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# Shalom

*Jewish Peace Letter*

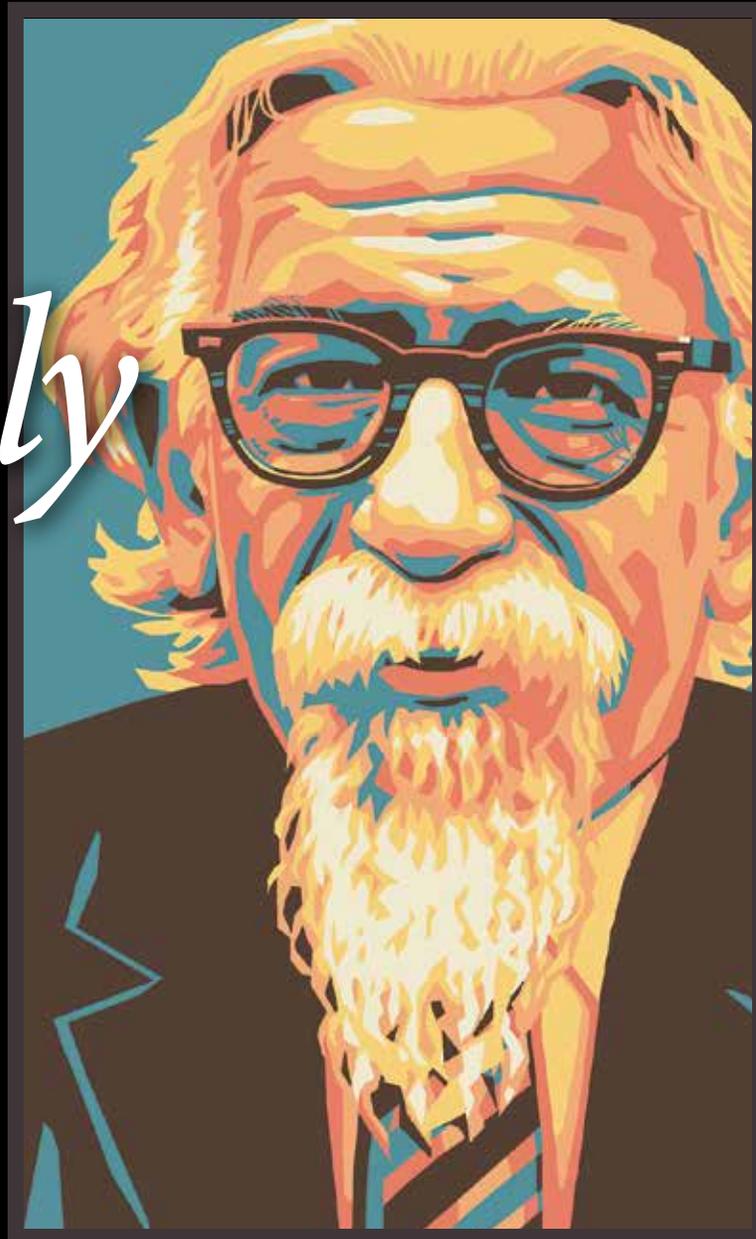
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## C O N T E N T S

“Daily

*we should  
take account  
and ask:  
What have I  
done today to  
alleviate the  
anguish, to  
mitigate the  
evil, to prevent  
humiliation?”*

— Rabbi Abraham  
Joshua Heschel



Artwork by Julie Lonneman

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Stefan Merken

*Our Web site is being redesigned and a tool created for searching past Shalom articles.*

**STEFAN MERKEN** is Chair of the Jewish Peace Fellowship and co-editor of Shalom.

## New Year's Wishes and Gratitude

**O**ver the past eighteen months our lives have been in flux. No matter who you are or where you live, the virus has touched you in some way. We have dealt with the fear of catching a disease we couldn't see; we didn't know where it came from, or who or what was responsible for its spread.

Relatives, friends, neighbors died as we watched in self-isolated horror and saw the numbers grow nightly from the news. Life changed and may never go back to

what we used to call "normal."

But in some way, Jews deal with these life changing challenges every year. We have been buffeted by hardships and changes for as long as there have been Jews walking the earth. We stand in synagogue, temple or in our homes asking that we as a group and as individuals be forgiven



*The editorial board of Shalom wishes you a very happy, healthy New Year.*

for the wrongs we have done and ask that we be written in the book of life for the coming year.

The editorial board of Shalom wishes each and every one of you a very healthy and happy New Year.

In the last newsletter I asked for help for the JPF. Examples include writing an article, a poem, or a letter to the editor. Prof. Elliot Ratzman, Chair of Jewish Studies at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana stepped forward and is redesigning our Web site; with the help of students he is also creating a research tool to make the Shalom newsletter articles available for anyone who might be looking for one particular issue. Many thanks to Prof. Ratzman and his collaborators. ☆

# Shalom

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## Compassion's Unintended Consequences

Henry (Hank)  
Greenspan

## On Stigma & Humiliation

**I**t is part of Jewish tradition to wrestle with texts (as with each other!), even the most revered. Thus the Torah has its commentaries, its commentaries on the commentaries, and an understanding that there will always be further commentaries. There are no final answers, at least not before the Messiah comes and the world is healed. But, from a Jewish perspective—or at least mine—I'm guessing that even then we would continue to raise questions, suggest alternative interpretations, and make (hopefully good) trouble.

