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ARIEL
MINISTRIES

DIGITAL HOLO CAU ST MUSEUM



**Theodicy and
the Holocaust**

**Evolution: The Toxic
Roots of Auschwitz**

**The Metaphysical
Background of the Shoah**

**Replacement
Theology's Sin**

Purpose Statement

Ariel Ministries exists in order to evangelize Jewish people and to disciple Jewish and Gentile believers through intensive Bible teaching from a Jewish perspective.

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editor's letter

Dear Reader,

As the world is struggling to come to grips with the consequences of a pandemic, it also commemorates the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II. In times like these, are any such celebrations still important? We think the answer is "yes." It is always important to remember what happened during the Holocaust because even this COVID-19 pandemic was used by some social media influencers to stir up hatred against the Jewish people. We therefore dedicated this edition of the *Ariel Magazine* exclusively to the difficult topic of the Holocaust. A first scanning of the pages will show you that our graphic designers, Jesse and Josh Gonzales, decided to tie the individual articles together by creating a digital Holocaust museum. The stunning visual effects underline the importance of this edition. You may also quickly recognize that traditional sections such as our "Meet the Team" and "Ministry News" have been omitted in order to devote each page to this unique topic.

As many of you know, Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, the founder of Ariel Ministries, belongs to the generation of Holocaust survivors. So, it was important to hear his voice, and what better place than the "Editor's Letter" to give him a "stage" from which to speak to you. Here is what he would like you to know:

"I am not a Holocaust survivor since I was born in Siberia, Russia, during World War II but far from the war zone. My parents, especially my father, were Holocaust survivors. From the earliest days of my childhood, I sat around the table as the adults spoke of their experiences during and after the war. On my father's side, about twenty members of my family perished at the hands of the Nazis. On my mother's side, her father was shot to death and her mother was imprisoned for thirty years in a Communist labor camp. From the five survivors who eventually established the five branches of the Fruchtenbaum family, I would hear stories of their survival, first in Poland and then also in Displaced Persons Camps in West Germany. While I was a student in Israel for a total of three years, I was finally able to record the full story of all their experiences and also the stories of those who did not survive. These stories found their way into two books: *When Your Face Was Your Destiny: The Fruchtenbaum Family Story As Told by Holocaust Survivors* by David S. Turner; and, to a more limited degree, *Chosen Fruit: The Personal Life Story of Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum* by L. Jesse Grace.

This issue of the *Ariel Magazine* is dedicated to the Holocaust. It includes an article by Dr. Barry Leventhal about the theological implications of this horrific time and other texts dealing with the same or similar subjects. It may not be an easy read, but it is a necessary one for a full understanding of the role the Holocaust played in Jewish history. The magazine also shows how the *Shoah* led to the world's acceptance of the rebirth of Israel, which was a result not only of human merit but also of the very work of the God of Israel fulfilling the promises He made."

As always, we welcome your feedback and questions. Please direct them to:

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DIGITAL HOLOCAUST MUSEUM

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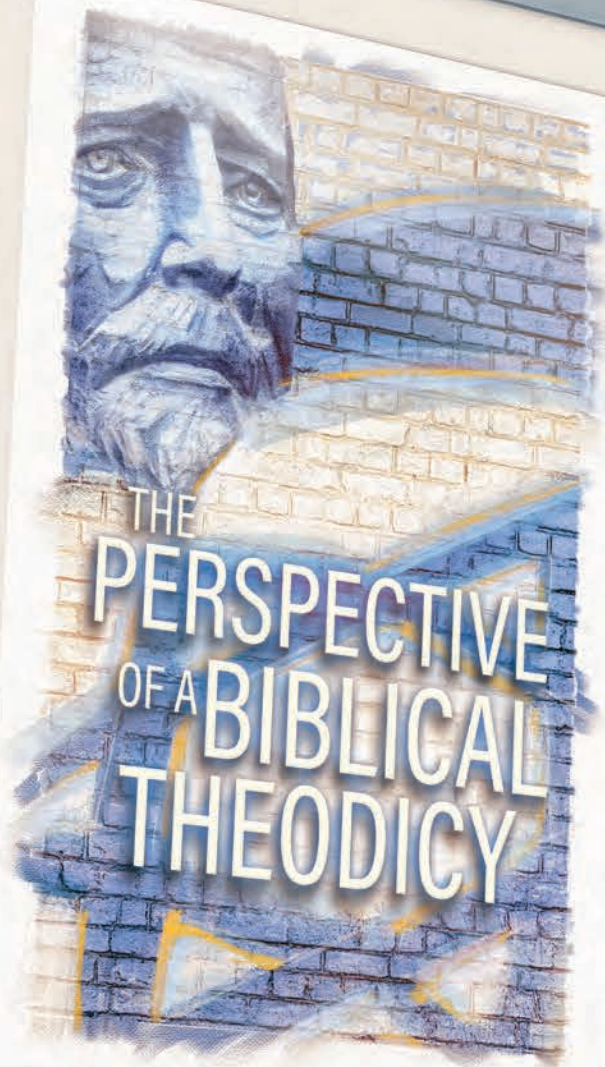
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The Perspective of a Biblical Theodicy

By Dr. Barry Leventhal



Christianity (like Judaism and Islam) is committed to a monotheistic doctrine of God as absolute in goodness and power and as the Creator of the universe *ex nihilo*. The challenge of the fact of evil to this faith has accordingly been formulated as a dilemma: If God is all-powerful, He must be able to prevent evil. If He is all-good, He must want to prevent evil. But evil exists. Therefore, God is either not all-powerful or not all good. A theodicy (from *theos*, "god," and *dike*, "justice") is accordingly an attempt to reconcile the unlimited goodness of an all-powerful God with the reality of evil.

In a world deeply troubled with evil and suffering, theodicy is worthy of any man's thinking and pondering, for only the unthinking and unfeeling would dare to ignore the deep problems of the twenty-first century. Berkouwer has captured the extreme importance of such a theodicy in the modern world:

Theodicy is a justification of God's providential rule. It attempts to prove that in spite of all enigmas and all criticisms, God's governing of the world is holy, good, and just. Theodicy is an attempt to defend God against all complaints or accusations by demonstrating the meaningfulness and purposefulness of God's activity in the world and in human life. It presupposes the seriousness of all sorts of doubts and criticisms and assumes that there are empirical facts which cause tensions and pose problems in connection with the Divine rule.¹

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The Holocaust poses an immense problem for those attempting to devise a biblical theodicy, especially among Jewish philosophers, theologians, and rabbis.

The existential reality of Nazi evil and suffering has caused many Jewish thinkers to reject any possibility of developing an adequate theodicy—God's action, or lack of action, during the rise and fall of the Third Reich can never be justified.

The evil that annihilated six million Jews continues to fester under the religious skin of Judaism. How could a God of love and power allow six million Jews to be slaughtered in such a manner, with over one million of them being children? The vast number of six million is too much to handle. But for a biblical theodicy, the number is not the deciding factor. One innocent child poses as much of a problem as one million innocent children. Judaism has for centuries recognized this principle, even as the Talmud says: "He who destroys a single life out of Israel is as if he had destroyed an entire world, and he who saves a single life out of Israel is as if he had saved an entire world" (*Sanhedrin* 37a). Therefore, an adequate theodicy will answer the issue of evil and suffering, be it in the lives of six or six million.

In dealing with evil and theodicy, it must be remembered that three different kinds of evil must be confronted. First, there is the problem of metaphysical evil, or the nature and source of evil. In other words, what is evil? And who is the author of evil? Second, there is the problem of moral evil, or the reality and responsibility of evil. Again, to rephrase this problem, who is responsible for evil? How is it that man chooses to commit evil? And third, there is the problem of physical evil, or the so-called suffering of

innocent people by events not determined by their own moral choices. In other words, why do people suffer from so many natural catastrophes? If God is in sovereign control of the natural world, why is there so much natural disaster? This article will not deal with the problem of physical evil since it does not relate specifically to the Holocaust itself.

A further word must be added at this point before embarking on the task that lies ahead. In approaching the problem of evil and theodicy, it must be remembered that man faces certain inherent limitations in penetrating these issues. Berkouwer suggests that three factors limit one's knowledge in these matters. First, there is the common failure to reckon with the real and concrete wrath of God as it is revealed in Scripture. This, in turn, greatly impoverishes one's experience with the holiness of God. When considering evil in all of its forms, one must keep in mind that God is not only presently revealing His wrath from heaven (Rom. 1:18ff.) but will also do so in the future for all eternity (2 Thess. 1:6-10; etc.). In other words, God has not made His final statement as yet concerning evil. Second, there is human guilt as a real limitation to one's thought and understanding. Real moral guilt not only accounts for much human evil and suffering but also prevents the human mind from clearly penetrating the mist of divine providence in matters of suffering and evil. And third, neglecting the church's doxology also places a severe limitation on one's perception and experience of evil and suffering. The church is assured that God has all things under His sovereign control and that He is working all things together for her good (Rom. 8:28-39; etc.). The church may not always understand God's superintending of His creation, but she can rest in faith that He is about His business and will eventually bring all things to the light of His holiness (cf. Rom. 11:33-36; 1 Cor. 4:5; 13:12; etc.). Berkouwer summarizes this point in regard to an adequate theodicy: "With this we deal with the profoundest point in all reflection on the problem of theodicy: is it possible to stand in this evil world and sing a doxology in the face of the incomprehensibility of God's world rule?"²



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Theodicy from a Theological Perspective

This article will look at theodicy from a theological perspective only. It must be affirmed that the investigation of certain specific doctrinal positions, as well as certain specific biblical purposes, will point to the fact that it is both reasonable and logical to expect God to forestall His eventual and ultimate solution to the problem of evil and suffering. First, specific doctrinal positions will be related to a biblical theodicy for the Holocaust, and then specific biblical purposes (i.e., for the church, the Gentile, and the Jew) will also be related to this theodicy.

Some have tried to relate certain specific doctrinal positions to a biblical theodicy. Using selected categories of systematic theology, they have addressed themselves to the issue of evil and suffering. It is needful that several more categories of systematic theology be applied to this same problem.

Bibliology

The first category to be investigated is bibliology, the doctrine of the Bible. Two specific factors come into focus. First, related to the time periods of the Bible, is the unique portrayal of the dispensations. Each one of these specific time periods or economies is set up by God to test man in some specific ways regarding His clearly revealed will. And each one of these historical dispensations ends in utter failure and judgment.

A second factor also comes into focus in the doctrine of the Bible. Related to the supernatural origin of the Bible is the role of biblical prophecy and its fulfillment. The Bible does not predict that the world will end on a positive, victorious note, but rather that it will end in utter rebellion and judgment (cf. 2 Thess. 1:3-2:12; Rev. 19:11-21; etc.). As the world has bathed itself in evil and suffering for all of its existence, so it will end in the same bitter fashion. The Bible truly

gives an accurate picture of the world in its rebellion against its Creator, with all of the expected consequences for both man with God and man with man. This is especially true of the prophetic picture of Israel, including the suffering of the Holocaust.

Theology Proper

The second category is theology proper, the doctrine of God. As has been stated above, God must always act in total accordance with His nature. And His attributes reveal His character. Whatever the Holocaust meant, it certainly cannot be viewed apart from God's attributes. His holiness, justice, love, goodness, truth, freedom, omnipotence, immutability, omnipresence, omniscience, and sovereignty must all be brought to bear on the evil and suffering of the Holocaust. For whatever happened during that brief period, it in no way compromised on any of these attributes of God.

