

# POORN

## *in the Promised Land*

by Judith Bat-Ada

Suppose that in one year anti-Semitic violence in the U.S. rose by 45%, and a Jew was brutally mutilated. Suppose, too, that year there had been a 300% increase in the sale of anti-Semitic magazines and videotapes. Surely, American Jews would demand an investigation of the connection between these two phenomena.

In Israel, there has been an acceleration of certain types of crimes in the past few years. During this same period, there has been a drastic increase in the dissemination of printed and visual materials glorifying certain kinds of violence.

The crimes have been assaults on girls and women. The materials are pornography. And Israeli women are beginning to speak up on the connection.

While this article is not about pornography per se, but about its proliferation in and effect on Israeli life, we should take just a sentence or two to provide a working definition: pornography means the display of people as sexual objects rather than as total, complex human beings with complex histories, presents and futures, and the reduction of such persons to easily replaceable body parts (breasts, thighs, vaginas, legs, etc.).



Dr. John H. Court, Associate Professor of Psychology at The Flinders University of South Australia, in his paper on pornography presented to the International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women (Haifa, 1981), concluded that the themes of pornography channel and direct violence to women and children. These themes include pleasure in pain, rape as rewarding, and sex as a mechanistic event which one is entitled to witness. He writes:

"An extended case, starting in 1970, has been made on the basis of very dubious data from Denmark, that sex crimes go down when pornography becomes freely available . . . I remain . . . convinced [on the basis of various studies] that sexual assaults are not only increasing, but that this increase is in part influenced by the themes promoted by pornography." While minor sex crime reports declined in Copenhagen, rape did not. Dr. Court writes: "In fact, the trend has been steeply up." He quotes British feminist Diana Russell:

"The point about the relationship between pornography and rape is this: pornography, even at its most banal, objectifies women's bodies . . . Women are not seen as human beings, but as things. Men are reared to view females in this way, pornography . . . feeds it, and rape is one of the consequences."

Israeli police statistics reveal a 45% increase in rape in Israel from 1980-1981, and a 10% increase in other sex crimes. The increase in rape cannot be explained away by the standard "more reporting" argument. Dr. Court believes this argument is "overstated by those who wish to deny the association with pornography." Even if public awareness led to increased reporting of assaults, "it cannot explain rises prior to such public awareness occurring," he said. In fact, some research suggests that fewer rapes are reported in Israel today (in the U.S., as well) than in past years because of: (1) the emergence of non-reporting rape crisis centers; (2) publicity regarding the sometimes serious difficulties imposed upon the victims of rape by the authorities; (3) the well-justified fear of retaliation from the rapists' friends or the rapists themselves when they are inevitably released from custody; and (4) the realization that often no conviction will be obtained.

Shlomo Gal, chief of the Jerusalem police force, in a 1981 interview with Esther Stein of the Institute for the Study of Media and the Family, said police estimate that only 1 out of 20 rapes is reported. And this estimate does not take into account increased incest and marital rape, about which there are neither statistics nor estimates. While our numbers of reported rapes (142 in 1980, 277 in 1981) are low compared to the U.S. (the F.B.I. estimated, *Newsweek* reported, that U.S. rapes occur at one per six minutes), our sudden increase is what is significant.

Moreover, the rape crisis center in Tel Aviv informs us, victims are getting younger (as in the U.S.). For the first time, parents are calling in about attacks upon children as young as five years of age. There was an outbreak of rape of children from five to 16 after the brutal sexual assault and chain-saw mutilation of 11-year old Nava Elimelech of Bat Yam in March, 1982; her severed head and parts of her body were found along the Tel Aviv beach. *Bull Magazine*, in an article on Nava after she was originally kidnapped, described her as a sexually swinging 12-year-old who engaged in sexual acts at parties with all the boys and

left for a sexual encounter the night of her disappearance, wearing sexy underwear. (Parenthetically, I deliberately use the term "girls" when speaking of young females "under the age of consent"—i.e., up to 18. I do this out of a strong ideological conviction that the word implies a level of social and legal protection adult society owes any youth below the age of 18. Those who delight in the ultimate in female exploitation, that is, the purveyors of child porn, are happy to call girls of 10 or 15 "females," "women" or "young women." This permits their exploitation of children—redefined as women—with "clear conscience.")

