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Precis

Recent research on wartime Jewish religious thought about the Holocaust reveals that Orthodox Jewish thinkers presumed an ontic-level dualism between the sacred world of Israel and the profane world outside, including Christianity. However, some exceptional thinkers looked to historical developments and distinguished medieval-modern Christianity, which was co-opted by paganism, from original Christianity, which drew from Jewish roots. Beyond these categorical considerations, wartime Jewish religious thinkers shared the meaning given to tragedy by Christianity in terms of vicarious suffering, the suffering of God, and the devaluation of the flesh in the name of spiritual sanctity.

In the last decade, historians of modern Jewish religious thought have embarked upon a new area of research: wartime religious thought vis-à-vis the Holocaust and its continuity with earlier and later developments. The literature (archival, periodical, monograph) and numerous major thinkers have been identified, and a methodology has been implemented. Dominant schools of thought have been delineated: Mizrahi (religious-national), Agudat Israel (the worldwide *Halakha*-based rabbinical movement), Musar (moralistic) Hasidic (Habad, Belz, Munkacz), and Kabbalistic. The roots of wartime thought (including the Gaon of Vilna, Nahman Krokhmal, Samson Raphael Hirsch, Nathan Birnbaum, and Rav Kook) have been identified. As the research continues to be published, “post-Holocaust” theology — a misnomer if it implies that thought about the Holocaust began after the catastrophe — may well be entirely recast.

These sources suggest a new path for deliberation for scholars of religious thought (both Jewish and Christian) about the Holocaust. The fact that wartime Orthodox Jewish thinkers presumed an ontic-level dualism between Israel and the rest of the world has already been indicated in published research.[1] According to it, Christianity belonged categorically to the other, polluted

(Tuma) world. Here I wish to qualify the duality in two respects: first, by the fact that some exceptional wartime Orthodox thinkers spoke of a positive relationship with Christianity; second, by the fact that wartime Orthodox views of suffering seem to have drawn from the same universe as Christianity in terms of vicarious suffering, the suffering of God, and devaluation of the flesh in the name of spiritual sanctity. It is as if the same religious consciousness about suffering was there for both. Thus, while Orthodox Jewish thinkers generally posited Christianity in the realm of anti-Torah, both Judaism and Christianity drew from a common source to cope with tragedy. It follows that, if in the Holocaust context Judaism and Christianity did, indeed, share on this very deep level, the catastrophe may turn out to be not only a basis for antithetical concerns (for example, the Holocaust was Israel's punishment for the crucifixion, on the one extreme, or the by-product of a Christian Antisemitism that must be radically removed, on the other) but also for theological synthesis.

Categorical Dualism

In general, wartime Orthodox Jewish thinkers accepted the premise that the world was split into two antagonistic realms, Israel and the nations. The position had already been "canonized" in the medieval period, insofar as it appeared in Maimonides' *Epistle to Yemen* of 1172. Because Israel was made unique and preeminent by God in terms of divine precepts (Dt. 4:8), Maimonides wrote, the jealous nations rose up against Israel and persecuted it out of injustice and enmity — all in a vain attempt to thwart God. In the era of the Holocaust, this premise was tailored according to the respective schools of thought cited above.[2]

First are the representative Mizrahi views. Bentsion Firer (1914-88) of Rymanow, Poland, who wandered through Siberia during the war to end up in the Ulm displaced-persons camp after liberation, then went on to Palestine to become a national rabbinical figure, brought forth the Talmudic explanation of Sinai as a source for hatred: "What is the meaning of Mt. Sinai? That upon it there descended hatred (*Sina*) upon the idolators" (*Shabbat* 89b). Among Eastern European Orthodox Jewish thinkers, including Firer, the phrase was taken to mean — apparently following the *En Yaakov* commentary by Ya'akov ibn Habib (1460-1516) — not that the idolatrous nations were hated, for then God would have destroyed them, but that Israel was hated by the nations and that it was hated because of its Torah and Mitsvot. Firer pointed out that the alienation could be traced even further back to the conflict between Jacob and Esau that already started in Rebecca's womb (*Midrash Bereshith Rabba* 63). It eventually found its way forward through Sinai and Amalek and into the modern world. To Firer, the entire non-Jewish modern world belonged to that other, antagonistic realm. It included the democratic nations that let Jews burn in the ovens of Maidanek and Auschwitz and the Christian world that made the man Jesus into God and wanted to annihilate Israel. Hitler, himself deified by Nazi Fascists, channeled his own antagonism into an assault upon Israel's spirit. Thus, for example, he tattooed the arms of prisoners to remove their individuality and, thus, their humanness. Once the spirit was destroyed, Hitler knew, the physical dimension of Israel would go quickly.[3]