We expect discussion and debate—even with God, if the situation calls for it. Noah, Abraham, Moses, and other founders eventually went with the program. But not without seeking clarification and, at times, negotiation. “On the other hand, let’s talk about it.” That may be one of the secular first principles of our tradition.

Two streams follow in response to the quotation from Rabbi Heschel. The first is to parse. “What *have* I done today?”: So taking account happens late in the day, after whatever has or has not happened? Why not start in the morning with “*will* do”? Does it matter?

“*The anguish*”; “*the evil*.” Which ones? There is a lot of both in the world. Does it matter which we try to “mitigate”? Clearly, alleviating suffering in general would not seem to meet the criteria. The daily work of a dedicated physician, for example, or that of a good parent, teacher, or plumber obviously contribute to the general good and reduce the potential bad. But would a teacher reflecting, “I had some great classes today” be sufficient taking—and settling—that day’s account? I am not sure. And does the notion of *degrees* of “alleviation” matter? I am also not sure.

In any case, the word that really caught my attention was “humiliation.” Here, there is no “the.” It is humiliation as a discrete phenomenon that is more specific than either “anguish” or “evil.” I would guess that most people, listing the anguishes and evils of the world, would not even mention humiliation near the top of their list. And here the text is about “preventing,” not alleviating as earlier. I find all of this profoundly evocative.

And so I am led to the second stream, which concerns what we mean by “humiliation” and what may help counter it.

I learn that the word “humiliation” is related to the Latin *humiliare*, “to humble.” Being humbled, as we normally understand it, is often a good thing. But perhaps we can say those who humiliate are short on humility—perhaps extremely short. And very long on presumption, pretention, and—in some cases—cruelty.

I say “in some cases” because I believe that a great deal of humiliating is not



*This is how Rembrandt painted Jacob Wrestling with the Angel, less of a struggle and more of an embrace.*

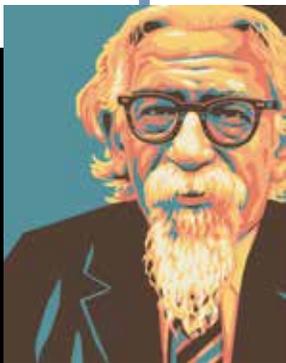
*Those who humiliate  
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**In this  
issue, three  
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respond to  
this quotation:**

*“Daily we  
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I done today to alleviate the anguish,  
to mitigate the evil, to prevent  
humiliation?”*

*—Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel*



*Continued on next page*

## Compassion's Unintended Consequences



*“I am not  
‘The Survivor.’  
I am not  
a category.  
Not a thing.”  
—Agi Rubin*

**HENRY (HANK) GREENSPAN** is a psychologist, essayist, playwright, and professor emeritus at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He has been interviewing, writing about, and teaching about Holocaust since the 1970s—now fifty years. Rather than single “testimonies,” his work with survivors is based on sustained conversations some of which have lasted over decades. That approach is most fully described in *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Beyond Testimony* (2010).

deliberately targeted and may even be experienced as compassion. In particular, I think of my friends who are Holocaust survivors and with whom I have worked for over fifty years. Echoing many others, Agi Rubin, a close friend and co-author, recalled about her first years in the United States: “We were ashamed. We were *made* to feel ashamed. So I covered up. ‘I’m fine, Joe. *That’s* not me! How are you?”

The “that” to which Agi refers is the view of survivors as exotic “damaged goods”—guilty, ghostly, and estranged (or, in contemporary lingo, “deeply traumatized.”). Even after survivors achieved a kind of celebrity status—which began in the late 1970s in the U.S.A.—they continued to be a “that.” Agi once exclaimed. “I am not a quote-unquote, capital S, ‘Holocaust Survivor.’ OK, I survived. But I am not ‘The Survivor.’ I am not a category. Not a thing. We have enough experience being categories.”

To be engaged as a “category,” a “that,” is the essence of stigma and, I would suggest, of much humiliation. As Erving Goffman taught us long ago, we often “gift” those whom we patronize (and thus humiliate) with compensatory “honors.” Thus cancer patients become “warriors” who are expected to “battle” their disease. “Survivors” (of almost everything) are celebrated for their exemplary “resilience,” transcendence of victimhood, “triumphant human spirit.”

In short, pedestals quarantine as readily as consulting rooms. Goffman wrote that stigmatized people—in whatever valence—are experienced as “not quite human.” But there is more. What I have noticed over the years is that Holocaust survivors are often disproportionately grateful for *whatever*

recognition they receive. My fellow cancer patients are also generally careful not to offend—to their face--those who attempt solicitude. Along with decency and compassion, that reticence also reflects the fear of losing (again) even that small bit. One ought not bite the hand that pats you on the head, even from patronizing altitude. As a consequence, the stigmatized person also learns how to deal—along with everything else--with humiliation in relative isolation.

