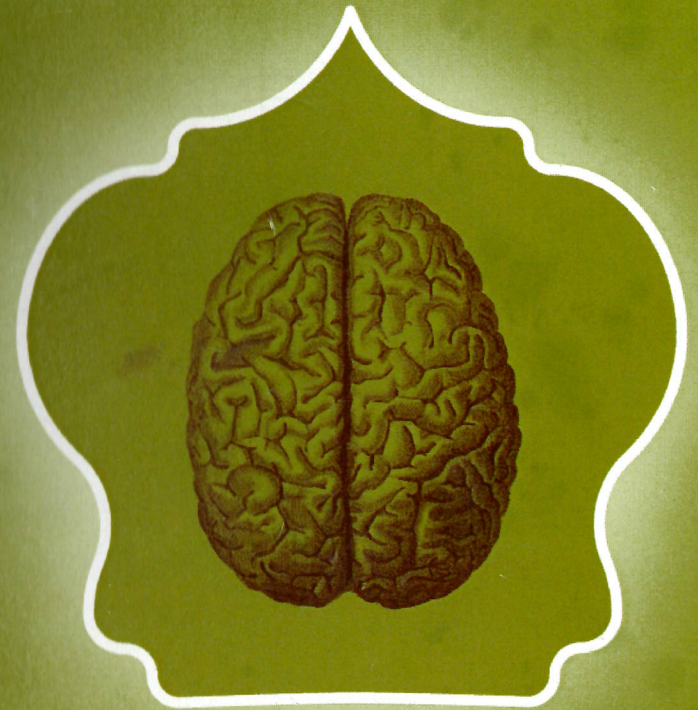




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Wrestling *with*
your Conscience



A Guide for Jewish Draft Registrants
and Conscientious Objectors

JEWISH PEACE FELLOWSHIP

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JEWISH PEACE FELLOWSHIP

Wrestling With Your Conscience

Thanks to Shirley and Sid Lens for their
generous contribution toward printing this booklet.

Book design by David Kruger

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ISBN: 0-9702237-0-6

Publication Date: 09/01/2000 • Published: Nyack, New York
Second Edition 2009

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Grateful Acknowledgment is Made to the Following:

Center on Conscience & War /National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors (NISBCO) for permission to use portions of What I Believe about War, Letters of Support for Conscientious Objector Claims, and Worksheet on War Objection.

Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCO) for permission to use portions of If There Were A Draft.

The Other Israel (POB 2542, Holon 58125, Israel) for permission to quote portions of Dan Shohet's letter to the Prime Minister of Israel.

Thanks to Rabbi Philip Bentley, Warner Bloomberg, Naomi Goodman, Andy Mager, Carolyn Toll Oppenheim, Rabbi Michael Robinson, Gerson Silver, and to Stefan Merken and Murray Polner. Special thanks to Bob Daugherty, Jim Feldman, Bill Galvin, and L. William Yoltan.

Selective Service laws and regulations are, of course, subject to change. This booklet is current as of December 2009. While JPF is committed to providing accurate and up to date information, this booklet is no substitute for advice from a competent lawyer. Should you need an attorney, JPF or the Center on Conscience & War, or CCCO, for example, can put you in touch with one who is familiar with Selective Service laws and regulations.

For those currently in the military: Although this book is geared toward those facing draft registration, military law provides for the discharge of Conscientious Objectors. The legal definition of what qualifies, and important questions to be answered are the same, so much in this book will be useful for you. But the process is very different, and you will have to show how your beliefs have changed since you enlisted. If you believe you are a Conscientious Objector in the military, you may wish to contact CCW or CCCO for help in preparing a claim.

Dedicated in Loving Memory to: Rabbi Isidor B. Hoffman for his concern, care, insight, and most of all his compassion for the human spirit, to **Ed Feder** a man with deep convictions against war and violence who was influenced deeply by Jewish ethics and traditions, and to **Naomi Goodman**, for her lifelong devotion to family, humanity, and the Jewish tradition of peace and justice.

Contents

- 6 Introduction *Carolyn Toll Oppenheim*
- 8 Can a Jew be a Conscientious Objector? *Jewish Peace Fellowship*
- 13 The Jewish Pursuit of Peace *Rabbi Philip Bentley*
- 15 Judaism and War *Rabbi Michael Robinson*
- 17 Registration at Age 18 *Andy Mager*
- 20 Preparing your Personal CO File *Gerson L. Silver*
- 22 What Do I Believe About War? *CCW*
- 30 Letters of Support for CO Claims *CCW*
- 33 What if the Draft is Reinstated? *CCCO*
- 35 Step-by-Step Procedure
- 37 "Thou Shalt Not Kill" *Murray Polner*
- 42 Selective Conscientious Objection and Israeli Refusers *Warner S. Bloomberg*
- 44 What the JPF Can Do For You *Stefan Merken*
- 46 The Jewish Peace Fellowship *Naomi Goodman*
- 48 A Selective List of Resources
- 51 Internet Resources
- 53 Some Books and Articles of Interest

Introduction *Carolyn Toll Oppenheim*

This remarkably concise and valuable booklet is a road map explaining the military obligations the U.S. government demands of its citizens as well as a guide to the alternatives available. It is also a guide to an ethical Jewish tradition which may help readers make their own decisions but which refrains from taking any position on what is the proper moral decision. Any Jewish professional, working in or out of the Jewish community, who comes in contact with young men and women (women, especially health care professionals, may one day be included in this obligation) should be conversant with the material contained here.

This booklet will also allow rabbis, religious school educators, youth group leaders and Hillel program directors to open discussions with Jewish youth on the broader issue of their own Jewish ethical or religious responses to governmental obligations. These include registration with Selective Service and the options they may legally pursue should the draft be renewed. As Jews, we should encourage them to grapple with and take seriously their relationship to government expectations, regardless of their final decisions.

Long before they approach the age of 18, young Jews are encouraged to discuss serious decisions facing them: driving, voting, and sexual activity. At 18, all young men are also required to register for a possible draft. Jewish ethics, outlined so well in this booklet, brings to bear considerations on those crucial life decisions no less important than decisions about sex, voting and driving. This booklet can serve as a guide for young people in junior high school, high school and college and help them make thoughtful judgments. As the opening chapter notes, to prepare to be truly adult "...this decision should be made based on an honest inspection of your deepest commitments and after a careful consideration of your own tradition."

Much resource material from our Judaic texts is collected here. Among other things, it includes the Talmud's strict limitations on violence -a checklist offered for "forbidden" or "permitted" wars — which can be understood not only for its content but also as a

way of being aware of the topic. Young people can learn that these Talmudic considerations are believed to be a model for international humanitarian laws. Laws in Deuteronomy that outline who may or may not be conscripted into the military are considered a basis for many modern draft laws. Our texts and traditions show that many Jews have long wrestled with the question of participation in war (whether through the draft or even the paying of taxes to support war) before reaching their decision. Indeed, Judaism compels us to be mindful of its teachings on war and peace.

An additional advantage of beginning this exploration several years before the date of required Selective Service registration is that should a young man wish to examine the option of conscientious objection then this booklet can help. The exploration itself may well lead some to look more deeply into the subject well in advance of the time a final decision has to be made.

This booklet can also be read with profit by Jewish parents who wish to talk to their children about issues of war and peace in light of Jewish ethics. They will find this booklet useful in its reliance on Jewish texts and tradition. It may also lead some to ask their religious schools and youth programs to address these issues in the context of Jewish ethics.

At a time when society is seeking answers to how we can live together without violence, *Wrestling With Your Conscience* is a welcome Jewish contribution.

Can a Jew be a Conscientious Objector?

Jewish Peace Fellowship

“This people is known by three signs:
being compassionate — conscientious — charitable”

Talmud (Yebamot 79:a)

Dear Reader:

The fact that you bothered to look inside this booklet already says something about you. It suggests that you, like so many others, are troubled by modern war: the weapons used, the destruction wrought, the human beings killed, the resources wasted, the threat of world annihilation. It suggests that at some level of your being you balk at lending your talents, your abilities, your very self to this activity of the modern nation-state.

You balk, and yet you may be uncertain. On the one hand, you are aware of the satisfactions of constructive activity, of feelings of love and compassion, of a desire to build a better world, of a reluctance to kill. On the other hand, you know the demand of nation-states today: that you make yourself available for military service and, in the name of human values, be willing to kill and destroy if so ordered.

