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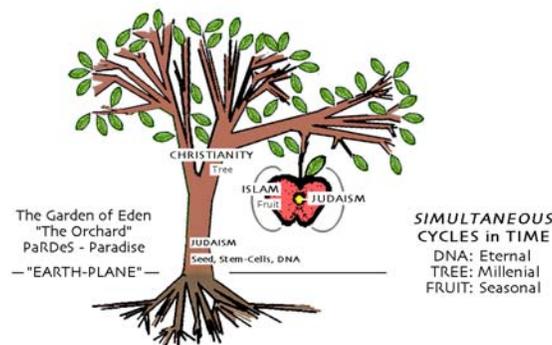
Thanksgiving 2013 / Chanukah 5774

Levanah and Stan Tenen
William Haber

From The Editor

In the Western world, this week marks the beginning of our annual winter holiday season. Traditionally, it's a time we spend with family, when we prioritize giving, giving thanks, and giving back—all springing from the underlying ideal of the golden rule. During this time, we strive to set aside conflicts that divide us and pursue peace—whether around the dinner table, or in wider world arenas. But how do you begin to open your world to someone—a person or a community—that has been (or has seemed) an adversary, or at least whose goals appear inimical to your own? How do you even talk with a person (or a country) whose personal style you find offensive, or intimidating—much less trust that you may, underneath it all, have common interests, and even care deeply about the same things?

Thinking about this, Stan and I returned again to our model of the three Western faiths: the living Tree of Abraham.



The Tree of Abraham: An Organic Model of Western Civilization

For an explanation of this model, and the complete graphic essay, see

www.meru.org/Posters/TreeofAbraham.html.

An animation of this process is posted [here](#) on Meru Foundation's YouTube channel.

The Tree of Abraham is a living system: each element, each stage in the process contributes something essential to the growth of the whole. One way these three elements—seed-conception, tree-growth, and fruit-letting go—can work together as part of a science of consciousness is in what we have called the “manifesting principle” described in the essay *The Three Abrahamic Covenants and the Car-Passing Trick*. When all work in harmony, the world can change. But of course, it's a long way from principles and theory, to practice in reality. How to begin?

Each element of our tree—Judaism the seed, Christianity the tree, and Islam the fruit—will necessarily view the same event from a different perspective: your world looks very different, depending on which stage of the “Abrahamic process” is your home. And here lies a key.



To set the context, here's a quote from David Brooks' column in the New York Times (available in full at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/28/opinion/28brooks.html>):

[T]here's been a lot of talk this year (2010) about trying to reduce corruption in Afghanistan, Iraq and across the Middle East. But in a piece in [the magazine] *The American Interest* called "Understanding Corruption," Lawrence Rosen asks: What does corruption mean?

For Westerners, it means one set of things: bribery and nepotism, etc. But when Rosen asks people in the Middle East what corruption is, he gets variations on an entirely different meaning: "Corruption is the failure to share any largess you have received with those with whom you have formed ties of dependence."

Our view of corruption makes sense in a nation of laws and impersonal institutions. But, Rosen explains, "Theirs is a world in which the defining feature of a man is that he has formed a web of indebtedness, a network of obligations that prove his capacity to maneuver in a world of relentless uncertainty." So to not give a job to a cousin is corrupt; to not do deals with tribesmen is corrupt.*

The first step is understanding that the person "across the table" may not hear, in our words, what we actually mean; they may be hearing something else entirely. And the ways they've developed to manage the world as they see it may appear incomprehensible to us—but make perfect sense to them. In this vein, Stan and I offer an account of an experience we had in Israel over 25 years ago; we call it "Bargaining Up the Down Staircase."

—Levanah Tenen, Editor

*Lawrence Rosen's complete essay is available at <http://www.the-american-interest.com/article.cfm?piece=792>.

Bargaining Up the Down Staircase

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While stereotyping individuals by association with one group or class or another is always inappropriate because, as individuals, we are all different and each of us represents only ourselves, there is no getting around the fact that people whom we identify, or who identify themselves, with different cultures do things in stereotypically different ways. This is what we mean when we identify a culture, or a person who is part of that culture. So while what I am about to describe cannot represent what any particular European Jew or Palestinian Muslim does as an individual, it did really happen more or less as I am relating it. It represents something important that is different in the styles of bargaining commonly relied on to settle differences in these different cultures.

