that. G-d thought he would keep us on a long leash at first. Pot was cheap, often free, strong and delicious. Mescaline and psilocybin had good reputations. Bad kids took cocaine, speed, heroin. It all happened very fast, much too fast for Control to intervene successfully. One popular slogan was: "Not to overthrow the government, but to create a situation so interesting that the government gets lost in the shuffle."

He

In August of 1964, in the heat of an election campaign, a North Vietnamese PT boat (the smallest naval craft there is) was reported to have made a perfectly legal feint in the water in front of a U.S. destroyer in the Gulf of Tonkin. This was the "Gulf of Tonkin incident." Lyndon Johnson went to the Senate and got it to authorize all necessary measures to fight the Vietnamese menace. The vote was 99-1. (100-0 would have looked fishy.) The media did not distinguish itself. In New York some 50 people demonstrated against what was the outbreak of war. Five years later a million people marched on Washington to protest the war, which would drag on until the Spring of 1975. Fifty-eight thousand Americans dead, two million Vietnamese dead.

Is there an afterlife? Is there judgment and punishment for Lyndon Johnson and the Senate? Everything in me says yes.

The State of Israel, as a closely held client state of the U.S., did not act as a moral beacon. How could it? George Meany-Hubert Humphrey-Lyndon Johnson politics meshed almost perfectly with Golda Meir-Moshe Dayan-Yitzhak Rabin politics. You've heard of Reform Judaism? This was all Reform Socialism. So Israel was cut off from the Third World to which it seemed she naturally belonged, and took many slaps in the face which were intended for the United States. Nowadays every misfortune is called a tragedy. But the lack of contact between serious U.S. Jewish youth and serious Israeli Jewish youth has elements of classical tragedy. In any event,

the Six Day War barely registered in the consciousness of U.S. radical Jewish youth. We were so intensely American, we thought, and indistinguishable from our gentile colleagues, who were our best friends. Blame U.S....imperialism shall we call it? Oh, but one mustn't say imperialism. So one will not. The U.S. is not an empire, it just has "interests" everywhere, including the "hearts and minds" (the souls) of people everywhere. It wants every Jewish soul. It wants every soul, and it "defends" its interests.

Chapter 4: Socialists

Jack London was a far greater socialist than Karl Marx, in my opinion, because although both men were writers by occupation, Jack London knew how to write and Karl Marx didn't; and because while Jack London had a very impressive work history even apart from his writing, Karl Marx was an eternal student who lived off the profits that his best friend and sugar-daddy Fred Engels sweated out of the textile mill he (Engels) inherited from his father. Jack London was sociable, while Karl Marx, *may his name be blotted out*, loved a bitter argument. (Social-ists should be sociable, I maintain, and should even know how to give way (sometimes) before forces as weak as water.)

Marx exhorted: "Workers of all countries, unite!" With an explanation point yet, as if someone had given him a permit to drive around the neighborhood in a sound truck yelling and giving almost everybody a headache. Marxism split the working class and stands ready to keep it split for another thousand years in the service eventually of Coca-Cola, etc. as surely as Xtianity split the world in the service of emperors from Constantine on up to Kaiser Wilhelm and Czar Nikolai in the so-bloody 20th century.

Did I say "working class?" Marx-Lenin-Trotsky-Stalin have made it hard to say "working class" without cringing. "The workers" is even worse. "The class of employees" is cold-blooded, but maybe that's what we need. "Employees" is (for now) value-neutral, and adding the word "class" to it is like adding a fuse to a stick of dynamite, I have convinced myself.

"The class of employees" is not at all the same as "the oppressed." Who is not oppressed, repressed, and suppressed? It is a fallen world. G-d can redeem, and I

firmly believe that He will. In the meantime to relieve the symptoms of oppression, so that for example people could be able to hum and sing aloud to each other in public places and private places—I intuit that “the employees” must become outspokenly conscious of themselves as a class. It would help if the remnants of the radical movement in the U.S. could get clear on it—at least to some extent.

