

Teaching the Shoah

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Mandate and Momentum

Edited by

Zev Garber and Kenneth L. Hanson

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PREFACE

KENNETH HANSON

There is no single way to teach; nor is it particularly easy to define what teaching is. It is certainly much more than the imparting knowledge for its own sake. Rather than the conveying of information, it is about what might be called “formation” - the formation of ideas, concepts and attitudes. It is about instilling the requisite confidence to employ the tools of critical thinking and thoughtful analysis. Perhaps above all, it is about developing the ability to pose probing questions, as it is with the Shoah (Holocaust), arguably the single most “studied” event in human history. Teaching the Shoah, however, presents challenges which are, arguably, unique among all formal courses of instruction. The Shoah as an event is unique, belonging in a category all of its own. It cannot be approached as would any other unit of historical material. Even though human history is replete with incidents of mass murder and horrible atrocities committed on entire populations, the burden of teaching the Shoah is to convey the fact that never before or since, from the moment that humans walked the earth, has an entire people, worldwide, been targeted for complete extermination. Moreover, the lessons derived from engaging in the study of this most unspeakable genocide go beyond purely academic application. Such lessons touch on how individuals view one another, respect one another, and ultimately treat one another. They are as relevant today as ever and, to that extent, the theory and methods of teaching the Shoah deserve fresh analysis and investigation.

When it comes to teaching the Shoah, methodology and teaching tactics are indeed wide and varied, embracing everything from the purely theoretical to practical experience in a classroom setting. Of course, today’s pedagogical realities involve not only the traditional classroom, but the growing trend of online education, which presents its own unique challenges and possibilities. As every educator knows, new vistas constantly present themselves, along with the overriding need to keep the memory of the Shoah freshly in mind, even as it recedes into the historical distance. Among the looming issues is the question of how the Nazi genocide may be made relevant to contemporary society, given the sociopolitical issues (including

equity and racial tolerance) which are hotly debated in today's social climate.

There are, to be sure, multiple examples of ethnic cleansing and racial oppression in the world today, which, while not to be strictly equated with the Nazi genocide, are nonetheless evocative of Hitler's campaign of genocide. Indeed, the list of post-Shoah genocides and near-genocides is too long even to recount. In Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge took control of the government in 1975 and began a reeducation campaign, targeting political dissidents. In the four years after they took power, between 1.7 and 2 million Cambodians died in the infamous killing fields. In Rwanda, Civil War broke out in 1990, exacerbating tensions between the Tutsi minority and the Hutu majority. In 1994, when the Rwandan president's plane was shot down, an organized campaign of violence against Tutsi and moderate Hutu civilians broke out across the country, killing more than one million.

In 1991, Yugoslavia began to break up along ethnic lines. When Bosnia and Herzegovina declared independence in 1992, the region became a war zone. The Serbs targeted Bosnian and Croatian civilians in areas under their control in a campaign of ethnic cleansing. The war in Bosnia claimed the lives of an estimated 100,000 people. In Darfur over a decade ago, the government of Sudan carried out a campaign of mass slaughter against civilians, murdering 300,000 and displacing over two million people. In China there are continuing concerns over possible crimes against humanity and what has been likened to genocide, due to the mistreatment of the Uyghur population and other mostly-Muslim ethnic groups in the north-western region of Xinjiang. More recently, the carnage enacted by the Russian army in Ukraine stands out, as the world's collective conscience was horrified by images of slaughter in Bucha, on the outskirts of Kiev.

Each of these examples is a horrible legacy of shame, but the Shoah stands alone in the sense that it is the only moment in all of human history in which an entire people throughout the world has been targeted for complete and total annihilation. This reality presents yet another conundrum in formulating both theoretical and practical approaches for studying and teaching the Shoah: even though we try to derive valuable transferable lessons from this endeavor, on some level the very comparison of the Nazi plan of genocide to other genocides and to the specter racism in the modern world serves only to trivialize it.

