

- To begin a dialogue with Iraqi officials and the Iraqi people on the possibilities of a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

- To establish a permanent "peace presence" in Iraq that will include the sending of other delegations within a month.

- To obtain the release of four American hostages who returned home with our delegates.

Each of us saw the enormous impact the eight-year Iran-Iraq War has had on the population. Two Vietnam veterans in our delegation were eager to meet with Iraqi veterans. We also met with some of the leading religious figures in the country, students on a university campus, people in hospitals, and people who lived in a farming region. We talked with other foreign delegates from Sweden, Finland, and Italy, and with leading members of the Iraqi government, such as the Deputy Prime Minister, and the Speaker of the National Assembly. In every case we saw hope for a negotiated settlement to the historical disputes in the area.

I am no apologist for the Iraqi government, which was not elected by its 18 million inhabitants. I traveled to the Middle East last spring, to bring a delegation to Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, under the auspices of Mid East Witness. That trip confirmed my belief that one of the keys to peace in the whole region is the recognition and self-determination of two states, Israel and Palestine, with international guarantees for the security of each. Saddam Husseins can come and go, but as long as the injustice of that situation remains as a concern, there will be no peace in the region.

Our trip was an attempt to give a human face to the potentially catastrophic situation. It was a gift for me personally to be able to talk face to face with some of the Iraqi people, and I have a new understanding of the complexity of the situation.

Since my return I have been deeply troubled by the rhetoric and rigidity coming from Washington. It is for this reason that I appeal to you to write your Congressman/woman and the President to ask that the U.S. do the following:

- Continue the U.N. sanctions/embargo (not including essential food and medicines) until Iraq leaves Kuwait.

- Reverse the build-up of military forces in Saudi Arabia to what is needed for defense only.

- Replace U.S. Forces as rapidly as possible with regional Arab forces.

- Place the multi-national defense forces under the command of the U.N. military staff.

A catastrophic war can be avoided, but we all need to work hard and speak out if there is to be peace in this region of the world. ❖

Lynn MacMichael is a BPF member.

JU-BU

by Ilene Serlin

In his article "The Dalai Lama and the Jews" in last winter's Newsletter, Marc Lieberman asks the inevitable question: "Why are there so many Jews involved in Dharma activities in the West?" As a longtime Ju-Bu (Jewish-Buddhist), I have been working with this question for fifteen years, and welcome the beginning of genuine questioning and interfaith dialogue.

Dr. Lieberman points out several compelling affinities between the Buddhist and Jewish experience, among them a strong sense of history, a respect for the unitary sacredness and interdependence of all life, a valuing of scholarship and compassion, and an appreciation of life in exile. He reminds us that the Dalai Lama is interested in an interfaith dialogue, and maps out several areas of mutual exchange.

I was delighted to read of Dr. Lieberman's interest, and would like to do as much as I can to foster this dialogue. As a clinical psychologist who was one of the group facilitators during the Dalai Lama Harmonium Mundi conference on contemplation and psychotherapy, I have long been interested in the question of why so many of us Jews are interested in Buddhism, and I have been trying to bring about an interfaith dialogue since 1975. At that time a student of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, I was impressed with how many other Buddhists were Jewish. The Jewish establishment at that time was not particularly interested in learning about Tibetan Buddhism; in fact, my efforts to engage in dialogue were met with harangues about Jews leaving the fold and dire predictions about assimilation and loss of identity. Interestingly enough, it was precisely this patriarchal and judgmental attitude which discouraged coming back. In the same way, many of my Buddhist friends were still so relieved at having escaped strict religious upbringings and family that they, too, had no desire to look back. My struggle not only with the similarities, but also with strong differences, was lonely. I wrote about the journey to find my roots in *A Modern Jew in Search of a Soul* (ed. Spiegelman, 1986) and in *Lilith*, and was gratified by the outpouring of response from others who were finding their way between Buddhism and Judaism.

Dr. Lieberman has beautifully articulated key similarities and affinities between the Buddhist and the Jewish experience; I am drawn to their differences. I believe that each can function as "shadow" for the other, and that these differences provide a lively creative conflict. By re-owning the projections and disowned aspects of oneself which are projected onto and lived

ough the other, and by seeing the relationship between these two as a developmental dance changing over time, conflict resolution can be found. I believe that these two traditions have an enormous amount to give each other, but that the way is not through simple harmony. If the Buddhist and Jewish experiences were partners learning a partnership dance, we might ask: "What are similarities and differences?"; "How can we handle differences?"; "Where is the overlap, and what is the meaning of their interdependence?"