One example will suffice to illustrate this point. The Apostle Peter made the following statement that reflects upon one aspect of the character of God: *The Lord is not slow about His promise [of the second coming of Yeshua], as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance . . . and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation* (2 Pet. 3:9, 15, emphasis added).

The second coming of the Lord will mark the end of evil and suffering, but as yet, this anticipated coming has not arrived. Why has God so long delayed the alleviation of such suffering and misery (i.e., by not sending Messiah)? The answer to this question is based on His character: God is patient or longsuffering. It is His great desire that all come to repentance that leads to salvation. He does not desire anyone to perish in judgment. Therefore, He delays His coming so that those who will come to repentance (e.g., perhaps even through much suffering as in the Holocaust)

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might experience the greater good of salvation. His patience is prompted by His love, which is one of His attributes.

Angelology

The third category is angelology, the doctrine of angels, including Satan and demons. Two important factors relate to this doctrine. First, God's elect angels were certainly at work on behalf of the elect of the church, especially the remnant of Israel, the Jewish believers who suffered in the Holocaust (cf. Heb. 1:13-14). But second, it is also true that Satan and his demons were heavily at work trying to stamp out the nation of Israel, for Satan is the author and perfecter of all anti-Semitism. Also, it must not be forgotten that evil first found itself expressed in the fall of Satan (cf. Isa. 14; Ezek. 28; 1 Tim. 3:6; Rev. 12:4).

Anthropology

The fourth category is anthropology, the doctrine of man. Suffering will not only produce God's greater glory but also man's (cf. 2 Cor. 4:17; etc.). Suffering also will produce man's greater good (cf. Gen. 50:20; Job 23:10; Rom. 5:20; 8:28; etc.). This is sufficient a theodicy in and of itself. But added to this is the biblical teaching on man's free, moral nature. As stated above, he is a free, moral creature, responsible for all of his actions and reactions. Each Nazi and each Jew must account for his moral choices in this life. It is a part of creaturely existence.

Hamartiology

The fifth category is hamartiology, the doctrine of sin. Certainly, the Holocaust bears witness to the biblical testimony concerning man's sinfulness, both his sinful nature (cf. Ps. 51:5; Eph. 2:3; 4:18; etc.) and his sinful acts (cf. 1 Jn. 1:8-10; etc.). The Bible well describes man as a sinner, potentially capable of any crime on the face of the earth. Apart from the grace of God, every man could be transformed into a Hitler.

Soteriology

The sixth category is soteriology, the doctrine of salvation. At least two factors can be related to this doctrine. First, it was evil itself that brought the Messiah to His eternally appointed death (cf. Col. 2:13-15; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 Pet. 3:18; etc.). He who was without sin came to remove sin and all of the suffering that results from it (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21). And second, it is certainly true that men only come to God for salvation in their moment of personal need, sometimes in the frantic moments of suffering and desperation. It is impossible to determine how many Jews came to a saving faith in the Messiahship of Yeshua during the Holocaust. But it was probably well into the thousands. Certainly, this must be considered a greater good, as well as leading to a greater world.

Ecclesiology

The seventh category is ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church. Again, two factors can be related to this doctrine. First, the Holocaust brought out the unique commitment of the body of Messiah, the true church, as Gentile believers sought to hide many Jews from the invading forces. They laid down their lives as Messiah had (cf. 1 Jn. 3:16-18; etc.). But second, the Holocaust also brought out the true nature of the false church, the apostate church, which not only denied the Savior but also thousands of Jews and non-Jews fleeing from the Nazis. In fact, in many cases, the apostate church actually helped in the slaughter of the helpless victims.

Eschatology

The eighth category is eschatology, the doctrine of last things. Once again, at least two factors can be related to this doctrine. First, if the Holocaust demonstrates anything, it is that worse is yet to come (cf. Zech. 13; etc.). In fact, the Holocaust is almost a precursor of what the Jewish people must face in the future just prior to the Lord's return (cf. Mt. 24; etc.). God is going to



allow Israel to suffer her worst persecution yet, and then all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11). The time of Jacob's trouble is in the future, hovering over him like a knife ready to fall (cf. Jer. 30; etc.). And second, the future holds a positive outlook, for God's eternal judgment will come and a new world will follow, one without evil or suffering (cf. Dan. 12: 1-3; 2 Thess. 1:3-2:12; Rev. 19:11-22:21). Israel will once again find herself at her rightful place as the head of the nations (cf. Deut. 28:1-14; Zech. 14:16-21; etc.). Israel awaits her future worst holocaust, but it will certainly be her last.

Christology

The ninth category is Christology, the doctrine of Messiah in His person and work. As mentioned above in soteriology, Messiah certainly came to die for all of the evil and suffering in the world. But He also came with a unique relationship to the Jewish people. The Lord in His incarnation was born, lived, died, and rose again as a Jew, on Jewish soil (cf. Rom. 1:1-4, etc.). He knew and loved His brethren according to the flesh. And He will one day return and reign as their Davidic king and Messiah (cf. Lk. 1:26-38; Rev. 5:1-14; 12:5; 19:11-16; etc.). As He wept over Jerusalem because of her rejection of His Messiahship (Mt. 23:37-39), so He must certainly have wept over her bitter calamity during the twentieth century. In fact, His lament over the city of Jerusalem undoubtedly saw her destruction down through the ages (cf. Lk. 21: 20-24).

Pneumatology

The tenth and final category is pneumatology, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Again, the Spirit's work must be obvious to any observing the Holocaust from a biblical and theological perspective. His restraining ministry prevented two-thirds of the Jewish people from being slaughtered (cf. Gen. 6:3; 2

Thess. 2:6-9). His convicting and regenerating ministries brought many Jews and non-Jews into a saving knowledge of the Messiah (cf. Jn. 3:3-8; 16:7-11; Titus 3:4-7). He was at work before, during, and after the Holocaust in bringing glory to the Savior (Jn. 15:26; 16:14).

In conclusion, a brief survey of the major doctrines of the Bible has revealed that rather than being lost and behind the scenes, God was at work in a mighty way during the Holocaust. But His activity was undoubtedly only known and appreciated by those who knew and believed His Word. The greatest theodicy is always perceived by the hearts of the faithful. This survey has also made it reasonable and logical to see evil and suffering as a major factor in God's total plan for the ages. He is truly using this evil world to bring about a greater glory for Himself as well as a greater good for man.

SPECIFIC BIBLICAL PURPOSES

Having related certain specific doctrinal positions to a biblical theodicy, it now is fitting to relate certain specific biblical purposes to this same biblical theodicy. The Bible makes it clear that all humanity can be divided into three major groups: the church, the Gentiles, and the Jews (cf. 1 Cor. 10:32; etc.). It will now be demonstrated that although all three groups experience evil and suffering for some similar purposes, each group individually also experiences these for quite unique purposes.

The Church

The New Testament cites eleven reasons or purposes for the church's experience with evil and suffering in this present world:

1. To share in Messiah's sufferings (Rom. 8:16-17; 2 Cor. 1:5; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24; 1 Pet. 4:13-14)
2. To draw us near to Messiah, our faithful High Priest (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 10:19-25)

3. To conform us to the image of Messiah (Rom. 8:26-30)
4. To cause us to grow in the faith (Rom. 5:3-4; James 1:2-4; 2 Pet. 1:2-11)
5. To purify our faith and give us a greater love for Messiah (1 Pet. 1:3-9; 4:1-3)
6. To discipline or child train us so we can share in His holiness (Heb. 12:5-11; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 11:17-34; cf. Heb. 2:10; 5:8)
7. To give us a life message of comfort (2 Cor. 1:3-7)
8. To prepare us for glory and honor (Rom. 5:2; 8:17-18; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; 1 Pet. 1:6-7)
9. To give us a greater experience with His grace (2 Cor. 12:7-10)
10. To glorify God (1 Pet. 4:12-19)
11. To remind us of "old" truth (2 Pet. 1:12-15)

The Gentiles

The New Testament cites three specific purposes for the unbelieving Gentiles to experience evil and suffering in this present world:

1. To be exposed to God's present wrath for suppressing the truth (Jn. 3:16-19, 36; Rom. 1:18-32)
2. To act as a forewarning against God's future wrath (Eph. 2:3; 2 Thess. 1:3-10; cf. 1 Pet. 4:17-18)
3. To be drawn to the Spirit's convicting and regenerating ministry (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Jn. 2:2; cf. Jn. 3:1-8; 16:7-11; Titus 3:5)

The Jews

The Bible records four major purposes for the unbelieving Jews' experience of this world's evil and suffering:

1. To receive punishment for specific covenant violations (Lev. 26; Deut. 28-30; etc.)
2. To vindicate God's own name before the Gentiles (Ezek. 20: 1-32, 44; 36:22, 32; etc.)
3. To receive discipline for the rejection of the Messiahship of Yeshua and for preventing the spread of His gospel (Lk. 21: 20-24; Eph. 2:3; 1 Thess. 2:13-16; etc.)

4. To surface the godly, believing remnant (Rom. 11:13-14, 25-29; cf. Jer. 30:1-31:37; etc.).

In summary then, it can be seen that this present evil and suffering world is the best possible way to the eventual best possible world. In fact, much of the present suffering leads to positive benefits even in this age, in the midst of the darkness itself. Whether it be the church, the Gentiles, or the Jews, God is permitting evil and suffering and indeed even using it for man's better good as well as His ultimate glory.

CONCLUSION

Theodicy is the justification of the moral actions of God. There are several different and often opposing views offering themselves for such a justification. Biblical theism is the best offering for all of the problems involved in a true theodicy. The infinite, personal Creator has created a world that allows for personal, moral choices by His creatures, thus preserving true moral freedom. At the same time, He is using this present evil world as the best possible way to the eventual best possible world.

It has also been seen that theologically biblical theism best reflects all of the major categories of systematic theology. In fact, after reviewing the categories, it is possible to see why God's permissive toleration of evil and suffering in this present world is both reasonable and logical. It is in accord with His own nature and truth. This, however, does not mean that we can presently know all of the answers in a truly biblical theodicy, for God has not yet revealed His final word on this most difficult problem—there is still room for mystery (cf. Deut. 29:29; Rom. 11:33). Finally, the Word of God makes it quite clear that God has several different purposes or reasons for allowing such evil and suffering in His world. Whether it be with the church, the Gentiles, or the Jews, God is working all things according to His sovereign and gracious will in order



Lest We Forget



that He will be ultimately glorified and that man will ultimately experience the greater good. The Holocaust is just one of many violent eruptions that the Jewish people have faced and will face again in the future. The men who are responsible for such atrocities will ultimately pay for their evil choices and actions (cf. Gen. 12:3; etc.). But in the meantime, it is hoped that Israel according to the flesh will learn the painful lessons that God is trying to teach her.

It is only fitting to close this article with the very words of Holy Scripture, words that have comforted God's people down through the centuries, especially as they faced the onslaught of evil and suffering:

*Shall not the Judge of
all the earth deal
justly?*

(Gen. 18:25)

*The Rock! His work is
perfect, for all His
ways are just; a God of
faithfulness and
without injustice,
righteous and upright
is He.*

(Deut. 32:4)

¹ G. C. Berkouwer, *The Providence of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952), p. 232.

² Ibid., p. 266.



