

McGill University

**Holocaust Studies for Moral and Religious
Education**

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by

Tauba Satov

Montreal, Quebec

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ABSTRACT

This thesis will present an account of the religious way of living drawn from the writings of selected authorities. It will consider how myths, rituals and religion can help humans reach moments of transcendence. These themes will be discussed further in reference to the pious Jews who originated from small towns in Eastern Europe and who lived in accordance with their religious values.

This thesis will give substance to the account of the religious way of living with specific reference to the experience of pious Eastern European Jews before, during and after the Holocaust. It will be proposed that Holocaust studies can offer students several messages that are of crucial importance.

EXTRAIT

Cette thèse traite des moeurs religieuses en s'inspirant des écrits d'autorités choisies. L'auteur examine comment mythes, rituels et religion aident la personne à atteindre des moments de transcendance. Ces thèmes sont développés par renvoi aux juifs pieux originaires de villages situés en Europe de l'est.

L'auteur met en valeur toute la signification découlant du compte rendu des moeurs religieuses des juifs pieux de l'Europe de l'est et en particulier par renvoi à leurs expériences durant et après l'holocauste. Il est proposé que l'étude de l'holocauste saura transmettre à l'étudiant plusieurs messages d'importance fondamentale.

INTRODUCTION

The specific purpose of this thesis is to examine the value of Holocaust studies for moral and religious education; in particular, studies which focus on the ways in which the myths, rituals and religious faith of pious Eastern European Jews served them through their plight during the Holocaust.

The experience of the pious Eastern European Jew during the Holocaust will be treated in the light of general considerations concerning how myths, rituals and religious faith can serve to help persons transcend suffering that otherwise might be unbearable. The first chapter will provide a general framework by presenting an account, based on various authorities, of the nature of religion, myth and ritual and of their role in establishing a basis of value and meaning. This will be followed by a chapter devoted to an account of the spiritual ethos of the pious Eastern European Jew prior to the Holocaust. The third and fourth chapters will focus on the ways in which this spiritual heritage served to enable victims of the Holocaust to transcend their suffering. Chapters five and six will discuss both the universal significance of the experience of these Jews during the Holocaust and the value of incorporating studies of this experience in

moral and religious education courses in schools. This will be followed by a brief summary of the study undertaken and a statement of the conclusion for moral and religious education that can be drawn from it.

Chapter One

RELIGION, MYTHS AND RITUALS

This chapter presents an account of the views of F.J. Streng, M. Eliade, J. Campbell and A.J. Heschel concerning the general nature of religion, myth and ritual, and their role in establishing a basis for value and meaning in human life. Some reference is made to the Jewish religious tradition to illustrate the general considerations discussed.

Religious Living

According to Frederick J. Streng " Religion is a means to an ultimate transformation."¹ In other words, he claims that an ultimate transformation is a life orientation. It is a change from being caught up in the troubles of common existence, for example, sin and ignorance, to living in such a way that one can cope at the deepest level with these troubles. That capacity for living, he maintains, allows one to experience the most authentic reality - the ultimate. The adherents of a religious tradition define their lives in terms of that ultimate context and try to live in such a way that deficiencies are transformed into fulfillment.

Streng maintains that religion incorporates two basic elements, ultimacy and effective power.² In his view, in the context of religious awareness, ultimacy means the most comprehensive resource of which a person can be aware. It is one's sense of superlative value that motivates and structures one's life.

Streng claims that a religious awareness incites one to act from a view of life that transcends cultural habits or mere short term gain. When people are sensitive to living in the ultimate context of existence they seek the deepest comprehension of life. A believer in religion experiences and expresses ultimate reality as a power that transforms him to the core.

Streng claims that religion as effective power stresses the recognition by religious adherents that their symbols, techniques and social expressions are not wishes, hopes or fantasies. In his view, these are practical means of transforming life from unreality to reality, from inauthentic existence to authentic existence.

In realizing the nature of one's being, a person becomes spiritually whole.³ According to Streng, the believer is not destroyed by the problems and frustrations of daily existence, for a person participating in a religious process of transformation senses a lifesaving and freeing reality that cures

life's troubles.

A commitment to the value that an individual recognizes as the source of happiness and the fullest possible expression of that reality is a positive way of living.⁴ Streng emphasizes that it is not necessary to judge whether one or another religious answer is right or wrong. Rather, the purpose of understanding religious life is to point out various possibilities for religious living, each of which is recognized by its adherents as having the power to transform a person ultimately.⁵ Any appropriate emotional, intellectual and physical expression of oneself in relation to the natural rhythm of change in the universe, is the basic human spiritual act.⁶

The Power of Myth

Streng maintains that myths and rituals do not accurately explain the nature of personhood, the development of life or the source and conditions of the deepest meaning, joy and wholeness in human experience. Rather, mythical material presents the investigator with information that can be interpreted objectively to explain the linguistic, psychological and social causes of religion.⁷

According to Mircea Eliade, myths are stories of our human search through the ages for truth, for meaning and for significance. Myth helps in understanding our

passage from birth to life and then to death. Eliade explains that the myth is regarded as a sacred story because it always deals with these life-realities. The cosmogonic myth is true because the existence of the world is there to prove it; the myth of the origin of death is equally true because man's mortality proves it.⁸

Eliade claims that myth expresses, enhances and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man. Myths are very relevant to reality. The knowledge of myths supplies man with the motive for ritual and moral actions, as well as with the indications as how to perform them.

Joseph Campbell says that myths are clues to the spiritual potentialities of human life. " We need for life to signify, to touch the eternal, to understand the mysterious, to find out who we are." ⁹

Campbell goes on to say, " Myth helps to put the mind in touch with this experience of being alive." ¹⁰ It tells what the experience is. In his book Night, Elie Wiesel recounts that when he was a concentration camp prisoner he remembered his Sabbath table, the bread, the wine, the food. He reports on how this helped him to turn inward and how the symbols helped him to reconstruct the image of the love he had shared with his family - that holiness of time - the Sabbath.

Wiesel recounts that when he remembered the

myth of the Sabbath he was able to manipulate his mind to go beyond his horrible human condition in the camp, to experience the ceremonial recounting of the myth, to be seized by the sacredness of the experiences involved with the Sabbath rituals. He reports how the exalted powers of the events recollected gave him the inner strength to carry on in spite of the hardships. Living this myth gave Wiesel a genuine religious experience. Although this transcendent experience was shortlived in his everyday world, it left him with something that was precious and significant to him alone. According to Streng, Wiesel enjoyed, " Freedom through spiritual discipline " 11

Campbell says that the human person is seeking an experience of being alive, not the meaning of life. He says that life's experiences on the purely physical plane should have resonances within one's own innermost being and reality, so that one can actually feel the rapture of being alive.

Campbell points out that Judaism provided the rituals by which the Jewish people became members of the community.¹² The rituals enabled each individual to be a part of the cultural society. In a culture that has been homogeneous for some time, there are a number of understood, unwritten customs and rules by which people live. There is an ethos. There is a mode, an understanding that "we do it that way." An unstated mythology develops. It is not all written down in books at first,

but develops in the culture of a people and gradually finds its way into songs and stories which eventually get written down. Campbell maintains that mythological stories are about the wisdom of life.

Mythology has a great deal to do with the stages of human life. According to Campbell, "The foremost function of myth is to reveal the exemplary models for all human rites and all significant human activities, diet or marriage, work or education, art or wisdom."¹³ For example, the initiation ceremonies as one moves from childhood to adult responsibilities, the Bar Mitzvah of a thirteen year old Jewish boy into manhood or the Bat Mitzvah of a twelve year old girl into womanhood or the ceremony of moving from the unmarried state into the married state; all of these rituals are mythological rites. They have to do with the recognition of the new role one is in.

"Myths bring us into a level of consciousness that is spiritual."¹⁴ When a person lives such a meaningful experience he or she may become a model for other people's lives. The zaddiks, the saintly humans of the Hasidim, were educated toward life. They moved into the sphere of being mythologized. According to Campbell, mythology is the song of the imagination inspired by the energies of the body. Yet every myth we tell today has some point of origin in our past experience. "I am today what I am because of those beliefs."¹⁵ The

biblical tradition is a socially oriented mythology. The individual has to find an aspect of myth that relates to one's own life.¹⁶

Eliade claims that myth opens the world to the dimension of mystery, to the realization of the mystery that underlies all forms. The greatest myth, he says, is the ritual of the New Year.¹⁷ It is a reiteration of the cosmogony. Each New Year man is reminded of the origin of the world. When this new time cycle is created in our world it is a time of the greatest of renewals. Although the world one knows and in which one lives differs from culture to culture, the myth of annual renewal or the origin myth that plays the role of a cosmogonic myth is universal.

Among the Jews, the scenario of the periodic renewal of the world was progressively historicized.¹⁸ According to Eliade's interpretation, the New Year ritual scenario was applied to such historical events as the Exodus and the crossing of the Red Sea, the conquest of Canaan, the Babylonian captivity and the return from exile. Also, the constitution of Israel at Mount Sinai through Yahweh and his servant Moses, when Israel becomes effective in the order of the people, can be submitted to ritual renewal in a cult.

Consequently, Eliade concludes that the Jewish cult systems, like others, share the common hope for the annual regeneration of the world. There is a belief in the origin

myth which implies the possibility of recovering the absolute beginning. Hence the end is implied in the beginning and vice versa. It is the idea of the expression of a more intimate and deeper religious experience, nourished by the imaginary memory of a "Lost Paradise". The New Year scenario offers the hope that the joy of the beginning could be recovered.

Transcendence

According to Joseph Campbell, the mystery of life is beyond all human conception. Myth is that field of reference to what is transcendent in life. The ultimate word in our language for that which is absolutely transcendent is G-d.