It is a painful conflict. Certainly all of us appreciate the importance of social organization for human welfare, all of us learn to respect the nation for its potential and actual contributions to human welfare, all of us want to be good citizens. But at the same time we know that within us are elements we must also respect: a conscience which forbids us to kill or injure our fellow creatures, and the powerful urge to preserve and build a better world through constructive activity.

How, Then, to Resolve This Conflict?

If after an honest inspection of your deepest commitments, and after a careful consideration of your own tradition, you may conclude that because of your deeply held religious (or moral/ethical) beliefs

you cannot in good conscience participate in war in any form, your nation recognizes your legal right to present this claim before your draft board. You are still obliged to register for the draft but if you come to this conclusion, and are granted CO status, you will be exempted from fighting and/or going into the military.

What Do You Say?

In a non-dogmatic tradition such as Judaism, there is much room for individual intuition and understanding. Even if you do not have much Jewish education or do not regularly attend synagogue services or do not observe Jewish dietary laws, you can still be classified as a CO if the beliefs you hold prevent you from participating in war. While this booklet cannot tell you what to believe, it is possible, however, to share some of the teachings of the Jewish tradition which provide the basis for many of those Jews who have been COs. For while Judaism is not in any absolute sense a “pacifist” tradition, some of its basic teachings, when applied to modern warfare, raise grave doubts about the permissibility of participation in war today.

You may also find it helpful to talk with your rabbi, or some other counselor or teacher of religion who you respect, or someone to whom the JPF may be able to refer you to.

What Does the Tradition Say?

In the Biblical period Judaism regarded peace as the most divine fulfillment of God’s will.

“It shall come to pass in days to come . . . that they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. . . . There will be no harm or destruction in all My holy mountain; for the land shall be full of knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

Isaiah 2:2,4, 11:9

This attitude, so basic to Judaism, was strikingly reaffirmed in the classical rabbinic period.

“Great is peace, for all blessing are contained in it. . . Great is peace, for God’s name is peace. . . . It is written, ‘Seek peace and pursue it.’ (Psalm 34.15). The Law does not command you to run after or pursue the other commandments, but only to fulfill them upon the appropriate occasion. But peace you must seek in your own place and pursue it even to another place as well.”

Leviticus Rabbah, Tzav IX, 9
Numbers Rabbah, Hukkat, XIX, 27

But the tradition contains more than general statements of ideals. It was very specific about what it understood to be the application of these ideals to daily life with all its conflicts. Thus for example, Judaism regards the sanctity of life as a paramount value and expressly prohibits murder or the shedding of blood.

“In every other law of the Torah, if a man is commanded, ‘Transgress and suffer not death,’ he may transgress and not suffer death, excepting idolatry, incest and shedding blood. . . . Murder may not be practiced to save one’s life. . . . Even as one who came before Raba and said to him, ‘The governor of my town has ordered me, “Go, and kill so and so; if not, I will slay thee”’, Raba answered him ‘Let him rather slay you than that you should commit murder; who knows that your blood is redder? Perhaps his blood is redder.’”

—*Talmud (Sanhedrin 74a)*

Nor should one think that Judaism, while insisting on the scrupulous limitations of violence in individual cases, was willing to forget such scruples in the case of war itself. Even when war was fought for the most legitimate reasons, Judaism recognizes that killing is an offense before God. For example, in the Biblical era a sin offering was made by all soldiers.

The tradition is also specific in declaring certain strategies impermissible, no matter what ends are being sought:

“When siege is laid to a city for the purpose of capture, it may

not be surrounded on all four sides but only on three in order to give an opportunity for escape to those who would flee to save their lives.”

Maimonides Code “Treatise on Kings and Wars,”
Chapter VII, Law 7.

This strict limitation of violence, (no matter how just the cause may be), is one of the most basic of all Jewish ethical teachings. With the power of modern weapons, the impersonality of long-range warfare (do we really know whom we are killing?), and the complexity of issues being fought about, can you imagine that a Jewish tradition so scrupulous about shedding innocent blood and so scrupulous about limiting destruction could possibly sanction war today, whether nuclear or “conventional”?

But What About Defense?

On first consideration, such a rejection of war may seem irresponsible. For after all, haven’t we certain responsibilities to others and to ourselves? Are we simply to remain passive before tyranny and injustice? Shall we not defend human values when they are threatened?

Such questions are reasonable and the conscientious objector has no easy answers. (Neither has the military, it should be noted. For is it not perfectly clear that proposed military solutions to these problems are increasingly irrelevant and dangerous?) But even here the tradition has something to suggest which we, in our age, may be able to understand and apply with new insight. We know something of what Gandhi achieved in India by nonviolent means and what Martin Luther King Jr. accomplished in this country by dedicated nonviolence. We also have impressive records of Danish nonviolent resistance to the Nazis on behalf of Danish Jews. In the village of Le Chambon in France during World War II, French Protestant pacifists protected Jews from the Nazis. Nonviolent resistance overthrew apartheid in South African and brought democracy to the Philippines. And we have witnessed the extraordinary nonviolent protests of Soviet Jews against oppression and anti-Semitism. In the light of these and many other examples, the words of Isaiah may point to a better way to solve the world’s problems:

“For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: In turning and stillness shall you be saved, in tranquility and trust shall be your strength. . .”

Isaiah 30; 15

When we consider what Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai accomplished nonviolently in the face of Roman military might, or when we read in Josephus the stirring report of the successful nonviolent resistance to the Emperor Caligula by our people, we realize that modern experiments with nonviolence have an important place in Jewish tradition.

Though far from fully understood or developed, such nonviolent techniques seem to offer more genuine hope for the future than any means currently available for defending human values. The pacifist position, then, which compels us to intensify this search for effective nonviolent alternatives, asserts that at this crucial period in human history, to say “no” to war is to say “yes” to a slowly developing but vital mode of human struggle, and that in fact the apparently irresponsible negation of military service may be the most deeply responsible affirmation of all that we would truly fight for.

The Jewish Conscientious Objector is supported by the following authoritative groups:

“We recognize the right of the conscientious objector to claim exemption from military service in any war in which he cannot give his moral assent, and we pledge ourselves to support him in his determination to refrain from any participation in it.”

Rabbinical Assembly of America

“Conscientious objection to military service is in accordance with the highest interpretation of Judaism.”

Central Conference of America Rabbis

The Jewish Pursuit of Peace

Rabbi Philip Bentley

Jewish tradition teaches that human beings were created in the Divine Image. As the basis for ethical teachings this is a radical concept. It means that every human being who ever lived or ever will live is made in the Divine Image. The worst villain imaginable as well as the saintliest person is sacred. Jewish ethics are based on respect for the dignity and integrity of every person. Violence against a fellow human being is therefore a terrible thing.

In the Talmud (*Pirkei Avot 1:12*) we learn that Hillel taught, “Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing it, loving your fellow creatures, and drawing them near to the Torah.” Once Hillel saw a skull floating on the surface of water and he said to it, “Because you drowned others, they drowned you; and ultimately those who drowned you will themselves be drowned.” (*Pirkei Avot 2:7*) The cycle of violence is futile. Instead, peace must be sought.

The Hebrew word for peace, Shalom, is well known. What is not so well known is that the root of this word is not quietness or lack of hostility but completion or perfection. The word suggests that the way to a perfect world must be peaceful and therefore nonviolent. Of the pursuit of peace, the Rabbis taught (*B'midbar Rabbah Hukkat 19; 27*) that for all other *Mitzvot* (commandments), we are to “Seek peace and pursue it,” (*Psalms 34; 15*). The Talmud teaches (*Gittin 59b*) that the entire Torah was given for the sake of pursuing peace, as it is written, “and all her paths are peace,” (*Proverbs 3; 18*).

Some argue inaccurately that the Torah teaches “an eye for an eye.” This principle was never intended as a license for vengeance or corporal punishment but rather as the basis for lawsuits. Some have suggested that the Talmud tells us that if someone comes after you intending to kill you, turn and kill the pursuer. Those who believe this fail to note the way the Talmud strictly limits this to a kill or be killed situation in the most immediate sense. Even the Israeli military has a tradition of *tohar ha-neshekh* (purity of arms) that demands that deadly force be used only to preserve life. In short, Jewish tradition does not exalt military might or regard warriors as role models.

Not only our spiritual and ethical traditions but also our historical experience tell us that we should pursue our aims through nonviolent means. We have survived exile and oppression but have not only survived but have continued to flourish. We have done this almost always without resorting to violence. We know the evil of violence and the power of nonviolent action. As Rabbi Arthur Waskow wrote, "One can see practically the entire history of Rabbinic Judaism as a nonviolent effort to persist as a decent community in the face of hostility and oppression."