Sexual child abuse is by no means a new phenomenon in Israel. We have had child molestation before and child rape before, but such cases were so few and far between that no statistics of child rape existed previously. Such an overwhelming incidence of rape of children is new.

Israel has thus seen real changes in its male behavior towards women—and children—in a very short period of time. Our research supports the mounting accumulation of feminist and scientific opinion that an anti-women propaganda blitz over the past several years has caused and/or encouraged increased women and child abuse. Much of that blitz appears in forms of pornography.

Dr. Court has pointed out that a larger danger than pornography itself may be that its themes filter down into "legitimate" mass media and general society. The effect of these pornographic themes is to increase the level and style of violence such as rape, wife battering, incest and general abuse. These crimes appear to be incorporating the newer forms of abuse and humiliation depicted in pornographic materials.

My interviews with battered wives substantiate statements on this phenomenon by Barbara Swirski of the Battered Women's Shelter in Haifa. Battering husbands (as well as emotionally and verbally abusive men), she said, commonly use pornographic photos and ideas to focus the sexual activity they force their wives into. These photos and "imaginative" ideas include the wives' copulation with dogs brought home for the occasion. (One woman who did have sex with the dog as demanded, partici-

The Feb. 15-21 1982 cover of *Anashim*, a "family" magazine, features the kind of sensuously brutal scene that is increasingly being woven into the family, women's and general-circulation media in Israel.



pated in the production of a pornographic film made by her husband.) Forced anal intercourse is common. Battered wives are clear in their testimony and analysis that the pornographers' material is used as both inspiration and as "certified male authority" by their husbands.

"There is one message basic to all kinds of pornography," said activist Andrea Dworkin in a speech at a 1979 March Against Pornography rally in New York: "She wants it; she wants to be beaten; she wants to be forced; she wants to be raped; she wants to be brutalized; she wants to be hurt. This is the premise, the first principle, of all pornography."

There is considerable evidence that porn triggers rape—as well as wife battery, incest, sexual harassment on the job and other assaults on women. Is it any different from providing scope and social place—often approval—in society to anti-Semitic or racist plays, cartoons, films, jokes? If such scope is given, anti-Semitism or racism, which is always present to some degree, will take root, grow, and become violent.

Pornography can be seen as the anti-Semitism of women. Feminists need not seek out pornography as an issue: it "finds" feminists—just as anti-Semitism finds the Jew, assimilated or not. In the same way that *Mein Kampf* was an issue for all Jews, pornography can be seen as an issue for all women.

Five years ago the incidence of pornography in Israel was lower than in the U.S. Today it is found in "legitimate" mass-circulation magazines as well as movie-house, billboard, radio and newspaper ads.

One major difference between Israeli and American pornography is that the pornographic themes of sadism, pseudo-homosexuality and child pornography are being woven into the daily family, women's and general circulation media, and the street and travel environment. Materials appear in Israeli family publications today which would still not be found in the back pages of *Playboy*. In the last few years, women's, family and youth magazines have featured advertising and "artistic" scenes which are "sensuously" brutal; in one case, sexual exploitation was combined with specifically Jewish symbols of the Holocaust.

Barely a magazine issue appears today which does not include some blatantly violent image assaulting female dignity. For example, *La Ishah*, the best-selling women's magazine in Israel, ran two suggestively-posed naked photos of Brooke Shields as an eight-year-old, next to her "grown-up" image. *Ladies' Home Journal* or any other legitimate American magazine would not run a picture of a naked 15-year old girl, yet some Israeli women's and family magazines have done just that, increasingly including sexually exploitative images

of unclothed females writhing in various states of arousal or just casually decorating the pages as images of desirability. Here, the photos seem to say, is a *real* female (the model), a desirable woman or child, and you, the reader, are merely the pale imitation of this sexually uninhibited free spirit. In Israel today, a five- or eight-year-old child can open family newspapers and find pictures of couples engaged in foreplay.

In Israel, too, we appear to find more visible phallic imagery than in the U.S. While *Playboy* and *Penthouse* cover the male genitalia as carefully as they reveal the female genitalia, Israel's weekly *Bull* and its recent imitations, such as *Erotica*, are now offering semi-erect phalli.

All the imported so-called soft pornography (*Playboy/Penthouse/Hustler*) is sold at newsstands everywhere, in university bookstores and by Steimatsky's, Israel's major bookstore and newsstand distributor. European pornography, and black-and-white child pornography is also available, at high prices.