The Toxic Roots and Bitter Fruits of Modern Anti-Semitism

By Dr. Alan M. Shore¹

Anti-Semitism has been termed the world's oldest hatred. For those among us who embrace the view that there is a spiritual dimension attached to Jew-hatred, the battle is not merely against flesh and blood but occurs in a larger context of enmity. Be that as it may, it is unarguable that Jews have for centuries been the focus of a unique form of virulence. If it is indeed the world's oldest hatred, our unenviable position is also in a sense a testimony to our hardihood. After all, to have set this unasked-for record of longevity, we must still be here, having outlasted a multitude of foes. In asserting our presence, Jewish people embody a prophetic word to those who seek our harm that although they can wound us, they cannot prevail.

Here in America, the events of past months have once again raised, at least for the moment, the awareness that Jewish people are frequently targets of unreasoning aggression. In the New York City area alone, 2019 was capped by over a dozen violent attacks that were reported over a two-week period stretching into the first week of 2020, including an attack that wounded five at a Hanukkah party at a rabbi's house in suburban Monsey. The uptick in physical attacks and acts of vandalism directed at synagogues and Jewish cemeteries is just that: an uptick. That is, it is a spike in the criminal expression of the bigotry that is ongoing and has unhappily ingrained itself in our culture over many decades.

Attacks from All Sides

Yet, at this particularly fraught moment, I cannot think of another time when Jews have faced the enmity of those drawn from such a broad spectrum of ideologies as today. Our foes are drawn from right-wing, white supremacists, and they also infest the hallowed halls of many liberal universities that ought to be ashamed of themselves.

Where did all of this come from? What is its history and the path of its development? In the brief space of an article, I'd like to step back for just a moment and reflect upon these questions, beginning with a more precise definition of the word "anti-Semitism" that goes beyond simple Jew-hatred. In doing so, I hope to provide a challenge to believers to sharpen their thinking and their understanding. The first thing I want to propose is that there is a distinction between the anti-Judaism that was conceived and promulgated by the institution of the church and the later anti-Semitism that arose from other sources.

Conjoined Twins

Berkeley scholar Daniel Boyarin has noted that the birth of present-day Judaism and the Jewish movement that developed into present-day Christianity

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occurred during that same first-century, post-Temple moment. He likens that relationship to the sibling rivalry of Jacob and Esau, Abraham and Sarah's twin grandsons, who vied from birth for the blessings that their father Jacob was authorized to confer.²

I would take this image even a step further. I liken the inextricable bond of Jew to Christian and vice-versa to the conjoined twins Chang and Eng, better known as P.T. Barnum's celebrated Siamese twins. Only instead of sharing a liver, and often pictured standing awkwardly side by side, Judaism and Christianity are joined at the chest, heart to heart, sharing one bloodstream and sentenced to stare directly into each other's eyes, unable to get away from each other, as much as both of them may long to.

Such was the case in the early years of Judaism and Christianity's preadolescence. This was a sibling rivalry that caused Christianity to disown its Jewish connection, thereby impoverishing itself to a considerable extent, in this writer's viewpoint. Thus, this set the stage for the deeply antagonistic and contemptuous attitude that has characterized the Christian approach to Judaism until quite recently.

Moreover, it is said, Chang and Eng would occasionally break out into mostly futile fistfights when one wanted to go one way and the other did not. They did each other only small damage because they were roughly the same size. But what if one of these twins were to grow into a giant and a bully? Who gets the worst of that match-up? Is it any wonder that the Jewish people's narrative of Jewish-Christian relations is a litany of grievance upon grievance, rooted in Jewish cultural memory and liturgical tradition?

An Alienated Minority

Prior to the modern era, Christianity's rapid rise and the dominant role it

assumed in Christianizing societies placed the Jews in the pinched and vulnerable position of an "alienated minority," as historian Kenneth Stow puts it, in the apt title of his book about Jewish experience in Europe during the Middle Ages.³ By mid-second century, while the gospel spread along the Roman roads, the mother church in Jerusalem was swept away as Roman military might crushed successive Jewish rebellions. As a result, the emerging institution of the church gained an outsized influence, often accompanied by the mentality that if Christianity were to triumph, Judaism must be humiliated.

Try as they might to discredit Judaism, the Jews remained very much on the minds of the early church fathers and those who followed them. In time, the church's position regarding the Jews was deeply influenced by the fifth century writings of Augustine. According to Augustine's interpretation of Psalm 59:12, "Kill them not, lest my people forget," the Jews retained an essential function in the economy of God, particularly in the area of eschatology.⁴ Augustine acknowledged that the turning of the Jews toward the gospel was an essential precondition of the church's anticipated return of the Messiah. As a result, although having forfeited their favored status through their unwillingness to accept the assertions of the church, the Jews were nonetheless an indispensable element in the church's understanding of the goal toward which the world was pressing. Therefore, the church begrudgingly acknowledged that the Jews' presence in the world must be preserved. However, as such thinking went, the Chosen People had lost their place through their unbelief in Yeshua the Messiah, doomed to wander unhappily throughout the world even as they were permitted to be reviled for their faithlessness and disobedience.



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Although frequently ignored, the position of the Catholic Church, articulated by Pope Gregory I and restated over the centuries, was that the Jews could be restricted and ostracized but ought not be forcibly converted or killed simply because they were Jews.⁵

As the church expanded and consolidated its temporal power, Augustine's influential teaching would come to have significant ramifications beyond the sphere of church doctrine. As the institutions of the church came to exert dominance in spheres of political power in Europe in the medieval era, the theological assumptions of Jewish subservience became manifest in the Jews' unenviable legal and social standing in the lands under Christian dominion where they resided. Proscribed from normal participation in the dominant Christian culture, the Jews were commonly demonized and condemned to a vulnerable and uncertain existence, prone to expulsions and periodically stripped of their possessions.

Anti-Judaism vs. Anti-Semitism

It is impossible to overstate the harm that the anti-Judaism that embedded itself in the church's teaching has caused and which, to this day, still rears its ugly head. But although they often go hand in hand, anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism are not the same thing. Here's why.

Anti-Semitism is not based on the hatred of the Jewish religion. It is based on hatred of Jewish peoplehood. And although this may startle

some, the theory of race, out of which anti-Semitism arises, owes much to the writings of Charles Darwin, both *On the Origin of Species*, and his lesser-known work, *The Descent of Man*, in which Darwin applies his theory of natural selection to human cultures. A man of his time, he drew sharp distinctions between what he perceived to be the civilized and the savage, and his concept of the civilized deeply conditioned his own prejudices. The English philosopher Herbert Spencer took exception to Darwin's term "natural selection" because he thought it implied that nature had the agency to select anything, and instead coined the still-serviceable term "survival of the fittest." Darwin was delighted with the phrase.⁶

In many cases, the original thinking of a theorist is guided toward a path that the theorist may or may not have sanctioned. It fell to Darwin's cousin Francis Galton to draw out some of the possible frightening ramifications of Darwin's theory. If nature tends to eliminate the unfit, why should not human beings nudge the process along? If inferior stock could be bred out of a herd of cows, why not out of a herd of human beings? Thus began the eugenics movement, which caught fire in America, where in California alone 20,000 forced sterilizations took place in the twentieth century in an attempt to weed out the "losers" in life's race.

As a scholar in modern Jewish history, I have on many occasions visited the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research on West 16th Street in Manhattan. It is both a repository and a part of Jewish history that is dedicated to the preservation of that history. Yet, each time before I enter, I pause to gaze at a little-noticed plaque on a building just feet away next door. It marks an earlier location of the Margaret Sanger Clinic House.

This was the first legal birth control clinic to open in the United States. Now, regardless of what someone thinks about birth control, what makes the juxtaposition of these two buildings so chilling is that Margaret Sanger was a vocal advocate of eugenics and the forced sterilization of the "unfit." In 1920, Sanger publicly stated that "birth control is nothing more or less than the facilitation of the process of weeding out the unfit [and] of preventing the birth of defectives."⁷ This is just the sort of thinking that informs the goals of those who seek not to preserve, as YIVO strives to do, but to destroy the footprint of the Jewish people upon the earth.

To emphasize a point, the policy of forced sterilization was not a Nazi invention. In fact, it was at one time upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. In its infamous 1927 decision, Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote, "It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime, or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind . . . Three generations of imbeciles are enough."⁸ Years later, the Nazis at the Nuremberg trials quoted Holmes's words in their own defense.

What does this have to do with anti-Semitism? The word "Semite," used in its modern sense, arose in connection with the emergence of nineteenth century race theory. It quickly became weaponized as "anti-Semitism." In Vienna, to cite only one example, it was deftly wielded by Mayor Karl Lueger to scapegoat that city's Jewish population. In doing so, he won the admiration of an aspiring young political activist living in Vienna. His name was Adolf Hitler, who wrote approvingly in *Mein Kampf* of the American

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advocacy of eugenics as a tool of social engineering. "There is today one state," wrote Hitler, "in which at least weak beginnings toward a better conception [of immigration] are noticeable. Of course, it is not our model German Republic, but the United States."⁹ Hitler's admiration of eugenics coincided nicely with the political advantages of European anti-Semitism. He never forgot the ideological and political lessons he learned in Vienna at the feet of Karl Lueger.

A Hundred Baptisms Would Not Have Saved Them

Allow me to stress that it is the racist and not the religious that transforms the earlier anti-Judaism into modern anti-Semitism. One need look no further than the fact that German Jewish church members, of whom there were a significant number, were hauled away to the concentration camps or otherwise disposed of along with other Jews. A hundred baptisms would not have saved them because it was their Jewish blood, not their religion, that made them Jews in Hitler's sight. And the race theory that distinguishes between the superior and inferior, buttressed by the eugenics movement, dovetailed in a truly fiendish way with Hitler's determination to revive the ancient mythology of the Aryan master race to forge a new national and cultural identity for Nazi Germany. The outcome? The murder of six million Jews and the stench of the anti-Semitism that lingers to this day.

To sum up thus far, the church's centuries-old, deeply embedded anti-Judaism and its contempt for Jews turned and fertilized the soil in which the seeds of modern anti-Semitism took root and then bore and continue to bear their evil fruit.

The Power of Guilt

Where does this leave us? Is there a single unifying principle that explains our contemporary anti-Jewish violence apart from the belief that Satan is behind it all? If so, that explanation is proving to be elusive. Perhaps it lies to some extent in the bitter quip, "The Germans will never stop blaming the Jews for Auschwitz." The gist of that saying is this: The memory of the Holocaust is so unbearable to the descendants of its perpetrators that they have come to resent the people whose continued existence is an unwanted reminder of a past that cannot be undone.

In a wider sense, that mentality may explain, at least partly, the rash of acts presently emanating from so many seemingly unrelated quarters and ideologies. The Jewish presence afflicts our collective conscience in a way that may be said to be similar to how our conscience is convicted by the Holy Spirit. How we respond to that spiritual discomfort says a great deal about the kind of people we are. This sense of guilt can generate confusion, anger, and hostility toward the very people about whom we feel guilty, whether rightly or wrongly; or it can lead along a path that moves us toward repentance, forgiveness, and restoration.

Christians and Jews have much to learn from and to teach one another. Moreover, Jewish followers of Yeshua are uniquely positioned to carry out a ministry of reconciliation to those who will receive us. In a sense, we are a priesthood that acts on behalf of our unbelieving "kinsmen in the flesh," promoting access to a Redeemer who is recognizably Jewish to those to whom He was first revealed. We are also prophets to the body of Messiah, which stands in need of a firmer grasp of who we are and what our place is in the eternal scheme of

things. Messianic believers straddle two worlds, Jewish and Christian. They are a part of both while not, in this present age, completely at home in either. Yet, the ambiguity of our situation gives us a fuller perspective, enabling us to act as ambassadors on behalf of both worlds, one to the other.