The earliest known instance of nonviolent resistance is recorded in the Torah (*Exodus 1: 15 - 21*). When Pharaoh sought to kill all of the male children of the Israelites he ordered Shifra and Puah, the midwives who served that community, to kill newborn boys. The midwives, fearing God, refused and made excuses. Pharaoh was forced to let them go and order his people to commit these murders in the open. This first nonviolent resistance took place under the absolute Egyptian monarchy and was successful. From that time to this there are many instances of such actions. In our own day the Soviet Jewry movement in the Soviet Union was entirely nonviolent and was crowned with success. In Israel the work of hundreds of nonviolent projects of action, dialogue, and education over the past half century is proving that the way to end the conflict between the Israeli and Palestinian people is not military victory but reconciliation.

The Jewish Peace Fellowship sees Judaism as a nonviolent search for justice and peace. We seek to do this not only for our own people but also for the entire human family.

Judaism and War *Rabbi Michael Robinson*

The Bible, the Talmud and contemporary Judaism are not monolithic on any topic. In the Bible we read about a feisty people fighting its way through the wilderness and into the Promised Land. According to Biblical theology, when they were unfaithful to God they lost in battle, when faithful, they won.

But we also read how Father Abraham settles a dispute between his shepherds and his nephew Lot by simply telling them: you go to the right and we will go to the left. (*Genesis 13:1-12*) For Abraham, the best land and the best water were not worth fighting over. The critical issue was to live side by side in peace. The tradition Abraham established continues in the Bible and develops among the Prophets. Then, too, according to the Book of Chronicles, King David was not allowed to build the Temple because the blood of others was on his hands. (*1 Chronicles 22:7-10*).

The laws of Deuteronomy on warfare demanded that when war was made on a city the trees of the city could not be destroyed. (*Deut. 20:19-20*). From this the rabbis of the Talmud extended the principle to require that nothing of use could be destroyed, not even a ceramic pot or plate. (*cf. Maimonides Mishneh Torah, Melakhim 6, 8, 10*). This, of course, would make modern warfare impossible. The Talmud does speak of forbidden, optional and obligatory war. The obligatory war is against the seven nations that made war against the children of Israel as they made their way towards and into the Promised Land. Yet at the time that the rabbis designated this as an obligatory war, none of these nations existed any longer.

Deuteronomy also establishes a draft law by designating those who cannot be required to serve in the army. If a man has built a house and not lived in it, planted a vineyard and not eaten its fruit, or betrothed a wife and not lived with her, he cannot be called to serve. It also declares that if he is afraid he is exempted from military service. (*Deut.20:5-8.*) The ancient rabbis interpreted this to mean a person is exempt if he is afraid that he might sin by killing someone. This may be considered the first provision for conscientious objectors in any draft legislation.

The Biblical prophets dreamed of a world of peace “where each would sit under his vine and his fig tree and none would make them afraid.” The way of peace for them was the only way, and instruments of war should be destroyed and converted into tools to build a fruitful life for humanity. Rabbi Hillel in the *Mishnah* admonished us to “be as the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace.” (*Pirke Avot 1:12*). “He who saves a single life it is attributed to him as if he had saved the entire world, and he who destroys a single life, it is as if he had destroyed the entire world.” (*Mishnah Sanhedrin 4.5*)

Throughout our history there has been a continuous stream of commentators who find warfare to be a violation of the Jewish principles of compassion and of doing no harm, and, most important, of violating the sacredness of human life, since each human has been created in the image of the Divine. This was especially true during the rabbinic period when the rabbis of the *Mishnah* and *Talmud* were almost unanimous in rejecting capital punishment and war. The creation of the State of Israel and its struggle with its neighbors has caused many Jews to endorse violence, however reluctantly. Yet there are still many Jews who have refused to rationalize violence and understand that violence breeds violence and leads to even more bloodshed, more tragedy, more death. *Derech emunah b'charti*—I have chosen the way of faith.

Registration at Age 18

Andy Mager

In January 1980, when President Jimmy Carter called for the reinstatement of draft registration, I was a 19 year old college student. The draft still meant “Vietnam” for most people, and there was great public discussion about whether this was a step toward future wars of aggression or a prudent defensive measure.

The Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan the previous year and Americans had been taken hostage in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution. Registration was opposed by a large number of people and when it began that summer many young men like myself chose not to register. My decision was based on a deeply held belief that war is wrong and that I have a responsibility to work for peace and justice, not war and domination. Because of my public refusal to cooperate with draft registration and my other peace activist work, I was one of those singled out for prosecution, eventually being sentenced to six months in prison, a two and half year suspended sentence and probation.

In recent years there has been little debate about draft registration and most young men go to their local post office and complete the simple registration form. If you have questions about the possibility of participating in war and seek guidance based on the Jewish tradition, then this booklet is full of valuable information. What follows is a brief look at the registration process and what steps one who has conscientious concerns about war might consider.

The law requires that registration can be accomplished in the sixty day period beginning 30 days before their 18th birthday. Registration is accomplished by filling out a card at the post office, by mail or by Internet. (There are also other ways to register such as by checking off a box on the student financial aid form or with a designated Selective Service registrar.) Registrants are also required to keep the Selective Service System, the government agency which runs the program, updated about any address changes.

Refusal to register could lead to prosecution in the federal courts and a sentence of up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. A variety of benefits are also denied to non-registrants, including

access to federal financial aid, student loans, job training programs, and federal jobs.

However, thus far only 20 people have been prosecuted out of hundreds of thousands who did not register. And virtually all those who were prosecuted had publicly stated their belief that war was immoral or had written to the government about their position. Those who don't register may receive a series of threatening letters from the government though to date no one has been prosecuted for refusing to register since 1986.

Despite the persistent efforts of various peace organizations, including the Jewish Peace Fellowship, the government has refused to include any place on the registration form for young men to indicate they are conscientious objectors to all wars. Nonetheless, many young people who believe that they could not in good conscience participate in war have chosen to write something to that effect on their registration card before turning it in. It is important to remember that many young men who oppose war and violence have decided to register, recognizing that there will be other opportunities to take a personal stand.

Copying the form before submitting it to the post office and saving the copy is one step that can be taken to begin preparing a conscientious objector file. Such documentation would be valuable in the event that Congress were to put a draft in place. Registrants have to notify Selective Service in ten days of any changes of information though apparently the rule is not enforced. You may also register on the Internet. However, if you do, you cannot write anything additional on the card other than the information requested.

As moral Jews, many young people have questions about whether they could kill another human being, whether they accept the U.S. government's authority to send people anywhere in the world and order them to kill, or whether they choose to fight the battles chosen by our government. Whatever your choice, now is the time to begin considering your options.

The legal definition of a conscientious objector is a person who objects to participation in war in any form, and whose belief is based on a religious, moral or ethical belief system. You don't have to believe in God; nor do you have to oppose using violence in personal self-defense. Ultimately, if your claim is rejected, you have the right to appeal.

The decision about whether to serve in the military is a very significant one in any person's life. It is not a task to take lightly, so it is important that you take the time to consider your options and learn from others.

Preparing Your Personal Conscientious Objector (CO) File

Gerson L. Silver

Your Personal CO file is very important in proving your case to your draft board. Remember: While the file is not being set up to convince others that they must agree with you, it is the single most critical evidence you must present to prove that you are sincere about requesting CO status. Your draft board will ask you what made you decide you were a CO. To help answer their questions you need to start a personal CO file with information about your background and what you've done so far in your life.

Here are Some Ideas:

- Write down how you became a CO
- Make lists of books, teachers, films, television shows, etc., which influenced you.
- Note any changes in your lifestyle, such as becoming a vegetarian, working with children, assisting in synagogue, etc.
- Note ways you have tried to help others.
- Note any way you've worked for peace or resolution of conflict.

Your Claim Will be Judged Based on Three Standards:

1. Are you opposed to participation in war in any form?
(This does not require you to make a judgment about past or future wars, or even current wars in which you are not being summoned to fight. This means that you do not have to question your father's decision to serve in a past war, or the decision of Israel to conscript men and women.)
2. Is your claim based on your religious, moral, or ethical beliefs?
3. Are you sincere?

Therefore it is imperative your file contains evidence dealing with these standards.