Shlomo Diamant-Yahalomi (b. 1917) of Strizhov, Russia, who was imprisoned in Lvov, Odessa, and Russian labor camps during the war, ended up in displaced-person centers in Poecking and Bergen-Belsen and then went on to the Land of Israel in September, 1947. He shared the view that hatred was implanted in history at Sinai and identified Nazism as the final explosion. As he made his way from Lublin westward after the war, he passed through Maidanek. He recalled how he saw a crucifix suspended over the ovens, bones, and shoes there — and realized that the *Magen David* would never have a place among the nations of the world.[4]

The Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, Moshe Avigdor Amiel (1882-1945), wrote that the world was divided metaphysically between the people of Israel, who were rooted in the absolute, self-contained (Kant's thing-in-itself) sacred reality of God and Torah, and the rest of the world, which was rooted

in the secular and the material (for example, Ex. 19:5). Even at the end of days, when all the nations of the world would stream toward God, Israel would remain distinct because it collectively reflected Torah from the onset of its existence. The separation was cosmically ordered and absolute. Whenever Israel attempted to remove it, as it did by Hellenizing or by assimilating into Spanish Christian and Muslim culture during the so-called Golden Age, there was chaos — i.e., it was attacked (Ez. 20:32-34). Israel made the most intense effort at assimilation in the nineteenth century, in terms of the Mendelssohnian Enlightenment, and Herzl's secular Zionism. The chaos that resulted this time was the Holocaust.[5]

A fourth figure, Mizrahi leader and Jerusalem mayor Shlomo Zalman Shraggai (1899-1994), also traced the enmity from Esau to Hitler — who, Shraggai wrote, was intent upon destroying Torah and raising his hands against God. When Israel found itself in Esau-territory — that is, exile — instead of rushing to escape the dangers of intermingling, it self-destructively rushed into the alien culture to the point of sharing in its view of redemption — whether the French Revolution or democracy. The nations' hatred, intensified by Israel's intrusion into enemy territory, exploded.[6]

In essence, for Mizrahi thinkers, alienation was a permanent, metaphysical reality. Israel had to contain it or limit it to a "cold war" status. It followed, for Mizrahi thinkers, that Israel had to have its own Land. Isolated within its own territory, the war could remain only "cold." Assuming that Jews would not draw non-Torah culture into the Land, they would be out of the enemy's range. They would no longer antagonize the nations by intruding into their territory or upset the cosmic order and cause chaos to rain down upon the Jewish people.

Second, thinkers from the Agudat Israel school addressed the dualism as well. Alexander Zusha Frydman (1897-1943), who was imprisoned in the Warsaw ghetto and then killed in Travniki, explained it in terms of *Netsah Israel* (The Eternity of Israel, 1599) by the mystical writer, Maharal of Prague. The Esau-Jacob antagonism resembled water and fire. If they mingled, the water would destroy the fire. However, if they were divided — if the water were poured into a pot over the fire — they would both survive. Citing the sixteenth-century mystic, Yitshak Luria, Frydman wrote that the holy sparks imparted to all nations were naturally drawn away by Israel, which was the channel to their divine source. Israel's existence meant their deterioration, and so the nations hated Israel.[7]

In the Lodz ghetto and then Bergen-Belsen, the religious educator Yehuda Leb Gerst (1906-63) — who later became a prominent historian of Hebrew literature in the State of Israel and recipient of the Rav Kook prize — spoke of the division in terms of historical development, a departure from basic Agudat Israel views. Israel's identity was rooted in the morality revealed to it at Sinai, and it was heteronomous in character. The nations of the world, with their idolatrous and instinctual tendencies, spoke of human-based, autonomous morality. Israel and its morality became targets for attack, from Apion through the Crusades, into post-Kantian German philosophy of moral autonomy (for example, Jodl, Hartmann), Nietzsche, and finally Hitler.[8]

In Jerusalem, Yitshak Meir Levin (1894-1971), Palestine's leading political Agudat Israel figure, spoke of an abyss between Israel and the rest of the world. On one side there was Israel, which bore God's ideas in the world and the vision of perfecting the world (*Tikkun Olam*); on the other, cruel and evil nations that were poised for war against Jews and God together. The hatred toward Israel was implanted at Sinai (*Shabbat* 89b) and intensified over time. No common language existed to bridge the abyss between Israel and the "animal of prey." Israel was obliged not to try to end the separation, which was a metaphysical fact, but to extend it into history. Instead, Israel allowed the line of separation to break. The culprit was assimilationist *Haskalah* (the Orthodox forced assimilation and Enlightenment together retroactively). It both weakened Judaism and evoked divine intervention in the form of Nazi attacks. To be sure, Hitler was the long-term outcome of Sinai hatred, and he was ready to attack Israel because it threatened his world. However, the catalyst for his attack was the fact that Israel failed to maintain the dividing line between itself and the nations.[9]