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² Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 2-6.

³ Kenneth R. Stow and Mazal Holocaust Collection, *Alienated Minority: The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

⁴ Ibid., 18.

⁵ Ibid., 9.

⁶ Charles Darwin, *The Variation of Animals and Plants Under Domestication* (D. Appleton, 1899), 6.

⁷ "Eugenics and Birth Control | American Experience | PBS," accessed January 21, 2020, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/experience/features/pill-eugenics-and-birth-control/>.

⁸ Adam Cohen, *Imbeciles: The Supreme Court, American Eugenics, and the Sterilization of Carrie Buck* (New York: Penguin Press, 2017), 303.

⁹ Quoted in Arthur Caplan and Robert Arp, *Contemporary Debates in Bioethics* (Chichester West Sussex; Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 359.



BAD THEOLOGY HELPED FEED THE HOLOCAUST

by Mottel Baleston

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Every five years, it is my privilege—and my solemn responsibility—to teach a course at the Ariel School of Messianic Jewish Studies entitled “The History and Theology of the Holocaust.” The students are a mixed group of believers from both the USA and overseas. In recent years, about 25% have been Jewish. These students usually have familiarity with the subject of the Holocaust, but for the others, it is my desire to impress upon them just how important this topic is. At the top of the outline, I composed these words as my opening statement:

“For today’s Jewish community, there is no other event as important, no other event as disturbing, no other event as horrifying, no other event that has done more to shape self-identity and galvanize commitment to Jewish survival and continuity than the murder of six million European Jews, the Holocaust.”

The subject is not theoretical to me, but rather it is deeply personal. I was born into a Jewish family in New York City and lived in a neighborhood that had a very large number of Holocaust survivors. In one of my earliest memories, I am sitting in a barber chair just before the start of kindergarten and am seeing a number tattooed on the bare arm of Isaac, the owner, and also on his brother’s arm working in the next chair. I waited until my father and I left the shop to ask about it and saw my father’s face tighten as he said that Isaac was born in Poland and was forced into a concentration camp during “The War” along with all the other Jews of his village. He had to work all day long breaking rocks and building roads. My father explained it in terms I could understand. “He only got one piece of bread and one bowl of soup each day. The Nazis took away his name and gave him a number instead. His parents were taken away to be killed, along with all the young children, but don’t ask him about it; we don’t talk about the war.” Case closed.

There were over a dozen Holocaust survivors, often shopkeepers, with numbers that I would regularly see in my neighborhood in the course of a typical week. These were middle-aged people in the 1960s, and they included my teacher in the Jewish school I attended two days a week after public school and several people in our synagogue. What many do not realize is that a large number of people killed during the Holocaust were murdered in the field or within a day of arriving at a camp and never received numbers.

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As a child, I was given a simple explanation for who carried out the Holocaust: “the Christians.” Now, even as a child I understood that there were various churches of Christians with very different practices, but what seemed indisputable is that the people who carried out these crimes had some connection with a church and identified as Christians.

Fast forward 15 years and I had become a believer in Yeshua as my Messiah, “a Christian.” What was I now to do with this tension over the Holocaust? Did Christians carry out this deeply satanic act?

As I write this article, I am aware that I am walking through a minefield of the emotions and intellects of my readers. Some may have a knee-jerk, visceral, negative reaction to the suggestion that Christians could have carried out these acts. Others recognize that there is often a wide gap between those whose loyalty is to a church institution and those whose loyalty is to the person and teachings of Jesus the Messiah.

With the conviction that all truth is God’s truth, let’s pursue the facts as we focus on this central question: What were the theological trends within Christendom that allowed the horrors of the Holocaust to occur?

First, a simple definition: “The Holocaust” is the term used to describe the killing of six million European Jews from 1938 through 1945 as part of a program of deliberate extermination planned and executed by the Nazi regime in Germany.

We are not minimizing the suffering of others; we surely recognize that millions of Poles and Russians and others suffered greatly at the hands of the Nazi regime during World War II. But for the last half-century, the word “Holocaust” has been used to particularly describe the intentional effort to carry out the destruction of the entire Jewish people, and to expand its meaning only invites a dilution of the unique and satanic origin of this event.

Shift in Bible Interpretation

One of the most fundamental helps in understanding Scripture is the adage: “When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense.” In essence, that means that whenever possible, we should embrace the literal meaning of Scripture and not imagine some sort of allegorical or alternative meaning. That literal method has been followed by the most faithful Bible teachers over the centuries.

An example of why this is important is found in Jeremiah 31:3 where God says of Israel “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” Any honest reading of the passage in its context tells you that God is speaking of national Israel. The verse is a reflection upon God’s character and His covenantal faithfulness. The New Testament apostles acknowledged God’s eternal Abrahamic Covenant with Israel and anticipated that He would fulfill His promises to them in a literal way. This is not a blanket salvation, but rather it is a recognition that there will be a saved remnant among the Jewish people and that they will be recognizable as Jews.

Yet, as hundreds of years went by and the church drifted away from the apostles’ teaching, some became hateful toward the Jewish people and sought alternative meanings to a plain understanding of the text. By the year 250 A.D., Origen of

Alexandria had become an influential church writer, and he promoted an allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures that would become influential in the early formation of both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox branches of Christendom. His methodology meant that whenever the Scriptures admonished the Jewish people for unfaithfulness, as the prophets often did, they addressed the ethnic Jewish people. But whenever God made statements to Israel such as “I have loved you with an everlasting love” or “I have engraved you on the palms of my hands,” they imagined that this meant the Christian church. In essence, they taught that whenever bad things were said about Israel, it must mean the Jews, but whenever God said good things about Israel, He means the church.

Ultimately, that anti-Jewish bias would fully develop as outright violence by some. The writings of John Chrysostom were basic study material from the fifth century onward in many Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox settings, and his homiletic writings can still be found in a number of evangelical seminaries. Some of his devotional writings seem standard, but he went out of his way to aim toxic, angry writings against the Jewish people. In his book *Adversus Judaeos* (“Against the Jews”), Chrysostom writes in 386 A.D.:

The Jews are the most worthless of all men. They are lecherous, greedy, rapacious. They are perfidious murderers of Christ. They worship the devil, their religion is a sickness. The Jews are the odious assassins of Christ, and for killing God there is no expiation possible, no indulgence or pardon. Christians may never cease vengeance, and the Jew must live in servitude forever. God always hated the Jews. It is incumbent upon all Christians to hate the Jews.

Leading up to the Holocaust, the Nazi propaganda machine used these very quotes to justify the growing persecution of Jews in Germany.

In research for this article, I accessed websites from traditional Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox groups to see what they said about Chrysostom, and the majority were united in attempting to whitewash or explain away his call for violence against the Jewish people. In particular, the charge that all Jewish people are guilty of the death of Jesus is one that has gained traction throughout the history of Christendom and has led to much violent persecution. An honest reading of the New Testament certainly shows that the apostate Jewish leaders conspired with the Romans to put Yeshua away because it fit both their aims. At the same time, tens of thousands of ordinary Jewish people had come to faith in Messiah Jesus, and, of course, all of the apostles and early followers were Jewish. For the Byzantine church to buy into the false idea that somehow the Jewish people are guilty of the death of Jesus betrays an abysmal lack of scriptural understanding. We have the very words of Yeshua Himself who said, “No man takes my life from me, but I willingly lay it down” (John 10:18).

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The false teachings of Origen, Chrysostom, and others would launch what historians call "the teaching of contempt," a phrase used by reputable scholars of every persuasion to describe the irrational targeting of Jewish people by some theologians of Christendom. Bundled together with some other non-biblical doctrines, in recent years it has become known as "replacement theology," denoting the idea that the church has replaced Israel, that even the literal land promises are made allegorical and transferred to the church, and that God has only contempt for the ethnic Jewish people today. That teaching of contempt would often be heard in sermons leading up to Good Friday as the Jewish people would be blamed for the death of Yeshua. Particularly emotional services would sometimes result in violent hordes in Europe sweeping through Jewish homes, pulling people out into the streets, and hacking them to death. Yes, this has literally

happened many times over, the evil fruit of over a thousand years of this teaching of contempt.

Martin Luther

One thousand years after Chrysostom, a young Roman Catholic monk named Martin Luther read those writings as part of seminary curriculum. Initially, Luther was inclined to research, study, and question, and as he read the Scriptures, he became convinced of the error of many Catholic doctrines. Then, in seeking to understand and translate the Old Testament Scriptures into German, he

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became friends with several rabbis who taught him Hebrew. Over the years, he attempted to convince them of his views, but as that failed, he became very bitter toward them and began to draw ideas from the toxic well of replacement theology that he had learned in the monastery. Finally, by 1543, Luther wrote:

The Jews are a base, whoring people, that is, no people of God, and their boast of lineage, circumcision, and law must be accounted as filth . . . They are full of the devil's feces . . . which they wallow in like swine . . . The synagogue is an incorrigible whore and an evil slut . . . Their synagogues and schools should be set on fire, their prayer books destroyed, rabbis forbidden to preach, homes razed, and property and money confiscated. They should be shown no mercy or kindness, afforded no legal protection, . . . these

poisonous envenomed worms should be drafted into forced labor or expelled for all time . . . We are at fault in not slaying them. We must drive them out like mad dogs.¹

Four hundred years later, the Nazi regime followed Luther's advice down to the letter, with Adolf Hitler quoting Luther as justification for the waves of violence directed against Jewish families.

The Holocaust

A full telling of the historical origins of the Holocaust is not the subject of this article. However, the theological toxin, "the teaching of contempt" described above and found in the institutional churches, fed the atmosphere that allowed this unthinkable horror. That teaching of contempt meant that even many in the German Protestant churches quickly complied with the directives of the Third Reich as far back as the mid-1930s to scrub from their liturgy and practice any mention of the Jewishness of Jesus.

In 1935, Germany enacted the Nuremberg Laws, which viewed the Jewish people as less than fully human and legalized racist persecution against them. The teaching of contempt helped fuel this thinking.

November 1938 saw waves of violent attacks against Jewish families, shops, and synagogues throughout Germany and Austria in an event known as *Kristallnacht*. Rev. Martin Sasse, Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thuringia, published a compendium of Martin Luther's writings shortly after *Kristallnacht* in which he applauded the burning of the synagogues. He noted the coincidence of the date of the rampage, writing in the introduction: "On 10 November 1938, on Luther's birthday, the synagogues are burning in Germany." The German people, he urged, ought to heed these words "of the greatest anti-Semite of his time, the warner of his people against the Jews."

Certainly, it is true that some genuine Christians in Germany and Europe resisted Nazi directives, and many suffered for it. There were thousands of church members who took risks to protect the Jewish people, but there were tens of thousands who willingly became collaborators and helped the Nazis round up Jewish people to be stuffed into cattle cars. Some even formed militias that assisted the Nazis in hunting down and shooting Jews where they were found. This form of slaughter, commanded by SS officers but using local volunteers, became known as the "Holocaust by bullets."

A full theological understanding of the Holocaust goes beyond the scope of this article and would include Satan's age-old hatred for the Jewish people because they were used by God to give to the world the Scriptures and the Savior. That is a crucial study and one detailed by Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum in his book *The Footsteps of the Messiah*. What we need to remember is that every person who has been adopted into the family of God through the sacrifice of the Messiah of Israel needs to study the Scriptures carefully, avoid false teaching such as replacement theology, and have a love for the people of Israel.