NOTE: KEEP COPIES OF EVERYTHING YOU PUT IN YOUR CO FILE. IF YOU SEND MATERIALS THROUGH THE MAIL USE CERTIFIED MAIL, RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED, TO INSURE THAT MATERIALS WERE RECEIVED. KEEP THE RECEIPTS IN YOUR CO FILE AND GIVE COPIES OF THE ENTIRE FILE TO SOMEONE YOU KNOW AND TRUST AND WHO, IF NECESSARY, WILL BE AVAILABLE TO PRODUCE THEM QUICKLY.

Obtain Letters of Support for your CO Claim

You should obtain between three and seven letters of support. These letters should be from:

- People you know well, know your beliefs and believe in your sincerity
- A cross-section of teachers, relatives, classmates, religious leaders and friends
- People who may disagree with your position but can witness to your sincerity (these may be especially worthwhile)
- People who can detail the length of time you have held your present beliefs and/or have observed the process of change and refinement in these beliefs or know about your memberships in ethical, moral or religious organizations.

Your Practice Questions

(Have other qualified people review your answers)

Question 1: Describe the beliefs which are the basis for your claim as a CO, and whether those beliefs would permit you to serve in a noncombatant position in the armed forces. What proof do you have in your personal CO File?

Question 2: Describe how you acquired these beliefs. What proof do you have in your personal CO File?

Question 3: Describe how your beliefs affect the way you live, and the type of work you do or plan to do. What proof do you have in your personal CO File?

REMINDER: KEEP YOUR ANSWERS IN YOUR PERSONAL FILE, AND REVIEW AND REVISE THEM REGULARLY WITH SOMEONE KNOWLEDGABLE ABOUT CURRENT DRAFT LAWS SUCH AS A DRAFT COUNSELOR, ATTORNEY, RABBI, ETC.

What Do I Believe About War? Questions for the Conscientious Objector

The world still faces difficult questions about war and peace. Each of us probably asks at some time in his or her life, "What do I believe about war?" The purpose of this questionnaire is to encourage people who have strong concerns about participating in war and who might be conscientious objectors to answer that question and make a record of it. The answers could prove useful especially for those who might deal with the Selective Service System or the military in the future. The answers could also help those who are struggling with questions concerning paying taxes for war and working in war-related jobs.

What is Conscientious Objection?

Generally, conscientious objection is a sincere conviction, motivated by conscience, that forbids someone from taking part in organized killing. This objection may apply to all forms or to particular aspects of war.

What Types of Conscientious Objectors are Recognized by Federal Law?

The Military Selective Service Act and government regulations recognize two types of conscientious objectors:

- 1. Conscientious Objectors:** These are persons who, by reason of religious, ethical, or moral belief, are conscientiously opposed to participation in war in any form. (People who develop such beliefs while in the military may be discharged from military service.) They are exempt from military service in the event of a draft. If called up, they perform alternative service as civilians.
- 2. Noncombatant Conscientious Objectors:** These are persons who, by reason of religious, ethical or moral belief,

are conscientiously opposed to killing in war in any form but who do not object to performing noncombatant duties (such as being a medic) in the armed forces. These people are reassigned to non-combatant duties in the armed forces or, in the event of a draft, are trained without weapons and assigned to non-combatant service.

What Other Types of Conscientious Objectors are There?

3. Conscientious Objectors to Paying for War: These are people whose consciences forbid them to pay the military portion of their taxes because of ethical, moral and religious beliefs. Many impoverish themselves by living below taxable levels, others suffer garnishment, court appearances, property loss, and, in some cases, imprisonment. If provision for conscientious objectors to paying war taxes is enacted, most of them will be able to pay all their taxes without this agonizing moral dilemma, since their taxes will go to non-military programs.

4. Selective Objectors: These are persons whose consciences would not permit them to participate in what they believe to be an "unjust" war but do permit them to participate in what they believe to be a "just" war. For example, some people who were conscientiously opposed to the Vietnam War because they believed it was unjust said that they would have fought in World War II. Selective objectors may also object to certain weaponry or to particular targeting and therefore request reassignment.

5. Nuclear Pacifists: These are persons whose consciences would not permit them to participate in a nuclear war, or what they believe would likely become a nuclear war. Some nuclear pacifists are opposed to all war because of their belief that any war fought today could lead to the use of nuclear weapons.

At this time federal law does not recognize war tax objectors, selective objectors and nuclear pacifists as conscientious objectors. Unless the law changes, these persons would not be granted conscientious objector exemptions from military service in a draft situation or from taxes for war. These people might enter CO claims in

the hope of expanding the law, asserting their beliefs, or mitigating the penalties for violating the law. If Selective COs come to the conclusion that although a "just war" is theoretically possible but in today's world it just couldn't happen, they may qualify as COs. So, too, might a nuclear pacifist who believes any war may lead to nuclear war!

6. **NONCOOPERATORS WITH THE DRAFT:** These are persons whose consciences forbid them to cooperate with draft law requirements. Many of these conscientious objectors refuse to register for the draft. Nonregistration is currently illegal. Current law stipulates that young men who fail to register within 30 days of their 18th birthday are subject to possible criminal penalties of up to 5 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. They also forego federal financial aid for higher education and job training as well as employment in the federal government. Many states have similar penalties and some even prohibit non-registrants to enroll in their colleges and universities.

Am I a conscientious objector?

This question is not as simple to answer as it may seem, so it is important to give it serious thought. You may want to consult your relatives, friends, teachers, or religious advisors. It may take some time to come to a conclusion. The important thing is to start thinking about this now. What do you believe about war?

Why is it so important to think about this now?

Although the last few U.S. military deployments have not included a draft, a draft is still possible. Although defunding of Selective Service has been proposed to Congress several times over the past few years, it has always been defeated, because Congress is not willing to concede that a draft is so unlikely in the near future that it is not worth funding the agency that would oversee it. Any war could precipitate a call for a draft tomorrow. Disappointing enlistment rates could also lead to the reinstatement of the draft.

Under current regulations people would have 10 days to apply for conscientious objector status - they would then be given additional time to document their claim. The reason that people need to think

about it now is that they won't have many days to think about it once the draft starts. If they don't think about it now, people may discover they are conscientious objectors only after they are drafted - or when it is too late to apply.

What about women?

Despite the fact that women are not yet required to register for the draft, Congress has the power to include women in a draft. Plans for a draft of health care professionals include women, and women already make up more than fourteen percent of the U.S. military. It is, therefore, important that women, as well as men, consider what they believe about war.

What obligations would I have as a conscientious objector?

As a result of being classified as a conscientious objector, you would be required to give two years of alternative service in some civilian agency or non-combatant service in the Army, if you are drafted. Taxpayers would still have to pay the full amount of taxes due.

What should I do if I am a conscientious objector?

Prepare now. If you think you are a conscientious objector, answer the questions that follow as clearly and completely as possible. Make a separate copy and mail it to the Center on Conscience & War or the Jewish Peace Fellowship and/or your own religious body or counseling agency. Keep a copy for your own records. The Center on Conscience & War and the JPF will be happy to receive your statement whether or not your objection is based on traditional religious grounds.

If you send a copy of your statement to the Center on Conscience & War or the JPF, a counselor will review it and send any recommendations that might help in the presentation of a future conscientious objector claim.

What are letters of support?

Letters of support are letters written by people who know you well and will attest to the sincerity of your conscientious objector claim. These letters can be very important. It is not necessary that the writers agree with your beliefs. The best letters are often written by persons

who disagree with the conscientious objector but believe in his or her sincerity. Three good letters are advisable [though some recommend as many as four to seven letters of support]. The letters, as well as your statement, can be revised if and when you have to apply for CO status. (You will be allowed witnesses at your draft hearing, and the writers might appear on your behalf.)

What happens next?

If the draft begins, you will have all of the answers to the questions on your worksheet plus letters of support on file with the Center on Conscience & War, the JPF and/or your religious body or counseling agency. You will also have your own copy. (These records will be invaluable in documenting your conscientious objector claim.)

Question 1: Describe the beliefs which are the basis for your claim as a conscientious objector. If appropriate, state whether those beliefs would permit you to serve in a noncombatant position in the armed forces, or pay taxes for war.

(Form 22, the Selective Service System Documentation Form for Conscientious Objectors, says: "Describe your beliefs which are the reasons for your claiming conscientious objection to combatant military training and service or to all military training and service.")

This question asks you to describe, in some detail and as honestly as possible, the basic principles by which you guide your life. You should describe those values which are of utmost importance to you, such as God, love, truth, etc., and why these beliefs are in conflict with participation in war or paying for war or preparations for war. This question asks you to formulate your own statement of conscientious opposition to war. You should begin by saying that you are conscientiously opposed to war, and then describe the beliefs that lead you to such opposition. (Feel free to use additional paper for the answer to this and other questions.)

