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## The Challenge of the Holocaust

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### Abstract

Throughout their history, the Jewish people have endured persecution, massacre and murder. They have been driven from their ancient homeland, buffeted from country to country and plagued by persecutions and pogroms. Jews have been despised and led as lambs to the slaughter. In modern times the Holocaust continued this saga of Jewish suffering, destroying six million innocent victims in the most terrible circumstances. This tragedy has posed the most searing questions for contemporary Jewry: where was God at Auschwitz, and where was humankind? This article seeks to respond to these two deeply troubling questions in the light of contemporary Jewish Holocaust theology.

### Keywords

Judaism, Holocaust, Holocaust theology, Auschwitz, Nazism, God, redeemer God

### Introduction

For over fifty years the Jewish community has wrestled with the implications of the Holocaust. Six million Jews died in a merciless way at the hands of the Nazis. In the shadow of the Holocaust, there are two central questions that we must ask: first, where was God when six million died; and secondly, where was humankind? These are very different questions. The first question is theological and strikes at the very heart of the Jewish faith. If God is a redeemer, if he is the Lord of all, if he is the father of the Jewish people, then why did he not hear the cries of his people? Where was God in the crematoria? Where was God in the death camps? Where was God when children were snatched from their mothers and crushed into a bloody pulp? The second question is not about spiritual reality, but about the human heart. Where was humanity when six million died? How could Hitler and his followers have acted as they did?

How can we account for such brutality? What about ordinary Germans: how could they have turned away from such violence; did they have no compassion for their Jewish neighbours? How are we to account for the violent anti-Semitism that was unleashed during the Nazi regime? The Nazis did not seize power; they were elected as majority government. Only then did Hitler assume dictatorial control. What lesson can one learn about human behaviour; and how can we assure that such violence and brutality is not repeated on other innocent victims in the future?

### **The Horrors of the Holocaust**

The first stage of the Nazi's plan for European Jewry began with the invasion of Poland in September 1939. In every conquered town and village the Germans forced Jews to undertake various types of tasks in public to de-humanize them (for example, cleaning pavements and public toilets with their prayer shawls). Jews were driven from their homes and the contents were confiscated. Further stripping of identity and public humiliation was the forced shaving of beards and sidelocks from traditional Jewish men. Then, Jews were forced into what Hitler referred to as a huge Polish labour camp, where a massive work programme was initiated. The next stage in the plan of extermination began with the invasion of Russia in 1941. This was designed to destroy what was described by the Nazis as the 'Jewish Bolshevik conspiracy'.

The first mobile killing battalions of 500–900 men (the *Einsatzgruppen*) took place under the supervision of Reinhard Heydrich and signalled the beginning of the slaughter of Russian Jewry. Of the 4,500,000 Jews who resided in Soviet territory, more than half fled before the German invasion; those who remained were concentrated in large cities making it easier for Heydrich's troops to carry out their task. Throughout the country the *Einsatzgruppen* moved into Russian towns, sought out the rabbis or Jewish council and forced them to provide a list of all Jewish inhabitants. As a result Jews were then rounded up, crowded into trains, buses and trucks and taken to woods where they were murdered and their bodies thrown into mass graves. Other methods were also employed by the Nazis: mobile gas vans were sent to each battalion of the *Einsatzgruppen*.

In addition, the mobile killing operations were supplemented by the use of death camps at Chelmno and Auschwitz in the Polish territories, and at Treblinka, Sobibor, Majdanek and Belzec in the Polish 'General Government'. The horrors of rounding up Jews and their journey and arrival at the camps

have been depicted in numerous accounts. According to a Polish pharmacist who witnessed the Jews of Cracow being gathered together in the Cracow ghetto:

Old people, women and children pass by the pharmacy window like ghosts. I see an old woman of around seventy years, her hair loose, walking alone, a few steps away from a larger group of deportees. Her eyes have a glazed look; immobile, wide-open, filled with horror, they stare straight ahead. She walks slowly, only in her dress and slippers, without even a bundle or handbag.<sup>1</sup>

Crowded together, Jews travelled to their deaths as the pace of murder accelerated. As a local Polish person later recalled, the trains carrying these victims were horrifying:

The small windows were covered with planks or lots of barbed wire, and in some places planks were missing from the walls, which was proof of the desperate struggles taking place inside. Through the cracks in the planks and through the wired-up windows peered scared human faces. Sometimes we could tell that a train was approaching, although it was still far off because of the shouting of the guards; they were standing on the buffers of the wagons and shooting those who tried to escape.<sup>2</sup>

At Treblinka the women, on arrival, had their heads shaved as part of the aim of dehumanizing individuals and removing their sense of personal identity. The hair was later dispatched to Germany for use in mattress filling. At the Nuremberg Tribunal one of those who survived gave an account of this procedure:

Because little children at their mother's breasts were a great nuisance during the shaving procedure, later the system was modified and babies were taken from their mother's as soon as they got off the train. The children were taken to an enormous ditch; when a large number of them were gathered together they were killed by firearms and thrown into the fire. No one bothered to see whether all the children were really dead. Sometimes one could hear infants wailing in the fire. When mothers succeeded in keeping their babies with them and this fact interfered with

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<sup>1</sup> Testimony of Tadeusz Mnakiewicz in Eisenberg, 'Witness to the Holocaust', in Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust* (London: Henry Holt & Co, 1987), pp. 356–7.

<sup>2</sup> Testimony of Stanislaw Bohdanowicz of Zwierzyniec, 'Trebgenza Collection', in Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, p. 413.

the shaving, a German guard took the baby by its legs and smashed it against the wall of the barracks until only a bloody mass remained in his hands.<sup>3</sup>

On arrival at the death camps a selection process took place, where Jews were either selected for immediate death in the gas chambers or were selected for hard labour. An eyewitness to the arrival of Jews at Belzec later recounted a typical occurrence:

A little before seven, there was an announcement: "The first train will arrive in ten minutes!" A few minutes later a train arrived from Lemberg; forty-five carriages with more than six thousand people; two hundred Ukrainians assigned to this work flung open the doors and drove the Jews out of the cars with leather whips.

Stark naked men, women, children and cripples passed by... SS men pushed the men into the chambers... Seven to eight hundred people in ninety-three square meters. The doors closed. Twenty five minutes passed. You could see through the windows that many were already dead, for an electric light illuminated the interior of the room.

The people were still standing like columns of stone, with no room to fall or lean. Even in death you could tell the families, all holding hands. It was difficult to separate them while emptying the room for the next batch. The bodies were tossed out, blue, wet with sweat and urine, the legs smeared with excrement and menstrual blood. Two dozen workers were busy checking mouths they opened with iron hooks... Dentists knocked out gold teeth, bridges and crowns with hammers.<sup>4</sup>

### Where Was God?

In the aftermath of the events of the Holocaust Jews worldwide continue to ask the question: where was God? This religious perplexity has given rise to a wide range of responses from Jewish thinkers. One of the most traditional responses comes from the American rabbi and theologian, Bernard Maza. Maza argues that the Holocaust was the result of divine providence; the central theme in Maza's thought is that God brought about the Holocaust to insure that Jews return to traditional Judaism. According to Maza it was God's will that the Jewish people not abandon their heritage. God knew that Jews had to be returned to their land as this was the only way they would find freedom to rediscover Torah Judaism and return to God's law. To accomplish this purpose, Maza

<sup>3</sup> Testimony of Samuel Rujzman, 'Punishment of War Criminals', in Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, p. 457.

<sup>4</sup> Kurt Gerstein, Statement of 6 May 1945, Tubingen: International Military Tribunal, Nuremberg, Nuremberg Document PS-2170.

holds, God poured out his fury through the events of the Nazi regime: this was the beginning of the process of redemption.<sup>5</sup> So if you ask who was ultimately responsible for the Holocaust, the answer according to Maza's argument is not Hitler and the Nazis. Rather, God providentially used the SS to accomplish the goal of Jewish renewal in a post-Holocaust age. In formulating his thesis, Maza presupposes that God is an all-powerful, benevolent Lord of history, who is concerned with his people. However, if God was ultimately responsible for the horrors of the death camps, it seems impossible to reconcile such mass murder with the traditional concept of God's nature. Surely if God is all-good God would have wished to rescue innocent Jewish victims from the hands of the Nazis, and if God is omnipotent God had the power to do so. Yet, Maza contends that the Holocaust was an outpouring of God's fury. Surely if God was concerned with the future of Torah Judaism, God could have accomplished the divine purpose without slaughtering a vast segment of the Jewish population.