Teaching the Shoah therefore involves a special measure of sensitivity, to the more than six million European Jews whose lives were extinguished during the Nazi terror, and to the descendants, who live with the memory of the death camps, the gas chambers and the crematoria. In the words of the chief prosecuting attorney at the trial of Adolf Eichmann, Gideon Hausner:

I do not stand alone. With me here are six million accusers. But they cannot rise to their feet and point their finger at the man in the dock with the cry 'I accuse!' on their lips. For they are now only ashes – ashes piled high on the hills of Auschwitz and the fields of Treblinka and strewn in the forests of Poland. Their graves are scattered throughout Europe. Their blood cries out, but their voice is stilled.¹

Indeed, the sincere educator may fear that anything said about this most unspeakable tragedy in the annals of history may be wholly insufficient to convey the gravamen of the indictment laid out by Eichmann's prosecutor. However, the burden to teach both young students and the general public outside of the academy is compelling enough to brush aside whatever sense of inadequacy might inhibit the humble pedagogue. Simply put, silence is not an option.

This volume of essays and creative pieces is broadly reflective of the current state of Shoah/Holocaust education. It touches on the theoretical underpinnings of which educators must of necessity be mindful, while also providing examples of novel approaches rarely considered among conventional educational strategies.

Prof. Zev Garber (Los Angeles Valley College) offers an approach to teaching the Shoah as presented in an introductory undergraduate class on the subject. Central to his methodology is his analysis of the broader "meaning" of the Shoah and its social and historical implications. Probing, the nature of prejudice and the motives of those responsible, he asks whether something like the Shoah might happen again.

Prof. Garber, in another contribution, discusses teaching the fundamental lessons of the Nazi genocide, offering a "historiosophy" and an "eisegesis" of what he terms "Hitler's Kingdom of the Night." Among the pedagogical tools he highlights are storytelling, the religious response to the Shoah, and

¹ Gideon Hausner, "Six Million Accusers" (1961), in *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, Second Edition, eds. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 697.

feminist theology, offering fresh alternatives to traditional Holocaust education.

Prof. Emeritus Henry Knight (Keene State College) looks to conversation as metaphor, examining what he calls “structured occasions” in the classroom and beyond, to speak to a post-Shoah wounded world. He specifically considers the value of interruption, coupled with hospitality and respect, vis-à-vis illuminating the trauma and victimhood engendered by the unleashing of genocide.

In terms of the broader lessons gleaned from the study of the Shoah, there is an important analysis by Prof. Jonathan Arnold (Oxford-educated attorney) of the “weaponization” of racism via the Nuremberg Laws of 1933, resulting in catastrophic repercussions for both Jews and non-Jews.

Prof. David Patterson (University of Texas at Dallas) adopts a more theological approach, as he convincingly argues that the purpose of the Hitler’s campaign of genocide was to annihilate not only God’s witnesses but God himself. In their aim of exterminating the whole of world Jewry, the Nazis designed to extinguish both the Torah and its attendant traditions, which define Jewish identity. He argues that in relating the Torah to a particular event, historical moments become “sacred history.”

Mehak Burza (University of Delhi, India) writes on the uniqueness of the Shoah with respect to the trauma inflicted on its victims. She differentiates it from more mundane forms of distress, experienced in ordinary living, as well as other mass killings and genocides. She also considers how the anguish and suffering inflicted by the Shoah may be mediated by means of survivor narratives, which must be taught with special sensitivity.

Among the chapters is a newly written play (by Angela Berliner), telling the fictional story of a theater family and a twelve-year-old girl brought to a concentration camp to find her younger sister. Thematically, it is discovered that resistance to genocidal tyranny may be found in art. Interspersed with tragedy are elements of comedy, song and dance, paying homage to writers, performers, and musicians. It may well be called a story of creative resistance.

A short story of historical fiction by Susan Garber is also presented, relating in dramatic narrative the presumed fates of three individuals believed to have perished under Nazi persecution. Touching on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the Ringelblum Archive, and the intergenerational value of memory, this fictionalized account is highly instructive as a teaching tool

geared for junior high and high school students. The artistic representations accompanying the story are one more way to bring into focus (especially for students) the unfathomable tragedy as it unfolded in occupied Poland.

Rounding out the volume is my own detailed discussion of producing video presentations for an online course on the history of the Holocaust. I specifically reference how the new technology can be instrumental in communicating important concepts in ways not appreciated in the traditional classroom environment. I have embraced such technology to examine what I feel, as an educator, to be the two most important concepts in teaching the Shoah: Nazi racial ideology and the “pivotal year” (1937) in which the Nazi “revolution” became radicalized.