The second part of this question seeks to determine whether as a draft registrant you claim noncombatant status in the military or a full exemption from military service. You should specify what it is about noncombatant service which would violate your conscience if this is the exemption you seek. Conscientious objectors to paying taxes for

war should specify what it is about paying taxes for war which violates their consciences.

Although at this time federal law does not provide exemption for selective objectors, nuclear pacifists or conscientious war tax objectors, this should not stop you from filing such statements of belief or making claims for exemption on these grounds. In the event your beliefs develop or the law changes, your statement could prove very important.

If your convictions lead you to be a non-cooperator, you may wish to use your answer to this question to record your beliefs.

Question 2: Describe how you acquired these beliefs.

(Form 22 says: "Describe how and when you acquired these beliefs.")

In answering this question, you should include anything of significance which helped to form your beliefs. Mention any religious training you have had if you feel such training has helped you arrive at your position. If you feel you arrived at your beliefs with no formal training, there is, of course, no need to mention any. The influence of clergy, teachers, family members, books, television, movies, membership in organizations and experiences in your life should be listed. Be specific. You need to show that strong influences in your life have stimulated you to think clearly and seriously about participation in war.

Specific incidents can be mentioned, such as seminars or assemblies you have attended, courses taken, trips taken, contact with refugees, demonstrations you were in, to show that your beliefs had substantial formation beyond a merely "academic interest." Obviously, if you have experienced war, be sure to reflect on it. Take care not to give the impression that your belief is primarily a matter of political considerations, expediency, or merely an arbitrary, personal moral code unrelated to higher values. Unconventional beliefs do qualify, but they will require careful statement.

Question 3: Describe how your beliefs affect the way you live and the type of work you do or plan to do.

(Form 22 says: "Explain what most clearly shows that your beliefs are deeply held. You may wish to include a description of how your beliefs affect the way you live.")

This may be a difficult question for objectors who have not had many experiences which can show sincere beliefs. Select the best illustrations of your convictions. You can discuss how your future plans are strongly affected by a commitment to those beliefs. Describe kinds of employment you have had or plan to have which reflect your commitment. Discuss any public expression, written or oral, you have given to your beliefs. Describe your lifestyle, mention your life's goals as you have set them, and show how they are an outgrowth of your beliefs. This question allows you to demonstrate the sincerity with which you hold your beliefs.

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And this from the Selective Service System:

Service As a CO

“Two types of service are available to COs, and the type assigned is determined by the individual's specific beliefs. The person who is opposed to any form of military service will be assigned to Alternative Service described below. The person whose beliefs allow him to serve in the military but in a noncombatant capacity will serve in the Armed Forces but will not be assigned training or duties that include using weapons.”

Alternative Service

“COs opposed to serving in the military will be placed in the Selective Service Alternative Service Program. This program attempts to match COs with local employers. Many types of jobs are available, however the job must be deemed to make a meaningful contribution to the maintenance of the national health, safety, and interest. Examples of Alternative Service are jobs in:

- conservation
- caring for the very young or very old
- education
- health care

Length of service in the program will equal the amount of time a man would have served in the military, usually 24 months.”

Letters of Support for Conscientious Objector Claims

The Selective Service System will *not* accept letters of support or any material from persons attempting to establish conscientious objector claims until inductions are resumed and the registrant is reached in the draft lottery and receives an induction order. Potential CO claimants will need to make arrangements for their own file of materials to be submitted when the time comes.

Statements of conscientious objection should be filed with your religious body or counseling agency if such a service is available. If this service is not available, the Center on Conscience & War and JPF will keep your CO statement on file and will offer suggestions where appropriate to strengthen the statement.

Should draft classification be resumed, letters of support for a claim to be classified as a conscientious objector will be vital. They can be as important as the answers one gives to the questions in the CO claim. In fact, good letters of support could be a deciding factor when a CO claim is considered. It would be much more difficult for a draft board to maintain that a person is insincere if there are several supporting letters from respected individuals stating otherwise. The writers of these letters may be people you choose later to be witnesses at the hearing of your claim before the draft board.

Choose references carefully. They should be people who know you well, are familiar with the position you are taking, and believe in your sincerity. Try to get a good cross-section of people who know you - teachers, relatives, classmates, friends. It is not necessary that a person writing a letter agree with your beliefs. The best letters are often written by persons who disagree with the CO position but believe in your sincerity. Try to obtain letters from people who have known you for various lengths of time. Some people, such as recent friends, can attest to the strength of your present beliefs. Others, such

as parents, rabbis, cantors or teachers, can attest to the length of time you have held your beliefs, even if you have less contact with these people now. Any statements your references can make verifying the sincerity or strength of your beliefs would be significant.

A member of your family, a religious leader whose guidance has meant much to you, a roommate, a teacher, an employer - anyone who knows you and can speak to the following points would make a good reference. They can help you most by answering in their letters the following questions:

- 1) What is your relationship with the applicant, and how long have you known him/her?
- 2) Do you believe that the applicant is sincere in his/her claim as a conscientious objector?
- 3) To the best of your knowledge, has the applicant's conduct since arriving at this belief been consistent with the claim being made?
- 4) Do you believe the applicant's claim is based on deeply-held moral, ethical or religious beliefs, however broadly defined? If possible, give examples of influences or training in the life of the applicant which you think might have led to the development of his or her beliefs.

Each reference should be given a brief statement of your position in which you try to answer any questions the person may have about your position or the CO position in general and why you are filing a CO claim during a time of a standby draft. You may want to include some helpful brochures. the Center on Conscience & War's Who is a Conscientious Objector? and Conscientious Objectors and the Draft, for instance, answers many of the questions and dispels some of the misconceptions people have about the conscientious objector beliefs recognized by law. Fully explain the four points you have asked the reference to address. The more specific a letter of support can be, the more attention it will receive. A personal letter which includes details that demonstrate the claimant's convictions is usually more convincing than a general, impersonal one.

You, of course, are responsible to see that references listed on your claim are contacted and that the letters of support are filed with

your claim. It would be best if letters could be collected and filed with your claim, but additional letters and other helpful materials, like term papers or speeches in which you include your CO beliefs, can be added at any time.

Try to obtain three [some suggest four or more] good letters now and a similar number if and when individual Selective Service classification resumes. These letters should be approximately one page in length, typed or clearly written, and addressed, "To Whom It May Concern." The person writing a letter of support should include your name, address, and Selective Service number. Request that all letters be sent to you rather than the local board. If you receive a letter that is vague, inaccurate or doesn't speak to the four points listed earlier, do not include it in your file. It might prove detrimental. Above all, keep copies of everything you put in your file. When corresponding with Selective Service send by certified mail, return receipt requested. Keep copies of everything you send them.

What if the Draft is Reinstated?

Before anyone can be drafted, Congress and the President would have to enact legislation authorizing new draft calls. Under present law (which could well change with a new draft), Selective Service would first select randomly among those who turned 20 in the calendar year of the call up (the famous "lottery" system).

If you are among those selected for processing and possible induction, you will be sent an Order to Report for Armed Forces Examination. (There must be at least 10 days between the date the order to report is issued and the date someone is scheduled to report.) This would be the first warning to get very serious about documenting a claim because processing is imminent.

If you pass the physical, you will be issued a Notice of Acceptability and a Registrant Claim Form (Form 9). You will have 10 calendar days from the date Form 9 was issued to file a claim. (Remember that the date it's issued is not the date you get it!) You must file for all classifications that apply to you during that 10-day period, or you waive your right to apply for them. Filing is simply checking off boxes on Form 9, and signing and dating the form, and sending it back to Selective Service by certified mail, return receipt requested. At that point Selective Service sends additional forms, as appropriate, depending on what you checked off, and once again gives you 10 days to return them (from the date issued).

At this writing the major possible exemptions are:

- Rabbi, minister or divinity student
- The surviving son of a parent (or whole blood) sibling who was killed after 1960 as a result of military service, or is currently missing in action, or a POW, even if you have other brothers.
- One whose military service might cause extreme financial hardship to, or support of immediate family members. Physical or emotional dependency may also qualify.

- One not physically, mentally or morally qualified for military service (4-F).
- One who is gay or bisexual
- A conscientious objector. Please note that COs are neither exempt nor deferred. They are in the categories of 1-0 (alternative service) or 1-A-0 (non-combatant military service).