All of this is to suggest that humiliation is much more common than we typically assume. It does not require degrading epithets. It may be entirely devoid of hatefulness of any kind. It often reflects the everyday ways we conflate people with their histories or circumstances. So survivors (again of all kinds) become epiphenomena of the Holocaust, cancer, blindness, blackness, rape, and so on. Rather than being people exactly like ourselves—indeed, *as* ourselves—who have also endured or are enduring whatever circumstances. Rather than being our comrades and brothers and sisters.

My own spiritual mentor, William James, once wrote, “What most horrifies me in life is our brutal ignorance of one another.” Combatting “brutality” of this kind does not require protest or obvious acts of resistance. It does require living closer to the ground (I also learn that “humility” is related to *humus*, the ground) rather than at 50,000 feet. It requires engaged and genuine conversation rather than presumption. It requires exquisite attentiveness, patience, and time.

With mixed results, that is what I aspire to find and facilitate every day. ☆

*Sanctity, Not Strategy*

Jim Thornton

**Peace Has No Path.  
Peace Is The Path.**

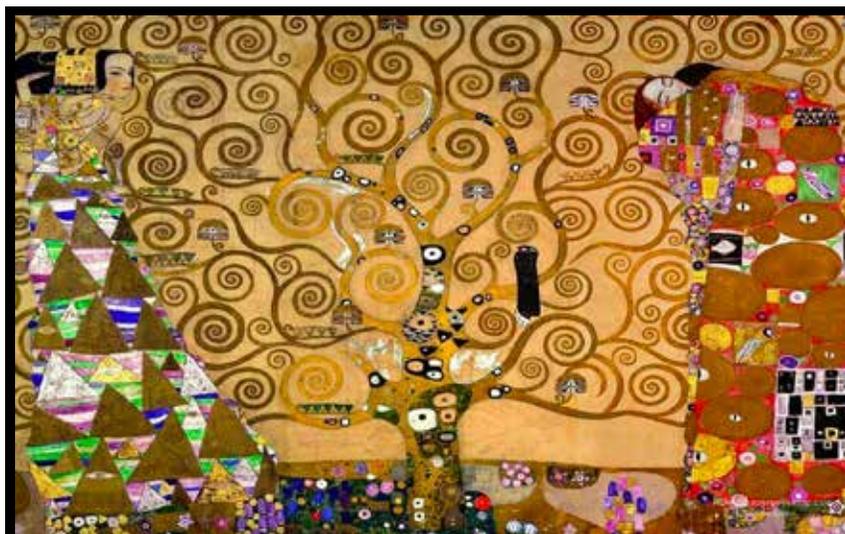
I am a straight, white, protestant male, of English descent. I have spent most of my life as a conservative Republican. I am a veteran of the armed services and a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom. I have been to war and I have seen war. In the years after, I have come to realize that war is never justified. I know making that claim to a people who were the victims of genocide may be hard to defend, but I am grateful for the opportunity to do so.

In this quotation, Rabbi Heschel is simply asking the question: What have I done today to live peace, what have I done today to follow the path of shalom? The first obstacle we need to overcome is the belief that there is a path to peace. This is simply not true. Peace is not some destination. If

only we somehow figure out how to get the right person in office, or just eliminate the right people, we will one day arrive at this peace or shalom. I have learned that it does not work that way. The rabbis in the Talmud knew that “The entire Torah is for the sake of the ways of shalom.” These rabbis understood that there is not a way to shalom because shalom is the way. I wish my Christian brothers and sisters were able to understand shalom the way the early rabbis did.

The peace activist Jim Forest, whose work was published in the June 2021 issue of *Shalom*, recently pointed out, regarding the peace movement, “We need to focus on sanctity, not strategy.” This is precisely what I want to stress. We have spent so much time and effort campaigning for people we think are going to bring peace, we have spent so much money bombing people we think are blocking peace, that we fail to see that shalom has no strategy. Peace can only be obtained by living shalom. When I can learn to live in harmony with my supposed enemy, when I can see that every human life is just as sacred as mine, then and only then will I be living shalom.

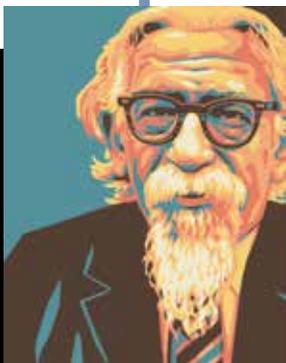
This way of life traces itself all the way back to “The Tree” in the Garden of Eden where there was one tree in the middle of the garden. When the serpent asks Eve if they are allowed to eat from all the trees, she says yes, except for the one tree in the middle. Therefore, when God shows them the trees, they saw all different trees. They saw fruit trees that all produced different fruit; they saw hardwood trees, softwood trees. All of these trees were called The Tree of Life.



“The Tree” in the Garden of Eden where there was one tree in the middle of the garden.