¹Martin Luther, *On the Jews and Their Lies* (eBook by Eulenspiegel Press, 2015).





Who Killed Yeshua?

By Bob Morris

WHO KILLED YESHUA?

God

Satan

World

Romans

Jews

Yeshua

You





Who Killed Yeshua?

By Bob Morris

The Background

The year 2020 began with Westboro Baptist Church members again picketing a religious organization. They stood at the entrance of Yeshiva University holding "Jews Killed Jesus" signs.² This accusation is nothing new. The crusaders cried this as they persecuted the Jewish community in Europe and Israel. The Nazis made this accusation when they murdered six million Jews during World War II. In 2003, Loyola Academy in Wilmette investigated an incident in which about 50 students chanted an anti-Semitic taunt, "You killed Jesus," during a heated basketball game against rival New Trier Township High School.³ A year later, someone vandalized an outdoor Florida menorah with the words "You killed Jesus."⁴ And in 2016, fans cheering for a Catholic basketball team shouted, "You killed Jesus" to opposing players from a school with a large Jewish population.

The Accusation

"The Jews killed Christ" is a perennial issue that we face in Jewish missions. I was confronted with this subject when a woman working for a Jewish anti-missionary organization frequently called me. She inevitably raised the allegation that all Christians believe the Jews killed Messiah. She tried to convince me I was a traitor to my own people. I responded with a lengthy explanation of the truth.

Theologically, we call the accusation that the Jews killed Yeshua "deicide," "the murder of God." This charge entails three elements:

1. The Jewish people alone (solely) are responsible for the death of Messiah.
2. Every Jewish person (universally) is guilty.

3. The Jewish community will forever (permanently) be guilty of this crime.

Without even hearing the gospel, many Jewish people reject it as a reaction to the charge they alone are responsible and continue to be responsible for the death of Yeshua. This charge is still taught as biblical truth today. One statistic indicates that 75 percent of conservative Protestants believe the Jews are permanently guilty of killing Yeshua.⁵ The result has been the Jewish rejection of the gospel and anti-Semitism plaguing Jewish-Christian relations for centuries.

Augustine (354-340 A.D.) stated that God marked the Jews when they murdered the Messiah and thus they cannot be destroyed. Their dispersion and misery serves as a witness against them regarding their evil act.

John Chrysostom (344-407 A.D.) said, "[The Jews] are the perfidious murderers of Christ... The Jews are the odious assassins of Christ... It is incumbent upon all Christians to hate the Jews."

Even Martin Luther wrote the fervently anti-Semitic essay "On the Jews and Their Lies." He blamed Jewish suffering on "their sin of crucifying Jesus."⁶ Some modern Bible teachers and pastors continue to champion this teaching.

Is this charge biblical? Is your Jewish doctor, neighbor, relative, co-worker, etc., guilty of murdering your Savior?

The answer is a simple and emphatic, "Absolutely not!" What the Bible says about this issue must be the foundation of our thinking. Otherwise, we will order our lives on subjective human emotions or ideas that could be absolutely wrong and deceive us, with disastrous consequences, as history has revealed. Who is responsible for the death of the Son of God?

God

The First Party: God

The first party responsible for the death of Messiah is God Himself. The Bible teaches that God is all-knowing and all-powerful. Absolutely nothing catches Him by surprise. Absolutely nothing has ever been, is now, or ever will be out of His control for a moment, from the largest galaxy in the heavens to the smallest subatomic particle. Psalm 147:5 states, *Great is our Lord and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite* (see also Isaiah 40:28, 46:10; and Romans 11:33-34).

Acts 2:23 declares that Yeshua was delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God and put to death. Furthermore, Acts 4:27 tells us that Messiah's death was whatever God's hand and God's purpose predestined to occur. God planned His Son's death from the beginning.

For this reason, the Messiah's sufferings could be predicted through the prophet's writings. Yeshua affirmed the prediction when He stated in Luke 24:44, *All things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled*. This included His suffering and death (see also Isaiah 52:13-53:12 and John 3:16.) Thus, God bears responsibility for Yeshua's death.

Satan

The Second Party: Satan

The origin of sin and rebellion is found in the mind of God's most beautiful and intelligent creature, Satan (Ez. 28). Satan's unrighteousness is revealed in Isaiah 14:13-14: *But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'* Satan desired a position greater than what he already possessed. He wanted to rule the angels in place of Michael the archangel. He wanted to rule Israel as the messiah/king. He wanted the glory that belongs only to God. He wanted to usurp God Himself.

Satan spread his nefarious selfishness to mankind in Genesis 3. There, God promised that the coming Messiah would judge Satan: *He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel* (Genesis 3:15). From that point on, Satan knew the only way to avoid God's judgment was to destroy the coming Messiah.

This relentless but futile goal is revealed graphically in Revelation 12:4b: *And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child*. The dragon is Satan, the woman is Israel, and the child is Yeshua. When Yeshua died, Satan thought he had succeeded in devouring the Messiah. However, all that Satan did was fulfill the prophecy of Genesis 3:15 and ensure his own condemnation.

Who Killed Yeshua?



World

The Third Party: The World

The evil world system, which the prince of this world controls, stands in opposition to God, His Messiah, and those who are "in Messiah." As a result, the world persecuted Yeshua (Jn. 15:20). The highest form of that loathing, abuse, and cruelty was the murder of the holy Son of God. However, Yeshua overcame and judged the world through His death on the cross (Jn. 12:31-33). He will execute judgment when He returns.

Romans

The Fourth Party: The Romans

Rehearsing the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah in Acts 2:23, Peter held the Roman government culpable. He grouped the Roman government and its representatives under the label "godless men" stating, *This Man [Yeshua], delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death* (Acts 2:23).

In Acts 4:27, Peter made the association specific by naming the key officials involved. Clearly, the Romans represent the entire Gentile world at large. *For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Yeshua, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel*.

Jews

The Fifth Party: The Jewish People

The Jewish community must accept its share of the responsibility for Yeshua's death. In the book of Acts, Peter addressed a crowd of *devout men from every nation under heaven* (Acts 2:5-6) and told them: *You nailed [Yeshua] to the cross* (Acts 2:23). The responsibility, however, extends beyond the religious leadership. While praying, the assembly of Jewish believers in Messiah stated in Acts 4:27 that the people of Israel were gathered against God's holy Servant Yeshua. Israel must accept the proper amount of fault in this crime.

Yeshua

The Sixth Party: Yeshua

In John 10:1-18, Yeshua identified Himself as the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11, 15). His death was totally under His control, power, and desire, for He said, *I lay down my life [crucifixion] that I might take it up again [resurrection]* (v. 17). Furthermore, He said, *I lay it down on my own initiative. I have authority to lay it down* (v. 18). Yeshua took upon Himself the appropriate responsibility for the experience of the cross.



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You

The Seventh Party: You

The Bible says Yeshua died for your personal sins and for my personal sins. Each one of us is personally responsible for what happened to our Savior. You and I have fallen short of God's glory. You and I have transgressed. You and I were helplessly enslaved to sin. He died for us because He loves us. *He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification* (Rom. 4:25). *For while we were still helpless, at the right time Messiah died for the ungodly* (Rom. 5:6). *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Messiah died for us* (Rom. 5:8).

The anti-Semitic remark "the Jews killed Christ" has crippled Jewish outreach for centuries because it hurls that partially true insult at Jewish people. Holding the entire community responsible for a profound and complex event is inaccurate. The Jewish community is only responsible for one-seventh of the blame for Messiah's death.

The Consequences

If the Jews are not solely responsible for the death of Yeshua, what consequence do they experience for their part in rejecting His Messiahship?

The consequence that fell upon the Jewish community for rejecting Yeshua's Messiahship was the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 A.D. by the Romans. The religious leadership of Israel precipitated this judgment when

they rejected Yeshua's Messiahship, claiming He was demon-possessed (Mt. 12:24). They blasphemed the Holy Spirit and brought upon the nation an unpardonable judgment (Mt. 12:31). The judgment is stated to be unpardonable because it would not be rescinded or alleviated.

As Yeshua began His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the multitudes greeted Him joyfully with the traditional Messianic greeting of Psalm 118:26: *Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord*. The multitudes hailed Him as the Messiah. If ever there was an appropriate time to rescind the judgment associated with rejecting Him, it was at this point. However, instead of canceling the punishment, Yeshua again pronounced words of judgment (Lk. 19:41-44; Mt. 23:37-39). Jerusalem and the Temple were doomed in spite of the cries of acclamation; the judgment could not be alleviated.

After the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, the Jewish community continued to live in the land until the Bar Kochba revolt, which lasted from 132 to 136 A.D. An entry in the *Jewish Virtual Library* states:

The Bar Kokhba revolt marked a time of high hopes followed by violent despair. The Jews were handed expectations of a homeland and a Holy Temple, but in the end were persecuted and sold into slavery. During the revolt itself, the Jews gained enormous amounts of land, only to be pushed back and crushed in the final battle of Bethar.⁷

The online version of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* adds:

In 135 Bar Kokhba (the Jewish leader) was himself killed at Betar, his stronghold in southwest Jerusalem. The remnant of the Jewish army was soon crushed; Jewish war casualties are recorded as numbering 580,000, not

including those who died of hunger and disease. Judaea was desolated, the remnant of the Jewish population annihilated or exiled, and Jerusalem barred to Jews thereafter.⁸

Therefore, I would personally date the modern Jewish Diaspora from 135-136 A.D. rather than 70 A.D. The source of modern Jewish suffering is not the rejection of Yeshua's Messiahship. The punishment for the rejection of Yeshua's Messiahship fell upon the Jewish community in the first century (70 A.D.), not the second century (135-136 A.D.), and will not fall again. Therefore, please *do not* tell a Jewish person the sufferings Jews have experienced over the last 2,000 years (especially the Holocaust) are a result of rejecting Yeshua.

The Source of Jewish Suffering

The Jewish community today is experiencing the curses of the Mosaic Covenant. The first covenant into which God entered with the Jewish people is called the Abrahamic Covenant. It is unconditional and eternal (Gen. 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-17; 15; 17). Some 430 years later (Gal. 3:17), God added the Mosaic Covenant, a temporary and conditional covenant, to Israel's responsibilities.

Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 contain the Mosaic Covenant's blessings and cursings. The blessings of the covenant would result from walking in faith with God. However, if Israel would not walk in faith, God promised a discipline that would get more and more severe as the nation's unfaithfulness continued. The promised discipline would begin with poverty and gradually add disease, drought, defeat, cannibalism, and oppression. The final and harshest chastisement that Israel would experience would be worldwide

dispersion (Deut. 28:64-68; Lev. 26:33-39). During that dispersion, Israel would become the most despised nation on earth. Her captors would talk about and ridicule Israel. Deuteronomy 28:64-66 predicts Jewish suffering during the last 20 centuries:

Moreover, the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known. And among those nations you shall find no rest, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the Lord will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul. So your life shall hang in doubt before you; and you shall be in dread night and day, and shall have no assurance of your life.⁹

In 30 A.D., Yeshua instituted the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Mt. 26:28; Mk. 14:24; Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25). Its essence is personal and individual salvation from sin. From that time until the present, individual Jews and Gentiles have entered into the blessings of the New Covenant by placing their faith in Yeshua as Savior and Messiah and receiving individual salvation (Jer. 31:34). However, the Jewish community as a community has chosen not to enter into the New Covenant. Romans 11:25-27 tells us that the community will not do so until Yeshua returns, when all Israel is saved.

