



a 22 year-old and to my generation.

You told us that as Governor of Texas, you introduced some innovative education policies that put Texas at the forefront of national education reform. The federal government must continue in its traditional advisory role for states by encouraging states to implement programs that meet national standards. This can be accomplished by increasing the investment of federal funds in public education to ensure higher teacher quality through training initiatives and to raise salaries to attract new teachers and retain qualified teachers. I urge you to provide greater financial incentives and rewards to states that reduce class size and encourage statewide testing of their students. Additionally, mentoring programs by veteran teachers of new teachers should be promoted on the national level.

The second issue of great concern is the economy. It is evident that the economy is now turning downward. This may be the way the economy naturally balances itself following the last prosperous eight years. However, I also believe this downturn stems from a decline in American consumer confidence. Foreign investors too may be suffering a lack of confidence. Although the President does not have direct control over the marketplace, he can influence investment and confidence in our economy. I call upon you to take confidence-building measures to encourage con-

tinued consumer spending and investment.

The third issue I see as integral to your administration is social security. During the campaign, you stressed a plan that would invest a portion of each worker's social security money in the stock market. This type of program appears fiscally dangerous. I challenge you to seriously re-think this policy and look to ideas proposed by former Vice President Gore. Please make certain that future generations will still be able to benefit from social security.

Finally, I conclude by mentioning what I see as the greatest personal challenge you face: your lack of knowledge of foreign affairs and apparent lack of interest and experience in international matters. You would be wise to build on the foundations that President Clinton began by opening relations with China, Vietnam, and the Koreans. Also, you must continue to strive toward peace in the Middle East. Lastly, the U.S. should assume a role of leadership in the United Nations, pay off the debt it owes, and encourage greater international cooperation in trouble spots throughout the world.

I wish you the best of luck in your term and encourage you to face the obvious challenges head-on and quickly.

Rachel Metson
Office of Senator Diane Feinstein
Washington, D.C.

Cleaning Up Environmental Policies

Dear President Bush,

I am a rabbi and theologian who has been involved with the religious environmental movement for more than ten years. On a regional, national, and international level, I have met and spoken with people of all faiths – clergy, laity, scientists, and scholars – who are deeply concerned about the growing environmental crisis. Environmentalism is an issue that transcends all previous categories. It is neither Republican nor Democrat, conservative nor liberal, capitalist nor socialist. It is at once both traditional and radical.

Environmentalism is traditional in that it upholds the values of humility, moderation, and frugality. The Western religions all believe that God is

the sole Creator and owner of the world (Psalm 24:1). Human beings were created by God to be the stewards of the world. We are to use the world for our benefit, but only in a way that will neither destroy Creation nor upset its divinely established order. Thus we should stand in humility and awe and we should use Creation in a moderate and frugal way.

Environmentalism is radical in the original sense of the word that means going to the root or foundation of things. Environmentalism challenges the fundamental way we are now living, working, producing, and consuming.

Previously, people could assume that the world was so vast that whatever we took from it and whatever we

put back into it would not have that much effect. We now know this is not true. Humans have been changing their physical environment for thousands of years. Before the last two hundred years, these changes had only local or, at most, regional effects. In the modern era, with large-scale industrialization and a growing global economy, environmental change has also increased proportionally. While we can say that previous generations did not understand how we were affecting the biosphere, we can no longer escape our responsibility for the decline of the basic life systems of the world. Climate change, shortage of fresh water, loss of biodiversity, toxicity of the soil, and other environmental problems are some of the issues that will confront humanity in the coming decades. How we respond now will affect how severe these problems will become.

In the end, the environmental crisis is not an issue of technology, economics, or politics; but one of values.

Therefore, Mr. President, I hope that your Administration will address the most critical environmental issues now facing our country and the

rest of the world. In the next few years we must become part of an international treaty to reduce greenhouse gases and thus alleviate the effects of global warming. The reduction of greenhouse gases is the greatest issue facing humanity since the end of the Cold War. We will need to fashion a new American energy policy that will move us away from fossil fuels and create new clean sources of power as well as high mileage vehicles. We must do more to protect animal habitats to maintain biodiversity and stop the extinction of species. And we must continue our efforts to keep our water, air, and soil clean from toxic chemicals.

You, Mr. President, have a special role in providing leadership on the environmental issue. I hope you will take up the challenge.

Sincerely yours,
Rabbi Lawrence Troster
Bergenfield, New Jersey

Book
Review

The Jewish Political Tradition, Volume I, Authority

Michael Walzer, Menachem Lorberbaum, Noam J. Zohar and Yair Lorberbaum (eds.),
(New Haven, Yale University Press, 578 pp. \$35.)

It has been a standard assumption of both Zionist and anti-Zionist ideologies that, lacking a state, the Jews never developed a tradition of political theory. Questions of authority, legitimacy, and the limits on sovereignty that preoccupied ancient and medieval thinkers from the Greco-Roman and Christian traditions faded from view once the Jews no longer wielded state power. Over the last two decades, a number of scholars, including this author, have challenged this dominant view, arguing instead that Jewish sources are rich with political discourse, even if largely different in form from Western political thought. This is, in part due to the fact that Jews continued to exercise power in community structures that were quasi-sovereign. From this premise, it becomes obvious that the State of Israel, although clearly constituting a radical change in Jewish political life, does not represent a com-

plete rupture from rabbinic and medieval Jewish history.

Perhaps the most important and impressive fruit of this new approach is represented in this collaborative work of Michael Walzer, one of the foremost political theorists in North America, who combined forces with a group of Israeli scholars. The Israelis, who are all closely associated with the Shalom Hartman Institute, spent varying amounts of time at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton where Walzer is Professor of Social Science. The project itself grew out of several conferences of philosophers and Jewish Studies scholars that the Hartman Institute has organized since the 1980s. The result is an extensive collection of sources around the theme of authority (three more volumes, on membership, community, and politics in history, are forthcoming) covering a range of subjects from covenant and revela-