Painting by Gustav Klimt

**This article is the second of three contributors responding to this quotation:**



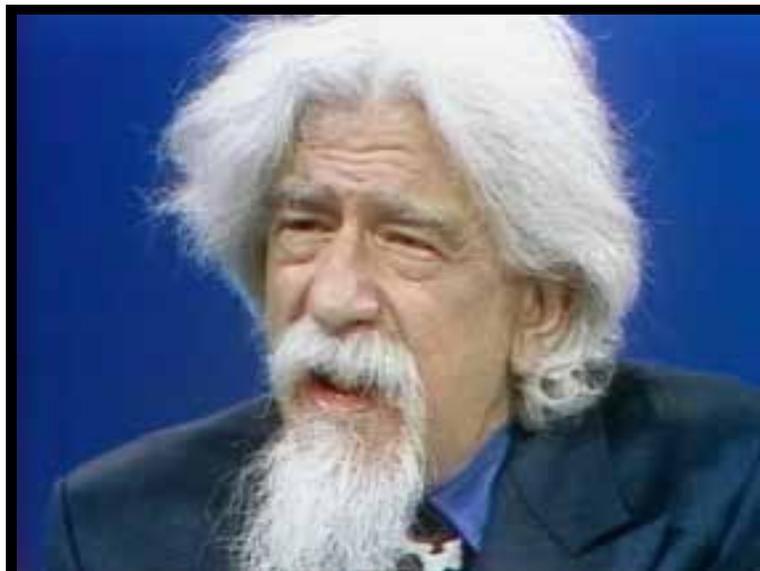
“Daily we should take account and ask: What have I done today to alleviate the anguish, to mitigate the evil, to prevent humiliation?”

—Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

Continued on next page

*Sanctity, Not Strategy*

We have many different types of trees that all look different and produce different things shown in oneness and unity. Then there was one tree in the middle of the garden, the Tree of The Knowledge of Good and Evil. One tree representing division, and duality. God prohibited us from eating of that tree, not because God wanted to withhold something special from us, but rather because God wanted to protect us from the destruction we would cause if we had that knowledge. The “sin” we inherited from Adam and Eve is not disobedience, but rather the knowledge of good and evil. To put it simply, we inherited the dualistic mind. We see everything as good or evil. Just about every facet of our lives is split. The dualistic mind will only lead to war. The tree of life or a mind of oneness is the path of shalom.



*“What have I done today to live peace?”*

—Rabi Abraham Joshua Heschel

*“There is no way to peace. Peace is the way.”*

—attributed to A. J. Muste

I speak in Christian terms because that is the context I live in. The repentance that Yeshua came to bring was a turning away from the duality of our minds, and a return to the oneness in which we were originally created. The teachings of Yeshua found in the Christian Scriptures, and the prayer in John 17 are all calling for oneness and Unity. Our Apostle Paul calls us Ambassadors for Christ, tasked with bringing a ministry of reconciliation. At the heart of every religious teaching is a similar message, and yet we still live in a world that is in a constant state of war. How can this be? To put it simply, we do not see the sanctity in all life, just the lives that are on our side. Therein lies the biggest problem we have, sides. As long as we keep picking sides, we will always have war. The dualistic mind will not allow it to be any other way.

If we want to make changes in our world, we first need to change our minds. We need to stop seeing people as republicans or democrats, liberals and conservatives, believers and unbelievers, male and female, right or wrong, or any other way in which we divide people. The biggest thing that both sides have in common, in any set listed or not listed above, is that they divide people. Until we can change our minds and start practicing sanctity, we will keep looking for a strategy to win, which inherently causes us to divide and pick sides. Yeshua said, “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God.” We want to be seen as God’s children; therefore, we must become peacemakers. The only way to become peacemakers is to renounce duality and begin to live in unity and oneness with every other tree in the garden, regardless of the kind of fruit they bear. ✧

**JIM THORNTON** is the senior pastor of Grace Community Church in Grafton, Ohio. He is a graduate of Baldwin Wallace University. He resides in Elyria, Ohio with his wife and two children.

## Faith As Action

Rachel N. Baum

## Restoring Trust in the World

**A**braham Joshua Heschel's articulations of a partnership between God and human beings have shaped my identity as a Jew. His understanding of faith as action moves me and challenges me.

In this quotation from a speech Heschel gave in 1963, I am drawn first not to the nouns —anguish, evil, humiliation—but to the verbs: alleviate, mitigate, prevent. They suggest a movement from the local to the global, from person-to-person alleviation of suffering, through the mitigation of social evil, to the prevention of something still larger: humiliation.

Heschel equates humiliation with murder, a resonance contained within the language we use. When we are humiliated, we say we are mortified, from the root *mort*, death. Later in his speech, Heschel says that “It is better, the Talmud insists, to throw oneself alive into a furnace than to humiliate a human being publicly.”<sup>1</sup>

These words are pointed after the Shoah, when those who humiliated human beings also threw those humans into burning furnaces. They are especially resonant next to the words Heschel spoke just before the quoted passage: “We are all Pharaohs or slaves of Pharaohs. It is sad to be a slave of Pharaoh. It is horrible to be a Pharaoh.”<sup>2</sup>

We are all people who humiliate or people who are vulnerable to being humiliated. Sometimes we are both.