The dictionary definition of a myth would be stories about gods, so then the next question is: What is a god? A god is a personification of a motivating power or a value system that functions in human life and in the universe—the powers of your own body and of nature. The myths are metaphorical of spiritual potentiality in the human being, and the same powers that animate our life animate the life of the world.¹⁹

Myth helps to clarify the transcendent experience.²⁰ Campbell says that transcendence properly means that which is beyond all human concepts. The word G-d refers to what transcends all thinking, but the word G-d itself is something thought about. An example of this is found in Judaism and its age old observance of the Sabbath. The myth-ritual surrounding

the Jewish Sabbath gives a sense of the sacred, of transcendence within the concreteness of the experience of space and time.

Campbell maintains that every mythology has to do with the wisdom of life as related to a specific culture at a specific time, that the myth is for spiritual instruction. He says that the pedagogical function of the myth is to teach how to live a human lifetime under any circumstances, and that civilizations are grounded in their myths.

Fritz Rothschild reminds us that according to Kant all of our experiences are bounded by time and space. They take place within space and they take place in the course of time. Our senses are enclosed in the field of time and space, and our minds are enclosed in a frame of those categories. In Rothschild's interpretation of Heschel's writings, the ultimate thing, which is no thing, that we are trying to get in touch with, is not so enclosed. We enclose it as we try to think of it. ²¹ Consequently, Jewish ritual may be characterized as the art of significant forms in time, as architecture of time. Most ritual observances, the Sabbath, the new moon and the festivals depend upon a certain hour of the day or season of the year. It is, for example, evening, morning or afternoon that brings with it the call to prayer. The main themes of faith lie in the realm of time.

Rothschild goes on to say that according to Heschel, Jewish culture gets its essence in events of history rather than in things or places.²² For example, in the book of Genesis, at the end of the story of creation, there is no reference in the record of creation to any object in space that would be endowed with the quality of holiness. No mountain or spring was established as a holy place, rather the seventh day, the Sabbath, is what became holy. It is holiness in time.

The essence of the Sabbath, according to this account, is completely detached from the world of space. It is a day on which Jewish people are called upon to share in what is eternal in time, to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation, from the world of creation to the creation of the world.

According to this interpretation, Heschel maintains that two sources of religious thinking are given from the myth of the Sabbath. Memory reminds Jews of the tradition of the special time. Some examples are the rituals of preparing, such as bathing, cleaning the home and special food preparation to honour this special time. Also, personal insight through prayer on the Sabbath takes the mind out of narrowness of self-interest and enables Jews to see the world in the mirror of the holy. Prayer clarifies hopes and intentions. It helps to discover true aspirations. It is an act of self-

purification.

According to Heschel's interpretation of the Sabbath, "The Sabbath is not for the sake of the week days; the week days are for the sake of the Sabbath." ²³ According to Jewish culture, he maintains, the grandeur and mystery of the world that surrounds us are not only perceptible to the elect. All humans are endowed with a sense of wonder, with a sense of mystery and with a sense of awe. It is up to all humans to appreciate the Sabbath. Education for reverence is a prerequisite for the preservation of freedom.

Heschel claims that throughout Jewish history the Sabbath sustained the people. They were able to establish their sanctuary wherever they were because the Sabbath was and is more than a day ... the myth of the Sabbath is holiness in time.

Prayer and Observance

According to Heschel's account, the focus of this spiritual time is not the self. Prayer comes to pass in a complete turning of the heart toward G-d, toward goodness and power. It is the momentary disregard of personal concerns, the absence of self-centered thoughts, which constitute the art of prayer. Feeling becomes prayer in the moment in which a person forgets oneself, and becomes aware of G-d.

The essence of prayer, he goes on to say, lies

in human self-transcending, in surpassing of limits of what is human and in relating the purely natural to the divine. The higher goal of spiritual living is to face sacred moments and to glory in them. Awe is "the beginning and gateway of faith, the first precept of all, and upon it the whole world is established."²⁴

Affirming life the way it is, that is what rituals and myths are about. To participate in this life courageously, decently and to the best of one's ability makes this life worth living...and special.

Myths and rituals are basic to the understanding of religion. According to Eliade, the individual's return to the origin is conceived as an opportunity for renewing and regenerating the existence of one who undertakes it. The initiation myths and rites are mystical rebirths, spiritual in nature. The acts are orientated toward the value of the spirit.

According to Eliade, Judaism realizes that every human condition is made up of many initiations that were original myths or religious experiences.²⁵ In his view, their values are transcendent in the sense that they were revealed by the Divine or by mythical ancestors. Consequently, religious experiences constitute absolute values for all human activities. It is the experience of the sacred that gives the idea that there are absolute values capable of guiding man and giving meaning to human existence. It is through the experience of the sacred that

the ideas of reality, truth and significance materialize. The expression of myth is by the rituals. Recollection and reenactment of the events help man to hold on to the present. By virtue of the continual repetition of certain rituals, the enduring value remains throughout universal time. During the horrors of the Holocaust, the transcendent experience of the Jews abolished the horror of the chronological time and recovered the many sacred experiences of the myths. This revolt against the irreversibility of time helped the concentration camp victims to construct some reality from the weight of dead time. It assured the victims that they were still the master of their own spirit; they could recreate their world. Through their own myths they could influence their lives. Only through transcendence were the Jews of the Holocaust able to rise above the mode of their existence.

Chapter One - Endnotes

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- 5 Ibid., 16.
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- 9 Joseph Campbell, The Power of Myth,New York:
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- 10 Ibid., 5.
- 11 Op.Cit., Frederick J.Streng, 90.
- 12 Op.Cit., Joseph Campbell, 9-11.
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Chapter Two

THE SPIRIT OF PIOUS EASTERN EUROPEAN JEWRY

This chapter will examine the spiritual world of the pious Eastern European Jews before the Holocaust. The behavior patterns and ideologies in their homes, in their schools and in their communities during this period were common to these pious people who really did not care to change with the times. Many were marked by the somewhat mystical traditions and they kept these images, concepts and patterns close at hand. Many Holocaust victims perceived and assimilated experiences through Hasidically influenced eyes. Elie Wiesel is an example of a survivor who is not orthodox today but is one who is still loyal to his Hasidic orientation as a child.

Judaism, A Way Of Life

Abraham J. Heschel explains the world of East European Jews, their daily life in the small towns, their habits, their customs, their attitudes towards the basic things in life and about the scale of values which directed their aspirations.¹ It is an expression of Jewish history that portrays the character of a pious

people as reflected in its way of living throughout generations in their loyalties and motivations.

Heschel explains that, pious religious Jews evaluate history by how much refinement there is in the life of a people, by how much spiritual substance there is in its everyday existence. Culture, he says, is the style of the life of a people. Pious Jews gauge culture by the extent to which a whole people live, not only particular individuals. It is how they behave in accordance with the dictates of an eternal doctrine or strive for spiritual integrity; the extent to which inwardness, compassion, justice and holiness are to be found in the daily life of the people.

Heschel points out that the pattern of life of a people is more significant than the pattern of its art. What counts most, he says, is not expression but existence itself. The key to the source of creativity lies in the will to cling to spirituality, to be close to the inexpressible, and not merely in the ability of expression.²

According to Heschel's view, pious ethics knew no perfection that was definable. Its vision aimed at the infinite, never compromising, never satisfied, always striving. The moralists were exalted; they yearned for the transcendental. They somehow felt that not only space, but also the soul was endless. They sought boundless fervor, praying and learning without limit or end.

Heschel claims that the ideals of these Jews were

shared by all the various parts of the community.³ The scholarly and the ignorant, the Talmudic student and the trader all had an intimate, organic character. The earthiness of the villagers, the warmth of plain people, and the spiritual simplicity of the lay preachers penetrated into the house of prayer, that was also a house of study and learning. They all felt authorized by G-d to be preachers of morals. Ideals became folkways, divine imperatives a human concern; the people itself became a source of Judaism, a source of spirit.

The Importance of Learning

Rashi(1040-1105) composed his comprehensive commentary on the Talmud, and Maimonides(1135-1204) published his Code of Jewish Law, which was concise and simple in style and covered the entire field of law. These two literary events changed the intellectual conditions of Jewish learning.

Heschel maintains that it was Rashi who brought intellectual emancipation to the people. Before his commentary, the Talmud was accessible only to the enlightened few, but with Rashi's commentary, explaining with simplicity almost every word of the text, the Talmud became accessible to many. The commentary unravelled the involved complexities of Talmudic dialectics. To this day Rashi's commentary is a companion that attends the student to whatever part

of the text he may turn. It communes with the student, conveying by a minimum of words, a maximum of meaning.

Heschel claims that Rashi democratized Jewish education; he brought the Bible, the Talmud, and the Midrash (works of exposition on the bible) to the people. He made the Talmud everyman's book. Learning ceased to be a monopoly of the few. It spread increasingly with the passing of time.⁴ Eventually many Jewish homes in Eastern Europe, even the humblest and the poorest had some books. Many a Jew, he says, gave of his time to learning, either in private study or by joining one of the societies established for the purpose of studying the Talmud.

"The Book, the Torah, was their essence, just as they, the Jews, were the essence of the Torah." ⁵

A typical Jewish township in Eastern Europe was a place where Torah was studied. According to Heschel, the house of study or synagogue was full of people of all classes busily engaged in studies. Simple townfolk, artisans, as well as young men from afar, where at dusk between twilight and evening prayers, gathered around the tables of Torah, to discuss interpretations of scripture and to read from theological or ethical writings. When a problem came up, there was immediately a host of people pouring out opinions, arguments and quotations.

"The stomachs were empty, the homes barren, but

the minds were crammed with the riches of Torah." ⁶

Heschel reports that every Jewish district had a prayer and study area called a "stible." It consisted of two rooms. One room was filled with Talmud, fundamental Jewish law, the other room was for prayer. According to his account every free moment from work was given to the study of the Torah. When economic exigencies made it impossible for people to give their time to the Torah, they tried at least to support the students. They shared their scanty food to give board to a wandering student. Many Jews, he claims, felt the delight at the thought that by their acts of support, they had a share in the learning. Having a scholar in the family was a great honour.⁷

Heschel maintains that in the eyes of these people knowledge was not a means for achieving power, but a way of clinging to the source of all reality. Enamored of learning, those who dedicated their life to study put their entire being into the study of the Torah. They shared their knowledge with others by discussions and oral interpretations.