The scene is set in the flea market in Beersheva in the mid 1980s. There are rows of vendors' tables lining the aisles. Jewish vendors and Muslim vendors are fairly well mixed together—but there is a distinct difference in style when it comes to bargaining over price and making a deal.

I notice that with many of the Jewish vendors, "bargaining down" works best. I pick up a trinket, look it over skeptically, and ask how much it is. When told the price, I respond with criticism. I point out the object is worn and damaged. I point to defects. I tell the vendor that he or she is asking too much for it, and I continue—diplomatically and not so diplomatically—to point out flaws in either the object or the vendor or both. With the Jewish vendors, this technique works pretty well. If I were to compliment the craftsmanship of the object the price would never go down, and might even go up!

When I am bargaining for the best deal with a Muslim vendor, I find that most often "bargaining up" works best. I pick up the trinket and marvel at it. I comment on its good qualities and I ask for the price. When I hear the asking price, I respond with sadness. I again point out how fine the object is, but I add that, sadly, I simply do not have the means—nor the personal merit—to obtain it. Even though I cannot afford it at the asking price, I still express my pleasure at having come upon the object and the vendor. This "bargaining up" the value of the object honors the object and the vendor, and encourages them to offer it to me—to someone who really appreciates it—at a price I can



afford. If I were to denigrate the object or the vendor I would be ignored or scowled at, and the object would not be available except at a much higher price.

Now think about it. What happens when cultures that use these two diametrically opposed styles of bargaining meet each other? No matter how diplomatic the words, each will interpret them differently. Bargaining down earns contempt from one, and bargaining up earns contempt from the other. One side—typical of the European cultural experience—craves hyper-criticism, and responds to an objective, externalized, “business” world-view. The other side—typical of the Middle-eastern cultural experience—craves hyper-praise, and responds more to a subjective, internalized, “familial” world-view. Each sees its way of bargaining as being more honest, caring, and trust-engendering, and the “other” way of bargaining as either too cold—meaning uncaring—and thus not worthy of caring or trust; or too romantic—meaning fantastical and unrealistic—and thus not worthy of caring or trust.

Regardless of who is doing the bargaining, it should be obvious that no successful deal can be made without a mixture of both approaches. There must be an agreed-to real value, and there must be personal respect for each party—in its own cultural terms and in its own cultural style and language. To make a deal, both parties must see not only their supposed common goal, but each must also see and appreciate each other’s cultural norms of trust, caring, value, and fairness, and the personal reflexes—snap-judgments, subliminal and pre-conscious cues—that come with them.

Both caring Muslims and caring Jews (and everyone else) need, as the saying goes, “to walk a mile in each other’s shoes.” Being critical as a style of negotiation is a means of caring; being romantic as a style of negotiation is also a means of caring. Both are essential. Putting both approaches on the table before sitting down to talk legitimizes and empowers both approaches for both parties. This puts an end to the fight over whose style takes priority, and it short-circuits the snap judgments caused by misreading each other’s style of doing business.

Trust and good deals require that both objective value and subjective value be honored and traded fairly.

There were real bargains at the Beersheva flea market that day.



Stan, Bill Haber, and I, and all of us at Meru Foundation, wish all of our readers a positive, peaceful, uplifting, and fulfilling holiday season and new year.

*Levanah Tenen
Stan Tenen
Bill Haber*



Meru Foundation on the Web

www.meru.org Meru’s original website was created in 1996, and has a large selection of essays and posters on many different aspects of this work. This is a site for leisurely exploration; the home page also includes a PayPal button for contributions.

Our eTORUS Newsletters include the most recent essays and graphics; all issues are archived at **www.meru.org/Newsletter/journalindex.html**.

A basic introductory packet on Meru Foundation, including a research summary, endorsements, a sample eTORUS, and biographical information, is posted at

www.meru.org/MeruIntroPacket.2013.pdf.

www.meetingtent.com Meru’s secure-server website for ordering our lecture DVD’s, books, and other materials, and for making contributions via credit card. This site also includes a Meru FAQ, sample videos, and contact information for the media.

www.tatctw.com Website focused on Stan Tenen’s 2011 book, *The Alphabet That Changed the World: How Genesis Preserves a Science of Consciousness in Geometry and Gesture*. Includes professional and reader reviews, and a portal for ordering from Amazon.

www.youtube.com/user/filmguy2121 Meru President Bill Haber’s YouTube channel, featuring our introductory video *First Light*, animations, and video excerpts from live lectures by Stan Tenen.



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