Understanding how humiliation functions can provide insight into why preventing it is so important. Humiliation differs from anguish and evil in requiring the presence of another person. I may experience anguish on my own, or feel shame at my behavior, but I am always humiliated before someone. To be humiliated is to be below the other person, closer to the ground. The word comes from “humble,” with the root of *humus*, ground. Humility

may be a virtue, but there is nothing redemptive in humiliation, which signals a rupture of the bonds between humans. This is why humiliation must be prevented. It is not enough to avoid humiliating another personally; one must prevent humiliation by creating a world in which no human being can be on the ground with someone else above them.

The breaking of the bonds of human connection may happen all at once or little by little. There are, perhaps, small humiliations through which a person might still retain some trust in the world. I think of microaggressions, the daily ways in which some people signal that other human beings are beneath them. While these aggressions are micro in how they accumulate in a life, they are far from small in their effects. For the person who is humiliated, in any way, other people can no longer inherently be trusted.

The most brutal of humiliations includes physical torture, so point-

*“Understanding how humiliation functions can provide insight into why preventing it is so important.”*

**This article is the third of three contributors responding to this quotation:**



*“Daily we should take account and ask: What have I done today to alleviate the anguish, to mitigate the evil, to prevent humiliation?”*

—Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

1 Abraham Joshua Heschel, “Religion and Race”. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1963-rabbi-abraham-joshua-heschel-religion-and-race/>.

2 Ibid.

*Continued on next page*

## Faith As Action

### Humiliation and torture both break one's trust with the world.

**RACHEL N. BAUM** is Deputy Director of the Sam & Helen Stahl Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, where she teaches courses on the Holocaust and Jewish culture.

edly written about by another Jew, Jean Améry. Unlike Heschel, Améry did not concern himself with God and did not feel called by the tradition of Judaism. Like Heschel's family, Améry was a Jew pulled into the Holocaust's vortex of evil.

Améry wrote with great lucidity about his torture and saw torture as the very essence of the Third Reich. Torture,

he explains, is world-shattering because the one who is tortured loses all trust in the world. Améry knew that such torture was not limited to Nazism and that brutality need

not be as severe as his own experiences in order to break one's trust with the world:

"I don't know if the person who is beaten by the police loses his dignity. Yet I am certain that with the very first blow that descends on him he loses something we will perhaps temporarily call 'trust in the world'. . . the certainty that by reason of written or unwritten social contracts the other person will spare me—more precisely stated, that he will respect my physical, and with it also my metaphysical, being."<sup>3</sup>

I thought about Améry when George Floyd was murdered. "My skin surface shields me against the external world. If I am to have trust, I must feel on it only what I want to feel."<sup>4</sup> How can trust in the world be restored when a human life is so wantonly disregarded? "The expectation of help, the certainty of help, is indeed one of the fundamental experiences of human beings."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, there were voices who pleaded for Floyd's life, but help did not come. Trust in the world cannot be assumed; it must be built and rebuilt every day.

No short essay can answer that call but a start is suggested by Améry: Rebuilding trust in the world requires answering the expectation of help, the certainty of help. Every day we must take account of our actions.

I think this is part of what Heschel meant when he said, immediately after the quoted words, "Let there be a grain of prophet in every man!"

Heschel taught that prophecy is a moment when God is in search of man, a moment when God becomes audible to man—not because of man's searching, but because of God's. To suggest that each person should have more than a grain of prophet might lead to hubris, to thinking we know the voice of God, while a grain of prophet can call us to responsibility.

This offers one explanation for why Heschel calls for accounting at the end of the day. One cannot know what God might utter; one can only look back to make sure that one did not miss the voice of God. Daily we must alleviate anguish, mitigate evil, and work steadfastly to prevent humiliation. ☆



*"The tortured always remain tortured."*

—Jean Améry

<sup>3</sup> Jean Améry, *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and Its Realities*. New York: Schocken, 1986, p 28.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

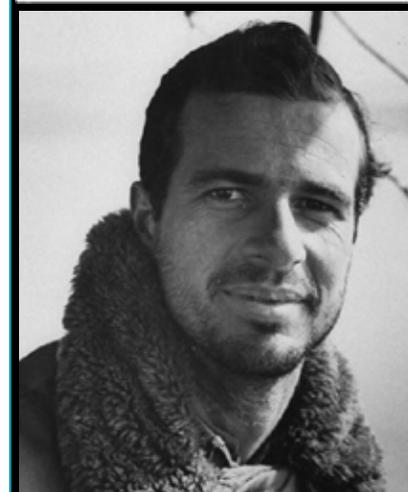
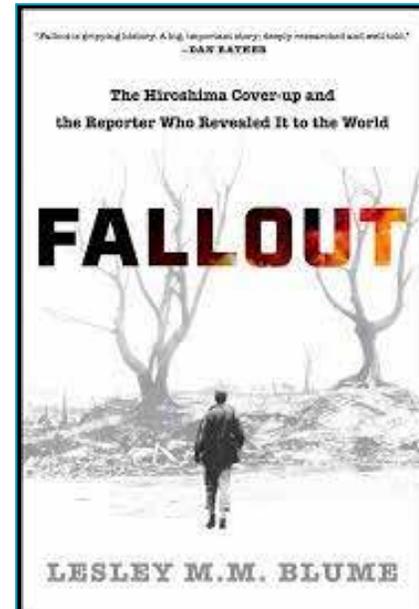
<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

## Book Review

# Fallout: The Hiroshima Cover-up and the Reporter Who Revealed It to the World

Review of Lesley M. M. Blume,  
*Fallout: The Hiroshima Cover-up  
and the Reporter Who Revealed It  
to the World.*

New York: Simon & Schuster, 2021. 288 pp.  
\$27 hardcover; \$17.99 unabridged audio  
download; \$17 paperback; \$12.99 eBook.