“All history,” wrote Marx, “is the history of class struggle.” He might have said just as sweepingly that all history is the history of class collaboration. It would not have been true either, but consider...under normal circumstances, to get a job, i.e., to become an employee, i.e. to enter the working class, you have to bow down and debase yourself and beg. You have to shame yourself and humiliate yourself and beg for work. You don’t have a right to work. Even when they were building the transcontinental railroad and needed to keep pouring blood on the tracks, there was the ritual of being hired, a ritual dance of debasement initiating class collaboration on unequal terms. Class collaboration with every swing of the hammer from whistle blow to whistle blow. Building the transcontinental railroad was a mighty act of class collaboration, as was the building of all the world railway nets, as is the building of the world airline net, the world computer net, the world garment manufacturing net, the whole global economic net of—what is it?—three billion souls getting out of bed every morning and giving their lives in exchange for their lives.

The Roman roads were built by class collaboration, the Spanish galleons, the British navy, the Egyptian pyramids, the whole ancient disgusting material culture of Empire. World War I and World War II were stupendous acts of class collaboration within each nation that was “fighting for freedom.”

Communism died a surprisingly good death. Non-violent revolution, considered pallid and sissy by the Baader-Meinhoffs and the Black Septembrists of the world, slew the mighty nuclear armed slave camp police state of Red Commie Russia and its satellites without a shot being fired outside of Romania. Imperial state socialism was overthrown by passionate acts of non-violent revolution performed by hundreds of thousands of great souls. If it happened in the East, can it happen in the West? The West is far slicker than the East, but it is also far more squeamish internally. Individuals have free will (within limits of course). Empires do not. G-d knows what will happen.

Who is G-d? G-d has experience as a strike leader. He led a walkout of Hebrew construction slaves from Egypt and took responsibility for the results. The

Bible is the record and no archaeological evidence contradicts it. The Bible is without question the most influential book in the world. G-d, who created nature and the world, made changes in the order of nature so that His Jewish workers could leave Egypt and take possession of the land of Canaan which had been promised to their ancestors, so that they could become *goy echad*, a *unique nation* on the face of the earth. (*Goy* means *nation*.)

In the year 1,934 of the international calendar there was a general strike in the San Francisco Bay Area supporting longshoremen who were demanding, among other things, a union hiring hall so that they would not have to beg the shipowners for work. It was a class struggle to reestablish class collaboration on a higher, more equal and more dignified level—the best that could be done without the direct and miraculous intervention of G-d.

What historians call Jewish Emancipation, the beginning of modern times for the Jewish people, is dated precisely from 1791, well into the French Revolution, when the French National Assembly, meeting to consider many matters of great import, stripped the Jewish community of its standing before the law and declared each French Jew to be an individual citizen of France. *A citizen*. Something new.

I have heard it said that unemployed actors were the main force in starting the French Revolution. They “work the crowd”; they and even their names may be known to the crowd but they avoid being “known.”

For some reason the mob needs leaders. Leaders are above us; they need props and schema to impose upon us; one cannot imagine Robespierre or Castro doing improvisational street theater.

Eighteenth Century garb is so bizarre that it is almost impossible for us to enter imaginatively into the lives of those revolutionary times. The framers of the Constitution dressed like fastidious clowns. Lenin, may his name be blotted out, always dressed in modern suit *and tie*. In any case his clothes were most...unrepresentative.

Times have changed. The respectable young worker of today wears clothes that would have landed him in a mental hospital during the fifties, and possibly not for 72 hours either.

The author has done street theater. Buses are part of the street; so are banks, laundromats, taverns, stores—any places with unlocked doors that have access to the

street. The author has done revolutionary street theater—sometimes preparing his opening line, sometimes improvising entirely. No one knows that it is theater or that he is an actor. The author has not made revolution. He is convinced he has made revolutionaries, gold nuggets lying in the stream.