The Tel Aviv bus station—supported by tax payers' money—permits porn peddlers a virtual monopoly. They have the liberty to exhibit materials floor to ceiling in the ticket-selling area. I have personally seen pictures of children in pornographic poses sold there. No other merchants have space there, only the porn peddlers.

The huge billboard film advertisements for semi- or not so semi-pornographic films are unavoidable in Tel Aviv. In Natanya in 1981, a large billboard featured a naked teenager astride an adult male, with an "older" woman looking on.

"Blue movies" are growing in fashionable chic in many social circles across the nation. In the rush to emulate sophisticated Americans and Europeans, "Deep Throat" and "The Babysitters" join a complete selection of "X" videos and films shown at private parties, and Chanukah and Purim celebrations. Even gatherings to celebrate the birth of a baby girl have been known to include "blue" movies; and, according to a colleague, in an Egged Bus Company celebration in a city building last

year, Egged bus drivers and their wives disco-danced while a pornographic film was screened.

There are 100,000 video tapes in private Israeli homes, and pornographic tapes are a major sales item, according to Kol Israel Radio. One can also now order "hard-core" video tapes via local community newspaper supplements published in the daily papers. The supplements openly promote full pornographic displays, advertising the "Eros" sex shops and their sex aids.

Children are increasingly acting out their new "lessons" in the classroom, much to the distress of parents and teachers alike, according to *This Week in Natanya*, a local newspaper. Interviews with nursery school teachers and parents confirmed this phenomenon.

For its primarily male student body, the Technion (Haifa technical graduate school) students' organization procures and screens pornographic films about once a month at all major student events. Strip-shows supplement the belly dances on Purim and Student Day, while "live" so-called "lesbian sex acts" were featured at Oneg Shabbats. All are advertised in full-color posters on the Technion campus and on walls throughout Haifa. Student magazines have blatant sexist drawings, photos, and porno crossword puzzles. A major protest by the University Women's Association produced no change.

At a kibbutz in the far south, a young mother argued in an interview that since their friends began showing "blue" movies, her husband's sexual demands had increased in proportion to his lessening sensitivity. This kibbutz woman felt "betrayed" by her group of female friends, who claimed that they enjoyed the "blue movie" Tuesday night screenings in members' homes. Instead of supporting her feelings, she said, these women "increased my insecurity and feeling of isolation."

Displaying or selling pornography, "materials which incite sexual lust," is, by the way, absolutely against Israeli law, and subject to three months' imprisonment and a fine. However, as the courts, lawyers and police are still under the erroneous impression that sex crimes decreased in Denmark when pornography was legalized, they continue to

view it as a trivial issue, and the law is not enforced.

(By contrast, Reuters reported in March that the French Government is considering a new bill under which anyone presenting images in newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, advertising, texts and public speeches deemed to be degrading to women through incitement to discrimination, hatred, violence, insult or defamation could face a prison term of up to one year and/or fines of up to \$44,000. Presenting the bill to a Cabinet meeting, Women's Rights Minister Yvette Roudy said it was modeled on France's anti-racism law of 1972. A spokesperson for the Ministry said, "Ideally the law would not have to be applied but, after a few test cases, its very existence would have a dissuasive and preventative value.")

Many Israelis share an innocent belief that if the assault of such images were really dangerous, the academic, medical and governmental bodies, supported by public taxes to protect and inform the citizenry, would have seen to it that these materials would not be permitted. Ergo—the constant barrage of brutality and hate must be harmless.

Sexual violence as Israeli chic is most explicitly demonstrated in *Monitin*, Israel's slick largest selling monthly. *Monitin* claims to be a "family magazine" (for upper-class Israelis). It is sophisticated and expensive, aimed at the influential male and, secondarily, at his female partner. Begun in September, 1978 and at times distributed free in affluent neighborhoods, it has reached a 250,000 circulation.

Women are slabs of meat to *Monitin's* photographic eye: cut up into manageable portions—legs, breasts, thighs, lips. The magazine has run photo images of battered (nude-sexy) women, women bound and tortured, women running in fear. And in one rape-murder sequence, a woman, apparently dead, dangles upside down in a bathing suit, one breast exposed.