John Hersey

Lawrence Wittner

**I**n this crisply-written, well-researched book, Lesley Blume, a journalist and biographer, tells the fascinating story of the background to John Hersey’s pathbreaking article, “Hiroshima,” and of its extraordinary impact upon the world.

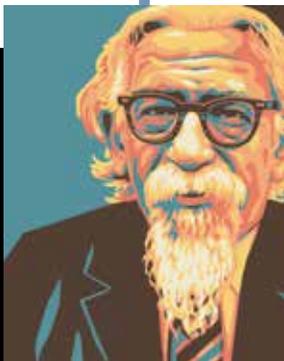
In 1945, although only 30 years of age, Hersey was a very prominent war correspondent for *Time* magazine and living in the fast lane. That year, he won the Pulitzer Prize for his novel, *A Bell for Adano*, which had already been adapted into a movie and a Broadway play.

Blume reveals that, at the time of the U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Hersey felt a sense of despair—not for the bombing’s victims, but for the future of the world. He was even more disturbed by the atomic bombing of Nagasaki only three days later, which he considered a “totally criminal” action that led to tens of thousands of unnecessary deaths.

Most Americans at the time did not share Hersey’s misgivings about the atomic bombings. A Gallup poll taken on August 8, 1945 found that 85 percent of American respondents expressed their support for “using the new atomic bomb on Japanese cities.”

Blume shows how this approval of the atomic bombing was enhanced by U.S. government officials and the very compliant mass communications media. Working together, they celebrated the power of the new American weapon by producing articles lauding the bombing mission and showing pictures of destroyed buildings. What was omitted was the human devastation, the horror of what the atomic bombing had done physically and psychologically to an almost entirely civilian population—the flesh roasted off bodies, the eyeballs melting, the terrible desperation of mothers digging with their hands through the

“Since Auschwitz  
and Hiroshima,  
the mark of Cain  
has overshadowed  
the image  
of God on the  
face of man.”



—Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

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## Book Review

### U.S. General Lesley Groves told Congress that radiation sickness was actually “a very pleasant way to die.”

charred rubble for their dying children.

The strange new radiation sickness produced by the bombing was either denied or explained away as of no consequence. “Japanese reports of death from radioactive effects of atomic bombing are pure propaganda,” General Leslie Groves, the head of the Manhattan Project, told *The New York Times*. Later, when it was no longer possible to deny the existence of radiation sickness, Groves told a Congressional committee that it was actually “a very pleasant way to die.”

When it came to handling the communications media, U.S. government officials had some powerful tools at their disposal. In Japan, General Douglas MacArthur, the supreme commander of the U.S. occupation regime, saw to it that strict U.S. military censorship was imposed on the Japanese press and other forms of publication, which were banned from discussing the atomic bombing. As for foreign newspaper correspondents (including Americans), they needed permission from the occupation authorities to enter Japan, travel within Japan, remain in Japan, and even to obtain food in Japan. American journalists were taken on carefully controlled junkets to Hiroshima, after which they were told to downplay any unpleasant items they had seen there.

In September 1945, U.S. newspaper and magazine editors received a letter from the U.S. War Department, on behalf of President Harry Truman, asking them to restrict information in their publications about the atomic bomb. If they planned to do any publishing in this area of concern, they were to submit the articles to the War Department for review.

Among the recipients of this warning were Harold Ross, the founder and editor of *The New Yorker*, and William Shawn, the deputy editor of that publication. *The New Yorker*, originally founded as a humor magazine, was designed by Ross to cater to urban sophisticates and covered the world of nightclubs and chorus girls. But, with the advent of the Second World War, Ross decided to scrap the hijinks flavor of the magazine and begin to publish serious journalism.

As a result, Hersey gravitated into *The New Yorker's* orbit. Frustrated with his job at *Time* magazine, which either rarely printed his articles or rewrote them atrociously, he resigned in July 1945. Then, late that fall, he met with William Shawn to discuss some ideas he had for articles, one of them about Hiroshima.

Hersey had concluded that the mass media had missed the real story of the Hiroshima bombing. And the result was that the American people were becoming accustomed to the idea of a nuclear future, with the atomic bomb as an acceptable weapon of war. Appalled by what he had seen in the Second World War—from the firebombing of cities to

*Continued on next page*



*Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum*



*The permanent exhibition of the Main Building displays personal belongings left behind by the victims.*

## Book Review

*Hersey and New Yorker deputy editor William Shawn decided that Hersey should tell the Hiroshima story from the victims' point of view.*

the Nazi concentration camps—Hersey was horrified by what he called “the depravity of man,” based upon the dehumanization of others. Hersey and Shawn concluded that he should travel to Japan and report on what had really happened there.