The sixties generation is half dead. We were not put to sleep, nor did we “Eat the Rich.” We were eaten alive, on the hoof, which explains why the ground underneath the culture of the 21st century is so slippery with blood and vomit.

Hey! You American? You like America? I like. Big dollah.

It's Burgerland. Freedom of speech in burgerland. Be careful.

Connecticutburger, Indianaburger, South Carolinaburger, Wyomingburger. The president of the U.S. is “the leader of the Free World.” That means Antarctica, Belgium, Japan, Brazil and all points in between. The U.S. is called a “superpower,” and that means empire; and it is “the only superpower,” and that means the only empire.

Jews lived well at times in previous empires, in Rome, in Persia, in Babylon, but these empires fell apart. Israel was a great nation under Solomon, three thousand years ago; she dwindled and fell and endured the Babylonian exile, and returned, and rebuilt the Temple, and fought the Romans most bitterly, and lost, and in the year 70 watched the Romans take the Temple apart stone by stone and sow Jerusalem with salt so that “nothing would ever grow there again.” That was the end of the Second Commonwealth, in the year 70, and though a few Jews stayed in the Land, the great majority moved from one exile to another to another for lo these 1,900 years. From Roman times until the early Dark Ages, Jews chanted and memorized commentaries on the Torah until finally it was written down around the year 500, seven centuries of law and lore argued out and remembered and finally written down and sealed. This is the Talmud, the music of the sages, and Jews were glued to it for 1,500 years while keeping dairy cows, growing fruit and working leather and silver and gold and trading in wool and grain and wine and spices. Then came Jewish Emancipation and then railroads and steamships and electricity and the vote and the vote for women...it was a whole new world, and the music of the sages lost its hold on most of Jewish youth. Back to square one.

The previous square was the Ninth of Av (in the Hebrew calendar), in the year 70. That day marks the fall to the Romans of the Second Temple. For some Jews in

the year 1900 the only possibility was back to Jerusalem, back to square one, except that Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel) was not in Roman hands anymore. The Roman Empire, like so many empires that Jews had lived in, was dead. Eretz Yisrael was the property of the feeble, somnolent Ottoman Empire of the Turks. The Jews of the South—from Morocco to India—were somnolent too, but the Jews of the North—from England to Russia—had been exploded by exposure to Modern Times. Jewish youth studied engineering and agronomy and Turkish law so as to be of more use in the Land. Other Jews took their chances as laborers. Money was raised (has to be done!) among rich and poor to buy land *ba'aretz* (in the Land). Modern Zionism had begun.

Chapter 5: Jewish Anger

“Anger is a sin but one may feign anger in order to discipline a child,” including sometimes a *potch* on the *tush*.

I am not a scholar and the issue is deep, but it seems to me that if one comes across Nazis (*y'mach sh'mam*) parading and demonstrating, and one becomes angry, one has not committed a sin.

In any case I try to be mellow, though my radical background makes this difficult.

As a revolutionary in the Late Sixties I was loosely associated with a gang of armed poets who seemed to believe in the abolition of money. I was angry at Bank of America, I was angry at Standard Oil, but as for Nixon (*y'mach sh'mo*) with his B-52s flying high high above the Pacific thousands of miles from Guam to way high above Vietnam, dropping more tons of bombs on tiny little Vietnam than were dropped on all of Europe during World War II...I did not envy Nixon his power, I could tell that he was embarrassed and uncomfortable all the time. But if I did not envy Nixon, perhaps I envied the bad poets who sat on top of hierarchies like Standard Oil and Bank of America. They had power and we wanted power.

It is good to have power—the power to breathe, the power to walk, the power to lift things, the power to eat food, the power to grow food, the power to participate

in a decent community/civilization that does not turn money into an idol. Where does power come from? Power comes from G-d. Angry radical Jew, perhaps you don't believe in G-d. But you *feel*, or once *felt*, the *presence* of G-d. Angry radical Jew, you may deny you have a soul. But you know you *are* a soul. Jewish soul, you have heard that "religion is the opiate of the people." Yes, but it is also the marijuana of the people, the herbal tea of the people, the mescaline of the people.