Let us start with the family, since the Dalai Lama has repeatedly said that the Tibetans can learn from the way in which Jews celebrate spirituality within the container of a family context.

On the one hand, this is true. Family life among Jews has long been praised for its stability, emphasis on learning and warmth. On the other hand, since the breakdown of village and extended family life, the nuclear family in post-modern America has certainly manifested its neurotic aspects. The powerful Jewish matriarch, with no households to run, has become an overwhelming Mrs. Portnoy. A natural push to learn and advance has become spiritual, intellectual and material materialism. Rituals no longer function, spirituality is empty. How many American Jews of my generation grew up with ambivalence toward Judaism in the home (a combination of fierce pride mixed with ambivalence about practice), combined with vapid temple services?

So many Jews in the 50's, 60's and 70's found first in existentialism, then in Zen, a refreshing change. They found, first of all, an emphasis on individuality and the heroic spiritual quest as a contrast to the noisy communalism and lack of privacy in Jewish families. In contrast to the sometimes suffocating protectiveness of Jewish caretaking, they found an expansive freedom. In contrast to the warmth of cluttered tables and warm passions, they found dignified silence, elegant clarity, and cool dispassion. In short, they found "Otherness."

From my practice, I have observed that many American Jews don't separate from parents until college and beyond. Torn with guilt and ambivalence, many still have not established individual selves or resolved conflicted feelings about their parents. In their late twenties, young people may compound a natural urge to establish their own lifestyles and philosophies with a "foreign" philosophy unconsciously in service of incomplete individuation needs. This is certainly not to reduce all spiritual seeking to psychological factors, but rather to point out the strong psychological component in these developmental decisions. In fact, spiritual communes and practices often provide surrogate families, structured environments, and guided journeys as a convenient substitute for the parental attachment. During this apprenticeship, teachings about basic goodness and awareness provide

important antidotes to early childhood neuroses.

However, when these young people turn 30 and begin to have children, they discover that they are actually quite like their mothers and fathers after all, and that it is no longer necessary to keep such a distance. The children may remind them of the need for childhood rituals, and a desire springs up to return to their roots. The "Tshuvah" or "returnee" movement is strong now in Judaism, as many Jews find themselves rootless and lost. Finally, as these people are faced with the mortality and death of their parents, there is nowhere else to run. At this point, there is the readiness to return, to work through conflict and establish true autonomy and individuation.

Paradoxically, the path to resolution lies in embracing the problematic images of "orphan" (as in Paul Cowan's *An Orphan in History*), "exile" and "return" to discover that it was all there all along. As the Zen teachers tell us, it is necessary to journey far afield only to discover that everything we need to know is right at our door. Once we have worked through our conflict and rebellion, taken back our fantasies about the "Other," and re-owned our yearning for "roots," then we can be at peace with ourselves. With the partnership of our inner Buddhist and Jewish aspects, and with a compassionate inner interfaith dialogue, perhaps the time has come for an outer interfaith dialogue and mature Buddhist-Jewish partnership. ❖

Two Poems by Ryokan

Japanese Zen monk (1758-1831)

*Spring wind feels rather soft.
 Ringing a monk's staff I enter the eastern town.
 So green, willows in the garden;
 So restless, floating grass over the pond.
 My bowl is fragrant with rice of a thousand homes.
 My heart has abandoned splendor of ten thousand carriages.
 Yearning for traces of ancient buddhas
 Step by step I walk begging.*

*Old and sick, I woke up and couldn't sleep;
 Late at night, the four walls were somber and heavy.
 No light in the lamp, no charcoal for fire,
 Only a miserable chill piled up on the bed.
 Not knowing how to divert my mind,
 In darkness I walked with a cane at the garden's edge.
 All the stars were spread out — blossoms of a bald tree.
 The distant valley stream flows — a lute with no strings.
 That night with that feeling I had some understanding.
 Some time, some morning, for whom shall I sing?*

Translated by Taigen Dan Leighton & Kaz Tanahashi, & first published in *Udumbura*, vol. 3, no. 1.