It is hoped that the wide variety of the approaches and subject matter of these essays will serve to highlight both the challenges and opportunities in teaching the uniqueness and universality of the most diabolical of tragedies ever perpetrated in historical infamy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ZEV GARBER

“Teaching the Holocaust: The Introductory Course” in *Methodology in the Academic Teaching of the Holocaust*, ed. By Zev Garber, with Alan L. Berger and Richard Libowitz (Lanham: UPA, 1988). Now Rowman and Littlefield. Reprinted with permission.

Chapter in book is entitled, “Teaching the Shoah at a Two-Year Public College”, suggesting changes from the original chapter in MATH.

“Understanding the Shoah. Review essay on *The Holocaust in Historical Context*, by Steven T. Katz” in *Shofar* 13.4 (1995). Reprinted with permission.

INTRODUCTION

ZEV GARBER

In a poignant review of Zev Garber (ed.), with Alan L. Berger, and Richard Libowitz, *Methodology in the Academic Teaching of The Holocaust* in the *British Journal of Holocaust Education*,¹ editor John F. Fox commented: “The volume addresses two basic questions, ‘what can we learn’ and ‘How do we teach the Holocaust and its lessons?’ These are investigated in four sections: ‘Theory and Methods’ which raises questions of meaning and methodology within the discipline and goals of university education; ‘Teaching Others’ is concerned with presenting the Holocaust to non-Jewish audiences; ‘Literature and Arts’ deals with the teaching of the Holocaust from the perspective of literature and arts; and finally, ‘Surveys and Reports’, which is designed as ‘open ended’ section and includes critical studies and personal ideologies suggesting, in the words of Zev Garber, ‘a post-*Auschwitz* Second Generation committed to life, hope, and action.’²

This volume represents a new anthological collection of essays on the subject of pedagogical issues related to teaching the Holocaust (Shoah). The number of books, articles and creative works of all kinds (from poetry to film) is staggering, making the Shoah the most documented event in human history. Even more than eighty years after the unfolding of Hitler’s genocide, the events surrounding the tragedy have not receded into the distance, but remain memorialized in multiple venues, both scholarly and popular. There are, nevertheless, additional avenues of Shoah-related research to be considered, in this case exploring the subject from the perspective of pedagogy. In particular, this proposed volume will address the field of Shoah education, featuring new and novel ways to promote awareness of the reality of the genocide, as well as an understanding of instrumentalities (both philosophical and physical) which drove and concretized it. How can, and should, the Shoah be taught? What approaches

¹ Zev Garber (ed.), with Alan L. Berger, and Richard Libowitz, *Methodology in the Academic Teaching of The Holocaust* (Lanham, NY; London: University Press of America, 1988) 327.

² *BJHE* 1 1 (Summer 1992): 119.

can be addressed with regard to sharing with students the most important lessons of this most unspeakable example of ethnic cleansing in human history? Reflections on Shoah terminology, theology and interfaith dialogue will complement the approaches in Holocaust pedagogy which are the main focus of this book.

In conclusion, while the Shoah is perhaps the most studied and researched event in human history, relatively little has been devoted to pedagogical theory and Jewish-Christian dialogue relating to teaching the Holocaust – a deficit addressed in this compendium of essays.

Key words: Antisemitism, Antisemitic Myths, Christian Ambivalence, Islamophobia, Replacement Theology, Teaching the Shoah, and Phobia.

Never Forget: A New York Incident

A recent study supervised by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany revealed disturbing facts about Shoah knowledge. New Yorkers aged 18-39 have shockingly poor awareness and understanding of the events of the Holocaust, with 58% unable to name a concentration camp, 19% believing that Jews caused the Holocaust, and 28% believing the Holocaust is a myth or has been exaggerated. During Genocide Awareness Month, elected officials moved to ensure that teaching about the Shoah became an obligatory requirement in New York schools, both public and private. Bill by Senator Anna Kaplan and Assemblywoman Nili Rozic would ensure that New York schools are teaching students about the Shoah as required under existing law S.121/A.472, and is viewed as important by 90% of the population (American Jewish Congress).