Unfortunately, the Jewish people continued then and continue today to live in unfaithfulness and disobedience with 90 percent being atheistic or agnostic. Nine percent of the Jewish community follows Rabbinic Judaism, a man-made religion that rejects the Messiahship of Yeshua. Less than one percent of the Jewish worldwide community trusts in Yeshua.

Who Killed Yeshua?



The worldwide Jewish community is living under the stipulations of the Mosaic Covenant and in unbelief. The result is the current worldwide dispersion and discipline promised under the curses of the Mosaic Covenant. This has been the Jewish experience for the last 2,000 years.

How to use this information

I have shared this with you to help you witness to your Jewish friends and communicate that Yeshua is not the source of suffering. Rather, Yeshua is the source of salvation. He is the way out of this cycle of disbelief, disobedience, and suffering in which we find ourselves ensnared. He offers to Israel spiritual salvation from sin and physical salvation from the curses of the Mosaic Covenant. Most important, His offer of salvation is effective today for the individual, *for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved* (Joel 2:32).

Remember that the Jewish community bears only one-seventh of the responsibility for the death of the Messiah. The consequences for that involvement (the destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem) are over, finished, complete, and not applicable to the Jewish community today.

If this issue comes up between you and your Jewish friends, disavow any support for the charge of "deicide." Acknowledge that some Christians have and do teach that error but that your church does not and neither do you. Explain that Messiah's death is a profound and complex issue that cannot be reduced to a simplistic accusation. If they are open, take them on a short Bible study (the article above) and show them what the New Testament actually states. Let the Word of

God, the truth, this information, and your love do their work in their hearts.

The information in this article is what I shared with the anti-missionary. After receiving this material, the woman called me once again. We talked briefly. She ended the conversation by stating, "You could have been one of the *Gedolim*!"¹⁰ She never called again. I can only hope her closing comment was sincere and not flattery. I can only pray that this material gave her new insight into Yeshua's Messiahship and was a catalyst to move her from opposition to faith.



¹ Bob Morris is a retired pastor and director of HaDavar Messianic Ministries in Irvine, CA.

² *HaAretz*, January 17, 2020.

³ "Loyola Academy Apologizes for Student Taunts," *Chicago Tribune*, December 1, 2000.

⁴ *Fox News*; published December 4, 2012; updated November 20, 2014.

⁵ Rydelnik, Michael, "The Chosen People," April 1987, p. 6.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-bar-kokhba-revolt-132-135-ce>.

⁸ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Bar-Kokhba-Jewish-leader>.

⁹ Also see Lev. 26:31-39.

¹⁰ Great Ones of Rabbinic Judaism.



Is Another Holocaust Possible?

By Olivier Melnick

It was not long after the death camps had been liberated that the phrase "NEVER AGAIN" was coined. Its origins are a bit unclear, but many believe that it surfaced in the late 1940s in a kibbutz in Israel. The phrase is used to this day to proclaim that a Holocaust should never

again take place. It has been proclaimed by Jewish people and friends of Israel with hope and pride, but recently also with much trepidation. Could another Holocaust happen? Are we seeing "OVER AGAIN" quickly replacing "NEVER AGAIN"?





Is Another Holocaust Possible?

By Olivier Melnick

For a tragedy such as the Holocaust, or *Shoah* (Hebrew for "catastrophe"), to occur, several criteria have to come together and set the world stage. It is important to look at how they did converge in the early part of the twentieth century and how this led to the extermination of millions, including six million of my own people.

Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal (1908-2005) developed a list of six criteria that needed to be met in order for the stage to be set for a Holocaust:¹

1. Hatred (racism, bigotry, prejudice)

2. A dictatorship (one or more)

3. A bureaucracy influencing people to claim, "I was just following orders!"

4. Technology

5. A crisis as an opportunity to act on the hatred

6. A scapegoat to demonize, ostracize, and eliminate

These criteria are not exclusive to the Holocaust. They work together toward any ethnic cleansing or genocide. They create a convergence that turns people against people. Hence, we need to add a seventh criteria to these six points: blind allegiance to irrationality. All seven criteria were met in pre-war Germany and resulted in the death of millions. How many of them may be found today? A quick overview might surprise you!

1. HATRED

Not much needs to be said to make a case for the hatred that has become a characteristic of the 21st century. To name just a few of the battles currently raging in America alone, we have witnessed a drastic polarization between blacks and whites and Democrats and Republicans. We have also seen a renewed virulent hatred of Jews by anti-Semites.

Hate has existed in the heart of man since the very beginning of history (Genesis 4:3-15.) Hence, before anyone points the finger, we must remember that it is innate to human nature to hate, and it is clear from the biblical record that it is easier to hate than love.

2. A DICTATORSHIP

In many ways, the world is no longer what it was in the 1930s and 1940s, but in other ways, it is the same—and worse. Dictators and heads of totalitarian regimes have always existed, but with the progress made in global satellite communication, we are more aware of them—and sooner.

Iran, Syria, Palestine (Hamas), Lebanon (Hezbollah), and Venezuela are examples of dictatorships where the head of the country controls all things. Inevitably, when dictators rule, the people suffer, and when people suffer, Jews always seem to suffer even more, as they are often held responsible for the ills of the world.

We have seen the Jewish people being painted as the "Nazis of the Middle East," "occupiers of Palestine," and "human rights violators." These misnomers are promoted by totalitarian regimes and pushed through by the people of these respective countries.

3. A BUREAUCRACY

Whenever there is a hierarchy in place with a lot of red tape, programs, and committees, people find it easier to act blindly and hide behind programs and committees. If necessary, they put the blame for their actions on the persons above them, claiming that they were "just following orders" according to the established rules and often with the fear of losing their jobs. Many Nazis claimed that their superiors forced them to commit atrocities.

Things might not be as clear-cut today as they were during World War II, but when there is a bureaucracy in place, it is always easier to follow rules, as unethical as they might be. In a way, the modern BDS movement² against Israel is an example of this phenomenon. People blindly adhere to this position taken by their corporation, organization, and even church, thinking that if their leader set the example of boycotting Israel, they ought to follow.

4. TECHNOLOGY

To make the Holocaust possible, the Nazi regime became very creative, very fast. The *Einsatzgruppen*³ were made up of Nazis dedicated to killing Jews. They started by shooting them in front of mass graves dug by the very victims. Then they experimented with packing them in vans, tightly sealed and filled with carbon dioxide. Eventually, and to speed up the process, they sent their victims to the death camps where German efficiency, factory-style timetable, and new technology (Zyklon B) facilitated the "final solution to the Jewish question."

Today's technology has improved much in the way we can

dispose of human lives in massive numbers (by abortion, euthanasia, ethnic cleansings, wars, and other means.) Yet, the most dangerous technological development of the last decade has been the birth and growth of social networks. In and of themselves, social media are neutral tools, akin to a paintbrush that could be used to paint a swastika on a Jewish storefront or a masterpiece on a canvas, depending on the mindset of the person using it. The way social networks have been used to demonize the Jews is off the charts. These platforms are global, mostly free, and instantaneous, posing a great challenge to those fighting them with the truth. That growth has been exponential and is not showing any signs of slowing down.

5. A CRISIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ACT ON ONE'S HATRED

There have been many crises in the history of mankind, and very often the Jews have been held responsible, a truth that relates this point very tightly to the scapegoat criteria. An interesting observation is that before the birth of modern Israel in 1948, fewer ills of the world were blamed on the Jews. However, with the advent of the false narrative of the Palestinian displaced people in the early 1960s came the increase of accusations against the Jews. Suddenly, they were made responsible for almost any crisis that occurred around the globe. Furthermore, Jews are seen as controlling Hollywood, the banks, and major corporations in a greedy desire to control the world. The accusations resemble the hoax

that was published in 1905 under the title *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The sad truth is that anti-Semites will always find opportunities to act on their hatred, oftentimes creating a crisis that will fit their agenda.

6. A SCAPEGOAT

The concept of the Jewish people being the scapegoats of humanity is as old as the Jewish people themselves. Jealousy and pride (both part of our fallen human nature) are pushing people of all ages, races, and creeds to hate the Jews. Some are anti-Semitic and yet have never met, let alone interacted, with a Jewish person.

The Jewish scapegoat concept will not cease to exist until the return of Yeshua at the end of the tribulation. When we are in the millennium, the Jews will be seen in a positive light (Zech. 8:23) but, sadly, not before.

7. A BLIND ALLEGIANCE TO IRRATIONALITY

The current iteration of endtimes anti-Semitism highly relies on people's blind allegiance to the most irrational partnership that targets the Jewish people and Israel. How else could we explain the partnership of two ideologically opposed entities: the liberal Left and radical Islam? How can we explain their common hatred for Israel and their promotion of the BDS movement, campus intifada, and all other kinds of anti-Semitic rhetoric? Only Satan, the archenemy of God and by proxy of the Jews, can be behind all this irrationality and make the irrational seem so rational.

CONCLUSION

All criteria are in place today for another holocaust to take place. The fact that two-thirds of Americans cannot name one death camp and that one-third of young Americans cannot explain the Holocaust doesn't help either. It becomes the responsibility of Bible-believing followers of Messiah to promote the truth in churches and outside of their church communities. The upcoming tragedy can still be greatly reduced (Zech. 12:10, 13:8-9) if we share the gospel with the Jewish people before the time of Jacob's trouble (the great tribulation.) So, while another holocaust is possible and all criteria are in place, the Jewish people still have many friends in evangelical circles who are willing to pray for them, to speak up on their behalf, to defend them, and even to protect them.

God has promised to never allow Israel to be destroyed completely (Jer. 31:35-37), and it is incumbent on all believers to show their Jewish friends that they are truly on God's side.

¹ Simon Wiesenthal, *Every Day Remembrance Day: A Chronicle of Jewish Martyrdom* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1986), pp. 1-30.

² BDS stands for "Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions."

³ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC, *Einsatzgruppen: An Overview*. <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/>. Accessed Jan 2020.





replacement
theology

covenant reform
theologies

amillennialism

**¹⁶ THEREFORE ALL WHO DEVOUR
YOU WILL BE DEVoured; AND ALL
YOUR ADVERSARIES, EVERY ONE OF
THEM, WILL GO INTO CAPTIVITY; AND
THOSE WHO PLUNDER YOU WILL BE
FOR PLUNDER, AND ALL WHO PREY
UPON YOU I WILL GIVE FOR PREY.
¹⁷ FOR I WILL RESTORE YOU TO
HEALTH AND I WILL HEAL YOU OF
YOUR WOUNDS, DECLARES THE
LORD, BECAUSE THEY HAVE CALLED
YOU AN OUTCAST, SAYING: "IT IS
ZION; NO ONE CARES FOR HER."**

JEREMIAH 30:10, 16-17





The Metaphysical World

It is now 75 years after the Holocaust ended, and we must remember the complete depravity of the human heart that was spewed out on the Jewish people.

I am writing this with a tone that is not my normal way of writing because what I have to say is urgent for the sake of the Jewish people. Several years ago, I was asked by Lancaster Bible College to teach a class on the Holocaust. I said that I could not but that I would teach a class on what birthed the Holocaust. The Holocaust was not created in a vacuum. It did not "just" happen.

There is the human side to the Holocaust, and much has been written about the Hitlers and Hamans of human history. However, there is also a metaphysical side that comes from the unseen world of Satan and his "angelic" hordes. The Holocaust was his brainchild. It revealed his depraved mind. As the author of anti-Semitism, he is actively promoting the hatred against the Jewish people through his demonic realm, who in turn promotes it in unregenerate human hearts to incite them against the Jewish people. This is not just a human depravity but a spiritual depravity coming from Satan and his demonic hordes.

