



work. We live not only from trauma to trauma, but from Shabbat to Shabbat, from festival to festival, according to a precise and inevitable timetable. This, of course, is the history we prefer, the history we have chosen.

Perhaps, as some have suggested, if we were to give up the history we have chosen we would be freed from the history we have been made to endure. Happily, that is not the way that most of us have preferred—nor, for that matter, is there much evidence that it really works for those who have preferred it. Instead, we have hewed to our chosen path, and done what we could to blunt the edge of the oppressor's sword. Yet there are times—too often—when the price of our steadfastness seems unbearably high. I write these words in the aftermath of the PLO massacre of thirty-five Israeli Jews, an injury to which has been added the insult of silence by many so-called moderates—silence, or, indeed, praise for the foul deed.

The political and military responses will be what they will be. My concern just now is with the personal response, with the question of how Jews, as individuals, can deal with such outrage, can still hold tight to their commitment, can still enter Judaism eagerly.

And the calendar, the other Jewish history, provides the answer. It is mid-March; spring is in the air, and Pesach just over the horizon. No matter how much the events of the day intrude, the seasons of the year return, reminding, relieving, redeeming. Some day—at the end of days—sacred time and secular time will merge. Long before that, we may hope that secular time will offer more delight. But in the meanwhile, even at the worst of times, it is also, recurrently, inevitably, predictably, the best of times.

This April is an especially crowded month. The week we usually devote to Pesach preparation and anticipation will be distorted by the nine-hour long NBC special "Holocaust." We have seen the previews, and highly recommend

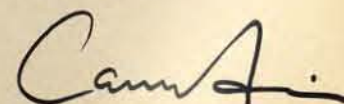
the program. In this issue, we offer some suggestions that may enrich the experience of watching it.

As I write, I glance through the contents of the issue, and wish that our readers might have the sense of both unity and diversity that knowing April's authors occasions for me. I have met all but one of them, and they are as disparate a group of people as one can find—an Orthodox rabbi from Brooklyn, an Israeli socialist, an American who lives in Israel and is a connoisseur of art and an American who lived in Israel and is a connoisseur of food—and, of all things, the Syrian ambassador to the United States. Among others. The ambassador excepted, the group is not united by its politics (I count three doves, two hawks, one pigeon, one ostrich, and two UFO's), nor by its religious orientation (two Orthodox, two Conservatives, one Karaite, one Reform, a closet Reconstructionist, a sprinkling of agnostics), nor by its mother-tongue (three Yiddish, one Hebrew, one Russian, several English, though be it noted that all but one speak Hebrew). But here they all are, teaching, arguing, amusing, caring. *E pluribus, MOMENT.*

This space has come to be our corner for apologies. Last month, we published three poems by Linda Pastan from which some words of identification were inadvertently omitted. Linda Pastan has published several volumes of poems, the most recent of which is *The Five Stages of Grief*, published by W. W. Norton in March.

Until next month—Israel's thirtieth anniversary, our next apology, and an assortment of other wonders—enjoy spring, the holiday, and whatever else there is to enjoy. (There's usually more than we think.)

And, please, take a moment to read our message on page 8.



## LETTERS

To the Editor:

I was disgusted by H. Teller's proselytizing attitude. Even though I can applaud his zeal in sharing Bible and Talmud, I can't accept his failure to see and respect the people and situations before his eyes.

Teller taught children to burn what he called "missionary bibles," books containing what are conventionally called in English the 'Old' and 'New' testaments. He was pleased with violence: "My pupils were enthusiastic. One little Moroccan told me that if he ever sees a missionary he is going to poke his eyes out." Didn't Teller see that it was violence and not faith that the child responded to?

When I encounter a book that is someone else's scripture I feel interested and engaged. Sure, I wouldn't want those to be the only scriptures available to me, but in Teller's shoes I would have used them. I might have ignored the New Testament as no threat whatsoever, or I might have made a lesson of the situation, putting it to the students to understand how sad it was to have to read our words from someone else's book. Or else I might have arranged for the books to be given to Christians or kept in a library. Why did Teller feel so threatened? You just don't burn books, any more than you burn people.

Unlike Teller, I dislike missionaries whether their ideas resemble mine or not. They don't respect the present. They coerce rather than communicate. When even a gentle and persuasive missionary makes a speech to me, I feel attacked. Teller is himself such a missionary.

I'm not surprised he couldn't communicate with anyone in Kiryat Shmonah. He didn't know anyone else was there.

Ralph Weiss  
Chicago, Illinois

To the Editor:

What fascinating excerpts from your readers' reactions to the Bakke case and affirmative action! You have to wonder (I do, anyway) if there isn't some way Jews and blacks can start talking again, relating, maybe even working together.

Seems to me that in the sixties when Jews worked for black rights we were working for ourselves too. The Bill of Rights that keeps race and religion out of schools, housing, and hiring was crucial to both our groups. And we liked working with blacks. They were tough and angry and had strong identities, and we could learn from each other.

After we won some territory the going got harder. Money and jobs got scarce, crime got worse, everybody had to fight harder for himself. We saw that we were separate peoples, two different movements for identity and survival. Some blacks realized that they had Islamic sympathies and some Jews, pro-Israel to start with, discovered they had an investment of sorts in the *status quo* of U.S. power.

It was a natural process, but we're beginning to suffer from the erosion of idealism. Blacks are virtually enslaved in South Africa and we shouldn't be silent. We should speak not just for the victims but also for our own self-respect. Working for that kind of cause again is an obligation we can be glad we have. If we can resume and develop our relationship with blacks we'll all be enriched.

Commenting on Bakke, *MOMENT*'s readers looked deep into themselves and their situation. I think that the lesson of the piece is that without denying our fears and our self-interest, it's time to move on.

Daniel Blass  
Detroit, Michigan

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