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AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

MS-763: Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman Collection, 1930-2004.

Series I: Wexner Heritage Foundation, 1947-2004.

Subseries 1: General Files, 1949-2004.

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Holocaust. Discussion notes. 1988.

For more information on this collection, please see the finding aid on the
American Jewish Archives website.

QUESTIONS FOR HOLOCAUST LECTURES,
TO STIMULATE DISCUSSION

1. Was Holocaust unique?
What about Armenians; Cambodians; Gypsies - etc.
2. What was Holocaust based on?
 - a. Hitler's visions in Vienna (see Davidowitz)
 - b. Christian Theology (see Martin Gilbert's intro)
 - c. European anti-semitism - Germany, Poland
3. Was western world's passivity a sign of its bankruptcy.
(democracy, church, Churchill - etc. - all failed) - or
was there any excuse whatsoever that you can think of?
4. Is Shamir (Kahana-ism) a logical outcome of Holocaust?
 - i.e. a. Take your own fate into your own hands
 - b. Make Israel 4th most powerful military force
in world.
5. Did Holocaust destroy covenant between God and Jews?
Where is God, after the Holocaust?

GREEK - "HOLOKAUSTON"

Septuagint's translation of Hebrew "OLAH" -
literally, "what is brought up" - rendered in
English as

"an offering made by fire to the Lord"

"burnt offering"

"whole burnt offering"

The Jews are victims, sacrifices.

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LECTURE I - OUTLINE

HOLOCAUST - A UNIQUELY JEWISH EVENT

1. Not going to talk about failure of:

- a. U.S. Jewry
- b. Democratic world
- c. Religious Christian world
- d. Yishuv

2. Not going to talk about lessons learned:

- a. Depend upon your own strength of will and arms
- b. Prepare both constantly
- c. Use this strength ~~as~~ early when danger threatens

3. Want to talk about the meaning of the event.

Was it just another massacre, as we have had so many in our history - or was it an absolutely unique episode.

A. DAVID WEISS says -

Not unique, and covenant with God not broken.
Man is evil, not God.

B. MICHAEL BERENBAUM says -

Holocaust was unprecedented not only in scope, setting, expectation and proportion, but in

intention

duration

consequences

intensity

methodology

C. IRVING GREENBERG says -

"No statement should be made about the Holocaust, theological or otherwise, that can not be said in the presence of the burning bodies of Jewish children."

D. STEVEN KATZ summarizes -

~~"Intentionality~~ gives the clue"
Intentionality

Genocide is unique to the Jew

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STEVEN KATZ - "POST-HOLOCAUST DIALOGUES"
Last Chapter - The "Unique" Intentionality
of the Holocaust

Genocide is the intent to destroy physically all persons who identify with and are identified by a given national, religious or ethnic identity. There is no possibility of escape through conversion, assimilation, intermarriage or any other device.

It is hard to find parallels in the Jewish past:

1. Haman killed not a single Jew
2. Pharoah couldn't build pyramids with dead slaves
3. Babylonian conquest was political, not genocidal
4. Roman conquest was political, not genocidal
5. Almohades allowed for conversion
6. Spanish expulsion allowed for conversion
7. Crusades
8. Fourteenth century massacres (Black Plague)
9. Chmelnitski - 17th century
10. Polish and Russian programs - 1/3 laws

none
was
genocidal,
however
murderous
and hostile

As for possible parallels in world history:

1. Indians in North and South America^{killed} by European colonizers and their heirs - 40% death rate. But motives were not genocidal - rather (1) missionizing, (2) economic exploitation, and (3) territorial expansion and control.

2. Armenian population of Turkey 1915-1916. Explanation given by Turks was that Armenians were disloyal, giving supplies to the Allies, impeding Turkish troops, spying, etc. etc. - and so had to be deported. Turkish ambassador to U.S. wrote that Armenian massacres were done out of military necessity. Armenian massacres were nationalistic, jingoistic, political. The intention was not genocide but territorial political extermination. Hundreds of thousands died in the deportations, but hundreds of thousands survived.

The intention of Hitler was to rule over a world that was Judenrein; the intention of the Turks was to rule over a Turkey that was Armenianrein. In the difference of scale lies the difference of quality.

3. The Indian population of Brazil was reduced between 1900 and 1957 from 1 million to 200K by disease and other means of induced destruction. This was motivated by economic exploitation of a vast interior territory.

4. The destruction of the Ibos in Nigeria was a consequence of economic, social, tribal causes.

5. It is true that the Nazis classified the Gypsies as non-Aryans, but imprisoned them for "anti-social" behavior, along with tramps, prostitutes, etc. Many Gypsies were sent to Aushwitz, but Himmler himself intervened on behalf of several tribes, calling them "German Gypsies".

In the spring of 1943, when the Einsatzgruppen were killing all Jews in Eastern Europe, the German authorities exempted all Gypsies who could prove a two-year residence in the locale in which they were identified.

6. Vietnamese and Cambodian tragedies were result of ideological warfare.

7. Civil-racial warfare in The Sudan and Chad between Arabs and blacks was a power struggle, not genocidal.

CONCLUSION:

"Through the category of intention we can begin to perceive at least one seminal individuating characteristic of the Holocaust."

STEVEN KATZ - "POST HOLOCAUST DIALOGUES"

SOME GENERAL RESPONSES TO HOLOCAUST - P. 143

1. The Holocaust is like all other tragedies and merely raises again the difficulty of theodicy and the problem of evil.
2. The classical Theological doctrine of "mipnei hata'einu" (because of our sins we were punished) can also be applied to the Holocaust. Israel was sinful and Auschwitz is her just retribution.
3. Israel is the "suffering servant" of Isaiah (ch. 52 ff) - she suffers and atones for the sins of others.
4. The Holocaust is a modern "Akedah" (sacrifice of Isaac). It is a test of our faith.
5. The Holocaust is an instance of the temporary "Eclipse of God" - there are times when God is inexplicably absent from history or chooses to turn His face away.
6. The Holocaust is proof that "God is dead" - if there were a God He would surely have prevented Auschwitz; if He did not then He does not exist.
7. The Holocaust is the height of human evil. The Nazis were men, not gods; Auschwitz reflects ignominiously on man; it does not touch God's existence or perfection.
8. The Holocaust is revelation: it issues a call for Jewish affirmation. From Auschwitz comes the command: Jews survive!
9. The Holocaust is an inscrutable mystery; like all of God's ways it transcends human understanding and demands faith and silence.

FACKENHEIM - JEWISH RETURN INTO HISTORY

- PP.279 Causal relationship between Holocaust and foundation of state of Israel.
- PP.281 To find a meaning in the Holocaust is impossible, but to seek a response is inescapable.
(Responses listed above are inadequate).
- PP.282 The heart of every authentic response to the Holocaust, religious and secularist, Jewish and non-Jewish, is a commitment to the autonomy and security of the state of Israel.

See paper clip - Israel is beginning of Redemption



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*Note: 7,8,9,10 -- none was genocidal, however murderous and horrible.

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