The words of the bill sponsors explain the necessity of voting the bill into law. New York State Senator Anna M. Kaplan (D. North Hills) said:

When we talk about the Holocaust, we say NEVER FORGET - but in order to forget something, you need to learn about it in the first place. We're doing a terrible job of teaching our kids about the atrocities of the Holocaust and the 6 million Jews who were murdered by the Nazis, and in a time when disinformation is exploding, and anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic violence are on the rise, it's never been more important to teach the lessons of the Holocaust to the next generation. I'm proud to partner with Assemblywoman Nily Rozic (D. Fresh Meadows) on legislation that will assess how well schools are doing at educating our kids about the Holocaust, and come up with a plan to ensure that every child is learning about our history in every

school across the state. It's never been more important than it is today, and we need to get it done this year.

Bill co-sponsor Assemblywoman Nily Rozic commented:

As we experience historic levels of anti-Semitism in New York and around the country, Never Again needs to be a call to action and not merely a platitude offered on Holocaust Remembrance Day and Genocide Awareness Month. When study after study delineate embarrassing ignorance and misinformation about the Holocaust, we need to rectify the issue at the source – educational requirements. Ensuring that the Holocaust is properly taught in schools coupled with education on recognizing anti-Semitism and other hate crimes is a crucial first step in stopping dangerous conspiracy theories.

The bill, S.121/A.472 would:

- Authorize the Commissioner of Education to conduct a study to determine which school districts are offering instruction on the Holocaust in compliance with Section 801 of the Education Law.
- Require a report on the findings of the study by the first of January after the bill becomes law.
- Direct the Commissioner to promulgate rules and regulations ensuring school districts are offering instruction on the Holocaust in compliance with Section 801 of the Education Law.³

The Holocaust Education Bill was signed into law by Governor Kathy Hochul at a special ceremony held at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City (August 2022). At the ceremony, State Senator Kaplan pointedly observed:

With antisemitism on the rise, and Holocaust misinformation exploding around the world, it has never been more important that we learn the lessons of the Holocaust, and ensure our next generation knows about our history, no matter how dark or difficult the conversation may be. That is why I've fought tirelessly to pass the Holocaust Education Bill, so that we can ensure this vital history is being taught to students in New York, and so that we may never forget what happened. I am so grateful for my partnership with Assemblymember Nily Rozic, for the leadership of Governor Kathy Hochul, and for the countless advocates and organizations who fought alongside me since day one of this important effort.

³ Received during Genocide Awareness Month, April 2021, from the office of New York State Senator, Anna M. Kaplan.

In sum, the law authorizes the State Education Department to conduct a survey of schools to identify which schools are teaching about the Holocaust, and what they are teaching at each grade level. Appropriate learning standards will be administered and supervised by the Superintendent of Schools. School districts that do not comply satisfactorily will be required to issue a corrective/alternate plan that meets the proper standards of grade level Shoah education.

Antisemitism, Act and Action

In late July 2022, I received a correspondence from the desk of NY State Senator Anne M. Kaplan that anti-Jewish flyers were disseminated throughout Rockville Centre and Ocean Side in Nassau County, New York. One displayed the subhead *EVERY SINGLE ASPECT OF THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION IS JEWISH*, and *FACTS DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS* with a row of photographs of Jewish members of the Biden administration, along with their names, titles, and an Israeli flag. Two of the individuals are marked *TRANSGENDER* in red writing. The second side of the flyer includes the headline *THE PROTOCOLS OF THE LEARNED ELDERS OF ZION* with the subhead *THE JEWS PLAN FOR WORLD DOMINATION*. The laundry list that follows is a catalogue of antisemitic tropes that have for centuries been used to demonize, stigmatize, and oppress Jewish people the world over.

