

Fixing Politics

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

Could the formula for advancing American political life have been developed in the 16th Century, in the small mystical community of Safed in Israel? There the kabbalist Shlomo Alkabetz wrote the hymn *Lecha Dodi*, sung each Friday night as we greet the Sabbath. The next to last verse begins: "Break out, right and left."

Lately everything is classified either "right" or "left." Each side ridicules the other. Venom flows back and forth. The right is heartless; the left elitist, on and on. No matter the idea or personality, it must be placed into the file folder of left or right to be venerated or vilified. Alkabetz was talking about the nature of God, unconfined, but surely there is a lesson here. Maybe we need to break out, just as the hymn advises.

In the bible Joshua looks up and sees an angel bearing a sword. Joshua asks, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" The angel's answer? "No. I am an angel of God." (Joshua 5:13,14) The angel is greater than sides. "No." That is the answer bigger than parties or factions — all the ways we limit our view. There is a truth larger than teams. Try seeing a picture greater than the certainty that others are shrouded in darkness. Break out. Directions work with boundaries; in infinity there is no left and no right.