According to Heschel, study was a technique of sublimating feeling into thought, of transforming grief by formulating keen theoretical difficulties into meaning, in finding a solution to a difficult passage in Maimonides. To figure out an answer to gnawing doubts was to examine, discuss and expand the word of the great

sages of bygone days. There was no barrier between the past and the present.⁸

Heschel reports that the simplest principle was disclosed to rest upon a complex of concepts and involved in a mass of relations to other principles. Conclusions to old rules were deduced in this manner, offering guidance in cases which had not been provided for in the old works. Over and above that, the storm of the soul that was held in check by rigorous discipline, the inner restlessness, found a vent in flights of the intellect.⁹

The spiritual life of the Jews was lived in solitude. Heschel claims that their life remained independent of the trends and conventions of the surrounding world. Unique were the ways of these pious Jews in thinking and writing, unique their communal and individual ways of life. Heschel reports that these Jews tenaciously held to their own traditions, that they were bent upon the cultivation of what was most their own, and to the utter disregard of the outside world.

Heschel goes on to report that these Jewish people had come into their own. They lived in their own way, without reservation and without disguise, outside their homes no less than within them. They did not, he says, deal with the problems raised by Aristotle nor by medieval philosophers. Rather, the students of the Torah answered their questions.

From Heschel's point of view, Jewish society in Eastern Europe had an intimate organic character. The spiritual simplicity of the people penetrated into the house of study and prayer. Their books were so rooted in a self-contained world that they read like notes of discussions with pupils. All their works, he says, are commentaries on classical works of ancient times.

Roman Vishniac reports that in the lives of the pious Eastern European Jews before the Holocaust everything was fixed according to a certain pattern, nothing was casual or left to chance. New customs were continuously added to, and the old customs enriched. The forms and ceremonies were passed on from generation to generation. Everything was keyed to a certain style.¹⁰

The commitment to religious education was very strong. Vishniac reports that parents often had to make sacrifices to pay tuition for their children; a poorly tutored father wanted at least his sons to be scholars. Women toiled night and day to enable their pious husbands to devote themselves to study.

According to Vishniac, life to these pious Jews was not merely an opportunity for indulgence, but a mission that G-d entrusted to every individual. In his view, every person constantly produces thoughts, words and deeds. The human supplies these products to the powers of holiness or the powers of impurity; the human is forever engaged in building or destroying.¹¹

He says, "Man's task is to restore what has been impaired in the cosmos. Therefore, the Jew is engaged in the service of G-d."¹²

The Spread of Kaballism

According to Heschel, the spread of Kaballah, Jewish mysticism, exerted a deep influence on the life of the East European Jews. Heschel maintains that to the analytical mind, the universe is broken apart. It is split into the known and the unknown, into the seen and the unseen. But the mystic mind tends to hold the world together:

The Kaballists knew that what their senses perceive is but the jutting edge of what is deeply hidden. All things below are symbols of what is above. They are sustained by the forces that flow from hidden worlds. Man's good deeds are single acts in the long drama of redemption.¹³

In Heschel's view of Kaballism, the meaning of human life lies in one's perfecting the universe. One has to distinguish, gather and redeem the sparks of holiness scattered throughout the world. Endowed with gigantic religious strength, one can, through proper consecration, ascend to the highest spheres; one's spirit can create heavens. At the same time, however, one must not forget that one's feet are upon the ground, close to the powers of darkness. ¹⁴ He says that in life on earth the person is able to experience both this world and the world to come, and one should never mistake

worldly for supreme joys, and the earth for heaven. "G-d has instilled in man something of himself... G-d is the infinite... the hidden of all hidden." 15

But what is the main objective, Heschel asks, of observance, if not to feel the soul, the soul in oneself, in the Torah, in the world? Unconquerable freedom was in the one who consecrated one's soul to the sanctification of the Holy Name.¹⁶

Heschel points out that outwardly the Jews of Eastern Europe may have looked plagued by the misery and humiliation in which they lived, but inwardly they bore the rich sorrow of the world and the noble vision of redemption for all beings.

According to Heschel's views, these religious Jews ceased to fear the flesh. The new thing in Eastern Europe was that something of the Sabbath was infused into the everyday, into weekdays. One could relish the taste of eternal life in the fleeting moment. Jews did not build magnificent synagogues; they built bridges leading from the heart to G-d. In the humble wooden synagogues the Jews purified their souls. There arose in them an infinite world of inwardness.

The present moment overflowed its bounds.¹⁷ Heschel points out that the Jews lived not chronologically, but in a fusion of the dimensions of time: they lived with great people of the past, not only in narrating tales about them, but also in their emotions

and dreams. Jews studying the Talmud felt a kinship with their sages. The past never died in their lives. In their souls simple Jews were always prepared to welcome the Messiah. They put no trust in the secular world. They believed houses of worship and study were more important than museums and libraries. The magic of the twentieth century did not blind them. Their life was oriented to the spiritual, and they could therefore ignore its external aspects.

True Piety

In order to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the spirit of the pious Jews in Eastern Europe before the Holocaust, it is important to consider their view of piety. An account of this is given by Heschel. As Rothschild reports on Heschel's writing, Judaism claims that the way to nobility of the soul is the art of sanctifying time through moral dedications, acts of worship and intellectual pursuits.¹⁸ Acts like these, Heschel says counteract the trivialization of existence. The act of study, of being involved in wisdom, of being overwhelmed by the marvel and mystery of G-d's creation is a form of purification.

According to Rothschild, the religious traditions claim that man is capable of discipline, of moral and spiritual exaltation and of an ultimate commitment. Awe and reverence are at the root of faith. The reverence

for the mystery and grandeur of the world that surrounds all humans gave the European Jews pleasure and meaning. It filled their souls with joy.

Rothschild points out that the ritual of prayer finds living expression in a living religious dream which permeates the acts of true piety. "It is the dream of a world, rid of evil by the grace of G-d as well as by the efforts of man." ¹⁹ Rothschild claims that one must render kindness to acquire goodness; one must do good to attain the holy.

Rothschild's view is that religion is not within, but beyond the limits of mere reason; its task is not to compete with reason, to be a source of speculative ideas, but to aid where reason is of little aid. Frequently, where concepts fail, where rational understanding ends, the meaning of observance begins. Its purpose is not to serve hygiene, happiness or vitality of the human being; its purpose is to add holiness to hygiene, grandeur to happiness, spirit to vitality.

Works of piety are like works of art. They are functional, they serve a purpose, but their essence is intrinsic. A mitzvah is the perpetuation of an insight or an act of bringing together the passing with the everlasting, the momentary with the eternal.²⁰

According to the interpretation of Rothschild, " Every act done in agreement with G-d is a mitzvah." ²¹ A mitzvah is a pious deed; it has the connotation of

goodness, value, virtue, piety and even holiness.

Consequently, " the good motive comes into being while doing the good."22

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Chapter Three

SPIRITUAL LINK BEFORE AND AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

This chapter examines the study and wisdom of the Hasidic movement to explain the faith of those pious Jews of Eastern Europe and the two major strains in the movement: the heritage of the scholars who actually devoted their complete being to the study of the Torah and the ordinary pious Jews who learned from their wise zaddiks.

This chapter will also examine the attitudes of love of family, respect for all living things and the "awe" for the world's creations within the Hasidic tradition. Various tales of meaningful human behavior are given from survivors of the Holocaust. Their myths sustained them and gave them the inner strength to be hopeful. In listening to the tales from the Holocaust much can be gained in moral and religious education. These Jewish people drew their inspiration from various myths from their heritage and continued to make their own tales during the Holocaust, which eventually are becoming

the myths of the Holocaust for future generations .

The Hasidic Movement

Roman Vishniac says that the Hasidic movement arose and brought heaven down to earth. The Hasidim maintained that the joys of this world are not the highest to which one can achieve, and they found in themselves the passion for spirituality, the yearning for the joys of the world to come. The perception of the spiritual, the experience of wonder became common.¹

Hasidism was founded by Israel ben Eliezer, the Baal Shem Tov, master of the good name, who recognized the need for new patterns of life, leadership and literature to revitalize the Jewish community of Eastern Europe. The new movement shuffled the existing scales of values within the Jewish community. It placed prayer, ecstasy, story-telling and sanctification of daily life on par with Talmudic studies.

The new pattern of leadership was no longer based only on scholastic achievements but on charismatic individuals. Hasidism eventually evolved into a leader-devotee relationship, where allegiance to a zaddik, a saintly leader, was established and handed down from generation to generation. To this day the chief rabbi of New York is a Zaddik to be regarded in high esteem.

Yaffa Eliach explains that the Hasidim contributed tales and anecdotes to literature. The main themes of Hasidic tales are; love of humanity, optimism and a

boundless belief in G-d and the goodness of mankind.²

Eliach points out that it would be a mistake to characterize the piety of the East European Jew as an attitude of self-restraint. The clear perception of spiritual significance in observing the law made self-restraint unnecessary. The pleasureableness of good deeds made many of the Hasids wonder whether the reward for their fulfillment promised by the rabbis in the life to come would not be undeserved. No high intellectual powers were necessary for ordinary folk to attain these ideals. The main requirements being faith, a pure heart and inwardness. Piety was thought to be of the highest importance.