Antisemitic tropes are the heartbeat of the oldest hatred spoken about, or hinted at, in all the essays of this volume. Understanding Jew hatred encapsulates:

1. Antisemitism is necessary for Jewish survival

Antisemitism on its own terms is evil – yet, although it has stigmatized and decimated the Jews in history, it has kept Judaism alive and made its culture flourish. Enlightenment and Emancipation in Central and Western Europe brought a radical departure from traditional thought patterns and aspiration. Emancipation destroyed the authority of the Jewish community and Enlightenment offered an ideological justification of surrendering the authority of Jewish tradition. The organic relationship of God-Torah-Israel (religion, culture, peoplehood) was now challenged by reason and equalitarianism. Also, bestowing equal civic rights and the quest for social and political acceptance began the loss of the Jewish way of life. Religious anti-Judaism, racial anti-Semitism, political anti-Zionism, and post-Shoah

antisemitism strengthened, not weakened, Jewish continuity and perseverance. Vitriolic antisemitism propels Jewish perseverance but fails to fully account for the Torah covenantal mandate: Choose life. Not revilement and persecution, but divinity and history have constructed the Jewish civilization.

2. Antisemitic Myths

No one who writes on antisemitism can be accused of tackling a simple issue, or one limited in scope. To be sure, many words on the subject are not in short supply. We pay attention to these words - however, it starts depending on which area of antisemitism intrigues us. The concern of the current revival of antisemitism in post-Holocaust Europe and the demonization of Jews in parts of the Arab and Muslim world inspire the collaborative effort of educator and researcher to educate students and a general readership on the ideology and vicious practice of one of the world's oldest hatreds, and how to recognize the subtle (and not so subtle) myths and symbols involved and evolved in this old-new tenacity of evil.

Historical, political, sociological, and psychotherapeutic overview of the study of antisemitism is complemented by primary and secondary reading sources - discussion and reading selections on antisemitic ideology and behavior through the centuries provide a systematic, repetitive, and ubiquitous picture of Jew hatred, fueled by medieval and early modern Christian anti-Judaism; modern enlightenment's philosophical, racial, and secular antisemitism; and contemporary Shoah denial and revisionism, anti-Zionism, Muslim antisemitism, and black antisemitism. The topics confront the student/learner with hacked religious and racist clichés, such as: the Jews are a deicidal and misanthropic people, who, in different time and clime, appear and reappear as demons, ritual murderers, conspirators, race defilers, rapacious moneylenders, parasites, plutocrats, and always as manipulators of mankind. Thus, the nexus of Jew hatred is not the Jew's integration or assimilation into society, but because of it. Similarly, in radical Muslim antisemitism, it is the very existence of a State of Israel, not political grievances nor historical disagreements debating an equitable resolution of two states for Israelis and Palestinians, that is the centrifugal force in the voluminous vituperation directed against the Jewish state.

Among the lessons taught is that no single religious teaching of contempt (Biblical-Koran, Church Fathers, Reformers, or present ecclesiastical authority) or secular text (e.g., *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews* [Nation of Islam, 1991], etc.) is able to turn masses of people to hate the Jewish religion and

nationalism, opine that the Jews are our misfortune, or demand the second calling for Jewish extermination. However, if such a development were to occur, it would be the result of discourse and ideology contributing to a distorted historical imagination that revels in revilement and persecution. Commendably, the editors and contributors to this volume, using reader-friendly language, composed provocative reading bites which bring home this point - that realization of antisemitism and its vision of a Jewish apocalypse is ever-present, and therefore necessitates constant vigil. An unfortunate but prudent exercise in curtailing the endemic hatred of Jews.

3. Antisemitism and Christian Ambivalence

Shortly after his election as *Reichkanzler* in 1933, Hitler spoke to a group of Methodist women meeting in Obersalzberg about his admiration for Frederick the Great, Otto von Bismarck, and Martin Luther. When asked, “Where do you get the courage to undertake the great changes in the whole Reich?” Hitler responded, with Luther’s New Testament commentary in hand, “From God’s word” (cited from Joseph B. Tyson, “Anti-Judaism and Biblical Authority: The Case of Luke-Acts,” unpublished paper, no date). Whether or not Hitler’s mandate for the *drittes Reich* (politically, “Third Empire” but theologically, “Third Kingdom”) is rooted in German Trinitarian pietism, it cannot be denied that centuries of Church teachings of alienation from, and contempt for, the Jewish people contributed to the Führer’s policy of lethal antisemitism. Why, how, and who in the Christian faith support of the Nazi demonizing of the Jews, and what we can learn about Christian culpability (Catholic, Evangelical, Lutheran, Orthodox) in the near total destruction of European Jewry, are central topics to alleged Christian involvement in the Shoah. A suggested goal is to evaluate the contributing factors in scriptural Christianity and historical Christendom that impeded the ability of European Christian clergy and laity in 1920s-1940s to condemn National Socialism as evil.