When I was eighteen I read Che Guevara's *On Guerrilla War*. It was not an angry book, it did not pick fights with anyone, it calmly laid out the elements of guerrilla war from the point of view of someone who, one imagines, had heard bullets zinging past his head. I am certainly just a punk in comparison, but what can I say? I will do my best, in the spirit of Che and Spartacus and of the many, so many millions of heroic souls who have struggled against empires since empires began, to bring it all slowly or quickly crashing down. Empire is cancer, and Che was a doctor of medicine.

We are not a peasant country. Almost all of us in the west are employees. As residents of certain municipalities, counties, states, provinces, nations, we are the sovereign people; as employees we are virtually nothing. It is the main contradiction in the Western World, I would say, and it is social, cultural, psychological and political all at the same time. Usually we stand patiently like donkeys under the weight of this contradiction. Occasionally we buck like wild horses. There is no conscious leadership or direction.

My religion is more important to me than my citizenship or economic identity. I am a Jew and happy to be a Jew. My anti-imperialism has Jewish roots; my poverty is Jewish poverty; my love for the labor movement is Jewish love; and standing above all these is my awe of the Creator.

He created and He creates. He is in us and in the trees and in the air. He is the Cartoonist and we are the characters He draws. He is an improvisational Cartoonist and we are (occasionally) free-will characters. It is magnificent.

Adam was not the first Jew, nor was Noah Jewish. The first Jew was Abraham. In Abraham's time the world was given over entirely to idolatry. People were doing nothing but smoking cigarettes and watching TV. Abraham's father, Terach, owned a store that sold TV sets. One day Abraham got angry (angry!) and smashed all the TVs but one. When Terach got back to the store he was appalled. "What happened here?" he asked his son.

Abraham replied: "The Masked Avenger came out of this TV set and smashed all the other TV sets."

"That's ridiculous," said Terach. "The Masked Avenger is just a TV show."

"Whaddya know," said Abraham.

"Whaddya know," said Terach.

G-d the Cartoonist was not drawing this episode. His pen was lifted in midair while He watched His freewill characters. Then ~~he~~ started drawing again, and He brought *Avraham Avinu* (Abraham our father) into the land of Canaan. He had peopled it, and He was disgusted with it. The Canaanites were given over to cruelty and perversion and nauseating behavior.

He

The land of Canaan was utterly given over to lewdness and perversion and horror, and G-d promised to give the land to Abraham and his seed. Hundreds of years later an Israelite army under Joshua crossed the Jordan and invaded and conquered and inhabited what is called *Eretz Yisrael*, the Land of Israel.

Come to Israel today and you will see plastic Pepsi, Coke and RC Cola bottles everywhere, even on Shabbos tables in Orthodox homes. There is an Israeli brand, Kinley, which in small letters says, "A product of the Coca-Cola Company." Israelis of all ages smoke especially Parliament and L&M and of course Marlboro, the ultimate in hip—"global village" it's all called. U.S. cultural imperialism saturates Israel. Sometimes it seems overwhelming. It finds political expression in the push by Meretz, the so-called left-wing party, to write a constitution for Israel based on the U.S. Constitution. Israel already has its constitution and it is the Bible. The Hebrew Bible, which has outlasted Greek and Roman imperialism and so many other empires and very recently smashed British imperialism, is the only solid rock to cling to in the struggle against U.S. imperialism.

Radical Gentiles, read the Hebrew Bible if you wish. Radical Jews, attach yourselves to the Hebrew Bible, seek out Orthodox rabbis, find a strong Jewish community, in all this go to G-d. G-d is a warm coat on a cold winter night, G-d is a cool breeze on a hot summer day.