The Hasidic Tale

According to Eliach, the Hasidic tale draws from both European literary tradition and from a variety of Jewish sources - the Bible, the Midrash, the Kaballah and others. Central to many Hasidic tales is the singular almost mythological charismatic personality of the zaddik, the saint. Eliach explains that in true Hasidic tales, the Jewish hero, the zaddik, possesses a larger-than-life personality. The zaddik struggles to remain optimistic even in the valley of death. His concept of eternal time enables him to surmount the brutal reality of his temporal surroundings. He is determined to believe that evil is transient and good must ultimately triumph. Faith becomes

an optimistic link providing the structural continuity between past and future while endowing the wretchedness of the present with dignity.³ Within the Hasidic community, the zaddik, like those in the tales, is revered and listened to. This was the case in the concentration camps during the Holocaust and remains so even to this day. According to Eliach, Hasidism imposes no restrictions on its storytellers. The tale is the agent entrusted with the mission of spreading the movement's ideas; it instructs, without any restrictions on structure, protagonist, or content. It provides a platform for the airing of conscious and subconscious issues, for theological, historical and social issues that would otherwise be taboo. ⁴

The Hasidic tale is by its very nature capable of coming to terms with the reality of the concentration camp universe and its aftermath. Eliach explains that the Hasidic tale offers solace to those whose faith has failed them, whose prayers seem not to be heard. The tales restore the vital communication link between man and man, between heaven and earth. The optimistic power vested in the Hasidic tale defies the burning furnaces and glowing chimneys of the concentration camp universe.

Eliach believes that during the Holocaust, when European Jews were systematically destroyed and the cultural achievements of western civilization were

fragmented, Hasidism continued to create its tales in ghettos, hiding places and camps. Despite the unprecedented scope of the mechanized destruction of human lives, Hasidism did not lose its values, its belief in humanity. In fact, it seems that the very nature of the Hasidic tale made it a most appropriate literary form through which to come to terms with the Holocaust and its aftermath. ⁵

According to Eliach, at a time when human beings were stripped naked of everything, even of their names, the only resource remaining to them was their inner spiritual strength. This was the very essence of their existence and it is this that the tales record.

For the zaddik, his resource was his faith; for the Hasid, it was often his faith in the zaddik.⁶ The anonymous, ordinary Hasid, whose only distinction often is his unlimited faith in his zaddik, finds it easier because of that faith to come to terms with the Holocaust. The Hasid can transcend the horror in the extreme environment of the Holocaust because of his faith in the zaddik who assures him and comforts him. The Hasid can find strength in the tales of the past and he can include his past stories into his own tales.

The Tales, A Record of Inner Strength

According to Eliach, the Hasidic tales enabled the concentration camp victims to endure each day with

some shred of hope. When the innocent concentration camp victim came face to face with the executioner and was instantly transformed from a citizen of the country into the ultimate victim destined for destruction, he still clung to his rituals of faith. In spite of the harsh realities, the victim was still familiar with his values. The use of his language and traditions of thousands of years was obvious in the daily observance of rituals, laws and customs. Even in the camps, where death was a way of life, one still lived within a culture that resembled some aspects of the prewar existence, and generally a few members of one's own family were still alive. Even in this horror some type of ancient tradition was secretly maintained, for example, the ritual of circumcision. These rituals which were practiced because of ancient myths helped the Holocaust victim live the present with some link to a better remembered past.

During the first few weeks and months in the concentration camp, many victims managed to stay together, mostly in groups of two. They were able to hold onto each other and to some shred of a lost past. The teaching of the Talmud was evident in their actions. For example, Elie Wiesel, in Night showed the devotion of a loving son for his father. The son cared for his father selflessly, right to the end. His Hasidic orientation directed him to be compassionate. Livia, from the tale A Bowl of Soup, did

not part from her mother for a single moment.⁷ Others, even when left totally alone, their last surviving relatives having disappeared, held on to a belief in their ancestors and family. The strength and protective merit of this belief of love and devotion could transcend the reality of imminent death. Frankl, in Man's Search For Meaning, kept the memory of his beloved wife alive even when she was no longer alive. A multitude of starved inmates at the Bergen Belson concentration camp still had enough hope to witness the kindling of Hanukah lights.⁸ The myth of Hanukah sustained them even in the darkness of their lives. The practice of the ritual motivated them and renewed their hope.

The Nazis could snuff out the lives of the human walking skeletons in the camps but not their spirits. These living corpses, more spirit than flesh, clung to their visions, to their dreams, to the only inner reality left when humanity betrayed them. They functioned in a world which was more dream than reality. Although many victims were not Hasids, they were influenced by the Hasidic orientation in Judaism.

The dying girl in the tale of A Hill in Bergen Belson crawled with her last bit of strength to a distant hilltop believing she heard her father's voice. Delirious with typhus, she felt comforted by the belief that her dead father was holding her hand and promising her health.⁹ The values of love, kindness and caring from her previous

life sustained her during that difficult time. Such was the vital power inherent in the myths central to Judaism. Another example follows in The Third Sabbath Meal at Mauthausen, Ignac, though only in his teens, was one of the tens of thousands of concentration camp inmates who were chased on foot across the frozen landscapes of Europe during the winter of 1945. Yet, at night, he dreamed he was a young student going to his grandfather's house on a Sabbath afternoon. (The practice of rituals was a central feature in the life of pious Jews.) He woke up, still feeling his grandfather's warm hands upon his shaven head, hearing that reassuring voice and tasting the aroma of his grandmother's Sabbath hallah (egg loaf). The reality of the dream overshadowed the physical existence of the camp. ¹⁰

According to Joseph Campbell, "Part of our loyalty to life is being loyal to our own lives."¹¹ The myth deepens and sustains meaning and hope in the transcendence of life. Even in Treblinka, an extermination concentration camp, survivors said that they didn't know for what or how, but inside they felt they had to survive. "Human nature is strong. You see the sky falling in but you still have a shred of hope that somehow, someday, maybe you're going to be the one that's left over."¹² But in addition to this faith in the survival of the self, many maintained their traditional values of kindness and generosity in spite of the horrors.

In Treblinka I cannot forget those people who were really not looking out for themselves. With each step they were risking their lives. I remember a fellow who was going around everywhere on the field, avoiding Germans and collecting medicines because we had none... and if someone needed some he gave them what they needed. ¹³

Caring people encouraged others to live. "But in this hell if you found people trying to comfort, to give aid, to help out with something, this is more than you could ever have expected in such a place. And you found such people."¹⁴ Many times in the camps the prisoners had no hope of escaping or accomplishing much, but their attitude of the need to try gave them the hope to carry on.

I can only tell you about my own experiences. There wasn't at anytime in my mind the possibility of really escaping. I was among the oldest in the camp, but while you're alive you have a subconscious hope. However, it's not a real hope. We were quite sure that we perhaps wouldn't accomplish anything with the uprising, but even if we would all die we might destroy the camp. ¹⁵

This participant of the Treblinka revolt survived. It was a subconscious hope that gave her the determination. She knew her fate in Treblinka, where tens of thousands of Jews were killed daily. Even if she died, the death factory had to be put out of business. Her selfless act was rewarded by life. Not knowingly, she became a heroine. She used her potentialities for greater significance than her own life; her concern for fellow

man. Each person in the camps drew on the resources of his or her innermost spiritual world, in combination with faith, this became a key to survival.

Meaningful human behavior was evident throughout the Holocaust. This super courage gave meaning to the lives of the concentration camp victims. Their suffering was not in vain if future generations could benefit from their efforts for survival and their hope for a better time to come.

My work was primitive, consisting of packing and hiding the material, it was the riskiest, but it was worth doing. We used to say, while working, that we can die in peace. We have bequeathed and safeguarded our rich heritage. I don't want any thanks. It will be enough for me if the coming generations will recall our times. We were aware of our obligation. We did not fear the risk.

What we could not cry out to the world, we buried in the ground. May this treasure be delivered into good hands, may it live to see better times so that it can alert the world to what happened in the twentieth century. ¹⁶

Buried writings by witnesses at the death camps preserve a record of what happened. These were found after the war. One testimony began:

Dear finder, search everywhere, in every inch of ground. Dozens of documents are buried beneath it, mine and those of other persons, which will throw light on everything that happened here.¹⁷

In the literature of the survivors there are images so grim, so heartbreaking, so starkly unbearable, yet heartwarming, to witness such heroism.

In The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A Kaplan of

January 16, 1942, Kaplan expresses himself eloquently:

This journal is my life, my friend and my ally. I would be lost without it. I pour my innermost thoughts and feelings into it and this brings me relief. When my nerves are taut and my blood is boiling, then I am full of bitterness. In my helplessness I drag myself to my diary and at once I am enveloped by a wave of creative inspiration, although I doubt whether the recording that occupies me deserves to be called "creative". The important thing is that in keeping this diary I find spiritual rest. That is enough for me. ¹⁸

Hope pushes one to fight anew each day for one more day. The simple act of living on became a form of passive resistance. By staying alive, the Jews, although defenseless, showed the enemy that they were courageous.

The Spirit of A Positive Attitude

Judaism is more related to time and history than to space and nature. Remembering particular dates with accuracy is the link between the myth and historical reality in the verification process. Viktor Frankl, in Man's Search For Meaning remembers very vividly a day in Auschwitz, for on that very same day his wife had a twenty-fourth birthday. In the act of self-engagement with his spirit Frankl experienced some vestige of spiritual freedom. As described in the stories, individual decisions can alter the course of human development. As Frankl points out, the human person is the only creature

not locked into the environment. Human imagination, reason, emotional subtlety and toughness make it possible for each person not to accept confinement to the environment but to change it. The human alone has the freedom to choose this attitude.