Arguing along similar lines, British Reform Rabbi Ignaz Maybaum believes that the Holocaust was the result of divine providence. Yet in contrast to Maza, Maybaum argues that God did not pour out his fury to revitalize Torah Judaism. Rather, he contends that the six million Jews who died in the concentration camps were chosen by God to become sacrificial victims to bring about God's purposes for the modern world. According to Maybaum, Hitler should be understood as an instrument of God's will, like Nebuchadnezzar in the Bible. Though Hitler was himself unworthy and contemptible, Maybaum holds that God used this instrument to bring an end to the ghettos of eastern and western Europe.<sup>6</sup> Hence, today as a result of the tragedy of the Holocaust, modern Jews have entered a new age of freedom and liberation. However, there are a number of important problems with this providential understanding of the Holocaust. First, it does not make sense to think that God entered into a covenantal relationship with the Jewish people only to kill them. If God is omnipotent, there would have been no need to murder six million Jews to inaugurate a new epoch in human history. The conception of divine destruction requires that we believe that God created the horrors of the Nazi regime and consigned the Jews to be destroyed, but such an understanding runs counter to the traditional Jewish belief that God is compassionate, merciful and long-suffering. For

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<sup>5</sup> Rabbi Bernard Maza, *With Fury Poured Out: A Torah Perspective on the Holocaust* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1986).

<sup>6</sup> Rabbi Ignaz Maybaum, *The Face of God After Auschwitz* (Amsterdam: Polak & Van Gennep, 1965).

most Jews it is impossible to believe in a God who was the source of the terrors of the death camps.

Another very different approach to the religious perplexities of the Holocaust is advanced by American Orthodox Rabbi Eliezer Berkovits. Like Maza and Maybaum, Berkovits maintains that religious belief is possible after the nightmare of the Holocaust. In his view, the problem of faith can be solved by appealing to the free will argument. That is, if God did not respect human freedom, not only would morality be abolished but men and women would cease to be human. Freedom and responsibility are the very essence of humanity: if human beings are to exist, they must be allowed to sin.<sup>7</sup> In this light, the Holocaust must be seen as an expression of human evil, a tragedy inflicted by the Nazis on the Jewish people, in which God did not intervene to save the Jewish nation, because he had bestowed free will on humanity at creation. Yet, a major difficulty with Berkovits' interpretation of the Holocaust concerns his view that God's hiddenness is necessary for human beings to act as moral agents. By absencing Godself from history, he believes, God created the reality of human freedom which is necessary for moral decision-making. While there is no doubt that Jewish heroism was exhibited as a result of such freedom of the will, God theoretically could have allowed such bravery to take place without the barbarism of the Nazi onslaught. If God is omnipotent and all-good, God could have created a world in which there is human freedom without such evils. It is conceivable, for example, that God could have created human beings who possess free will but nonetheless have an inclination for good rather than evil. Alternatively, arguably it would have been preferable to have a world in which monstrosities such as the crematoria were eliminated altogether even if that meant limiting human freedom. From a moral point of view, there are good reasons why freedom should have been subordinated to the prevention of suffering; in respect of the Holocaust, such a limitation of free will would surely have been preferable to the destruction of six million innocent victims.

Another approach to the religious dilemmas posed by the Holocaust is advanced by the Reform rabbi and philosopher Emil Fackenheim, who maintains that out of the ashes of Auschwitz, God issued the 614th commandment:

Jews are forbidden to hand Hitler posthumous victories. They are commanded to survive as Jews, lest the Jewish people perish. They are commanded to remember the victims of Auschwitz lest their memory perish. They are forbidden to despair of man and his world, and to escape into either cynicism or otherworldliness, lest

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<sup>7</sup> Rabbi Eliezer Berkovits, *Faith After the Holocaust* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1973).

they co-operate in delivering the world over to the forces of Auschwitz. Finally, they are forbidden to despair of the God of Israel, lest Judaism perish.<sup>8</sup>