In principle, Agudat Israel thinkers divided Israel from the rest of the nations by Torah: Israel had it, and the nations of the world did not. As with Mizrahi, this meant an ontological division, a cosmic antagonism. Agudat Israel thinkers, however, did not believe that the enmity could be contained, let alone resolved, by Israel's isolating itself in the Land. The combat was trans-geographical and would end only when Israel drew all its being from Torah, strengthening itself to the point of invulnerability and removing itself from the realm of non-Torah (be it diminished light of God's presence, autonomous/idolatrous morality, or assimilated existence). As with Mizrahi, for Agudat Israel a Land of Torah for the people of Israel would freeze the two realms of the universe in their respective positions. But while for Mizrahi the Land was the sole and preconditional means of doing so, for Agudat Israel the distance could be maintained anywhere. The Land for Agudat Israel was not the indispensable means toward that end but, rather, the consequence to achieving it and the redemption that this implied.

The third school of thought, that of Hasidism and Kabbalah, lifted the dualism into the apocalyptic framework. According to "Habad," the Hasidim of Lubavitch who were headed by Yosef Yitshak Schneersohn (1880-1950) in Brooklyn, the non-Israel world was the strain of humankind that was inclined to evil. It existed solely for God to employ as an instrument to force Israel to turn from sin, which was also exile of the self and of the nation, and to carry out penitent return (*Teshuva*) to God. The non-Israel world would surely have this effect, and Israel would ultimately perform collective *Teshuva* — whereupon the realm of evil inclination would be destroyed. Habad anticipated the completion of *Teshuva* in 1945, and spoke of immediate redemption along with the destruction of Israel's antagonists in a "military holocaust."[10]

Fourth, in Jerusalem, Ya'akov Moshe Harlap (1883-1951), the leader of Rav Kook's (d. 1935) school, Merkaz Harav, wrote of an ontological dualism between holy Israel and the *Tuma* rest of the world. Using Lurianic imagery, he said that the nations of the world could have drawn holiness — and, thereby, life itself — from Israel. They did not, and now it was too late. Redemption was imminent, and it would be for Israel alone. Because redemption meant their doom, the nations attempted to destroy Israel — in part in the vain attempt to halt the process, in part to take it down with them, and in part because they were seized by near-death convulsion and so struck out against all. With redemption, the spirit of Israel would survive, even if the body was shattered, while the *Tuma* nations of the world would be utterly destroyed.[11]

Exceptional Views of Christianity

Given the metaphysically based split between Israel and the rest of the world presumed by these various streams of Orthodoxy, whereby any involvement by Israel with the other realm involved self-destruction, any qualification of the dualism with regard to Christianity would have been remarkable. Still, there were some exceptions.

In 1937 Eliahu Botschko of Montreux (d. 1956), founding head of the Yeshiva there and Western European Agudat Israel leader, did make such a qualification. When Christianity arose, he wrote, it tried to adopt the Torah-law and thereby expel the hate and bestial fury that the nations had against Israel. Christianity shared the principle of "Love thy neighbor as thyself"(Mt. 19:19) and the Jewish teaching of the ethical perfection of humankind; because of this, Christians believed that they already witnessed the onset of the messiah (*die Spuren des Moschiach*). They were committed to the hope that, in time, the nations of the world would come to know and understand Israel more closely, so that Israel could be reconciled with the world. The early Christians thought that humankind would, in unity, walk under the banner of God and would soon celebrate the triumph of the prophetic promise: "And the Gentiles shall come to Thy light, and the kings to the brightness of Thy rising"(Is. 60:3). However, Botschko went on to say, Israel's hopes in this regard were dark d. Medieval persecutors set up pyres for Jews in the very name of the church. Paganism, as it turned out, was only sleeping in Christianity. It now awoke and instituted its night-

time orgies. The church, the great gate of Rome in which so many hoped to find protection and love, bitterly disappointed Israel. The apparent traces (*Spur*) of the messiah were lost once again.[12]

In the mid-1930's, Yehuda Leb Gerst, cited above, wrote how earlier Christians drew from their Judaic roots. Indeed, it was because Judaism "sent so much Jewish blood and marrow through the veins of Christianity" that the Inquisition turned against Judaism. In 1947 he wrote how German racists regarded Christianity as "an infection from a [Jewish] serum which permeated the body" of the world. By assaulting Christianity, they could destroy the Judaic substance that "fermented steadily" in it. Alfred Rosenberg (1893-1946), Gerst continued, attacked Christians for believing in the truths of Torah and divine unity (*Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts: Eine Wertung der seelisch-geistigen Gestalten-Kämpfe unserer Zeit,* 1930). Gerst pointed to the resistance of the courageous and righteous Christian, Michael Cardinal Faulhaber (1869-1945), who drew from Christianity's roots in Israel and resisted. However, he recognized that there was an idolatrous strain in Christianity, which lent itself to the anti-morality of Nazism and into which the Nazis tapped.[13]