Back in the early 1970s, I read a worthless Christian book dealing with Satan. I do not wish to give the author or title because I do not want to give the book any credibility. The only good comment in the book may be paraphrased as follows: Believers will be able to enter God's presence where Satan once dwelt before his fall. We, who were not worthy, have been given everlasting life. Satan, on the other hand, can never return. This situation leads him to hate us and, in particular, to hate the Jewish people because they were the vehicle used by God

to redeem us. He is bent on destroying them as well as us, but he cannot. He himself will be placed in the lake of fire by God for all eternity.¹

Satan's Deprived Work

The final solution was not new with the Nazis; it flowed from the twisted, perverted, and depraved being of Satan. Ponder that! Satan is the author of sin and the father of lies (Jn. 8:44). All the woes, problems, and calamities originated in his heart.

Satan does his depraved work on two different but related planes. First, he works through his demons in depraved human hearts, for he is their father. In the church, he has worked as an angel of light through faulty theology causing havoc, bad doctrine, violence, and anti-Semitism for centuries. Today, there are four major forms of theology from the past that affect Jewish people and us today. Three of them are anti-Israel. They are replacement theology, amillennialism, and covenant reform theologies. One is pro-Israel. This school of thought is called dispensationalism. The first three are theological brothers, but the firstborn is replacement theology. It began poisoning the church as early as the second century A.D. by reading unbiblical interpretation into the Scriptures, thus setting the stage for slandering the Jewish people. By replacing God's people over the centuries, they have incited the "Christian church" to commit unspeakable atrocities against the Jews in the name of Messiah. Even today, these theological triplets incite the world against Israel and the Jewish people. Ariel Ministries recently published a book series entitled *Israel Betrayed*. When reading through the two volumes of

this series, I saw something that I never considered before: The anti-Semitism of the past set the groundwork for today's anti-Semitism. It dawned on me as I read fact after documented fact that the following people and organizations are setting the stage today for Satan's final attempt to destroy Israel and the Jewish people: Naim Ateek and his Palestinian Liberation theology, Stephen Sizer, Gary Burge, Hank Hanegraaff, Bethlehem Bible College, Sabeel Center, Christ at the Check Point Conferences, and the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) movement. These entities have been propagating their anti-Semitic hatred to the world. Satan is their key supporter, wishing to annihilate the Jewish people through Holocaust II, Armageddon!

Satan's Human Pawns

I strongly believe that the most neglected area in praying for the Jewish people concerns Satan's war on Israel. He stages his attacks from the unseen world by using human pawns. Let me preface this statement by saying that to some degree, people in the past had a better understanding than we do in grasping the spiritual struggle that exists in the world of demons and angels. Daniel 10:11-13 provides a glimpse of this battle.

Satan and his unseen hordes are bent on subverting the plan of God by thwarting and controlling nations and world governments for their evil purposes. This truth is relevant to Jews and Gentiles alike considering the anti-Semitism that exists in the world today. These unseen forces are in battle against God to thwart His plan. They fight against the faithful angels who

carry out the plan of God. Believers are not immune to these satanic attacks, as we see from looking at the diverse Christian theologies. We also see the spiritual warfare in the hatred and bigotry against people because of their ethnicity. We see it in both worldly philosophies and in the religious systems that are opposed to God and are attacking His moral law that is the foundation of society. The goal of God's enemies is to deceive mankind. Mankind is depraved and becomes the pawn in the clutches of the dark forces of this world. We know who the enemy is. But Judaism does not believe in a devil and is therefore unprepared and unequipped to fight against these satanic hordes. If it were not for a covenant-keeping God, Israel would have been annihilated from this planet long ago!

Israel stands unprepared for Holocaust II. In this battle, Satan will kill two-thirds of the Jewish people worldwide (Zech. 13:8). The Satanic table is being set by anti-Semites who have been deceived, and even some "Christian" anti-Semites have tasted Satan's appetizer. They claim that Zionism is racist, calling Israel an apartheid state. They deceive gullible believers into rejecting Israel to support a Palestinian state. Be careful, be watchful, and be discerning as scholars and theologians twist the Scriptures to undermine the biblical title deed Israel has to the land: the Abrahamic covenant. In your prayers for the Jewish people, pray for God to confuse and thwart the plans of Satan until his time of total and complete defeat comes at the hands of the Messiah of Israel, Yeshua.

¹ The lake of fire is Satan's sixth abode. For details on the abodes of Satan, see Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries) by visiting www.ariel.org/home.

The Metaphysical World



Satan and his unseen hordes are bent on subverting the plan of God by thwarting and controlling nations and world governments for their evil purposes.



Difficult Passages in the Hebrew Bible

By Michael Gabizon

Introduction

The problem of evil has been a longstanding topic of discussion for followers of the Messiah. It is often asked: If

God is benevolent (all-loving), omnipotent (all-powerful), and omniscient (all-knowing), why does evil persist in the world? The authors of Scripture were not oblivious to this conundrum. The psalmist Asaph, for example, cried out to God, asking why the wicked continue to prosper while the righteous suffer (Ps. 73). Similarly, in our contemporary setting, we can point to recent atrocities like the Holocaust and ask: Where was God?

Another related matter that has challenged students of the Bible for millennia is the cluster of "troublesome" narratives in the Hebrew Bible: narratives that appear to condone slavery, genocide, and deception. These texts have led many to question their faith or even abandon it altogether. I recall a couple of years ago reading a five-page, single-spaced letter from a follower of Messiah who was on the verge of leaving his faith because, he argued, the narratives of the Hebrew Scriptures portray God as both dangerous and unpredictable.

Followers of Messiah have attempted to explain these texts in different ways. In the early church, for example, many interpreters allegorized the warfare texts in the historical narratives, meaning that they understood those texts to symbolize the Christian's battle against evil. Others, such as Marcion in the second century, argued that Christians should abandon the Hebrew Bible altogether. Within the contemporary evangelical community, Eric A. Seibert at Messiah College has recently proposed denying the historicity of these troublesome narratives; he argues that they never took place.¹ In order to identify what *actually* took place, Seibert asserts, one must employ a "Christological" hermeneutic. In other words, only those stories in the Old

Testament that mirror Yeshua's New Testament revelation are to be considered valid and true. Needless to say, these narratives in the Hebrew Bible have been discussed many times throughout the past 2,000 years, and we continue to wrestle with how to best interpret and apply them today.

In this short essay, I want to highlight two principles to use when reading the Hebrew Bible that may help us better interpret difficult narratives.² These principles, of course, will not solve every issue, but they may help establish a foundation for further research. First, it is important to examine both the immediate and broader literary context of the passage. Narratives that are divorced from their context or from the rest of Scripture are prone to be misunderstood. This happens quite frequently when discussing difficult narratives in the Hebrew Bible. Second, it is necessary to read the Hebrew Bible in light of its ancient Near Eastern context. Indeed, comparisons and correlations between the Bible and its contemporary texts typically help illuminate our understanding of the Scriptures. Therefore, both the literary and historical context are necessary to keep in mind. While these points may seem basic, they provide important guidelines for developing a better understanding of the narratives in question.

Understanding the Biblical Context

When confronted with a difficult narrative, keep in mind that information from other portions of Scripture may help elucidate the text. One famous narrative that is often quoted to express the "unpredictability" of God is 2 Samuel 6, when David was in the process of bringing the ark of the covenant from the house of Abinadab to Jerusalem. During this journey, the ark was placed on a cart and was being carried by oxen, and

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when the ark began to tilt, *Uzzah reached out toward the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen nearly upset it. Despite Uzzah's good intentions, the anger of the Lord burned against Uzzah, and God struck him down there for his irreverence; and he died there by the ark of God* (2 Sam. 6:3-6). This short pericope may seem nonsensical at first glance, but it is important to read it in light of the rest of Scripture. Indeed, in Numbers 4-7, God had given explicit instructions to the priests for transporting the ark: It was to be covered (Num. 4:5-6), it was to be carried by the sons of Kohath (Num. 4:15), and it was to be carried on their shoulders (Num. 7:9). By contrast, the 2 Samuel 6 narrative makes no mention of the ark being covered, and the text explicitly states, *They placed the ark of God on a new cart* (2 Sam. 6:3). Since the ark of the covenant was an embodiment of God's presence, no one was to touch it or else they would profane the ark and thus be killed (Num. 4:15, 17-19). Therefore, despite Uzzah's good intentions, his negligence of God's instructions was the true cause of the judgment, not God's unpredictability. This narrative may be compared to the golden calf story in Exodus 32: With Moses up on the mountain, the people wanted to worship God (Ex. 32:1), thus displaying "good intentions." However, they neglected God's instructions for engaging in proper worship (Ex. 32:2-4) and were later judged because of this. Therefore, in light of the biblical context, God was not acting impulsively or unpredictably in 2 Samuel 6, but He was remaining faithful to what he had previously commanded.

Another narrative that is better understood in light of its literary context is 2 Kings 2:23-25, which recounts Elisha's judgment on some children for mocking him: *he [Elisha] was going up by the way, [and] young lads came out from the city and mocked him and said to him, 'Go up, you baldhead; go up, you baldhead!'... [Then] he cursed them in the name of the Lord. Then two female bears*

came out of the woods and tore up forty-two lads of their number. At first glance, Elisha's judgment appears overly harsh. However, it is necessary to examine the close literary context to gain a better understanding. First, at this point in history, Israel was neglecting her covenant with God and developing a disdain for the prophets of God (1 Kgs. 18:4). Therefore, the verbal attack of the boys was not simply an isolated event but also a symptom of the degenerated moral condition of the Israelite society. In light of God's covenant with Israel, it was only proper for Him to judge her for her disobedience. Second, while the narrative may be read as though some children were having "innocent fun," there are several things to keep in mind. The term "young lads" is elsewhere applied to Solomon during the early years of his reign when he articulated his own lack of wisdom and understanding. Therefore, from a literary perspective, the author of 2 Kings 2:24 was likely commenting on the spiritually dense status of these boys rather than focusing solely on their age. Also, the Hebrew term for "lads" in 2 Kings 2:24 is quite flexible; it may refer to babies (Ex. 2:6), but it may also refer to young adults, such as those who gave counsel to the king (1 Kgs. 12:8). Therefore, it is not contextually honest to presume that these were young, innocent children. Furthermore, the Hebrew word for "mock" is often used by the enemies of Israel who mock the nation (Ezek. 22:5; Ps. 44:14; 79:4), further demonstrating the wicked status of these youth. Therefore, the exclamations of the youth were not playful jest but weighty curses. The Torah is very clear that children must be obedient to their parents (Lev. 19:3) and that the consequences of disobedience may bring death (Deut. 21:18-21). However, these youths were not simply disobeying their parents but were also insulting the very representative of God. To insult a prophet would be akin to insulting God Himself. This was not done in ignorance but in arrogance against God. From a literary perspective, then, God's



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interaction with these youths should be seen as a judgment on Israel's idolatry and the degenerate state of the nation.