As Frankl expressed, the accounts of the Holocaust period are painful memories, yet, they prove morality and hope existed even in the death camps. The values of the universal truth of goodness and consideration for life prevailed. Even though the inmates of the camps were naked and stripped of their earthly dignity, their spirits and their attitudes were theirs alone. They used their inner strength to resist the evil that is the enemy of all humankind not only that of the concentration camp victim. Frankl points out that they used this energy to respect and love one another, even at the worst of times. Their concern was for all, and to the brotherhood of humanity then and in the future. Their vision was eternal...in spite of the hell of the Holocaust, the tiny glimpse of a future world was of hope...that was the legacy of the Holocaust... not the final solution but the future bright and alive. Their persistent hope for a better future is well summed up by Isabella Leitner, in her book Fragments of Isabella

Stay alive, my darlings - all six of you.
Out there when it is all over, a world is
waiting for you to give it all I gave you.
Despite what you see here - and you are all
young and impressionable - believe me, there
is humanity out there, there is dignity. I

will not share it with you, but it's there. And when this is over, you must add to it, because sometimes it is a little short, a little skimpy. With your lives you can create other lives and nourish them. You can nourish your children's souls and minds, and teach them that man is capable of infinite glory. You must believe me. I cannot leave you with what you see. I must leave you with what I see. My body is nearly dead but my vision is throbbing with life - even here. I want you to live for the very life that is yours. And wherever I'll be, in some mysterious way, my love will overcome my death and keep you alive. I love you. ¹⁹

Leitner died a few days later. As Heschel says, faith is an attitude of a whole person, of sensitivity, understanding, engagement and attachment. It includes faithfulness and loyalty to higher moments of insight during daily life, irrespective of the chaos and contradictions in the external environment.²⁰

Isabella Leitner's vision of the world transcended her immediate environment in the concentration camp. Her loyalty to life and her belief in the universal truth of goodness in the world shows how myth helps transcend life by inspiring faith and hope. Although Leitner did not live after the Holocaust, her courage and dedication of hope will live on in the stories of the Holocaust. Her positive attitude for a better future will become a tale of the Holocaust for future generations. In the sense that Leitner's reverence for life overwhelms the spirit and was central to making meaning in her life, her tale will continue to inspire

and in this way become a myth.

According to Frankl, the opportunities to act properly, the potential to fulfill meaning are affected by the irreversibility of our lives. Leitner used an opportunity and actualized a potential meaning for once and for all. The suffering of Leitner only functions to show her as the heroine of courage and dignity. ²¹ Leitner takes on mythological qualities because her act was for the benefit of future societies.

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Chapter Four

THE REAFFIRMATION OF VALUES

Spiritual Inspiration of Religion

According to Alfred North Whitehead, religion is defined this way: " Religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness." ¹ It emphasizes that the individual is involved in an intimate personal dialogue with himself.

In An Introduction to Religion William T. Hall, Richard B. Pilgrim and Ronald R. Cavanaugh define religion as "the varied symbolic expression of, and appropriate response to that which people deliberately affirm as being of unrestricted value for them."² An appropriate response is an action that intentionally expresses a religious meaning or a freedom that cannot be taken away.³

During the Holocaust, many Jews were crushed by despair and abandoned their religion. But many others retained and even enhanced their devotion to their faith, which enabled them to remain hopeful, to offer support to one another, to choose life. Their myths and rituals sustained them in the roots and faith of their Judaism.

They continued to have faith in life and hope in spite of the most dehumanizing conditions. It is this reaffirmation of values by those who experienced the Holocaust which is their legacy to the world, that we will examine in this chapter.

Many pictures and stories of Eastern European Jewish people, their appearance and ghetto conditions were not representative of the Jewish people who lived in the urban centers of Germany and other Western European countries. However, the spirit of a positive attitude to life was their common denominator, regardless of their area of origin.

The anti-Jewish policy of Germany's Third Reich established social barriers, deprived Jews of their civil rights, excluded them from the economy and really made no exceptions for any Jews.⁴ In the concentration camps, established by the Nazi regime, the fate of all Jews ultimately was to result in the "final solution". The Nazis made no allowances for geographic or social differences. A Jew was a Jew.

Nathan Ausubel points out that during their terrible ordeal under the Nazis, the spirit of the pious Jews survived by their devotion to the Talmud. Even in the camps, the Hebrew youth pored over the Talmud, recited it, sank it into memory by sound and sight.⁵ Ausubel goes on to say that the Talmud formed mind and character by the discipline of its study and the deposit

of its lore. The Talmud tamed the excitable nature of the Jew. It checked one's individualism and molded one to fidelity and sobriety in the family and the community.

Ausubel explains that the Talmud can never be understood except in terms of tradition, as an organ of survival for a people exiled, destitute, oppressed and in danger of utter disintegration. He points out that in spite of the hardships of concentration camp life, rabbis upheld the Jewish spirit. They taught the Talmud in secrecy and at the risk of death. Even in the camps, "order" had to be established, faith and morals maintained, health of the mind rebuilt after each shattering moment. Through this heroic discipline, this rerooting of the uprooted Jew in one's own tradition, stability and unity were somehow strived for in the camp community. Wherever Jews were, even as fearful prisoners of the death camps, they could put themselves again into their own world by immersing their minds and hearts into their spiritual heritage. Their refuge was their Jewish soul; it was theirs and theirs alone, as exemplified and sustained in Torah, Talmud and the myths and observances of their culture.⁶

Their Jewish heritage stood as a spiritual inspiration over every phase of the moral code.⁷ Will Durant explains that it was the vital medium of life. As Durant reports, the prayers and rituals had their briefer counterparts in the camps. The feasts and

festivals of the faith were celebrated with educative ceremonies that bound the present with the past, the living with the dead. Secretly, every Friday eve of the Sabbath, the candles were lit; prayer, religious readings and sacred songs were practiced. Little bits of food were saved in honor of the Sabbath. The practice of religious ritual, he maintains, gave momentary release. In these special times they found transcendence and spiritual satisfaction. 8

Even under the most difficult circumstances of the Holocaust, some people in the bitter fight for self-preservation became no more than animals fighting over a morsel of bread, but others remained brave, dignified and unselfish. In these situations lay the chance for people to use their moral values or to forgo them for their own selfish need. Unfortunately, in the camps not all were capable of reaching such high moral standards...but even such examples as we have, were sufficient proof that people's inner strength, rooted in their religious faith, may raise them above their outward fate.

Faith and Hope Prevail

The value of a positive transcendent approach to life is what the survivor of the Holocaust still has to offer the future generations. The values of the period before the Holocaust transcended the Holocaust and are

still found in the myths and rituals of many Jewish homes today.

The love of the family is evident in all of Elie Wiesel's books. In writing about the Holocaust, he recalls his own experiences in Auschwitz and Buchenwald where he lost his parents and younger sister. Although they perished with many other relatives in the Holocaust, Wiesel has made them come alive in his books. His stories will live and inspire many generations who will glean the human values he so brilliantly portrays. His books examine the following values; love of family, love of prayer and love of mankind. Wiesel's major contribution is in his writing about the Holocaust. I believe that it helps him face today and the future to know that his readings may make more people socially aware and responsible.

Similarly, Martin Gray, in A Book of Life contributed his account of the camps. He lost most of his family in Auschwitz and Dachau. Yet, when he survived the Holocaust, he started life anew in America. With love and hope he enjoyed a second family. Unfortunately, they too were abruptly taken from him in a forest fire. Again, he was struck by tragedy. Yet, his lesson for mankind is very noble. He learned that " To live is to suffer but to survive is to find meaning in the suffering." ⁹

Martin Gray is presently working in America, totally involved in rebuilding the forest that took his

loved ones away. His concern is for future generations. Although the misfortune of the forest fire was so detrimental to his life, he can still appreciate the beauty of nature and the need for future generations to enjoy the life and beauty of nature. Involving himself in this special project helps him make meaning of his life. He is involved with concerned citizens and a transcendent cause. As he once said, " We had literally lost the ability to be pleased and had to relearn it slowly." This quote by Martin Gray sums up an attitude of a survivor. Life is for the living and the human must rejoice to be alive.

Monuments, A Reminder to all Mankind

The heritage of the Jewish people that transcended the Holocaust is the willingness to resist the evil that is the universal enemy of all mankind. Determination to respect and love one another is the monument of these people. Dedication to justice for all and to the brotherhood of humanity was embedded in their souls before, during and after the Holocaust, and is still a legacy of transcendence of these people today.

The monuments of the survivors act as a permanent "reminder" that the Holocaust did occur. Immediately after the Second World War, concentration camp survivors remembered their fallen comrades. The Tombstone Monument exists in Lukow, Poland.

In my opinion this monument might symbolize how great their faith in their people and their religion is. In spite of the Holocaust, they lived with the love of G-d and in belief in the future. Other first monuments were "preserved reality." Parts of the death camps were preserved or rebuilt as a reminder to what had taken place. One such example, is the gates of the Auschwitz concentration camp where the words, Arbeit Macht Frei, work makes you free, are written over the gates. These words greeted millions of people on their way to the gas chambers.

The Treblinka concentration camp was destroyed by the Nazis, plowed over and covered up. However, there is a monument that consists of a circular field of sharply shaped stones surrounding a more carefully piled form in the center, which I believe symbolizes that the life cycle goes on. They used the circle to symbolize the continuity of life. Inscribed on a stone nearby are the words NEVER AGAIN. The monument at Buchenwald consists of a group larger than life-size figures. It stands in remembrance of others who did not survive.

Similarly, the Yad Vashem monument, in a dimly lit space, in Jerusalem, is a cube - like tomb sunken into the earth with flame-like metal forms embedded into the floor. The names of all the large death camps are inscribed in the stone floor. This monument stands to remind us of the many innocent souls who perished in

vain. They stand to remind mankind that such manmade horror must never occur again.

The main issues and problems connected with memorializing such an event as the Holocaust and the numbers of people who suffered and died are many. It is an event of such magnitude, it is often difficult to imagine, and yet it happened.

Consequently, these monuments are examples of symbols of survival and these symbols carry meaning into the future. As Theodore Bikel put it in a quote from the filmstrip Holocaust and Resistance

The worthiest monuments are what we erect in our hearts, our willingness to resist the evil that is the enemy of all mankind - our determination to respect and love one another - our dedication to justice for all and to the brotherhood of man.¹⁰

To many Jews, as well as others, the greatest monument to the Holocaust and its transcendence is the Jewish homeland, Israel. It is seen by many as a state dedicated to the values of the hope and life of the Jewish people. The suffering of the Jewish people, their faith and their courage to hope for a better future at the worst of time, is their tribute to the past and their legacy to future generations.