Kevin P. Spicer, *Antisemitism, Christian Ambivalence, and the Holocaust* (Indiana University Press, 2007) discusses the conflicting issues of pan-Christian objections and acceptance of the Shoah in Christendom. Following the Introduction (“Love Thy Neighbor?”), by John T Pawlikowsky and Kevin P. Spicer (xiii- xxi), which acknowledges that “Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon” (xx, cited from the text of *Dabru Emet*, Hebrew, “Speak the Truth,” a statement on Christians and Christianity signed by more than 170 rabbis and scholars, September 7, 2000) but strongly objects to depict as equal antisemitism and anti-Christianity in Nazi ideology, the

book is parsed into four sections. Section One, “Theological Antisemitism,” discusses the legacy of Christian anti-Judaism and establishes its link to modern racial antisemitism within Europe’s Catholic and Lutheran churches. The essays are “Belated Heroism: the Danish Lutheran Church and the Jews,” by Thorston Wagner (3-25); “Rabbinic Judaism in the Writings of Polish Catholic Theologians, 1918-1939,” by Anna Lysiak (26-49); “German Catholic Views on Jesus and Judaism 1918-1945,” by Robert A. Krieg (50-75); and “Catholic Theology and the Challenge of Nazism,” by Donald J. Dietrich (76-101).

Section Two, “Christian Clergy and the Extreme Right Wing,” demonstrates the embrace of antisemitism in the pastoral activity and ecclesiastical outlook by some of the clergy from Roman Catholic, Evangelical Lutheran, and Romanian Orthodox churches. The essays are “Working for the Führer: Father Dr. Philip Haeuser and the Third Reich,” by Kevin P. Spicer (105-120); “The Impact of the Spanish Civil war upon Roman Catholic Clergy in Nazi Germany,” by Beth A. Griech-Polelle (121-135); and “Faith, Murder, Resurrection: The Iron Guard and the Romanian Orthodox Church,” by Paul A. Shapiro (136-170).

Section Three, “Postwar Jewish-Christian Encounters,” assesses the detrimental impact of Hitlerian Judeocide on the “Body of Christ” and the transformational steps taken by post-Shoah Catholic and Protestant authorities to reconsider traditional negative teachings about the Jews and Judaism in Christian *Heilsgeschichte* (e.g., deicide, misanthropy, conversion, etc.) in order to reconcile with the Jewish People. The essays are “The German Protestant Church and its *Judenmission*, 1945-1950,” by Matthew D. Hockenos (173-200); and “Shock, Renewal, Crisis: Catholic Reflections on the Shoah,” by Elias H. Füllenbach (201-234).

Finally, Section Four, “Viewing Each Other,” underscores the dynamics of Synagogue and Church scriptural and theological traditions and language bias, which have polarized acceptance and recognition between two monotheistic Abrahamic faiths, sometimes despite the best intention of bearing witness and reconciliation. The essays are “Wartime Jewish Orthodoxy’s Encounter with Holocaust Christianity,” by Gershon Greenberg (237-269); “Confronting Antisemitism: Rabbi Philip Sidney Bernstein and the Roman Catholic Hierarchy,” by Suzanne Brown-Fleming (270-284); and “Old Wine in New Bottles?: Religion and Race in Nazi Antisemitism,” by Richard Steigman-Gall (285-312).

The volume is a welcome analysis on the multi-faceted role of Christians (and, to a lesser extent, Jews) in the destruction of European Jewry. It advances that Christian anti-Judaism is religious antisemitism, and that Church inspired *Adversus Judeo* teachings molded a definitive facet of Nazi ideology that led to the Final Solution, more than ruthless state policy guided by “spurious and godless reason” (words of Pope Benedict XVI during his visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau, May 28, 2006). Take the Christian response, “Love Your Neighbor,” to rectify *extra Ecclesiam salus non est* by conflation. For example, Jesus came “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23) and proclaimed that “salvation is from the Jews” (4:22). However, this blessing is forever stained by the portrayal of the Jews as accomplices in the crucifixion of Jesus as it is scripturally attested: “His blood be upon us and on our children” (Matt 27: 25); “(T)he Jews who killed the Lord Jesus [...] They displeased God and are hostile to all men” (I Thess 2: 14-15), and elsewhere. The charge of deicide extends from the verse in Matthew.