Note, too, that student postponements have been sharply curtailed. If a student is drafted, upon documentation, their reporting date would be delayed to allow them to finish the term or semester they are currently in the middle of (i.e., they'd go in June instead of April.) Seniors would be allowed to finish the school year. Moreover, migration to Canada is no longer a possibility. Canada's immigration laws have changed, and it's now very difficult.

STEP-BY-STEP PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED IN SEEKING A CO CLASSIFICATION

1. Read this booklet carefully.
2. Complete the registration form of declaration of conscientious objection to military service. Retain one copy for your records. Send one copy to the JPF or the Center on Conscience & War. [See "Resources" section in this booklet for addresses.] This is NOT an official document, but it establishes the earliest recorded date of your beliefs and intent concerning a draft. This could be very important at a later time.
3. Record your beliefs on military service and the reasons for not being able to serve in this capacity. Continue to update by adding to your original draft because of additional reading, attending seminars, or conversations with family, friends, or others.
4. You should retain a copy of any letter or document sent to Selective Service. These should be sent by certified mail with a return receipt requested. This receipt should be attached to your copy and placed in your personal file.
5. What you write should be checked by a draft counselor, an attorney, or by a knowledgeable person or organization to prevent error which could result in your claim being rejected by a draft board. That person or organization, however, should be very familiar with the Center on Conscience & War's Draft Counselors Manual so as to be aware of any changes in the Selective Service regulations that have been made or may occur in the future.
6. Start collecting letters of support.
7. Do not hesitate to write to the Jewish Peace Fellowship to clarify any question about this material or related matters.

An alternative is to consult a well-informed draft counselor. This has the advantage of face-to-face contact.

8. When filing the draft registration form obtainable at the U.S. Post Office, you may write the following across the face of the form and signed with your initials:

“I am a conscientious objector opposed to participation in war in any form.”

This is an important step in establishing your claim at the earliest possible date prior to an actual military draft. Photocopy your draft registration card. If the clerk will initial the receipt of the card before copying it, or hand cancel the copy, or make some other indication of its receipt, so much the better. The registrant may have to settle for his own copy. That copy may be folded and mailed to oneself and thus provide a postmark showing its receipt.

It is also possible to register via the Net. If you do, it is not possible to write anything additional on the card except the information requested. Use your best judgment in deciding which form to use, but if possible, go to a Post Office and obtain a Selective Service form and complete it with the information provided above.

A final word: This may appear to be a great deal of preparation for something we hope will never happen. However, under the current plan, there would be some advance notice, but it is likely that someone would have less than 10 days to actually file forms.

“Thou Shalt Not Kill”: Jewish Conscientious Objectors

Murray Polner

“Dear Colonel N . . .” So begins a letter to an Air Force colonel from an officer during the Vietnam War, in this instance a Jewish young man who had slowly come to believe that he could no longer participate in any institution that accepted mass violence. *“I am requesting that I be discharged from the Air Force as a conscientious objector. I understand the severe punitive measures that can be dealt to me and am aware of the consequent hardship that may befall myself and my wife and children . . .”*

This officer was not alone. Because of the war in Vietnam as well as their opposition to the culture and atmosphere of violence in which they have always lived, more young men than ever refused to serve in the military on the basis of their ethical and religious beliefs. The conscientious objectors included young Jews, many of whom relied in their application for CO status on Jewish religious, moral, and historical traditions. What follows are several extracts from essays written by different CO applicants (who chose to be anonymous) during the 1960's explaining why they made their choice. They were Jewish pacifists acting upon Jewish principles. Their testaments reflect the words of a contemporary theologian when he wrote: *“God's will is not man's will; nothing finite - such as war and mass killing - can ever be identified with God. Rather, both concern man, in all his relationships and therefore all mankind.”*

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But why should I choose to become a conscientious objector? I think it is a question of each of us finding out what is his role for himself. Martin Buber speaks of something he calls the “peacemaker.” I don't mean this in grandiose terms; I don't mean someone standing between nations and nations. And Buber says we make peace not in

conciliatory words and humane projects but in making peace wherever and whenever we are destined to do so, not only in our own everyday lives but in the relationship between community and community, between nation and nation.

Now, I am not so naive as to forget what are the realities of this century. We have gone through two world wars, we have gone through the Korean War and now we have the Vietnam War and the Middle East wars and there are thousands of little wars being waged around the face of the earth. I am not trying to step outside of the historical stream that we are part of. What I am trying to do, and again I quote from Buber, is to drive the plowshare of the normative principle into the hard soil of the political face. I think he put it very well. It is not trying to transform the world overnight with a magic wand and making it a nation of peace-loving people. It is not that easy. But I feel that as far as I am concerned this is what I should do. Maybe I won't accomplish anything and maybe I will, I can't say, but the fact remains it is here and now and this is where I stand.

Now I am sure you have come across the terms "absolute pacifist" or "absolute conscientious objector" for someone who believes pacifism is an absolute fact, something all people should follow, something he would have done if he had been old enough to have been in World War I or World War II.

I am not prepared to say that because I am not a prophet or a fortune teller. That would be completely wrong. It is a decision we each have to make as far as participation is concerned. I have made my decision and will continue to do all I can whenever the opportunity is given me to work towards a world where warfare is not used as a means of reconciliation. Even though warfare may in the immediate time accomplish a political goal the ultimate result of warfare is the dehumanization of each and everyone of us. Even though I was not, obviously, in World War II, my father was and I have talked to him about it and I think it left a great mark on him. I don't think he is particularly happy about it. He says the violence he saw in the war left a scar which he doesn't think will ever disappear completely.

So I am trying to work the best I can, gentlemen. I said I believe in a concerned God who has given us our freedom and asked us only that we use this freedom to live in a state of peace. And to sum it up, again I will paraphrase Buber: He says the task of man is to recognize

both the world and himself and to thereby transform both, and I hope that I can live according to that.

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The process by which I arrived at the beliefs which I now hold was a continuous development, and to a certain extent I feel that they have always been a part of my life. I grew up in a house where the values of human dignity and equality were always emphasized. My parents have always worked, each in their own way, to further the causes of human freedom and brotherhood. They were probably the most important influences on me in my early life - especially my father, a lawyer concerned with civil rights and equal opportunity.

My early religious training in the Jewish tradition was also important, particularly since the educators and Rabbis with whom I came into contact through my participation in Jewish youth groups were very much concerned with problems of interfaith and interracial understanding and cooperation. Although I am no longer a practicing member of any congregation, and although I do not accept many specific tenets of Jewish theology, I continue to regard myself as Jewish.

I would align myself with those ancient and modern Jewish thinkers who have held that the true basis of Jewish faith is adherence to the law. "What is hateful to thee, do not to thy fellow man." I believe that the humanistic tradition of Judaism, with its emphasis on brotherhood and the dignity of the individual, supports me in my beliefs, and in my opposition to war. Martin Buber, a great contemporary Jewish theologian, has said, "No one who counts himself in the ranks of Israel can desire to use force." I believe that.

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The ruthless use of force haunts the world today; it creates human beings who no longer regard one another as human, who are forcing the way to another world war. I can do no more than use past history as a signpost to help me seek out and be one with the governing principle of life in which I believe. I must oppose violence by fighting lovingly for goodness, by unconditionally affirming my belief.

There is no possible excuse for me to resort, even regretfully, to taking part in war. I regret I must take so separate a course. As an

ordinary law-abiding citizen, I find myself deeply awed by what I am doing. Now that my beliefs have matured and crystallized, I ask to be released from all military obligations. I ask that my only obligation be civilian service to the civilian community.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, Professor of Jewish Ethics at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, sketches the development of man's concern for others as follows:

"At first the other selves are considered as means to attain the fulfillment of his own needs. The shift from the animal to the human dimension take place when, as a result of various events... he begins to acknowledge the other selves as ends, to respond to their needs even regardless of personal expediency... Cain when asked about the whereabouts of his brother gave answer, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' (Genesis 4:9), Abraham, unasked, unsolicited, pleaded for Sodom... Abraham could plead with God for Sodom because there is eternal, unconditional justice in the name of which he was able to say, 'Far be it from Thee to slay the righteous with the wicked. . . Shall not the judge of all the earth do justice?'"

(Genesis 18:25)

My beliefs are rooted in Judaism, and such expressions of it as the passage I quoted have always been a source of my faith and values. My formal Jewish education extended into my undergraduate years at college. I attended Hebrew speaking camps and taught in a Hebrew School. Rabbi Heschel point up the lesson I have learned from Judaism's practical creed:

"If life is holy, as we believe it is, then self-regard is that which maintains the holy. Regard for the self becomes only a vice by association. When associated with complete or partial disregard for other selves. Thus the moral task is not how to disregard one's own self but how to discover and be attentive to another self."