To a conscious Jew the predicament of the Jewish people must come first. A conscious Jew is one who knows that his or her heart, soul, body and mind are Jewish, and who consciously struggles against the assimilatory forces of U.S. cultural imperialism.

The Orthodox are ferocious—and have been ferocious for centuries and millennia—in their resistance to empire and assimilation. They are magnificent organizers. Without religion the Jews of the world would be dead spiritually, psychologically and physically. You don't want that.

Jews have contributed much to the left, but not in mindfulness of their own Jewishness. In Eretz Yisrael it was the right that struggled against the British Empire. I am speaking of the Stern group and the Irgun, and it is the "religious right" today which leads the struggle against U.S. cultural imperialism.

From the left point of view it is the Jews who ought to be considered the only ones with the valid claim to the Land of Israel. We are the ones who smashed the British Empire. The religious right, to which I belong, bases its claim on G-d's Torah, which says over and over and in every way that Eretz Yisrael is Jewish. As for "Palestine," it is not an Arabic word, it is a Hebrew word from our Tanach, our Hebrew Bible.

You should have religious consciousness and you should have historical consciousness. You should know that in the 19th century the British Empire dominated the globe, that it seized Eretz Yisrael from the Turks (who are Muslims, but not Arabs) in 1917, during World War I, that it made promises to both Jews and Arabs that it could not keep. The Arabs, you should know, had been squatting on Jewish land. Clear-thinking Muslims understand this. The Torah says that Eretz Yisrael is Jewish land, and the Koran says nothing on the subject. Simple as that.

In 1939 the British government finally stopped playing both sides of the street and came down firmly on the Arab side. It issued a White Paper virtually cutting off Jewish immigration into Palestine. This was just before the outbreak of World War II. Ben-Gurion said, "We will fight the war as if there were no White Paper and we will fight the White Paper as if there were no war." The Lehi (which the British imperialists called "the Stern gang") began the job of fighting the White Paper by driving the British out of Palestine. The Lehi killed British police and soldiers and sabotaged British installations. It was violence but it was not terrorism; it was guerrilla war. By 1947-48 the British were on the run. They left Eretz Yisrael in such a hurry that they were unable to put a successor regime of their own in place as they usually did when they left a colony. The Americans had to do it for them. The Arabs, who were only squatters, were distressed and bewildered. They are distressed and

bewildered to this day. So are those Jews who do not know that the State of Israel is merely Palestine Mandate American Phase.

Chapter 6: Of the Left

You are of the left so you may be socialist but you are not eager to own up to it so it doesn't matter. You are for labor, for the poor, for the oppressed. You are against U.S. imperialism. Your Jewishness is a frozen block of sentimentalism and stupid jokes. It comes last.

I know the left. I was born into it. My mother, may her memory be blessed, joined the CP in 1931. "To slander the Soviet Union is to slander the memory of the twenty million Soviet dead," I used to holler in the streets of Los Angeles fifty years later. Russian-Jewish émigrés would nod their heads in appreciation. I was locked up in psych wards time and again for this kind of "manic" behavior. Brezhnevism.

My dad, may his memory be blessed, was a postal worker who sorted mail for thirty years, mostly days and sometimes nights, at the huge facility at 90 Church Street in Lower Manhattan. He drew the cartoon for the union newspaper. America gave us electricity, running water, *we never missed a meal*, occasionally we ate out at the Chinese restaurant which every Jewish neighborhood has, and all they asked us to give in return was our labor and our Jewishness.

Our Jewishness had not been some quaint immigrant vignette or some video editor's dream of dirtier and dirtier jokes forever, our Jewishness had been of the very breath of G-d. Our Jewishness had been greater than the Hudson, greater than the Columbia and the Colorado and the Missouri/Mississippi, greater than Alaska and Texas and the whole wide world. This can be expressed in the mathematical formula:

$$\text{Jewishness} > \text{America}$$

We lost our Jewishness when we lost Shabbos. To keep Shabbos we would have had to fight for it. It would have been a struggle that would have turned America upside down. The fight would have been waged at home, between Jewish workers and Jewish bosses. So many Jewish bosses put up signs saying: "If you don't come in on Saturday, don't come in on Monday." How clever. There was no Jewish Mario Savio, there was no Jewish Rosa Parks, to take one of those signs down and to set off the

strike that would have brought the U.S. garment industry to a halt. We got Sunday off instead. We became Quasi-Christians.