*Monitin* cover women glare with vacant or hate-filled eyes, clenched fists, and gnashing teeth, projecting the belief that women are either victimizers, like these, or victims like those shown tortured or running. Its celebration of sex-sadism is surpassed



"The children are upstaging me," reads the text for this advertisement for children's clothing. Ads in Israeli family magazines "increasingly include sexually exploitative images of unclothed females."

only by its glamorization of anti-social activities, including "soft" drug use, which is often pictured as desirable and Euro-American.

*Monitin* prints a regular column by Dr. Ami Shaked, a leading sexologist and a former lecturer for the Ministry of Education. His columns are generally inane—except for the dangerous series in 1981 on incest, which cited the view of "many doctors" that all "loving" relationships are good, even should they include father-child sex. (He gives no such equal space to the "many doctors" who point out that incest can destroy children, or to documentation of the harm it can do.) His columns are consistently illustrated with violent and humiliating misogynist images. In one, a naked woman writhes in fear as a large screw is about to penetrate her vagina to "illustrate" Shaked's view of female fear of sexual intercourse.

*Monitin* has also featured sex/sadism photo displays in its issues. The most blatant and horrific example is what the Institute for the Study of Media and the Family calls the



*Monitin's Dec. '79 issue featured a 6-page spread entitled "A locomotive is breathing down your neck—a fantasy on panties and bras" shows fearful women clad in underwear (prices and stores are listed on the sides of the pages) fleeing and alongside are Holocaust symbols such as a WWII train and this furnace.*



*Some women's magazines seem to have patterned themselves after Monitin and include "fashionable" images of women in life-threatening situations." This rape scene, which was part of an ad for Hashi perfume, ran in Monitin—as well as in At and La Isha, both of them women's magazines.*

Monitin Holocaust Fashion Spread. In these pages in the Dec. '79 issue, female victims clad in underwear are running away from Holocaust symbols—a freight (cattle) train of World War II vintage, a furnace and a light fixture resembling a shower-head.

Whether we are Jungian believers or not, the collective memories of any given people are a reality. Just as Lincoln's face recalls the Civil War to Americans and the four-leaf clover signals luck and Irish culture, and just as the swastika recalls Hitler to most people, so half-naked fleeing people and burning ovens are a collective Jewish memory of the Holocaust. Most of the people the Institute showed these pictures to registered shock. One would have to be uninformed about magazine photo-selection processes to consider the juxtaposition in *Monitin* "accidental."

Volunteers from the Institute went to Yad Vashem (the Holocaust Memorial Museum and Archive) on a tip from someone who claimed that there were photos there similar to those in *Monitin*. We found asbestos gloves similar to those in the *Monitin*

spread, on the hands of the men in the Archive photo standing at the ovens pushing the bodies in. The light fixture in *Monitin* could clearly have come from the Yad Vashem photo of the "shower," which was hanging next to that of the oven and the gloved men. The purposeful use of Holocaust symbols was never denied by *Monitin's* editor, or Gerrard Elon, its photographer. *Monitin's* silence continues.

Over the last few years, some women's magazines seem to have patterned themselves after *Monitin*. "Fashionable" images of women in life-threatening surroundings, mirrors shrouded in yellow sheets, opium-den environs, children decorously ignored by elegantly dressed or whorehouse-dressed models, have all become common in *At*, a leading monthly women's magazine.

*La Isha*, the largest-selling Israeli weekly, always offers bare breasts. In September, 1981 it presented a nude full-bosomed 15-year-old girl in

high heels, her hand propped on her hip and a provocative expression on her face. In our interview with Zvi Algar, the magazine's male editor, his excuse for this brazen sexual exploitation of an adolescent was that the girl's mother had approved. He added: "Everybody's doing it. We can't hide from the rest of the world. We are a mirror of society. This [children's exploitation] is happening—we just mirror it."

In fact, general fashion ads everywhere for children's clothing increasingly pose children in provocative but "cute" poses.

Lee jeans and Gali shoe ads stress stripping—females taking off their clothes either in the presence of males in the picture or with the males outside it viewing the stripper—"putting out" and general alienation. These ads clearly trigger youthful fears, including the very realistic fear of young girls that they might not be chosen.