I believe in the traditional Jewish teaching that all men and women are family and I believe that my direct or indirect participation

in the destruction caused by war must inevitably violate the divinely instituted amity of all people. I subscribe to the teaching of Rabbi Stephen S. Wise:

"We of the Jewish brotherhood know that every command of our faith runs counter to war, that war is the supreme repudiation and negation of religion forasmuch as war commands men to kill, to have to lie, to covet, to steal, and that, until war goes, the prophecy and faith of our fathers cannot be fulfilled."

My religious training and my experience lead me to the conclusion that a person's life is ultimately governed by divine principles, by the will of God. These principles, both physical and moral, are not easy to determine, but I believe that if we are to reach the Messianic Era sought by Jews, we must make every effort to abide by those principles as we understand them.

Selective Conscientious Objection and Israeli Refusers

Warner S. Bloomberg

Selective conscientious objection is the position that — while one would be willing to be a soldier for some wars — present conditions make military service unacceptable. This is different from a person's objection to military service for any cause, at any time. In the United States, selective conscientious objection is not accepted by draft boards or courts and it is not recognized as a basis for discharge from this country's armed services.

Selective conscientious objection to a particular war may be made for various reasons. During the Vietnam War, arguments were made that principles of international law made it an "illegal war" which justified refusals to serve in the U. S. military (the "Nuremberg defense"). During the wars against Iraq, some reservists refused call-up because they perceived that war as unnecessary for the defense of the United States. Selective conscientious objection can be seen as a form of nonviolent political protest against government policies and/or the necessary expression of deeply held beliefs (whether or not the person considers themselves "religious").

In Israel, with some exceptions, there is compulsory military service for virtually all men and women at age eighteen, and continued reserve service for thirty years after active duty. In 1982, after the invasion of Lebanon, some reservists formed *Yesh G'vul* ("There is a limit/boundary") taking the position that Israel's invasion and occupation of Lebanese territory was unnecessary and unrelated to the defense of their country. Individuals took positions of "selective refusal" to serve in Lebanon. Refusals to perform military service in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza have been asserted on the grounds that the military occupation is morally and/or politically unacceptable. The government's response has often been to jail persons refusing to comply with their assignments. When their

prison time has been completed, a new sentence can be ordered for the additional refusal to follow orders.

As Jews, we have to decide for ourselves what is "good" and what is "evil" — what is "blessing" and what is "curse." Knowing the difference between right and wrong — and acting accordingly — is essential to our religious beliefs. Here, for example, are parts of a letter sent by an Israeli soldier to the Prime Minister of Israel in July 1999:

"My name is Dan Shohet, and I am a combat soldier at the Nachshon Battalion. I have just successfully completed my basic training. Soon, my company is due to be posted to the Qalqila Region of the West Bank. The company will go there — but without me. However important the military chain of command, there are things that no order will make me do. Things such as fighting in an unnecessary war, or being part of a system of military rule over another people. I am fully willing to endanger myself in order to defend my family and the rest of the people who live here . . . In the present reality, my conscience does not allow me to take part in the system of rule over the Palestinian people. I will not take part in military service outside the Green Line, Israel's border, or in any other manifestation of aggression or human rights violation. . . . If that means I must go to prison, I accept that."

Each person must decide for themselves.

WHAT THE JPF CAN DO FOR YOU

Stefan Merken

When I was 17 years old, with registration and the draft looming ahead of me, I needed to talk to someone about the possible alternatives for a young Jewish person who had strong feelings about not participating in the military. I turned to my rabbi, but he was not sympathetic to my pacifist feelings.

In the next few months I spoke with various people and read all the available information I could find. Before long I found the Jewish Peace Fellowship, an organization of individuals who shared my views on the draft, who could counsel and support me and understand my Jewish beliefs on nonviolence. It was only through my involvement with the JPF that I was able to gain the confidence that my beliefs were completely valid in opposing all forms of war and in seeking nonviolent alternatives to conflict. Obtaining my conscientious objection status from the military was based on my own Jewish beliefs, but it was the JPF that gave me a wider perspective and supported me and what I believed to be true.

The JPF consists of men and women who share the same Jewish values in opposing military conflict and violence, individuals who come from diverse backgrounds but who agree that Judaism teaches and supports the idea of searching for nonviolent alternatives.

You can contact the JPF if you need information on the Jewish perspective to participation in the military. We may well have members in your area who will be happy to meet and talk with you. We can counsel you on issues related to registration and the draft, advise you in writing a statement to present to your draft board that expresses your own feelings and then keep that statement on file. In short, we can explain what your rights are under the law. You can, if you wish, join the JPF, as I did, and stay in touch with other concerned Jews who share the same feelings.

Members of the JPF are more than willing to talk to young people about their own experiences, counsel them about how to express those feelings, and find information to help define their feelings and beliefs. The JPF issues statements on national and international

conflicts, publishes a newsletter, Shalom, sends out information on a variety of issues, and maintains an office and a website www.jewishpeacefellowship.org. The JPF has been in existence since 1941 and is there *at no cost* for anyone who needs to find someone willing to talk to them about Jewish alternatives to violence and war.

The Jewish Peace Fellowship: More Than Fifty Years of Jewish Peacemaking

Naomi Goodman

Rabbi Abraham Cronbach, Rabbi Isidor B. Hoffman and Jewish communal executive Jane Evans founded the Jewish Peace Fellowship in 1941. Their initial purpose was to help imprisoned and largely abandoned Jewish conscientious objectors during World War II, men whose rejection of war was little understood. In the years following, JPF's Executive Committee and members became concerned with the lack of a recognizable Jewish peace presence, although many Jews were involved in peace activities. The JPF's aims and activities expanded, becoming a Jewish voice in the peace community and a peace voice in the Jewish community. The JPF includes members from different branches of Judaism: Conservative, Humanist, Orthodox, Reconstructionist, Reform and secular Jews. Rabbis and other Jewish leaders have always been a vital part of the JPF.

Concern for conscientious objection has continued, but JPF's objectives have been broadened to include nuclear disarmament, peace work (often in cooperation with other groups, generally interfaith), publications, opposition to the death penalty, and recognition of important Jewish peace activities through its Abraham Joshua Heschel Peace Award. It maintains close cooperation with Israeli peace groups in working for peace and reconciliation while recognizing the need for Israel to exist in security.

Continuing its support for Jews who cannot in good conscience serve in the military, JPF provided draft counseling during five wars: WWII, Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf and Iraq, and was active in pre-registration counseling following the resumption of draft registration in 1980. During the Vietnam War, for example, JPF developed a network of draft counselors: rabbis, lawyers and others who had mastered the regulations, as well as staff members based in different cities.

JPF has often been the first (and sometimes the only) American Jewish group to join others in the fight for peace and social justice, working with groups such as Witness for Peace, Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Prison Visitation Service, the Peace Tax Fund, etc. JPF's opposition to capital punishment has taken the form of protests against executions on Jewish grounds. In addition, it has filed amicus briefs in cases that involve religious or civil liberties, including the successful effort to gain reparations for Japanese Americans held in WWII relocation camps.

JPF publications range from pamphlets giving Jewish views on such topics as war and peace, the death penalty and conscientious objection. Our publications include Murray Polner and Stefan Merken's compilation *Peace Justice and Jews: Reclaiming our Tradition*, Rabbi Albert S. Axelrad's *Call to Conscience: Jews, Judaism and Conscientious Objection* and *The Challenge of Shalom: The Jewish Tradition of Peace and Justice*, an anthology edited by Murray Polner and Naomi Goodman.

The JPF has truly been "a Jewish voice in the peace community and a peace voice in the Jewish community."

A Selected List of Resource Organizations

Organizations in the United States

American Friends Service Committee

National Youth and Militarism Program
1501 Cherry Street • Philadelphia, PA 19102-1479
(215) 241-7046 • Fax: (215) 241-7275
Email: afscinfo@afsc.org
Web: <http://www.afsc.org/youthmil>

Founded in 1917, AFSC is a Quaker organization that includes people of various faiths committed to social justice and peace.

Center on Conscience & War

1830 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. 20009-5706
(202) 483-2220 • (800) 379-2679
Fax: (202) 483-1246
Email: CCW@CenteronConscience.org
Web: <http://www.centeronconscience.org>

NISBCO is an association of more than 35 religious groups to defend and extend the rights of conscientious objectors.