Although getting into Japan would not be easy, Hersey had a number of things going for him. During the war, he was a very patriotic reporter. He had written glowing profiles about rank-and-file U.S. soldiers, as well as a book (*Men on Bataan*) that provided a flattering portrait of General MacArthur. This background served Hersey well, for the general was a consummate egotist. Apparently as a consequence, Hersey received authorization to visit Japan.

En route there in the spring of 1946, Hersey spent some time in China, where, on board a U.S. warship, he came down with the flu. While convalescing, he read Thornton Wilder’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, which tracked the different lives of five people in Peru who were killed when a bridge collapsed. Hersey and Shawn had already decided that he should tell the story of the Hiroshima bombing from the victims’ point of view. But Hersey now realized that Wilder’s book had given him a particularly poignant, engrossing way of recounting a complicated story.

Entering Hiroshima in May 1946, Hersey was stunned by the damage he saw. In Blume’s words, there were “miles of jagged misery and three-dimensional evidence that humans—after centuries of contriving increasingly efficient ways to exterminate masses of other humans—had finally invented the means with which to decimate their entire civilization.” As residents attempted to clear the ground to build new homes, they uncovered masses of bodies and severed limbs. A cleanup campaign in one district of the city alone at about that time unearthed a thousand corpses. Meanwhile, the city’s surviving population was starving, with constant new deaths from burns, other dreadful wounds, and radiation poisoning.

Limited by a two-week visiting permit, Hersey had to work fast. And he did, interviewing dozens of survivors, although he eventually narrowed down his cast of characters to six of them.

Departing from Hiroshima’s nightmare of destruction, Hersey returned to the United States to prepare the story that he had decided should read like a novel. “Journalism allows its readers to witness history,” he later remarked. “Fiction gives readers the opportunity to live it.” His goal was “to

have the reader enter into the characters, become the characters, and suffer with them.”

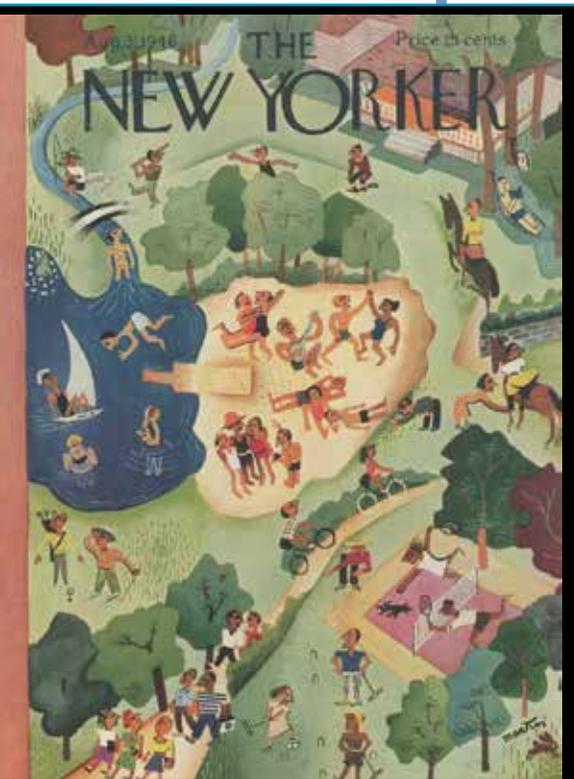
When Hersey produced a sprawling 30,000 word draft, *The New Yorker’s* editors at first planned to publish it in serialized form. But Shawn decided that this wouldn’t do, for the story would lose its pace and impact. Instead, he proposed running the entire article in



*The Atomic Bomb Dome with the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in the distance.*

*Continued on next page*

## Book Review



Cover of *The New Yorker* magazine August 31, 1946 issue devoted to Hersey's story.

one issue of the magazine, with everything else—the “Talk of the Town” pieces, the fiction, the other articles and profiles, and the urbane cartoons—banished from the issue.

However, things don't always proceed as smoothly as planned. On August 1, 1946, President Truman signed into law the Atomic Energy Act, which established a “restricted” standard for “all data concerning the manufacture or utilization of atomic weapons.” Anyone who disseminated that data “with any reason to believe” that it could be used to harm the United States could face substantial fines and imprisonment. Furthermore, if it could be proved that the individual was *attempting* to “injure the United States,” he or she could “be punished by death or imprisonment for life.”

What should Ross, Shawn, and Hersey do? After agonizing over their options, they decided to submit Hersey's article to the War Department—and, specifically, to General Groves—for clearance.

Why did they take that approach? Blume speculates that *The New Yorker* team thought that Groves might insist upon removing any technical information from the article while leaving the account of the sufferings of the Japanese intact. After all, Groves believed that the Japanese deserved what had happened to them, and could not imagine that other Americans might disagree. Furthermore, the article, by underscoring the effectiveness of the atomic bombing of Japan, bolstered his case that the war had come to an end because of *his* weapon. Finally, Groves, keenly committed to maintaining U.S. nuclear supremacy in the world, believed that an article that led Americans to fear nuclear attacks by other nations would foster support for a U.S. nuclear buildup.