For Fackenheim, the voice of Auschwitz thus calls all Jews to remain faithful to their heritage; the commanding voice of Auschwitz demands that Jews accept their condition, face up to its contradictions, and struggle for Jewish survival. In other words, the Jew of today can and must endure because he/she is commanded to do so. However, the central difficulty with Fackenheim's view is that he fails to give justification for his claim about God's command, and so the 614th commandment offers no solution to the issue of human suffering during the Nazi era. In confronting the horrors of the Holocaust, Fackenheim depicts God as a commanding presence rather than as a saviour. Yet the question remains as to why God did not intervene to stop the atrocities of the death camps. Instead of offering an explanation of how the traditional understanding of God can be sustained in a post-Holocaust age, Fackenheim simply insists that such questioning must not take place. Such a stance fails to provide a meaningful religious response to those Jews who are perplexed about God's nature and activity in the world.

A final, more radical, solution is proposed by the American theologian Arthur A. Cohen. Cohen argues that, while Jews believe that God acts in history (proclaiming that God redeemed the Jewish nation from Egyptian bondage), such a conception is misguided. God, he contends, must not be understood as a causal agent. God does not act; rather, God remains detached from the world God has created. It is a mistake, he continues, for Jews to view events as fulfilling God's eternal plan, since history is not the unfolding of God's providential will. According to Cohen, the traditional conception of God must be set aside; historical events must be seen as the result of human freedom rather than the effect of divine causality. Thus, for Cohen the Holocaust was a human creation rather than part of God's providential plan, and so it is human beings, not God, who should be held responsible for the tragedy that befell European Jewry.<sup>9</sup> Yet, the central problem with Cohen's interpretation of the Holocaust concerns his conception of a detached deity. According to traditional Judaism, God is omnipotent and all-good. While Cohen's explanation for the events of the Nazi period exonerates God from direct responsibility, it is not clear why

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<sup>8</sup> Emil Fackenheim, 'Jewish Faith and the Holocaust', in Michael Morgan, ed., *The Jewish Thought of Emil Fackenheim* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), p. 176.

<sup>9</sup> Arthur A. Cohen, *Tremendum: A Theological Interpretation of the Holocaust* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1981).

God would not have intervened to stop the Nazis; why God did not destroy the railway lines to Auschwitz in just the same way as he brought about the plagues in Egypt so as to free the ancient Israelites from bondage; why God could not have influenced Hitler, the SS, and the German public to adopt less hostile policies; why God allowed the terror to occur if God could have rescued the Jewish people. Surely if God had the power to halt the Nazi onslaught against the Jews, God would have done so.

### Where Was Humankind?

These various theories which seek to account for God's action during the Nazi era all suffer from various defects. There seems no way to resolve the theological dilemmas of the Holocaust. If we seek a comprehensive, consistent and persuasive answer to the question 'where was God, when six million died', I believe we will be disappointed. Yet there is a second haunting issue which we must now face: where was humanity when six million died; how could human beings have acted with such barbarism? How could the SS have herded innocent men, women and children into pits, and machined gunned them? How could SS officials have separated loved ones, walked them into gas chambers, and burned their bodies in crematoria? How could the German nation have devised and implemented such a monstrous plan for murdering six million Jews? How could Nazi doctors have committed hideous and murderous acts in the camps, and why did the bystanders not cry out against such injustice?

One must remember that the Third Reich was ideologically a racial state. Hitler had divided the human race into three distinct groups: Aryan founders, culture bearers and culture destroyers. Only Aryans, he maintained, are able to create culture. The Jew, however, is without genuine culture since he/she is unable to create one; instead, the Jew exploits what others have created: a parasite feeding on the body of healthy cultures. According to Hitler, like a harmful bacillus, the Jew spreads out more and more only if a favourable medium exists for him/her to do so.<sup>10</sup> In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler writing about Jews describes them as purveyors of prostitution and syphilis, the ferment of decomposition, rapists of Aryan women, harmful bacilli, maggots, poisoners, pestilence, spongers, fungi and foul-smelling creatures.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin & Harcourt, 1998), ch. 11 'Nation and Race'.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40–47.