A 1982 Zivanit company boot ad shows two naked children of about three years of age; the boy is embracing and about to kiss the girl. They wear boots and hats and stand before a full-length mirror on a shag rug—like Mommy and Daddy. In this case, the editor of *La Isha* pulled the ad because the text-plus-photo, he said, were clearly structured "child pornography." The editor admitted that his art director was aware of the implications but "explained" that since everyone else in Israel was using this "purposefully pornographic" image, their magazine had originally included it as well.

*Ma'ariv LaNoar* (*Maariv* For Youth, published by *Ma'ariv* daily) only five years ago (*sans* advertisements) was respected as a real youth magazine. It now offers girls its whore-image-as-fashion: spend, be, look and "do" sexy, or you will be out—left alone with no love and no life. These are the powerful signals the children are flashed week after week in perfect classical "conditioning" situations, as these magazine images are usually received as "information" in the home.

As a result of various protests, the Ministry of Education reprimanded *Ma'ariv LaNoar* in 1981, urging it to change its blatantly exploitative advertising campaigns. Fewer sexual attacks and oral sex scenes were in



*This 1982 Zivanit company boot ad was originally to run in La Isha women's weekly, as it had in other "family" magazines, but the editor pulled it because he thought it was clearly child pornography.*



*Gali shoe ads, like this one for "Scandalim" sandals for adolescents, stress "general alienation" and trigger "the very realistic fear of young girls that they may not be chosen" by teen boys.*

order, they said. However, since then the ads have actually become significantly more violent and more pornographic.

Images such as the pseudo-lesbian shampoo and clothing ads—where three models nuzzle, gazing deeply into the eyes of the "beloved"—appear in *Ma'ariv LaNoar* and in *LaHiton*, a magazine which caters to "the family" and reaches a large number of youth under 18. This magazine focuses upon entertainment and fun; half-nude, pornographically posed females regularly surround such female heroines as the popular Brooke Shields. *LaHiton* charge cards are also pushed on the 16-year olds.

It seems that what is being sold in all these cases is not pornography alone, but an Israeli version of the "Playboy lifestyle." Research confirms that the major target audience for the new Israeli "Playboy lifestyle" is, as always, the under-35 market. The effectiveness of this new life-style campaign can be observed in an event that took place on a kibbutz in the

far south in 1981. Before Purim, a group of 15-year-old boys sent a letter to parents and teachers warning them and their small children to keep away from the pre-Purim festivities usually provided by the kibbutz youth. Why? Because these boys had cut out *Playboy* and *Penthouse* centerfolds and other pictures of females spread-eagled and fingering their vaginas, and had pasted and hung them throughout the youth room where they held their own elite Purim celebration. No corrective action was taken regarding the sexism, alienation and elitism involved here.

Significantly, the chorus of a popular new song "Another Sex" goes, "We don't want our virgin girls any more. Give us the ones from the magazines."

Police and juvenile officers are seriously alarmed about the increased vandalism, dope and liquor use as well as the increase in youthful general crime. They believe that most Israeli youngsters cannot buy all the items—the package, the "Playboy lifestyle"—promoted daily on all

sides. They claim that raising unwarranted expectations of the youth is responsible for the frustration which is leading youngsters into anti-social behavior of all kinds.

Pornography did not drop from the sky: it was a well-planned, expensive effort, a concentrated marketing assault on the minds, hearts, values and pocketbooks of Israelis. Millions of dollars are now earned in pornography, and merchandizers look to it and to other luxury items (stereos, fashion, liquor) for astronomical profits. In selling this "Playboy lifestyle" package, the Israeli communications/advertising experts understood and exploited a relatively unsophisticated population anxious to be a part of what they perceived as worldly Western culture.

The reasons for its easy acceptance are complex, but one, surely, is the spiritual loss Israel has suffered over the past ten years, particularly since 1973—the loss of a belief in its own ideals, in Zionism, Judaism, a shared past and a shared future. As Israelis began to lose confidence in their own dream, they became susceptible to another to fill the void. As Israelis began to lose their cultural pride, they embraced the glamour and ideology of Western consumption.

But the "Playboy lifestyle" is a package deal. The growing consumption of liquor, drugs and luxuries goes hand in hand with the growth of consumption of pornography. While Israeli youth still retain an involvement, an interest, a commitment and an eager sense of humor and honor, time is not on their side. Things are moving too fast—and we are not responding to the changes adequately. Considering the high level of tension and anxiety under which the nation lives, Israel may be at grave risk from the problems triggered by pornography.

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