The gamble paid off. Although Groves did demand changes, these were minor and did not affect the accounts by the survivors.

On August 29, 1946, copies of the “Hiroshima” edition of *The New Yorker* arrived on newsstands and in mailboxes across the United States, and it quickly created an enormous sensation. Editors from more than thirty states applied to excerpt portions of the article, and newspapers from around the nation ran front-page banner stories and urgent editorials about its revelations. Correspondence from every region of the United States poured into *The New Yorker's* office. A large number of readers expressed pity for the victims of the bombing. But an

even greater number expressed deep fear about what the advent of nuclear war meant for the survival of the human race.

Some readers and newspapers denounced the article. *The New York Daily News* derided it as “propaganda aimed at persuading us to stop making atom bombs . . . and to give our technical bomb secrets away . . . to Russia.”

Despite the criticism, “Hiroshima” continued to attract enormous attention in the mass media. The ABC Radio Network did a reading of the lengthy article over four nights, with no acting, no music, no special effects, and no commercials. After the broadcasts, the program was judged to have received the highest rating of any public interest broadcast that had ever occurred. Some 500 U.S. radio stations reported on the article in the days following its release.

In the United States, the Alfred Knopf publishing house came out with the article in book form, which the Book-of-the-Month Club promoted as “destined to be the most widely read book of our generation.” Ultimately, *Hiroshima* sold millions of copies around the world.

For U.S. government officials, reasonably content with public support for the atomic bombing and a nuclear-armed future, Hersey's success in reaching the public with his disturbing account of nuclear war confronted them with a genuine challenge. For the most part, U.S. officials recognized that they had what Blume calls “a serious post-‘Hiroshima’ image problem.”

*Continued on next page*

## Book Review

### General MacArthur blocked publication of Hersey's "Hiroshima" in Japan for years.

Behind the scenes, James B. Conant, the top scientist in the Manhattan Project, joined President Truman in badgering Henry Stimson, the former U.S. Secretary of War, to produce a defense of the atomic bombing. Provided with an advance copy of the article, to be published in *Harper's*, Conant told Stimson that it was just what was needed, for they could not have allowed "the propaganda against the use of the atomic bomb . . . to go unchecked."

Although the *New Yorker's* editors sought to arrange for publication of the book version of "Hiroshima" in the Soviet Union, this proved impossible, for Soviet authorities banned it. *Pravda* fiercely assailed Hersey, claiming that "Hiroshima" was nothing more than an American scare tactic, a fiction that "relishes the torments of six people after the explosion of the atomic bomb." Another Soviet publication called Hersey an American spy who embodied his country's militarism and had helped to inflict upon the world a "propaganda of aggression, strongly reminiscent of

similar manifestations in Nazi Germany."

Ironically, the Soviet attack upon Hersey didn't make him any more acceptable to the U.S. government. In 1950, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover assigned FBI field agents to research, monitor, and interview Hersey, on whom the Bureau had already opened a file.

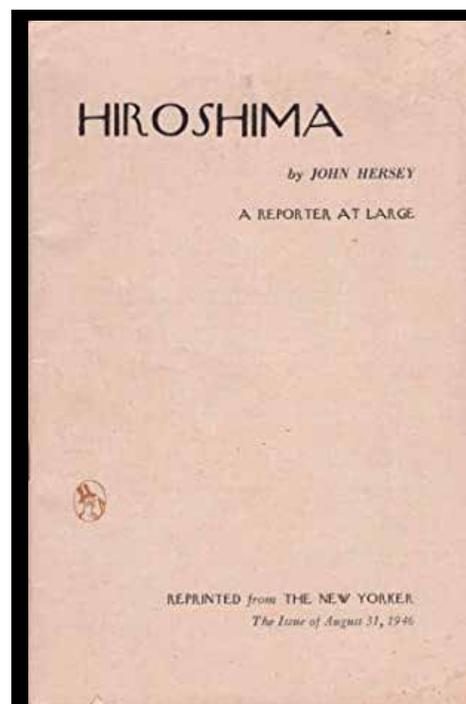
Meanwhile, U.S. occupation authorities did their best to ban the appearance of "Hiroshima" in Japan. MacArthur managed to block Japanese publication of the book for years until, after intervention by the Authors' League of America, he finally relented. It appeared in 1949, and immediately became a best-seller.

Hersey, still a young man at the time, lived on for decades thereafter, writing numerous books, mostly works of fiction, and teaching at Yale. He continued to be deeply concerned about the fate of a nuclear-armed world—proud of his part in stirring up resistance to nuclear war and, thereby, helping to prevent it.

The conclusion drawn by Blume is much like Hersey's. As she writes, "Graphically showing what nuclear warfare does to humans, 'Hiroshima' has played a major role in preventing nuclear war since the end of World War II." Although her book can be faulted for barely noticing the late 1940s public uprising against nuclear weapons by pacifists, atomic scientists, and world government advocates, she is certainly correct about the enormous impact of Hersey's work.

Overall, Blume reminds us that daring, committed individuals can help to create a better world. ☆

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**Cover of the first edition of Alfred A. Knopf's 1946 publication of Hersey's New Yorker article in book form.**