On the basis of such beliefs, the Nazi party maintained that Jews were not only less than human; they constituted a serious threat to the Nazi vision of a utopian society. For this reason, the Nazis believed the Jews could be treated brutally without any moral compunction; indeed, it became a patriotic duty to assist in their annihilation. It was left to the SS to carry out this task: like animals led to the slaughter, Jews were rounded up, transported and massacred. Herded together in intolerable conditions, they were humiliated, starved and murdered. Surrounded by SS guards, the Jews came to see themselves as nothing more than trapped creatures, whose death meant nothing to their captors. The vision of biological pollution served as the justification for the actions of SS. In the view of Himmler: 'Jews are the eternal enemies of the German people and must be exterminated. All Jews within our grasp are to be destroyed without exception, now during the war. If we do not succeed in destroying the biological substance of the Jews, the Jews will someday destroy the German people'.<sup>12</sup> Embracing such racial theories, Nazi doctors in the camps called forth an absolutized conception of good and evil as a justification for their actions: 'precisely because they were convinced of the justness or of the National-Socialist world blessing and that the Jews are the root of evil of the world—precisely because they were so convinced of it did they believe, or were strengthened, that the Jews, even existentially, had to be absolutely exterminated'.<sup>13</sup>

A prime example of such ideological conviction was Dr Josef Mengele. Arriving in Auschwitz on 30 May 1943, he had previously embraced right-wing nationalism, joining the SA in 1934. Fanatically committed to Nazism, he was unscrupulous in his dealing with inmates. He was like a religious man, absolutely driven by ideological convictions. As one Nazi doctor explained, Mengele was a double man, driven by contradictory impulses:

The double man, that is to say he had all the sentimental emotions, all the human feelings, pity and so on. But there was in his psyche a hermetically closed cell, an impenetrable, indestructible cell, which is obedient to the received order. He can throw himself in the water to go and save a gypsy, try to give him mediation . . . and then as soon as they are out of the water . . . tell him to get in a truck and quickly off to the gas chamber.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>) Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), p. 157.

<sup>13</sup>) *Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>14</sup>) *Ibid.*, p. 375.

Imbued with the Auschwitz mentality, doctors such as Mengele were able to encase themselves in a shell of insensitivity to the suffering of those whom they treated. Such detachment accounts for the lightning-fast changes doctors underwent from being attentive and compassionate to becoming unfeeling and brutal. By encasing themselves in this fashion, SS doctors were able to act without emotion and were indifferent to pain. Surrounded by death, they exemplified the Nazi ideology of hardness, determined that the Aryan race be triumphant over its enemies.

Such encasement in ideology provides an answer to the question of where humanity was when six million died, and it is here that there is a warning to all of us: a deeply important message buried in the mounds of bodies of those who died in the camps. In *The Concept of Man after Auschwitz*, the American Reform Rabbi Jack Bemporad stresses how ideology can distort and twist normal human sympathy:

The Nazis depersonalized and dehumanized their victims in a variety of ways, beginning with mass arrests, often awakening and terrorizing victims at night, herding them by the hundreds and thousands into the stifling cattle cars, taking away all their belongings, shaving their heads, and assigning them numbers in place of names. The list goes on and on . . . The camp was geared to reducing man to a purely sub-human animal existence, an animal existence with but one aim—to survive at any cost, and the final result of the process of dehumanization and depersonalization was that in time, those who did survive often adopted Nazi attitudes, identifying themselves with their persecutors, judging themselves by Nazi standards.<sup>15</sup>

The moral of this, he continues, is that the holocaust has demonstrated:

that man can destroy himself. It has shown that man in a dehumanized state is capable of doing untold and unbelievable harm. It has also shown that man is not by nature good. It has not, however, demonstrated that man is by nature evil. It has shown us that his awesome potentialities are for both good and for evil. It forces us to look at what contemporaneously is leading to dehumanization and depersonalization, and to do our best to prevent its coming to be.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Jack Bemporad, 'The Concept of Man after Auschwitz', in Albert Friedlander, ed., *Out of the Whirlwind* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), p. 478. Bemporad is using 'man' in the general sense to refer to 'mankind', as was common at the time he was writing.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 482.