Indeed, selected New Testament verses are a possible explanation for the complacent and complicit activity of many Christian believers towards the Jews - before, during, and after the Hitlerian era. Still, Christ loved his own and this has empowered the active campaign to convert the Jews to believe in the salvific death and resurrection of Jesus. To teach otherwise is to deny the Jews eternal salvation, and this is unacceptable.

For the Jews, this standard call of the confessing Church in history, and especially after Auschwitz, to be gloriously fulfilled in Christ Jesus is unconscionable. Not a proclamation of conscious malice, but, in my view, a misguided spiritual voice in the valley of the fallen ashes. In sum, reading *Antisemitism, Christian Ambivalence and the Holocaust* sheds light on and offers steps to overcome the locked-in conflict between Jews and Christians along the antisemitic path from Calvary to Auschwitz and beyond.

Teaching the Shoah and Phobia: Four Personal Reflections

1. Advances in understanding the Shoah (causes, effects, responses) have been dramatic and widely chronicled in the second half of the twentieth century. One can further note that Holocaust studies have occurred in successive waves. The first recounted the horrors of the Nazi treatment of Europe’s Jews in the historical context of deep-rooted religious anti-Judaism and secular antisemitic behavior. Then came the indictment against the intent and will of the German and Austrian nations, the Roman Catholic

Church leadership, the French, English and Soviet governments, and the free world, to combat morally the threat of and from Nazism. Also, in this second wave arose questions of theology and theodicy; that is, issues regarding interrelationship between human and divine responsibility after Auschwitz. In the last decades of the Century of Shoah and Genocide, a number of Jewish and Christian scholars exposed and debunked disingenuous Holocaust denial and revisionism. They combated the denial of facts and the minimization of the Event by emphasizing the moral bankruptcy in individuals, institutions, and governments who deny the historicity of the Shoah as an early warning sign of genocidal tendencies, now and in the future. Finally, the rise of Jewish-Christian discussion groups, symposia, and conferences interfacing on post-Holocaust morality and theology are notable in the last decades of the twentieth century and at the start of the twenty-first century.

2. Perhaps because of the understandable tendency to focus on the Shoah itself, one aspect of Holocaust studies of particular relevance has been less carefully considered: the impact of the Shoah on America and, more specifically, on Jewish life and Christian belief in America. There are a number of questions that should be addressed in this specific area of Holocaust studies. When and what did Jews in America know about the European Judeocide? How effective, or ineffective, was the American-Jewish response to the murder of European Jewry? Why did a prestigious Shoah fact-finding group of prominent American Jewish leaders, headed by former Supreme Court Justice Arthur J. Goldberg, “split up in anger and dissension” while investigating the American Jewish community’s response to the Nazi extermination program (*New York Times*, week of January 2, 1983)? How do Shoah survivors, who came to America, deal with shattered memories; and why do many (but not all) feel the need to educate others? How do survivors in America relate to scholars whose research endeavors to objectify their years of agony, pain, and torment? After decades of silence, *why* has the Holocaust become, for so many American Jews, a black hole around which their Jewish identity is spiraling? If cyanide has replaced Sinai and the State of Israel represents a hope risen from the ashes, then what are we to say about the staying power (rituals and symbols) of the 350 years indigenous American Jewish *religious* experience? How — in American terms — are we to deal with Jewish theology after the Shoah? How successful is academic Christian-Jewish dialogue in helping the American Christian in the pew to distinguish between Christian verities and supersession-ist teaching, which contributed to Nazi *Geistigkeit* in the bosom of Christendom? How does one “sensitize” an American Christian

polity to not “sanitize” or “Christianize” proper memory and respect for the Shoah?