In New York, the Mizrahi writer, Gedaliah Bublick (1875-1948), accepted the premise that paradigmatic Jacob and Esau were divided by an abyss (*Tehom*) and that Esau's Antisemitism would be unchanged even after Israel had its own land. But, for Bublick, Christianity was based in the realm of Jacob. He identified the split in modern times as one between evil/tyranny/anti-religiosity and civilization. Bublick shared the 1935 view of the historian of Christianity, Christopher Dawson, that "modern civilization is not only ceasing to be Christian, it is setting itself up as an anti-religion which will tolerate no rival"(*Religion and the Modern State*). Bublick paired Judaism and Christianity against the anti-religious universe where holiness was perverted into the life-force, ultimately blood itself, and where truths were only humanly and circumstantially determined. Godless Nazi Germanys blood-nationalism was the epitome. On the one side stood the realm of justice and humaneness, where humankind strove to emulate God in terms of morality, as represented by Judaism and authentic, nonracist Christianity. On the other side there was satanic idolatry, rule by the sword — that is, the realm of anti-being (*Sitra ahra*). Bublick placed his hopes for civilization in Roosevelt's America and Churchill's England, the one rooted in the Constitution, the other in the Magna Carta, and both ultimately in Hebrew Scripture.[14]

To what could the exceptional views of Botschko in Montreux, Gerst in Lodz, and Bublick in New York be attributed? They had in common a historical orientation: Botschko spoke of the messiah as ready to enter history, once the Jews actively sought a Land of Torah (a historical interconnection that fellow Agudat Israel thinkers rejected); Gerst spoke of morality in the context of cultural history; and Bublick spoke of contemporary historical events that divided the civilized from the uncivilized. Rather than impose the mythic division of Torah versus non-Torah or Jacob *versus* Esau upon time and space, they looked to historical development as a source of its own truth — in which regard they did not align with the general Orthodox mold. Once they admitted historical development to their systems, they could look beyond the medieval and modern schism between Christianity and Judaism, back to Christianity's Jewish origins.[15]

Suffering

Wartime Orthodox theologies of suffering unknowingly compromised the Orthodox Jewish theological premise of alienation. They pointed to a common source, settled in Western consciousness, which was there for the two religions to draw upon in moments of crisis. It should be pointed out that, with the possible exception of the Reform Zionist leader Abba Hillel Silver, who spoke in 1943 of the Holocaust as "crucifixion" of the Jews, [16] no wartime Jewish thinker — Orthodox or otherwise — attributed the meaning of suffering to Christianity explicitly. The prevailing view of Israel's suffering propounded by wartime Orthodox thinkers was the basic scriptural

principle that Israel itself was responsible for the chaos and was punished because of its sins.[17] This cause-effect-like position (how a historical act could evoke or "cause" divine response was its own mystery, given the Orthodox division between human and divine realities) is not under consideration here. Rather, I am concerned with the motifs of vicarious suffering, divine suffering, and the mortification of the flesh.

A. Vicarious Suffering[18]

Israel suffered not because of any sin but because of its holiness, which was done in order to redeem the world. In the refugee community of 1946 Shanghai, Simha Elberg (1908-95) of Warsaw published a treatise in Yiddish, *Akedat Treblinka* (The Akeda of Treblinka). He wrote that Treblinka was a collective *Akeda* — he brought forward the tradition that Isaac's binding actually led to his slaughter[19] — and constituted the inner identity of Israel's history from Abraham on. Indeed, the Holocaust had destroyed the world of history, leaving the prehistorical *Tohu va'vohu*. However, the nation of Israel as the Akeda nation remained at a point between the destruction and a new creation, between time and eternity. "Isaac," that is, Israel, Elberg wrote, had never been lowered from the altar and was forever slaughtered: "Mt. Moriah has been carried forever from one land to another, from Spain to France, from France to Germany, to Poland." In the Holocaust, the "*Akedat Yitshak*" nation endured the test of faith in God. The sobbing of millions broke forth from the red flames, splitting the heavens with the *Shema Israel*. Never before did the heavens witness so many *Kiddush Ha'shem* Jews killed to sanctify the Name. Elberg stated that the blood of Israel would atone for the sins of humankind and redeem the world.