Other Jewish writers make a similar point: the Holocaust has taught us to be aware of the human potential for evil. This is a point on which Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks agrees: the only meaning to be extracted from the Holocaust, he believes, is that human beings are capable of limitless evil. Consequently, there is no way to solve the theological problems presented by the death of six million Jews; rather, the Holocaust, he states, is a mystery wrapped in silence.<sup>17</sup> However, we can see the consequences of human free will. God, Sacks argues, has given human beings the freedom to choose to be good, and at the same time this necessarily gives them the freedom to choose to be evil. God teaches us what goodness is, he writes, but he does not intervene to force us to be good or to prevent us from being wicked:

So when human beings perpetrate evil it is human beings who are to blame, not God . . . The only meaning to be extracted from the holocaust is that man is capable of limitless evil. The religious meaning of six million deaths is no more and no less than that they, as other Jews had done before them, died al kiddush ha-Shem, for the sanctification of God's name, suffering, as Isaiah saw the servants of God would always suffer, until the world finds in its heart not to afflict the children of God.<sup>18</sup>

Likewise, the former Chief Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits argues that the central question raised by the Holocaust is not theological but moral. He writes:

When I am asked, Where was God at Auschwitz? I too have no answer. Perhaps there is none. Indeed infinity of suffering cannot be multiplied, whether it affects six million, or one million, or a single innocent life. Every time an infant's life perishes in a cot-death, turning young parents into mourners, the same question arises: Where was God? The real question is where was man at Auschwitz? Where was the humanity of a cultured nation mesmerized by a rabble-rouser, to turn into millions of mass-murderers and their accomplices? Where was man when numerous civilized nations remained silent and closed their borders to those fleeing from fiendish persecution? Where were the leaders of great faiths when the cries of the tormented evoked no response? Where was man when millions were shipped here in cattle trucks for the crime of being born as Jews?<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Chief Jonathan Sacks, 'Tradition in an Untraditional Age', in Dan Cohn Sherbok, *Holocaust Theology: A Reader* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), pp. 157–9.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 158–9.

<sup>19</sup> Chief Immanuel Jakobovits, 'Where was Man at Auschwitz?', in Helen Fry, ed., *Christian-Jewish Dialogue* (Exeter: Exeter University Press 1996), pp. 65–6.

## Conclusion

Let me return to the original two questions: where was God when six million died and where was humankind? As we have seen, there have been a wide range of Jewish responses, all seeking to make sense of God's seeming absence; yet, none of the theological responses are adequate. Yet, while they all suffer from serious defects, there is, I believe, within the tradition, a religious way through the thicket of perplexities that surround this problem. In the biblical Book of Job, we are presented with a picture of human suffering that calls for a response. Job was righteous, rich and prosperous, yet he lost everything. Throughout the book he laments his misfortune and calls on God to defend his ways. His friends try to comfort him, but he is disconsolate. Eventually, in chapter 38, God responds to Job's cry:

'Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?', God asks. 'Tell me if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?'<sup>20</sup>

What God is telling Job is that he cannot fathom God's mysterious ways. Similarly we must confess that we cannot understand God's dealing with the Jewish people at Auschwitz: it is a mystery wrapped in silence.

Nevertheless, the question of human evil during the Third Reich is different altogether. The American Jewish theologian Marc Ellis points out that while God remains a mystery, human action during the Nazi regime is explicable. 'At Auschwitz', he writes, 'we reached the end of humanity'.<sup>21</sup> In other words, those who committed crimes against the Jewish nation had persuaded themselves that they were acting in the best interests not only of Germany but of humanity. Imbued with racist doctrine, they turned into monsters, blind to the atrocity they had brought about. The Holocaust demonstrates that humans in such a dehumanized state are capable of unbelievable harm. It demonstrates the awesome potentialities for evil. It forces us to look at the consequences of depersonalization, and to prevent its coming to be. In a post-Holocaust age, we must be aware of the depths of human wickedness, and take all measures to combat evil in all its forms. In the death camps, the mark of Cain overshadowed the likeness of God: the earth was soaked with blood; the air polluted

<sup>20</sup> *Tanakh* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999).

<sup>21</sup> Marc Ellis, *Unholy Alliance* (London: SCM Press, 1997), p. 192.

with the smell of burning flesh. In the camps, madmen walked the earth. We must ensure that such wanton destruction never takes place again. Never again: that is the lesson of the Holocaust. It must be written on our hearts and in our minds: never again. In this quest God is waiting for our effort and devotion.

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