“What difference does it make?” the Wise Guys and the Hard Ladies say about their Jewishness, and it stirs G-d’s anger. It was not easy for G-d to make us Jews. We had to be born of a Jewish mother (something only G-d could arrange) or converted according to halacha, which is the steep and narrow path the Rabbis have hewn out of the mountainside. A Reform “rabbi” says you can become a Jew by reading some books and promising to be nice. Nice depends on the prevailing winds. For example: Reform used to say that a kippa (yarmulke) was not nice because it set Jews apart from their Xtian brethren. Now that ethnicity is nice, a kippa is nice again too.

Reform began in Germany in 1810. It is a phenomenon entirely of modern times, with no connection to the ancient or medieval worlds. Orthodoxy, by contrast, goes back to Bible days, a hundred generations and more in an unbroken chain—impressive compared to Reform, which cannot keep two generations together. Reform considers Orthodoxy to be nauseating, while Orthodoxy considers Reform to be...nauseating.

The Wise Guys and the Hard Ladies don’t care. *Meshugena*, they say, proud of their ten words of Yiddish which give them a sexy and mysterious aura. Celery soda, corned beef, Brooklyn patter—these supposedly constitute Jewish soul. The intermarriage rate is something like fifty percent and the Jewish population of the United States is collapsing. G-d is angry, and G-d’s anger has consequences for all of us.

Being a Jew is such a trip! What compares with it? One would think you would want your Jewishness to deepen every year, if not every day. Hurry! Study! Learn! Learn Jewish history, learn Talmud, learn the Bible, learn Hebrew, find yourself a rebbe!

It’s very late in the game. Think of the time you have wasted writing your name in the water, hanging out, going in circles, getting cured—are you young enough to do it all over again and still have something left?

The State of Israel is in a mess. It is only prepared to receive you despite itself. You are the marginal Jews. Ye who can organize, take it upon yourselves to organize.

Atlanta Maui Seattle Boston it's all America it's all Rome and young Jew for some reason you can't mine coal you can't grow corn you can't work Ford or Boeing production lines but you won't starve—you can be a bathhouse attendant. What is America but one big Roman bathhouse. The land of peace and freedom.

The insiders know that freedom is an illusion. Equality is the word today and you mustn't be against equality or you're a racist/sexist/homophobe. It's all groupthink and being a sheep.

How old is a young Jew? "You're as old as you feel," a paid physician once told me. Actually I'm 61 and have coronary heart disease. My father, may he rest in peace, died young of heart disease and I'm ready to pop off at any time. I believe in G-d, I believe in Judgment I believe in the Hereafter. Young Jew you ignore G-d you're breaking G-d's heart. You will earn an afterlife of Eternal Regret which may last nonstop for eleven months. Eternal Regret which lasts eleven minutes is bad enough—so turn to G-d Who wants to love you.

America loves you. America loves Jews, they're so bright, so verbal, so interesting, so incredibly stupid. "Why should it make any difference that I happen to be Jewish?" ask some young Jews. G-d grimaces. *Happen to be Jewish!* G-d stifles Himself, and all He releases is a little anti-Semitism. A tiny bit of salt in the stew. A certain young Jew is horrified by it. He finds out where groupthink headquarters is and he lobbies (he's an "activist") for anti-Semitism to be included in the left-wing litany of racism/sexism/homophobia. He succeeds in what he imagines to have been a struggle (walking through an open door). And now those whose genes resonate in hatred of groupthink begin to hate the Jews. It's a rough go. Struggle against anti-Semitism, my Jewish friend, with firearms if it comes to that, but first and foremost struggle against the holocaust of intermarriage and assimilation. That's a struggle.