The *Akeda* of Treblinka in which Jews were purified and sanctified through agony, suffering, and pain realized the principle that "agonies wash away all the sins of man"(*Berakhot* 5a). (For Elberg, this was somehow possible, while he also believed that God's wrath was evoked by Israel's making peace with exile.) Only the holiest could serve as sacrifice, and the Jews of Poland and Lithuania were the holiest of all. They were the holy emanation (*Atsilut*) of God, those able to argue with God on behalf of all of Israel and who prayed to God in a unique and potent way. The deep meaning of *Khurbn*-Poland, the author said, could be found in Lev. 10:3: "Through those near Me I shall make Myself holy." It meant that "through the death of those close to Me, I [God] will become sanctified." It would bring redemption. The "overflowing fury" implicit to the "I shall reign over you with a strong hand" (Ez. 20:33-34) of the apocalypse had taken place; the hour of divine revelation for all humankind would soon come. This, Elberg wrote, was "indeed our special mission, to redeem the world with our blood (*oystsuleyzn di Velt mit undzer Blut*)."[20]

Firer, mentioned above, also spoke of vicarious suffering. He shared the view that suffering was inherent for eternal Israel's existence in history. Given the metaphysical antagonism between Israel and the nations, what relationship was left to Israel? Not accommodation, which drained Israel of its life through Torah, but only *Mesi nefesh* was possible, a relationship of sacrifice. Here, self-destruction on one level meant preservation on another, for suffering unto death in the name of Torah constituted an assertion of Torah. As with Abraham, who prepared wood for the sacrifice with deliberation (*Midrash Bereshith Rabba* 55:8), so his people through history were to sacrifice themselves resolutely, even with a sense of equanimity toward death. The Holocaust was the fulfillment of suffering and, as such, the end of history with which suffering was paired and the opening of redemption. Firer identified the Holocaust as the pain of the messiah's birth, accompanied by a "colossal outflow of blood" like any birth. Thus, for Firer, the suffering character of Israel's historical existence — its sacrifice for the life of Torah — was transformed by the Holocaust into a sacrifice for redemption of humankind.[21]

B. The Suffering of God[22]

The Sages wrote that God was also captive in Egypt, "living in pain just as the Israelites were living in pain" (*Midrash Shemot Rabba* 2:5). In Tel Aviv, the Kotzker-Sokolover Hasid Hayim Israel

Tsimrman wrote in Tamim Pa'alo (His Ways Are Perfect, 1947) that God would be with Israel in its trouble ("He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble," Ps. 91:15) and share in the pain. As the Sages expressed it: "When a man suffers, to what expression does the *Shekhina* (divine presence) give utterance? My head is heavy, my arm is heavy! If the Holy One, blessed be He, is thus grieved over the blood of the wicked, how much more so over the blood of the righteous that is shed?" (*Hagiga* 15b).[23]

In the Warsaw ghetto (1939-43), the Piaseczner Hasid, Kalonymous Kalman Spira, wrote in *Esh Kodesh* (The Fire of Holiness) that God suffered over Israel's tragedy — so much so that God had to remove Godself from the finite world and weep in secret (*Midrash Eykha Rabba*, Proem 24) lest God's infinite suffering destroy the world. God went to God's own realm to cry (*Hagiga* 5b). Thinking from finite human to God, Spira wrote that physical suffering brought the soul down, away from God, but he also thought in terms of God's absolute infinity that filled all reality, and this included God's suffering. If the Jew expanded his or her consciousness, he or she could reach that suffering of God: "It is not merely that it would be impossible for a person to endure the experience of such great suffering, but even to conceive of His suffering is impossible, because He is beyond the confines of the human." When Rabbi Yose, a second-century Tanna entered the ruins of Jerusalem in order to pray whereby his selfhood was annihilated, he could hear God's suffering voice: "Woe to Me for I have destroyed My house, burned My temple, and exiled my children" (*Berakhot* 3a). Once Jews immersed themselves in the divine reality, their own suffering would no longer separate them from God, but join them to God, human suffering would be coupled with God's, thereby alleviated by the knowledge that one did not suffer alone.[24]

In Jerusalem in December, 1944, the Musar leader, Yehezkel Sarna (1889-1969), wrote in his *Liteshuva Velitekuma* (Toward Penitent Return and Revival) that the shock of catastrophe was such that the Jew could not even cry. If Jeremiah could not cry over the tragedy of the Temple (Jer. 8:23), how could a Jew now cry over the Holocaust? One could only turn to God for help. As God once cried over the destruction of the Temple (*Ekha Rabba* 1: 1), God cried now. Surely God's tears were mysterious (Jer. 13:17) and impossible to emulate, but the ontological reality of divine weeping made the human reality possible. The Jew could cry with God, and then the tears would be so precious to God that God would preserve each and every one (*Midrash Shoher Tov al Tehillim*, chap. 80).[25]