Emil L. Fackenheim contends that the Jewish survival after the Holocaust is in itself a sacred testimony to all mankind, that life and love ,not death

and hate, shall prevail. Thus the survivor is a witness against darkness in an age of darkness. The Jew is a witness, whose like the world has not seen. ¹¹

The whole Israeli nation is collectively what each survivor is individually: a testimony on behalf of all mankind to life against the demons of death: a hope and a determination that there must be, shall be, will be no second Auschwitz; on this hope and this determination every man, woman and child in Israel stakes his life.¹²

According to Fackenheim, the philosophy of the Jew is to affirm Jewishness, to live despite and because of death; to sing despite, and because of, the mourning. The words " Am Yisrael Chai "(Israel lives) have always signified joy and defiance. It is a dedication to the past and future generations.¹³

Fackenheim claims that Jewish survival has become holy because the Holocaust lives in all. The memory of the murdered millions is itself holy, as is the Jewish survival without which it cannot live. ¹⁴

Elie Wiesel sums up the teachings of Judaism very well in The Testament when he says "My father had never taught me so many things in so few words."

What matters is that they are fighting for those who have neither the strength nor the means to fight. The essential thing for you is to be sensitive to the suffering of others. So as long as you persist in fighting injustice defending victims, even victims of G-d, you'll feel alive, that is, you'll feel G-d within you, the G-d of your ancestors, the G-d of your childhood. You will

feel within you man's passion and
G-d's. The real danger, my son, is
indifference.¹⁵

Fackenheim points out that what once was a Hasidic saying is now an Israeli song. It epitomizes what transcendent faith can be in the contemporary world:" The world is like a narrow bridge but what matters above all is not to be afraid as one walks across it."¹⁶

According to Ausubel, the Jewish people were never afraid to endure. Their inner strength to live surged powerfully within them.¹⁷ Actually the most powerful preserver of the Jewish identity was the Jewish religion. It represented at its base a synthesis of every social ideal and cultural striving of the Jewish people. Their religion embraced both fear and love of G-d. It elevated righteousness as the greatest good and love of man as synonymous with the love of G-d.

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Chapter Five

THE UNIVERSAL SIGNIFICANCE OF FAITH

Chapter five discusses the significance of faith, a value that transcended the Holocaust, and the lesson that this may have for future civilizations to put more trust and faith in the hope of a better universe for all. It is argued that an awareness of these values makes the student of the Holocaust aware of one's responsibility to oneself and to all society.

The Significance of Faith

Religion and myth function in describing what is implied in Judaism's faith in the G-d of history independently of the contemporary experience. Such faith was maintained to a very large degree in the face of the destruction of European Jewry.¹

Eliezer Berkovitz points out that the question is not why the Holocaust, but why a world in which any amount of undeserved suffering is extant.² He claims that the nations and the houses of worship should not have been silent and indifferent to what was obvious in the early days of Nazism. The Jewish people, Berkovitz maintains, had to pay a terrible price for the passivity

of humanity.

Today, too, the Jewish people are deeply involved in the crises of the human race. They are still struggling to survive peacefully in Israel and in the diaspora. There are still many Jewish people in the USSR trying desperately to remain Jewish and to leave that country.

Berkovitz reminds us that pious Jews through the ages believed in the establishment of Israel.³ They were waiting for it during their wanderings and sufferings for long and dark centuries. There was little rational basis for this faith in the eventual return to the land of their fathers yet they knew that one day their faith would be translated into historical reality. To this day their faith has sustained them as is evident in the consistent exodus from the USSR.

According to Berkovitz, the Jews have emerged from one of their most calamitous defeats to new dignity and historic vindication.⁴ As in the past, the Jew has known much suffering and much for which to be thankful. The Holocaust does not contain the entire history of Israel, it is not the complete Jewish experience. Berkovitz points out that, although the Jewish people experienced the overlong absences of G-d's presence in the concentration camps, they also remembered the numerous revelations of the Divine in history.⁵ Because of that, he claims, it was possible for many to know G-d

even along the path to the gas chambers. For the Jewish people who believed in the presence of G-d, even in the hell that was everpresent in the concentration camps, it was possible for faith to sustain them.

According to Berkovits, the Jewish people do not exonerate G-d for all the suffering of the innocent in history. However, there must be a dimension beyond history in which all suffering finds its redemption through G-d. This is essential to the faith of a pious Jew. There is no justification for the ways of providence, but there is acceptance; a trust that in G-d the tragedy of man may find its transformation.

According to Berkovitz, the Holocaust proved not what humans were capable of doing to the Jews, but what humans are capable of doing to fellow humans.⁷ The Holocaust has presented humanity with the issue of all issues, that society cannot triumph by force. On a world-wide scale, he contends, the historic moment calls for a civilization in universal need of a spiritual rebirth of humanity. The relevance of this statement is for all nations, to all people, to lead their own lives according to their own vision, and to create a culture whose essential resources can only be of the positive spirit.

According to Berkovitz, the world conscience must learn from the survivors of the Holocaust. One is morally obligated to resist evil. Any human who denies to any human the right to life, to self-realization, to equality

and freedom denies humanity.⁸ The earth itself can become one global danger unless all humans have faith in the future of humanity and persevere to be sensitive.

The problem of external pollution in the widest sense of the word of foul air, of poisoned rivers and lakes, of atomic weaponry, of filthy ghettos cannot be solved without the prior solution of the problem of internal pollution, the pollution of the minds and hearts of man.⁹

Hopefully, future civilizations will put more trust in faith history than in power history.

In his book, Faith After the Holocaust, Eliezer Berkovits tells a simple story of Itzik Rosenzweig who made a living raising poultry. As he and his family were squeezed into the cattle cars, pressed to suffocation, there was great despair all around him. While outside former neighbours were happily deriding him, Itzik Rosenzweig begged them to please return to his house and give food and water to the poultry. This is only one of many, many deeds of human goodness that led Eliezer Berkovits to conclude: "Because of what man did to Itzik Rosenzweig I have no faith in man, because of Itzik, in spite of it all, I have faith in the future of man."

Myth, Implications for Education

The importance the Holocaust studies offer to education is to demonstrate how "the imagery of mythology

is symbolic of spiritual powers within us."¹⁰ Campbell says: " myths come from where the heart is."¹¹ In other words, what happened to the concentration camp victims during their earthly existence could not destroy them when they chose points transcending conceptualizations, pointing to the ultimate depth. When they had a glimpse of the sky, a tree or a bird - these images evoked the wonder of life. These experiences encouraged recall of moments of treasured insights. Recovering these insights renewed the concentration camp victims with new inspiration for life.

Holocaust mythology teaches that

The world is a match for us and we're
a match for the world. And where it
seems most challenging lies the greatest
invitation to find deeper and greater
powers in ourselves. ¹²

During the horrors of the camps the only hope for survival was in the attitude of the victim. Although the daily challenges were incomprehensible, the power to respond and to go on came from the amplification of life and consciousness during moments made transcendent by recall of past memories.

As was mentioned previously, in a different context, it was important to practice the ritual of welcoming the Sabbath. The observance of the Sabbath is considered to be the supreme requirement for the pious. The hallowing of the day is ordered in the Ten Command-

ments so that it might serve as part of the covenant of Israel with the Lord. The myth of the Sabbath represents the highest expression of social ethics among the Jews. It establishes the principle that no matter how down-trodden or rejected a man may be in the world, on the Sabbath he achieves dignity. He has natural rights that transcend all property rights. The ancient Rabbinic view was that on the Sabbath the human becomes transformed from within and from without. The wishful prayers of the Sabbath sustained these humans to survive the grief and horror of their daily lives. By taking part in these rites, these people participated in their myths. They absorbed these rituals, adjusted them and made them their very life. These spiritual experiences linked the concentration camp victims with their past and their own inward imaginative world. Consequently, it becomes obvious that a myth can be a life-shaping image.

Holocaust studies are important for education in the humanization of people. The response of many Jews to the Holocaust represents the culmination of human potentiality in the struggle of humanity against oppression and evil forces of destruction. " The point is made that this potential is within all of us."¹³ According to Campbell, myth teaches that the local and historical environment can be transcended as the human is engaged in the experience of myth. " A ritual is the enactment of a myth, either in a very literal way or in

an extremely abstract way."¹⁴ The importance of mythology is best summed up in the following quotation:

What a mythic image talks about is not something that happened somewhere or will happen somewhere at some time or other; it refers to what is now, and was yesterday, and will be tomorrow, and is forever. ¹⁵

The survivors of the Holocaust demonstrated that religion has a mystical dimension. During the Holocaust, social values challenged both the victims and the persecutors. In spite of the horror of the time religion survived. Religion, defined as a personal inward realization, prevailed. Many non-Jews remained honorable, they too showed much courage. They often jeopardized their own lives to help the less fortunate. Many Jewish children were saved by Christians. The survivors speak of these people to this day. These people remained loyal to their consciences rather than the political dictates of the time. A lesson for all, according to Campbell, is that any member of society must find one's own unique meaning for life and no one can give "the reason" only the individual can determine it for oneself.

When people question "Where was G-d?" and others inquire "Where was man?" the only answer is that each person must honestly respond. Many decent individuals made meaning for their own lives. Their acts of decency help us acknowledge that not all the world is indifferent or evil, and because of the example of such individuals

there is hope for our universe.

Joseph Campbell sums up the role of the myth for all humans:

Myth has got to deal with the human system in relation to the mystery of the universe, in other words, all humans are part of the cosmos and thus we must behave decently towards each other and our world and that we can't violate it without violating our own lives. ¹⁶

It is within this perspective of myth being the occasion for transcendence in the ambiguities of life that we see the importance of education in Holocaust studies. Humanity must not forget - not simply to maintain linkage with tragedy past. Humanity must not forget so as to seek out hope and positive meaning in the present and in the future. The world must be further humanized and offer peace to individuals, groups and nations. The study of the Holocaust helps humanity to transcend toward achieving spiritual well-being and world harmony for humanity.