Chapter 7: Freedom

Free citizen of the Empire, partially digested Jew, you have freedom, you have freedom of choice—either to be a slave of G-d or to be a slave of the Empire. Dear Jew, it makes a difference, but not a world of difference, whether your name is Smith or Goldberg, whether you make wonderful kreplach or have never heard of kreplach,

whether you go to more Chanukah parties or more Xmas parties. Are you gunning for a PhD in Talmudic Studies or an MA in Yiddish Literature? G-d is not impressed. "Either you're on the bus or you're off the bus." The bus was manufactured in the ancient Sinai Desert, it has been in Israel, Babylon, Rome, Spain, Poland, China, Yemen, Morocco, Holland, Brazil, Australia, Brooklyn, Berkeley, Toronto, Kiev... The ride is not always comfortable, not by a long shot, but the engine is good and the Driver knows what He is doing. The bus is Yiddishkeit, it is Judaism, it is Orthodox Judaism.

Take inventory. What do you have? Perhaps you have a microwave, or perhaps you have a cabin cruiser, or a thrift-shop radio; you have a nice little house with the mortgage paid off, or you have someone's couch to sleep on for one night, you have the price of a burrito in your pocket or you have a ticket for the Concorde in your pocket, forget all that, it's all *luxury*. Let's get down to essentials:

You have a body.

It is male or female.

It has a male reproductive tract or a female reproductive tract. It has male secondary sexual characteristics or it has female secondary sexual characteristics.

If you are a girl, do you want to "be like one of the guys," as the masters of The Culture want you to want to be? If you are a boy, do you want to be "gay" (queer), as the masters of The Culture want you to want to be?

They say that pleasure is the main thing, that pleasure justifies itself. We Orthodox Jews are seldom ascetics. We get pleasure from many things, including food, for example, but we know that the purpose of food is sustenance, and that the purpose of the reproductive tract is reproduction.

An Orthodox man and an Orthodox woman courting each other never kiss or touch until immediately after the wedding ceremony and then not before the eyes of the congregation, but in a private space especially provided for that purpose.

During the courtship the man should want to know if the potential *kallah* is "a wise-hearted woman with a tongue of kindness"; she wants to know how scholarly is his mind. She wants to know how strong is his faith and he wants to know how strong is hers. Their *frumkeit* (level of observance) should not be radically different. What are their backgrounds like? There is much to find out. Since they are part of a community, they learn a lot about each other through intermediaries. People meet through matchmakers (professional or amateur, male or female), through family,

through friends. People do not "pick up girls" in supermarkets, bars, bagel shops or laundromats, or go to parties with the hope of running into someone.

Orthodox women do not dress like plain janes nor do they dress like subtle prostitutes. They do not flirt and they hate to be flirted with. They do not use the power of their bodies to get men to look at them. They do not go around shaking men's hands nor would they dream of allowing themselves to be pecked on the cheek by their husband's friends or friends of friends or strangers.

You have a body.

You have a mouth, with the power of speech and ingestion. Worlds are sometimes created or destroyed with the mouth, with words. Before you eat or drink you can say the appropriate short Hebrew blessing. And in many different areas of life you can learn to talk straight, like a servant of G-d, not like a slave to fashion.

G-d did not create windup toys. He created us with free will. The choice is before you now, whether to approach Orthodox communities and bit by bit be absorbed, to live according to the Jewish calendar and Jewish ritual, or to live according to those fashions which appeal to you among the many, many different fashions which the Empire offers. You can be either a Jew or a fash-ist. A fash-ist is all stance and no soul.