C. Physical Mortification over against Spiritual Contentment[26]

In the thirteenth century, the Maharam of Rottenberg wrote:

When a man has committed himself to *Kiddush Hashem*, and to sacrificing himself *al Kiddush Hashem*, whatever is done to him — whether stoning, burning, burial alive, hanging — does not hurt at all. There is no man in the world who would not cry out if his little finger touched fire — even if he tried to hold back. Many sacrificed themselves to burning and murder *al Kiddush Hashem*, blessed be He, and do not cry out "Oy" or "Avoy."[27]

Elberg, cited above, wrote that *Akeda* suffering contained an inner spiritual contentment, even a radiant hope, and that the sufferer had a God-given strength to endure. On Mt. Moriah Abraham felt pain, but Isaac received a spiritual power to stretch forth his neck in an act of love for the *Shekhina*. In the *Akeda* of Treblinka, the innocent victim's (*Korban*) mother who entered the gas chamber did not suffer pains of Gehinnom, for "she was living in another, heavenly atmosphere which sweetened her suffering." It was, rather, when she was sentenced to observe her child's death that she became convulsed. When the father was buried alive, he did not suffer the travails of Job, because a new nourishing power was born in him that gave him strength to bear the pain. He hurt, rather, when he watched his wife or child struggle.

In Ra'anana, Palestine in 1941-42, the Musar thinker, Ephraim Sokolover (1901-68), offered this

metaphor: A surgeon (that is, God) who had to amputate both legs, then both limbs, and then perform even further surgery on his very own son (that is, Israel), had to decide to let the child live to suffer forever or die and suffer no more. Because God was tied eternally to Israel, God could not let it die. But, Jews had a uniquely spiritual power, a secret holy power that enabled them to endure physical suffering. As the Ten Martyrs killed by the Romans, including Rabbi Akiva and Hananiah ben Teradyon, all Jews could accept and endure suffering because they knew it came from God. The pleasure of following God's will made the physical torture painless.[28] Echoing this in Tel Aviv, the Musar thinker, Hillel Vitkind, wrote that the sufferings of the Holocaust were a matter of Israel's atonement in anticipation of the afterlife; hence, the knowledgeable person would be happy to endure them in anticipation of the soul's ascent to God.[29]

Conclusion

Although Orthodox Jewish thinkers during the Holocaust — and, except for Leo Baeck (1873-1956), Conservative and Reform theologians did not begin to cope with the Holocaust until two decades later — had a consciously monolithic view of the non-Jewish world, which reciprocated the tradition of Christian antisemitism, this was not the whole picture. A few historically minded Orthodox thinkers spoke positively of Christianity and considered its association with Nazism to be a tragic fall into paganism. But, beyond this, there is the remarkable fact that the most extreme right-wing voices of wartime Judaism formed their ideology of survival — and this, of course, not consciously — around motifs that lay at the heart of Christianity. Does this perhaps mean that, at times of utmost crisis, the two religions draw only upon certain common values? In the event that this is so, would it not be valuable to begin to dwell on the possibility of elements of inner synthesis of Judaism and

Christianity in the wake of the Holocaust?

Notes

1. There are three major forms of Judaism. The heartland of Orthodoxy (including Hasidism) was lire-war Eastern Europe; it flourishes again today, primarily in Israel. That of Reform Judaism was nineteenth-century Germany, and it has flourished since then in the U.S.A.

The heartland of Conservative Judaism and of its allied Reconstructionist movement has been the twentieth-century U.S.A.