Lessons of the Holocaust

The lessons of the Holocaust should teach humanity to identify those factors that contribute to the liberty, dignity and integrity of the human person. Every citizen should be responsible to identify oppressive signs and to care enough to be active and protective of liberty. Although the Holocaust is a uniquely Jewish

tragedy, its lessons have universal implications.

According to Maria Sachs Little, the most practical lesson is the development of an early warning system to identify potentially genocidal movements. It is important never to allow evil to run unchecked.¹⁷ The lesson of the Holocaust is to remind society of the commitment that the Holocaust remain a thing of the past that must never be repeated and society must constantly renew its commitment to the pursuit of human rights, human compassion and human understanding among all people, in all places, for all time.

Little asks " What can be learned that will prevent a repetition of such agony and suffering? " Society must be taught by teachers, spiritual, political and professional leaders to see the importance of identifying, singling out and rendering impotent movements that are potentially genocidal.¹⁸ Little claims that any terrorist groups should be carefully monitored and if possible exposed before they become too strong. Today there are various concerned groups of caring citizens being heard on behalf of human rights. The importance of legitimate government and the importance of religious liberty are issues to be confronted with much careful consideration for all humans. Finally, according to Little, the lesson of Holocaust education is for hope and healing this world so that all mankind may benefit.

Frankl believes " The salvation of man is through

love and in love." ¹⁹ Frankl's view is that the human potential at its best always allows for: (1) turning suffering into a human achievement and accomplishment; (2) deriving from guilt the opportunity to change oneself for the better; (3) deriving from life's transitoriness an incentive to take responsible action. ²⁰

According to Frankl, these objectives challenge students to actualize their potentialities with courage and dignity. Although the "decent" people in the world form the minority, Frankl believes that it is the challenge for each and every human being to join that minority. Moral and religious education should encourage each human to try his or her best for the sake of humanity.

Chapter Five Endnotes

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Chapter Six

UNIVERSAL VALUES OF GOODNESS

Chapter six reflects on Holocaust education as a lesson for humanity. It stresses the moral and religious values that can be learned. Gabriel Moran sums it up best.

Religion, like history, is not the name of an object; it is an idea and a method posited by scholars. It represents a commitment to use the mind in a search for the truth.¹

Reflections on the Holocaust and Education

In modern times, the Holocaust represents the most dramatic Jewish experience in the diaspora. As Elie Wiesel has suggested, the modern Jew's problem after the concentration camps was the question of being. By what values was the survivor to live amongst his fellow Jews and with others in relationship to the world at large?

The Holocaust threatened the Jewish people with near extinction, so for the survivors to endure, life became and still is their responsibility and their task.

Since the humans in the concentration camps were bound together by suffering, sentiment, religion, culture and the will to live, that loyalty to the group was and is essential to ensure its survival. Jewish spiritual resist-

ance, through maintaining one's Jewishness, demonstrated that Judaism was a source of spiritual and psychological strength which contributed to enduring the horrors.² The fact that some Jews actually went into the gas chambers while proclaiming the Sh'ma, (Kingdom of Heaven) in defiance of their enemies, is testimony that many Jews had powerful devotion to their religion.

Although the modern state of Israel was established in a context of great despair, it also was founded with great hope. Israel is not just a refuge for survivors. Rather it is the symbol of hope and continuity for many Jewish people.

According to Steven A. Luel and Paul Marcus, Israel and the Jewish people who survived the Holocaust remind humanity of its responsibilities.³ Many Nazis are still being tried in courts today for their war crimes. Many survivors are still able to recognize and recount the evil that was permitted by these people. They are witnesses to the wicked treatment of people by people, and by much of the world that showed much indifference. The survivors use their history of suffering to teach the need for empathy and the need for action, on behalf of others who are victims of injustice and violence. It is necessary to encourage enough caring individuals to react to any forms of evil in the world. The lesson of the Holocaust is to teach that humans are accountable for their actions. It is essential to teach students to live

by a value system. The message of this education is to encourage all mankind to use the environment for enrichment and growth. Hopefully, the deaths of millions in the concentration camps will not have been in vain if humans listen and learn. A Holocaust should not occur in a world where people are taught that human dignity is to be respected and human life is considered sacred. Education must take place everywhere, in the home, in the community and especially in the school. Moral education is possible in all subjects, literature, history, religion, philosophy, and many others.

Israel Bernbaum points out that the following objectives would be helpful to prevent such catastrophic events from ever happening again.

The answer may be found in ourselves. We must reject all racial theories about differences of human qualities among people as false, inhuman and immoral. We must not prejudge people because of the color of their skin, religion or origin. Instead, we must practice the principle of absolute equality and justice for all. We must learn to be tolerant and accept differences among people. Instead of erecting walls and fences separating human beings from each other, we must open gates of mutual understanding and open our hearts for mutual respect. Instead of hating we will listen and learn from each other.⁴

Bernbaum expects much in his claim about what we must accept. However, it is the task of educators to help students to be open and to make them aware of various

differences , in race, in beliefs and in values. It is not necessary to be like others, but it is necessary to respect each other's differences. In other words, the aim of all education in life is to help people to become human. Only, in this fashion, can the world of today have many tomorrows.

Holocaust Education, A Lesson for Humanity

The rationale for Holocaust education is that the Holocaust is the most thoroughly documented example of human behavior in extreme manmade situations.⁵ It is a major historical event, the teaching of which can educate people to the meaning of human dignity, morality, law and citizenship. Individuals develop the concepts of living appropriately in a given society. In studying about the Holocaust, the student investigates the role and the responsibilities of the individual. Issues and dilemmas which defy simple solutions can be discussed and seriously interpreted.

The universal questions of morality and the lessons to be learned from a history of totalitarianism, racism and dehumanization are not unique only to the Holocaust. The Holocaust subject provides a framework within which students can face and analyze questions related to catastrophes, questions of decision making, conflict resolution, justice, loyalty, stereotyping, prejudice, leadership, power, human behavior, government

responsibility, citizenship, obedience and survival.

The Holocaust studies have to do with an obligation to humanity. It is essential to the understanding of human society, understanding the problems of the good and evil and to the understanding of oneself.⁶ The aim of education is to help students to live appropriately in their world. It is the prerequisite for the preservation of freedom and survival.

According to Howard Roiter, Holocaust education teaches that no human should take his life for granted.⁷ Any race can be a scapegoat for another. One just has to pick up a newspaper and read about the inhumanities in our world today.

In studying the Holocaust literature, students may be motivated to be aware and alert to any injustice. Hopefully, our generation and future generations will continue to be heard so all mankind is treated with dignity and caring by all. Peace can only be reinforced by a belief in human justice, and that is a challenge for today and always. Humanity must respect life in order to appreciate it.

The Need for Religious Education

Religious education is not the practice of rituals nor the book of any specific religious group. Rather, religious education is instruction from all areas of life, home, school, church, community and others.

Learning takes place all the time and moral and religious education can only be learned in a just society.

According to Gabriel Moran, " Religion can be of inestimable value in human life." ⁸ Religious education is a way of learning to live properly in the modern world. A field of religious education would include a respect for the concrete, particular, and sometimes mysterious practices of the religious life and an application of the mind with all its critical capacity for the study, understanding and teaching of religion. According to John Dewey, " Schools are, indeed, one important method of transmission which forms the disposition of the immature; but it is only one means, and compared with other agencies, a relatively superficial means." ⁹ In other words, Moran quotes Dewey to emphasize that moral and religious education must take place everywhere in society not only in school.

Religious life should flourish everywhere. Religious education is of urgent necessity in our world. " All education needs to deal with justice; a religious education questions whether we are certain of how to get there." ¹⁰ None of us knows how to make a just world but we should be able to recognize injustice and to take the steps that reduce the world's sorrows. Religious education is not a panacea, but it can be a significant help toward walking humbly and justly on G-d's earth.

Instead of saying that the aim of education is growth, a religious person might say that it is never to stop learning. Religious traditions know that the knowledge education

should be concerned with is not just the knowledge we can acquire but the knowledge we must listen and wait for - perhaps at prayer. Religions know that the freedom we can hope for is not the liberation from the earth but acceptance of our finite selves in a dying and rising universe. 11

According to Moran, true understanding comes with much dialogue with others. Conversation with various religious groups may lead to increased tolerance and mutual understanding in the art of living.

" The aim of religious education is greater appreciation of one's own religious life and less misunderstanding of other people's." 12 Dialogue between people might help avoid prejudice. Our educational system is a good setting to work intelligently at the understanding of religious doctrines and traditions. Religious education is a place for passing on the past and a way of life. Religious education is not only the study of biblical texts. Rather, it is nonverbal teaching done through rituals. When religious education is conceived as continuous learning it can come from a variety of sources. " Truth is primarily sought not in statements about the world but in the person's interacting with the environment." 13

Religious education may be defined as the attempt to keep education open to the undreamt possibilities of the human race. 14 The gradual understanding and tolerance of such examples as racism and sexism are not

peripheral issues for religious education; it is what makes this education possible.

According to Moran, religious education is a combination of silence and paradoxical speech. Speech originates and ends in silence, but the crucial moment is education during this silence. The basis of religious education is bodily and social ritual. In the face of both life and death, nonverbal gestures provide the stability for the human person. An education that is religious preserves important rituals from the past. "Religious education ought to be a reminder that when it comes to the basic human gestures of living and dying, there are no wholly new answers." 15

The appropriate educational response today is to teach within revelation.¹⁶ In other words, Moran points out that the world is basically good and it is necessary to acknowledge that the world goes beyond one's control. He claims that it is necessary to learn from the past and from experiences and structurings which bring the human being into dialogue with other humans and with other beings who share the earth.

A first aim in teaching about the Holocaust is to make the material intelligible.¹⁷ Moran claims that documents can only be understood by those willing to approach the texts with reverence, sympathy and a willingness to see the entire picture. Students of the Holocaust should be encouraged to contemplate the issues. They

should be stimulated to learn from this past history how to create a world of compassion and understanding. From the Holocaust literature students should be encouraged to examine their own feelings about others.