Hopefully, these two examples demonstrate the importance of understanding the literary background of texts to better comprehend difficult narratives. In each case, the rest of Scripture must be taken into consideration. However, this method must also be applied with caution. For example, some have argued that God's opinion of killing is inconsistent since God prohibited murder in the decalogue (Ex. 20:13), yet He later commanded the Levites to murder Israel's rebels (Ex. 32:27). At face value, these texts may appear inconsistent. However, the immediate context of each section must take precedence. In the first case, God was giving a standard generalization for how Israel should live as a theocratic nation. This command was rooted in the theological truth that all people are made in the image of God, who is holy. However, in Exodus 33:27, many had broken their covenant relationship with God by engaging in idolatry, thus defying His holiness. Therefore, Exodus 32 records God's righteous judgment against transgression. Both Exodus 20:13 and 32:27 are in line with God's justice, though each reflects a different facet of this truth. While some statements are universally true (i.e., God is holy), many commands are confined to specific situations.

Ancient Near Eastern Context

The second element to take into consideration is the broader ancient Near Eastern background of the Hebrew Bible. A comparison between the biblical text with other historical literature written around the same time may sometimes prove helpful in illuminating the biblical narratives. For example, in 1 Samuel 15, Saul was commanded to *strike Amalek and utterly*

destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey (1 Sam. 15:3). The rationale for this attack was to enact retribution against the Amalekites because they had attacked Israel soon after the Exodus (Ex. 17:8-16). Notwithstanding this reason, many view this command as genocidal: Why would God command the death of children and infants?

However, within other ancient Near Eastern literature, hyperbolic language was often employed in warfare contexts; generalizations were often used when reporting about wars. This literary function was employed to depict how decisive the battle was, not necessarily to communicate all of the details. We have seen this type of hyperbolic language used in the popular Lachish reliefs, which are Assyrian inscriptions that narrate the siege against Judah in 701 BCE. Although these annals claim to have destroyed numerous cities and to have captured large sums of people, even besieging King Hezekiah "like a bird in a cage," these reports are largely viewed as exaggerations in light of the biblical record. Thus, hyperbole was utilized in warfare contexts.

We also see this when comparing warfare narratives in the Bible. For example, in the book of Joshua, the author portrays Israel as having conquered the land of Canaan: *Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had spoken to Moses* (Josh. 11:23). However, Judges provides another perspective, which points out how many foreign nations actually remained in the land. These are not "contradictions" but rather a result of different literary methods being used by the author.

With this in mind, God's command in 1 Samuel 15 should be understood as mandating Saul to win a decisive victory over the Amalekites, not necessarily that he should literally destroy the children and infants. Notwithstanding Saul's preservation of the livestock and Agag, the king of Amalek, Saul



Difficult Passages in the Hebrew Bible

perceived himself to have *carried out the command of the Lord...[I obeyed] the voice of the Lord, and went on the mission on which the Lord sent me* (1 Sam. 15:13-20). However, it is evident that he did not kill all of the Amalekite people since David fought against the Amalekites again in 1 Samuel 27 in the same location that Saul had attacked them (cf. 1 Sam. 30). Therefore, for Saul to have been under the impression that he had obeyed God's command, he likely understood the hyperbolic element within the command to wipe out all people. Thus, understanding these warfare texts in their ancient Near Eastern context is imperative to appreciate the text.

Being aware of the historical background of the Scriptures also helps safeguard against immediately transporting texts and concepts from the text into our 21st century context. This becomes particularly problematic with slavery laws. Within the Hebrew Bible, there are numerous law codes that expound on regulations for having slaves, and the New Testament functions within a similar social framework (e.g., Philemon). While certain slave laws are still difficult to understand, it is imperative to understand how the slavery of the Bible was an ancient phenomenon and should not be equated with slavery in North American history. The one fundamental difference between biblical slavery and North American slavery is that biblical slavery was not contingent on lineage or genealogy but on debt. Indeed, in the Hebrew Bible, some entered into slavery willingly (Lev. 25:47). Furthermore, once a slave was released from his obligations, he had the ability to be reintegrated into society. This is a far cry from North American slavery that associated certain ethnic groups as either inherently inferior or superior beings. This is another example of how our 21st century mindset could become dangerous and may inhibit gaining a better understanding of the Hebrew Bible.

Conclusion

As students of the Bible, we will inevitably come into contact with passages that challenge our worldview and understanding. I posit that the two methods mentioned above, namely examining the historical and literary context, will help in gaining further understanding of the text. However, as one continues to struggle with these types of narratives in the Hebrew Bible, it is possible to become discouraged, confused, and heavy-hearted. If this is the case, I would encourage you that you are walking a well-worn path that the psalmists and prophets have walked before you. Indeed, many lament psalms communicate the psalmists' struggles before God. In Psalm 88, the author proclaimed: *You have put me in the lowest pit, in dark places, in the depths. Your wrath has rested upon me, and You have afflicted me with all Your waves* (Ps. 88:6-7). Another example is Jeremiah, a prophet of God, who also experienced much distress in his ministry. He stated: *I have become a laughingstock to all my people, their mocking song all the day. He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drunk with wormwood* (Lam. 3:14-15). These saints demonstrated the importance of pursuing and wrestling with God, even in the midst of difficult times (Jer. 12:1-13). The mark of a godly person is not one who *feels* close to God but one who continues to *follow* God and struggle with God, just as Jacob did (Gen. 32). This, I propose, is where true spiritual growth and maturity take place.

¹Seibert, Eric A. *Disturbing Divine Behavior: Troubling Old Testament Images of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), p. 112.

² Much of this outline is borrowed from Paul Copan's book *Is God A Moral Monster?* where he divides his work into three main sections: the biblical context, the ancient Near Eastern context, and the spiritual significance of the law.



Outreach to Holocaust Survivors

By Ariel Hungary



The destruction of the Hungarian Jews happened when the German defeat was already obvious. The Sztójay government in Hungary, which came to power after the German occupation in March 1944, willingly partook in the *Endlösung*, "the Final Solution of the Jewish question." Germans could count on Hungarian anti-Semitism. With the efficient collaboration of the Hungarian authorities, more than 437,000 Jews from the countryside were deported in six (!) weeks (between May 15 and July 9) to Auschwitz. Eighty percent of them were killed on the day of their arrival. This was the fastest operation of deportation in the history of the Holocaust. The Jews living in Budapest were not deported at the last moment. But after the Nazi Arrow Cross Party¹ took control of the government in August 1944, many Jews in Budapest were tortured and murdered as well. These were the darkest days in the history of Hungary. More than half a million Jews died during the Hungarian Holocaust.



Outreach to Holocaust Survivors

Jewish Demography Today

Between 180,000 and 250,000 Jewish people survived the Holocaust in the capital of Budapest. Today, there are about 80,000 to 140,000 Hungarians who have one Jewish parent and roughly 160,000 people whose grandparents were Jewish. There are up to 5,000 Holocaust survivors who are still living among us. Ariel Hungary is working hard to reach some of these people.

At the end of last year, we organized a Hanukkah celebration with our small Messianic fellowship. As we had done before, we invited a group of Holocaust survivors. We ate donuts and sang Hanukkah songs. Then, we spoke about the historical background of the original feast and were able to read the related New Testament passages and explain the Messianic applications of Hanukkah. We are very thankful to God for

allowing us to share the gospel in a special Jewish context and have fellowship with these precious Jewish people. We prayed for the miracle of salvation, and the Lord answered by opening the heart of one of our guests for his Jewish Messiah a few weeks later!


After the celebration, the Holocaust survivors expressed their thankfulness and said they felt the love in the fellowship. They also said that they were interested in other programs we organize. Vera, one precious Holocaust survivor with whom Rita had the privilege of sharing the gospel on a very personal level, was interested in visiting our Messianic fellowship several times after the Hanukkah celebrations. During one of her visits, we mentioned how some brave individuals saved Jewish people while endangering their own lives. The occasion was the International Holocaust Remembrance Day. In response, Vera told

us how her family was deported to Austria and was miraculously able to stay together and survive, albeit with many sufferings. Vera invited Rita to her home because she had many questions about the ministry. It is very rare that someone would ask so many questions about our work. Yet, Vera did. She wanted to know why we think that the Jewish roots of our faith are so important. She also wanted to know why it is good to believe in Yeshua. At the writing of this article, our sister Paivi is organizing a Seder dinner for all these Holocaust survivors, and our plan is to show how Yeshua is the fulfillment of this feast.

¹The Arrow Cross Party was a fascist party led by Ferenc Szálasi, which formed a government in Hungary known as the Government of National Unity. They were in power from 15 October 1944 to 28 March 1945.

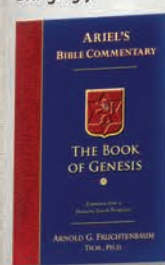
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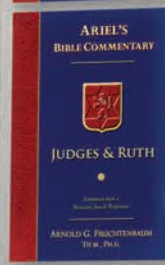
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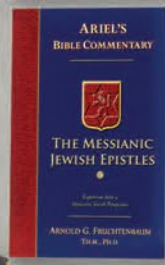
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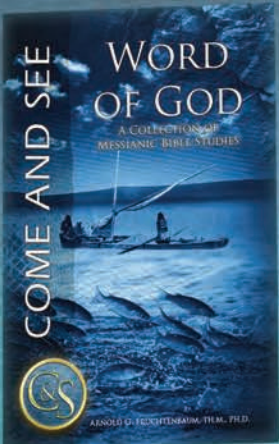
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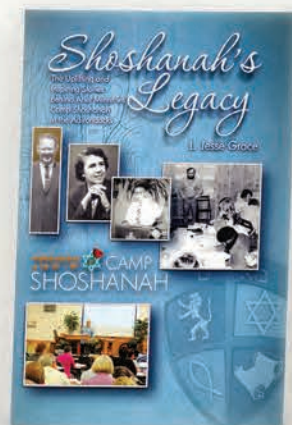


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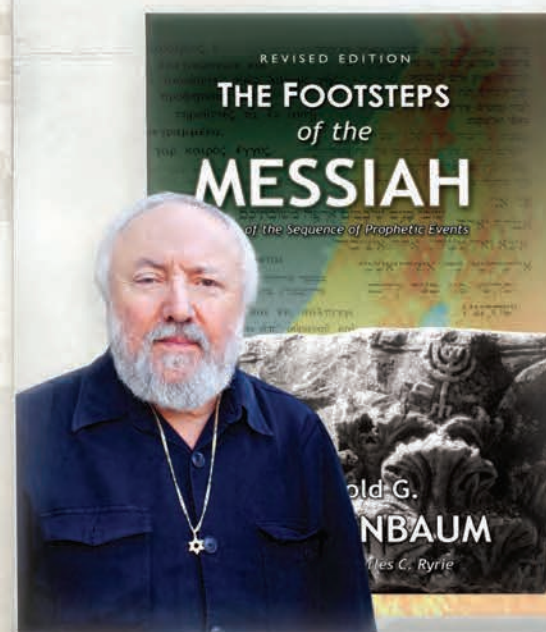
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The Shoah proved God's verdict on the condition of man to be truthful: The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt (Jer. 17:9). However, the Holocaust also paved the way for the fulfillment of God's promises that one day He would regather His people Israel. In his book *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum thoroughly explained that this return from the Diaspora is in unbelief and for judgment, but it will lead to Israel's final restoration. He noted:



"In that future time of wrath, God will once again enter into judgment with His people and will purge out the rebels among them. Those who remain will turn to the Lord; they will be brought into the bond of the covenant—specifically, the bond of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34). They will be brought into national salvation. Then it will be a new nation, a regenerate nation, that will be allowed to enter the land under King Messiah for the final restoration. Hence, Ezekiel 20:33-38 clearly describes a worldwide regathering in unbelief, from wrath and for wrath, in preparation for a specific period of judgment that will then lead to a national salvation and in turn to the final restoration of the Jewish people."

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