Committee Opposed to Militarism & the Draft (COMD)

Post Office Box 15195 • San Diego, CA 92175
(760) 753-7518 or (619) 265-1369
Web: <http://www.comdsd.org>

COMD is an anti-draft organization which also challenges the institution of the military and its effect on society. Its activities include community education and youth outreach.

Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR)

P.O. Box 271 • Nyack, N.Y. 10960
(845) 358-4601
Fax: (845) 358-4924
Email: FOR@forusa.org
Web: <http://www.forusa.org>

FOR is one of the oldest peace groups. Founded in 1914, it is an interdenominational religious pacifist organization.

Jewish Peace Fellowship (JPF)

Post Office Box 271 • Nyack, N. Y. 10960
(845) 358-4601
Fax: (845) 358-4924
Email: jpf@forusa.org
Web: <http://www.jewishpeacefellowship.org/>

Founded in 1941, JPF champions the right of Jews to be recognized as conscientious objectors to war.

War Resisters League

339 Lafayette Street • New York, NY 10012
(212) 228-0450
Fax: (212) 228-6193
Email: wrl@warresisters.org
Web: <http://www.warsisters.org>

WRL affirms that war is a crime against humanity. One of its primary programs is YouthPeace, a campaign promoting nonviolence, justice and an end to the militarization of youth.

Organizations in Israel

New Profile

Post Office Box 3454
Ramat Hashaim, 47100, Israel
Tel: +972-3-5160119
Email: info@newprofile.org
Web: <http://www.newprofile.org>

New Profile was organized primarily by mothers of conscientious objectors. It monitors and opposes military classes and military training experiences for high school students. It also supports those who object to military service on non-religious grounds.

Yesh Gvul (There is a limit/boundary)

Post Office Box 6953
Jerusalem, 91608, Israel
Tel: +972-2-6250271
Web: <http://www.yeshgvul.org>

This organization was begun in 1982 and continues as a support organization of reservists who are selective refusers (no service in the occupied territories).

The Parent Circle

Hayarmin 1
Ramat-Efal 52960, Israel
Tel: +972-3-5355089
Email: contact@theparentcircle.org
Web: <http://www.theparentcircle.org>

The Parent Circle is comprised of bereaved Israeli and Palestinian families who have lost loved ones in the Israeli--Palestinian conflict. They support peace, reconciliation and tolerance.

Internet Resources for Conscientious Objectors

The following is a list of links to organizations in Israel and U.S. dealing with conscientious objection, conscription, human rights and questions of war and peace.

Abraham Fund. <http://www.abrahamfund.org>

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). <http://www.aclu.org>

American Friends Service Committee, USA.
<http://www.afsc.org>

Amnesty International. <http://www.amnesty-usa.org>

Bat Shalom. <http://www.batshalom.org>

Brit Tzedek v'Shalom. <http://www.btvshalom.org>

Btselem. <http://www.btselem.org>

Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors.
<http://objector.org>

Common Ground in the Middle East. <http://www.sfcg.org>

Federation of American Scientists. <http://www.fas.org>

Fellowship of Reconciliation. <http://www.forusa.org>

GI Rights Hotline (877) 447-4487.
<http://www.girightshotline.org>

Gush Shalom. <http://www.Gush-Shalom.org>

Human Rights Watch. <http://www.hrw.org>

J Street. <http://www.jstreet.org>

Jewish Peace Fellowship.
<http://www.jewishpeacefellowship.org/>

Jews for Racial & Economic Justice. <http://www.jfrej.org>

Mennonite Central Committee, USA and Canada.

<http://www.mcc.org>

Meretz. <http://www.meretz.org>

Center on Conscience & War / National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors (NISBCO)

<http://www.centeronconscience.org>

Nonviolence Web. <http://www.nonviolence.org>

Pax Christi. <http://www.paxchristiusa.org>

Peacewatch. <http://www.ariga.com/peacewatch>

Peace Now. <http://www.peacenow.org>

Seattle Draft and Military Counseling Center.

<http://www.scn.org/ip/sdmcc>

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Sweden. <http://www.sipri.org> (In English)

The Other Israel. <http://www.otherisrael.home.igc.org>

Veterans for Peace. <http://www.veteransforpeace.org>

Vietnam Veterans Against War (VVAW). <http://www.vvaw.org>

Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW). <http://www.ivaw.org>

Waging Peace. <http://www.wagingpeace.org>

War Resisters League. <http://www.warresisters.org>

Some Books and Articles of Interest

Jewish

*Artson, Bradley Shavit. *Love Peace and Pursue Peace.*

*Axelrad, Albert S. *Call To Conscience: Jews, Judaism and Conscientious Objection.*

Bing, Anthony G. *Israeli Pacifist: The Life of Joseph Abileah.*

Ellis, Marc. *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation.*

Finn, James, editor. *Pacifism & Politics: Some Passionate Views on War & Nonviolence.*
[Includes interviews with JPF members]

Friedlander, Albert H. *Leo Baeck: Teacher of Theresienstadt.*
[The last Berlin rabbi who later became a member of the JPF]

Goren, Arthor, editor. *Dissenter in Zion.*
[Judah L. Magnes]

Hallie, Philip. *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed.*
[How French Protestant pacifists saved Jews fleeing from the Nazis]

Heschel, Abraham Joshua. *The Prophets.*
[A JPF member and one of the 20th Century's most significant religious thinkers]

Hurwitz, Deena, editor. *Walking the Red Line.* [The Israel-Palestine dilemma]

Kalechofsky, Roberta. *Judaism and Animal Rights.*

Landau, Yehezkel, editor. *Violence and the Value of Life in Jewish Tradition.*
[Written by an Israeli for Oz VeShalom, the Israeli Orthodox advocates of peace].

*Polner, Murray and Naomi Goodman, editors. *The Challenge of Shalom: The Jewish Tradition of Peace and Justice.*

*Polner, Murray and Stefan Merken, editors. *Peace Justice and Jews: Reclaiming Our Tradition.*

Schwartz, Richard H. *Judaism and Global Survival.*

*Solomonow, Allan, editor. *Roots of Jewish Nonviolence.*

Student, Menachem. *In The Shadows of War: Memoirs of a Soldier-Therapist.*

*Wilcock, Evelyn. *Pacifism and the Jews: Studies of Twentieth Century Jewish Pacifists.*

*Available from the Jewish Peace Fellowship

Articles

- * Block, Asher, "The Jewish Tradition of Peace."
- * Can a Jew Be a Conscientious Objector?"
- * Gendler, Everett, "Judaism and Nonviolence."
- * Kimelman, Reuven, "Nonviolence in the Talmud."
- * Reuben, Steven. Peace in the Bible."
- * Shalom [The JPF's newsletter]

General

- Brock, Peter. *20th Century Pacifism*.
- Dellinger, David. *From Yale to Jail*. [Autobiography of an American pacifist]
- Eller, Cynthia. *Conscientious Objectors and the Second World War*.
- Ehrhart, W.D. Vietnam-Perkasie. *A Combat Marine's Memoir*. [By a young enlisted Marine who fought in Vietnam and grew disillusioned with the war].
- Grossman, Lt. Col. Dave. *The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*.
- Hallock, Daniel. *Hell, Healing & Resistance: Veterans Speak*.
- Kovic, Ron. *Born on the Fourth of July*. [The author was a Marine who lost the use of his legs in Vietnam combat. The book became a major American film.]
- Lynd, Staughton and Alice Lynd, editors. *Nonviolence in America: A Documentary History*.
- Mayer, Peter, editor. *The Pacifist Conscience*.
- McAllister, Pam. *Weaving the Web: Feminism & Nonviolence*.
- Muraskin, Bennett. *Let Justice Well Up Like Water*.
- Polner, Murray. *No Victory Parades: The Return of the Vietnam Veteran*.
- Polner, Murray and Jim O'Grady. *Disarmed and Dangerous: The Radical Lives and Times of Daniel and Philip Berrigan*. [Two Roman Catholic priests who actively opposed the Vietnam War]
- Polner, Murray & Thomas Woods, Jr., editors. *We Who Dared to Say No to War*.
- Schlissel, Lillian, editor. *Conscience in America*.
- Seeley, Robert, editor. *The Handbook of Non-Violence*.
- Sharp, Gene. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*.
- Weinberg, Arthur & Lila Weinberg, editors. *Instead of Violence*.



JEWISH PEACE FELLOWSHIP