In Anne Frank, The Diary of a Young Girl, Anne may influence people her age not to take their gift of life and freedom lightly. In reading her daily commentary on wartime conditions, her words may provoke much soul searching. In the poetry of young children in I Never Saw Another Butterfly pupils may become aware of the beauty of nature that is not to be taken for granted.

Frankl and Gray make people think about the endurance of humans. How would we stand up to such tests? Holocaust literature can make students realize that all that life has to offer must be respected and treated with reverence.

The Holocaust happened and can happen again unless all humans take responsibility and learn from the past.

Nowhere is the need for education more evident than in the struggle for social justice.¹⁸ According to Moran, much of the writing that advocates social justice is grimly serious. Yet in a world where children suffer, nations starve and people die because of hatred, irony arises from combining a vision of the universe's immensities with passionate but small efforts in the middle of it all. Moran gives the example of Mother

Teresa who does not expect that her efforts will make the world just, but she does know that she cannot leave injustice as it is. Holocaust education teaches that there also is an irony that sustains people in the midst of terrible suffering. The Jewish experience is a dramatic but remarkable example of people making a difference in the way they chose their attitude in an unjust environment.

The process of a religious education that can sustain humans is outlined in a four - step solution by Gabriel Moran in his chapter on "Religious Education for Justice."

The starting place is the gifts of life in any community.¹⁹ Any human being who reflects for a moment knows that humans did not invent the world nor are they in charge of the universe. Each morning is a miracle of grace; the sun, the air, the flowers, the food. This attitude of receptiveness is at the center of the great religions. If people forget this attitude it is sad and they must be educated to relearn it.

During the Holocaust these reflections of life's miracles sustained many survivors. They knew that "The ordinary in life is limited." ²⁰ The non-ordinary in life is death. In the Holocaust these daily jolts of death made humans aware of the limits of what most people most of the time take for granted.

Holocaust education teaches a deeper appreciat-

ion of life's gifts. In the stories of a people's past, society can learn not to repeat acts of hatred and suffering. Society can learn to refuse to accept unjust limits of the ordinary world as the final limits of the universe. A religious educator tries to provide language, imagery, and practices to free people from illusion and strengthen their resistance to evil. In destroying what destroys our community existence, we affirm a life together in justice and peace.

As Moran reminds us, our world is not perfect, nor are human beings perfect. However, if we strive from our past and present experiences to struggle against our biases and patiently, but realistically, try to make as little wrong as possible ... then we are moving in the right direction to affirm a life together in justice and peace.²¹

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Chapter Seven

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Rightly endured, suffering purifies and deepens the human personality. It induces man to turn inward, to forswear the superficial pleasures of the passing moment and to concentrate on the enduring values of human existence, perhaps to seek the ultimate meaning where alone it may be found, in a realm beyond time and space.¹

These ideas were often helpful in the darkest hours. They enabled many concentration camp victims to carry on, to move from catastrophe to catastrophe without surrendering either faith or hope. Indeed, after each catastrophe their spirit was revived in faith. Especially, after the Holocaust the value of life was of the essence. The importance of living became a remarkable task.

According to Gabriel Moran, the meaning of life differs from person to person and moment to moment, life does not mean something vague but something very real and concrete. It forms human destiny, which is unique and different from each individual. He claims that each situation is distinguished by its uniqueness, and there is an answer to a problem posed by the situation. Every human has the unique opportunity by the way one bears the burden or good fate. As long as there is life there is hope. The

survivors of the Holocaust are living proof of this.

Moran points out that individuals can decide, for better or for worse, what will be remembered of their existence. The past has salvaged human deeds, joys and suffering. Nothing can be undone. The survivors rely on their memories but they must strive to live from fresh insight. They can learn from their traditions but they can only grow from their own seeking.

Immediately following the war years, the past was hardly discussed in the homes of survivors. Even the precious pre-Holocaust years were too difficult to recall. The hurt was too deep. Helen Epstein, in her book, Children of the Holocaust, describes how children's inquiries were often too painful for adult survivors to answer. The youngsters learned quickly not to be inquisitive. They had the wisdom to realize that their questions provoked an ambiance of sadness and tears. Crying parents were too difficult to handle. The suggestion of anything from the past made their parents melancholy for days. ²

Most people grow up with family. They have biological parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, old neighbors and friends. They have collections of photographs and recollections of neighborhoods and places frequented. More often than not, people can return to their places of origin and find some souvenir of olden days. Even the deceased can be paid some tribute in their respective

places of rest. However, many survivors of the Holocaust can't retrace their roots. Many of their homes were mostly ruined, burned, vandalized or destroyed. Total communities perished. Their birth, marriage, death certificates, acknowledgements of higher learning and family photos were totally obliterated. However, there are diaries, records, and souvenirs of many from gathered materials from various survivors. It is necessary to note that these are not personal individual identifications. Many memories of loved ones were suspended in time. Visions of these perished souls are remembered as they were last seen.

Nevertheless, experiences of bygone days were carefully embodied in the ritual of daily life. Silently, with much love and caring the values from the survivors were instilled in their children. Although, sadness for precious ones and times lost prevailed at the best of rituals, such as, all family gatherings, the Sabbath in the synagogue, the special holidays, school graduations and functions, births, briths, Bar or Bat Mitzvahs and wedding occasions; the mystery of life was held in very high esteem and never taken for granted. In this way, the values of the Eastern European Jews transcended time. Their lives demonstrate the conditions for living, love for creation, the experience of communion and the immersion in the present. They experienced the mystery, the suffering, the silence and the joy of human life. Still they persevere and try

to grow in the process of living.

If revelation refers to G-d's presence in the world, then religiousness can take many forms. According to Campbell, religion as a symbol system does not supply answers to agonizing problems but it does provide content, attitudes, rituals and courage for facing up to problems and making meaning in living.

Gray, Wiesel and many other survivors grew from their experiences. They often could not and cannot comprehend their "being", yet, they all live from a past towards a future with memory and hope. Their lives are meaningful because they have concern for their fellow man and for future generations.

The survivors' stories express their beliefs about ultimate values, the beauty of life. Their spiritual potentialities of human life is the myth of survivors. Their values and morals are a reminder that their martyrdom was not in vain. Their hope and faith in universal goodness and justice prevailed. For young people the world is still something to be met. Hopefully, the message of the Holocaust survivors is clear. To inspire future generations in the spirit of life is their legacy.

According to Gabriel Moran, " It is not our responsibility to finish the task, but it is our responsibility to refuse to withdraw from participating in the transformations of history."³

In concluding, it is essential to be aware that this thesis dealt with human morality in very extreme conditions. Without a doubt the Eastern European Jewish community had many members who converted, who married Gentiles, who collaborated with the Germans and who were only concerned about their very own being. They are another topic.

However, like the survivor Elie Wiesel, who today is a teacher and writer about the Holocaust, the survivors and the Jewish community described in this thesis came from an Eastern European Hasidic philosophic and theological way of thinking. Many of the Eastern European Jews maintained their traditional Judaic forms of culture and worship at the best and worst of times. Their values were drawn from the generations of pious thinkers. Their stories and myths constructed their world of meaning. With deep understanding and true intentions they turned daily living into a ritual of sanctification. The words and images from living a life with values sustained them in their sorrows. They chose to live with a positive attitude as their inspiration for life.

Although the Holocaust is unique in its awfulness, it is a firm part of human history, the manifestation of consistent and ongoing human characteristics. In studying the Holocaust, students not only study a particular society of the past but they learn about themselves as well. Holocaust study yields insight that illuminates

universal truths that are relevant for all human cultures. Humans should be open to universal ethics to make sense of the world and should not be conditioned or blinded by a small social economic or political grid.

The perspective of these reflections is to help understand the vital importance of Holocaust education today for the humanization of issues in a future world. Although, the history of the Holocaust is filled with much pain and sorrow, still, it is the task of every generation to remember and to learn from the trials the concentration camp victims faced daily.

Society cannot take the chance to forget the past, It must be committed to strive for truth and justice. Between 1939 and 1945, the world witnessed what is probably the most hideous and unforgettable act that has ever happened to a people. The seriousness of these actions are unforgivable and unforgettable but the reality for all society is that we must remember that inhumanity to any human must never recur.

The study of the Holocaust shows many different experiences. The following three examples are most significant in describing the Holocaust victims will to exist. The death camps constantly attempted to rid humans of any shred of dignity; the second experience is that the victims clung to that tiny spark of hope, their only link to life; and the third motivation for living was the strong belief in their hope for the future.

The lesson of the Holocaust is to teach others to live each day with hope, love and respect for life.

The implications for Holocaust education are important to ensure the fundamental principles of universal freedom, justice, democracy and equality.

The various themes of Holocaust literature represent the views of Holocaust victims and survivors. The aim of all the revelations of the Holocaust is to perpetuate the authentic memory of the Holocaust and to prevent its recurrence. Its lesson is for all society to strengthen and preserve its spiritual, ideological and cultural heritage. Society must learn to fight all forms of racial, ethnic or religious hatred. The purpose of Holocaust education is to remind all society never to be silent against any evil.

The legacy of the Holocaust survivors for all humans is that collective voices on behalf of all human beings must be raised. Discrimination, persecution and oppression anywhere in the world is unacceptable and should not be tolerated.

In concluding, the Holocaust was a specter of a world without justice. The personal memories of survivors and the literature of the Holocaust hopefully will teach the future generations to protect themselves and others from unknown dangers. The lesson of the Holocaust is to reinforce the importance of combatting injustice. It is a lesson for the universe.

By remembering the past the future generations can pave a world of brotherhood and love. Life is worth preserving and it is the task for all humans to respect and care for life in order for our universe to exist.

Summary Endnotes

- 1 Eliezer Berkovits, Faith After the Holocaust,
New York: Ktav Publishing
House, inc., 1973, 121
- 2 Helen Epstein, Children of the Holocaust, New York:
Putnam, 1979.
- 3 Gabriel Moran, No Ladder to the Sky, San Francisco:
Harper and Row Publishers, 1987, 182.

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