2. Cf. Avi Sagi, “The Punishment of Amalek in Jewish Tradition: Coping with the Moral Problem,” *Harvard Theological Review* 87 (July, 1994): 323-346.
3. Bentsion Firer, “Netsah Israel,” *Di Yidishe Shtime* [hereafter, *D.Y.S*.] 3 (November 12, 1948): 4; “Di Torah Hakdama tsu der Velt-Geshikhte,” *D.Y.S.* 3 (November 5, 1948): 4; “Dos Folk un zeyn Torah: Shavuot Gedanken,” *D.Y.S.* 2 (June 11, 1948): 6, 10; “Ve’evhar Be’david Lehiyot al Amo Israel,” *D.Y.S.* 3 (October 17,1948):3; “Das Sefer un Am Ha’sefer,” Dos Yidishe Vort [hereafter, *D.Y.V*.] 2 (February 2,1948): 4; “Mesirat Nefesh oder Revolt,” *D.Y.V.* 2 (April 14,1947):5; “Har Sinai un Har Ha’moriya,” *D.Y.S.* 3 (November 19,1948):3; “Ben Ha’metsarim,” *D.Y.V.* 2 (July 30,1948):2; “She’al Avikha Veya’gedekha,” Netsah Israel [hereafter, *N.I.*] 1 (May, 1948): 5; “Shabbat un Yahadut,” *N.I.* 2 (June, 1948):13; “Heshbon Ha’nefesh,” *N.I.* 4 (September, 1948): 10; “Ve’da Ma She’tashuv,” *N.I.* 3 (August, 1948): l4, 15.
4. Shlomo Diamant-Yahalomi, “A Brif tsu a Ben-Tora,” *D.Y.S.* 1 (May 9,1947): 2; “A Shad di Tirha,” *D.Y.S.* 1 (July 11, 1947): 2; “Darkhe Tsiyon Avelut,” *D.Y.S.* 2 (May 14, 1948): 6; “U’vaharta Ba’hayim,” *D.Y.S.* 1 (June 6,1947):4; “Shuva Israel,” *D.Y.S.* 1 (October 30,1946):3; “In an ernster Sha’a,” *D.Y.S.* 1 (March 7,1947):2; “Ben Hame’tsarim,” *D.Y.S.* 1 (July 4,1947):3.
5. Moshe Avigdor Amiel, “Linevukhe Ha’tekufa,” *Ba’mishor* 1 (January 25, 1940): 9-10; and 2 (December 20, 1940): 2, *passim*.
6. Shlomo Zalman Shraggai, *Tehumim* (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1951-52); *Tahalikhe Ha’temura Veha’geula* (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1958-59); *Zemanim* (Jerusalem: Zemanim, 1969).
7. Alexander Zusha Frydman, as cited in Mendel Piekaz, *Hasidut Polin* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1990), pp. 320-323.
8. Yehuda Leb Gerst, *Min Ha’metsar* (Jerusalem: Keren Spero, 1949); “Yid un Velt,” *Basha’ar* 10 (September 23, 1946): 3, glec11 (October 8, 1946): 3; “Di Shand fun Parnas,” *Basha’ar* 18 (January 16, 1947): 3, and 22 (March 4, 1947) :3; “Ha’masoret shel Sinat Israel,” *D.Y.V.* 2 (October 24, 1947): 4, and 2 (December 12, 1947): 4-5, *passim; Peletat Bet Yehuda* (Jerusalem: Mosad Al Shem Y. L. Gerst, 1970-71); “Perakim Mi’megilot Ha’zevaot,” *Kol Israel* 25 (September 12, 1947): 4-5; and 26 (April 15, 1948): 2, 4, *passim*.
9. See Gershon Greenberg, “Ontic Division and Religious Survival: Wartime Palestinian Orthodoxy and the Holocaust (Hurban),” *Modern Judaism* 14 (February, 1994): 21-61.
10. See Gershon Greenberg, “Redemption after Holocaust according to Mahane Israel — Lubavitch, 1940-1945,” Modern Judaism 12 (February, 1992): 61-84.
11. Ya’akov Moshe Harlap, *Me Merom*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem. Midrash Gavoab Letalmud “Bet Zevul,” 1944/45); vol. 4 (Jerusalem: Midrash Gavoah Letalmud “Bet Zevul,” 1952/53); vol. 6 (Jerusalem: Midrash Gavoah Letalmud “Bet Zevul,” 1981/82); *El Am Hashem* (Jerusalem: Ha’erets-Israelit, 1943); “Ve’hine Amar Nahamu Nahamu Ami [October 30, 1946],” Letter 138, and “Ayom hu matsavain shel Israel [date?],” Letter 249, Bet Zevul-Harlap Archives, Jerusalem.
12. Eliahu Botschko, *Die Spuren des Messias* (Montreux 1937).
13. Yehuda Leb Gerst, *Yidishkeyt un Veltishkeyt* (Lodz: Masora, 1938); “Ha’masoret shel Sinat Israel.”
14. Gedaliah Bublick, “Bey vemn Hitler hat gelerent zayn rasen Teorie,” *Idishe Vokhntsayung* [hereafter, *I.V*.] 5 (December 20, 1940): 2; “Zvay Bibel-Lender,” I.V. 6 (January 24, 1941): 2; Kamf fun Avoda-Zora gegen di Nevi’im,” I.V. 2 (August 27,1937):3; “Der Kval fun der gute und nobele baym Menshen,” I.V. 2 (July 9, 1937): 2.
15. After the war, in 1947, Moshe Prager offered a further analysis of Christianity’s role, positive and negative, in the ideology of the Holocaust: Moshe Prager (Mark), *Hurban Israel Be’erofa* (Tel Aviv: Ha’kibuts Ha’meyhad, 1947).
16. “From the infested typhus-ridden ghetto of Warsaw, from the death block of Nazi occupied

lands where myriads of our people are awaiting execution by the slow or the quick method, from a hundred concentration camps which before the map of Europe, from the pitiful ranks of our wandering hosts over the entire face of the earth, comes the cry: 'Enough; there must be a final end to all this, a sure and certain end!' How long is the crucifixion of Israel to last? Time and again we have been stretched upon the rack for other people's sins. Time and again we have been made the whipping boy for blundering governments, the scapegoat for defeat in war, for misery and depressions, for conflict among classes" (Abba Hillel Silver, "Address by Dr. Silver," *Conference Record* [September 1, 1943], pp. 4-5).