Eretz Habrit

The Orthodox ladies scurrying through hospitals doing what might be their favorite mitzvah, distributing pastries, delicious pastries, fine chunks of melon, shouting happily "*mezonos!*" (to remind the patients that the *beracha* for the pastry is *borei minei mezonos*). Visiting the sick is a big mitzvah mentioned every day in the morning prayers. It may be the mitzvah they specialize in. Everyone is supposed to specialize in some particular mitzvah. It might be having guests (it's a mitzvah especially to take in poor or needy guests), it might be tzedaka (charity; double meaning, charity and justice). Providing for poor brides is a mitzvah. There are so many mitzvahs, which is what makes our Holy Land so beautiful. Once you have the right attitude you find that the streets are paved with mitzvahs. But you can only perform mitzvahs properly if you have Torah. A life without Torah is a car without an engine.

What is on the agenda for Diaspora Jews?

Clothes are the clothes of the mind as well as the clothes of the body. Dress like a Jew. Come out of the closet. The world will change. Are you a skeptic? Be scientific: experiment.

Kashrut (kosherness): you know it's so important. Certainly you can boycott swine and vile fish. If you eat meat, eating only kosher meat and separating meat and milk are acts of moral elevation. There are certain things that don't go together, and the Torah is highly sensitive to ruinous combinations. Milk is life, meat is death. Jews are supposed to cultivate sensitivity. Life is one thing, death is another. A Jew dressed like a Jew does not go into a restaurant, not even just to have a cup of tea—it might give another Jew the wrong idea. In big cities you might be able to find genuinely kosher restaurants.

Idolatry. Mind murder. TV is the pig in the temple. Which side are you on in the Chanukah story? I know TV is addictive. I know there are some shows you think you have to have. "They try to appeal to every taste." Take your TV set and place it on the curb smashed with a hammer, or dispose of it in your own creative manner, or if you absolutely have to have the money then sell it. You will suffer withdrawal pains at first, but after awhile you'll feel very good and you'll gain great respect from the people you respect. The home is the sanctuary even more than is the *shul*. You wouldn't watch TV in *shul*, would you? When a Jew dressed like a Jew gets rid of his or her TV set, especially in a very creative manner, it is a sanctification of G-d's name, a *kiddush Hashem*.

Without Shabbos you are not really living. Without Shabbos you are not quite a Jew, you are a sort-of Jew. On Shabbos it is an extremely important mitzvah to feast on something special that your soul loveth: salmon perhaps, or asparagus, special pastries, everyone's different, something special *likhvod Shabbos kodesh*, something with which "to honor the holy Shabbos." If you can't afford special food, borrow and have faith that the money will come with which to repay. On Shabbos you don't touch money. Keeping Shabbos may mean transforming your entire life. It requires tremendous faith. Great faith brings great rewards. Let Shabbos-to-Shabbos be the rhythm of your life.

"*Tshuvah* precedes Creation." *Tshuvah* means return. Return to G-d. G-d loves *tshuvah* as much as a father loves the moment his two-year-old toddler who he had thought to his horror had been lost in the woods somehow miraculously appears. *Tshuvah* is accomplished through repentance from sin, which can be very hard. My

teacher has told me twice that G-d loves even attempted tshuvah, tshuvah that fails. We are so accustomed to mutual debauchery, deliberately encouraged by the masters of The Culture whoever they are, that we do not dream there is any other way. Proud of knowing and uttering slang words for solid waste to prove we are grownups as we first started to do when we were perhaps eight years old. Clean up your language. "When I was a child I did as a child, now that I am a man I have to put away childish things."

Don't be an empty-handed Zionist, but be some kind of a Zionist. It is a tremendous pleasure to build life in such fertile soil as ours. Of course there is transplant shock. For months at least, maybe for years, you will be a borderline case, slipping and sliding, even occasionally getting the blues. You start off as a kindergarten kid on the first day of school. Don't worry, you are not alone. If your roots in the Diaspora are very deep that could be fine; every soldier at his or her post. Come visit us often. If you don't have the money and can't raise it, or if you really can't get away, everyone understands.

What's it all about? What's the purpose of life? *Kiddush Hashem*. Sanctifying G-d's name.