17. On the punitive aspect of suffering, see, e.g.: "But if ye will not hearken unto Me, and will not do all these commandments, and if ye shall despise My statutes, and if your soul abhor My judgments, so that ye will not do all My commandments, but that ye break My covenant; I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it" (Lev. 26:14-16, King James Version).
18. See "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Is. 53:4-5, K.J.V.).
19. E.g., in the report from Mainz, 1096: "[W]hen the Jews discovered that the mobsters had broken through into the castle courtyard and there was no way out except through apostasy, they resolved to delay no further: 'Their voice rang out because all hearts were at one: "Hear 0 Israel, the Lord . . . is One." Ours not to question the ways of the Holy One, blessed be He and blessed be His name, for it is He who gave us His Torah, He who commanded that we die and be slain for the *Unification of his Holy Name*.... Let every one who has a knife inspect it lest it be flawed. Let him come forth and cut our throats for the sanctification of Him who Alone lives Eternally; and finally let him cut his own throat.... Whereupon all of them, men and women, rose and slew each other.... The tender of heart put on courage and themselves cut the throats of their wives and children, yea, babes .... Women bared their necks to one another in order to be offered up [*Li'aked*] for the Unification of the Name. So a man treated his own son and his own brother, so a brother his own sister; so a woman her own son and daughter... [H]ere is one sacrificing and then himself being sacrificed, and there another sacrificing and himself being sacrificed [*ze oked vene'ekad ve'ze oked vene'ekad*] ... Ask ye now and see, was there ever such a holocaust [*Akeda me'ruba*] as this since the days of Adam? When were there ever a thousand and a hundred sacrifices [*Akedot*] in one day, *each and every one of them like the Akedah of Isaac son of Abraham*?"' ("Shield and Buckler of every congregation," as cited in Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial — On the Legend and Lore of the Command to Abraham to Offer Isaac as a Sacrifice: The Akedah*, tr. and intro. Judah Goldin [New York: Parthenon Books, 1967], pp. 18-20.
20. See Gershon Greenberg, "Holiness and Catastrophe in Simha Elberg's Religious Thought," *Tradition* 25 (November, 1991): 39-64.
21. Firer, "Netsah Israel."
22. 0n the suffering of God, see Jakob J. Petuchowski, "The Suffering God," chap. 8 in his *Theology and Poetry. Studies in the Medieval Piyyut*, The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization (London, Henley, and Boston, MA.: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 84-97; Norman T. Cohen, "Shekhinta Ba'galuta: A Midrashic Response to Restriction and Persecution," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period*, vol. 13, nos. 1-2 (1982), pp. 147-159; and Melvin Jay Glatt, "God the Mourner — Israel's Companion in Tragedy," *Judaism* 28 (Winter, 1979): 72-79.
23. Hayim Israel Tsimrman, *Tamim Pa'alo* (Tel Aviv, 1947).
24. Kalonymous Kalman Spira, *Esh Kodesh* (Jerusalem: Va'ad Haside Dyastsenah, 1960). See Nehemiah Polen, *The Holy Fire* (Northvale, NJ: J. Aronson, 1994).
25. See Gershon Greenberg, "A Musar Response to the Holocaust: Yehezkel Sarna's Liteshuva Velitekuma of 4 December 1944," *Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 7 (Fall, 1997):

1-38.

26. See “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col. 3:5), and “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27, K.J.V.).
27. Samson bar Zadok, *Sefer Tashbats: Me’et Shimshon bar Zadok — Kollel Piske U’minhage Rabo, Maharam Mi’Rotenberg* (Jerusalem: Kollel Taharat Yom Tov, 1973/74), p. 107.
28. Greenberg, “A Musar Response.”
29. Vitkind cited: “’Therefore God gives thee of the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine’[Gen. 27:28]. [Rashi:] What is the significance of God? Tat He acts on justice. If you are worthy, He will give to you, and if not, He will not give to you. But to Esau He said, If the fat places of the earth shall be thy dwelling, whether you be righteous or wicked, He will give to you.” (Hillel Vitkind, “Darkhe Teshuva,” in his *Musar Ha’tora* I [Jerusalem: Pinhas Even Printing, 1943/44], pp. 136-139).

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