3. Dramatic language changes have affected the gender reference and racial discussion on the liberal-left newsfront and in the public-school classroom in the last couple of years. Neutral (not male nor female) pronouns; parent (not mother) bearing children; chest feeding (not breast feeding), and so on. Use of racial slurs to explain how words emerge as curse words is viewed as prohibitive and restricted. We adamantly disagree. To explain the N-word, S-word, or K-word, we need to say-write-show the basic meaning of the word and how it transformed into a word of negativity-slur-curse. For example, the word *kike*, offensive early 20th century word to describe Yiddish-speaking Eastern European Jews who arrived at Ellis Island, who could not sign their names in English, refuse to make a cross-looking X, and signed with a *kaykl* (Yiddish, “circle”). The lore has it that the immigration guards at Ellis Island would welcome arriving Jews as *kaykl machen Yids*, which ultimately shortened to “Kikes.” Similarly, “Spic” for one who “no speaka English”; “Wop,” primarily designated of Italians who arrived at Ellis Island “without papers”; and “Negro” from *niger* (Latin), often offensive, a Black person, member of the Negroid race by virtue of pigmentation.

Current “Stop the Hate” amendments, bills, and rhetoric have birthed a reverse racial language and association. In early May 2021, a shocking video surfaced on the media. Racist, verbal tirade was leveled against a Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department Deputy during a routine traffic stop. The motorist was reportedly using a cell phone while driving; showed no driver’s license when asked, and defended oneself by claiming that she/he is privileged, a teacher, wrongly reported as a community college instructor in a college belonging to the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD). No reported details to gender, ethnicity, pigmentation of the officer and motorist. May this information not aid the self and the community in learning lessons derived from the highly offensive, hateful and repugnant rhetoric of the driver captured on the bodycam: “Murderer, you are not White, stop acting White” (motorist to officer). Bodycam further reveals that an errant Black woman vilified a Mexican American officer of the law as a White officer. Condemning White officers as murderers does not condone nor justify compatible black-brown racist rhetoric nor behavior.

4. Antisemitism and Islamophobia, and Replacement Theology. A sane approach to this perplexing dilemma of Jew and Muslim disparity and

hatred requires a full understanding of how this stereotyping originated, developed, and intensified. In pursuit of this objective, respectable research in gathering and interpretation of the major (and not so major) patterns of perception that can lead to antisemitism and Islamophobia is primary. Second, interreligious hermeneutics lay the groundwork and methodology to confront the age-old historic-religio-philosophic conceptions and misconceptions of Jews and Muslims, including their culture, history, politics, ideology and issues, movements and organizations, events and self-understanding as a peoplehood and religion. For example, project case studies depicting falsehoods related to Jews as a peoplehood (antisemitism), religion/theology (anti-Judaism), and historic homeland (anti-Zionism); research into contemporary expressions of fear or suspicion of Islam expressed in media, editorial cartoons, and in satire; and references to Holocaust historicity to combat Christian replacement theology and to restore theologically Jesus as the eternal Jew to douse the fires ignited by the misremembered Christ.

Rereading, reinterpreting, and reconstructing group-affiliated ideology in seeking affinity between Jew and Muslim is achieved, therefore, by planting seeds of empathy and mutual respect. Oddly, claims of Israel-Palestine nationalisms is the contributing factor to the deeply seeded and felt conflict resulting in fratricidal war between two kindred peoples. One must affirm that Israeli and Palestinian can live and prosper in a social milieu conceived in mutual respect and abhorrence of terrorism. How to establish the proper facts about Palestinian and Jewish nationalisms without propagandist slandering, revisionist ideologues and ideology, and street thumping? We suggest self-criticism, interpersonal dialogue, and study; also, observe the *totality* of a group's behavior and not only doctrinal, popular, and journalistic teachings and writings.

Finally, on the issue of Jewish-Christian repentance and retribution, let the clarion call be, "Love your Neighbor" (Lev 19:18, Matt 22:39, Mark 12:1, Luke 10:27b), Torah stated and thrice written in the New Testament, suggesting Trinitarian association and *halacha* permanence. Commendable, but the commanding verse reads, "Love your neighbor *as yourself*"; that is to say, self-love/understanding/knowledge and reflective criticism is scripturally mandated *before* bridging the divide with others.

CHAPTER 1

HOLOCAUST TERMINOLOGY AND SHOAH THEOLOGY

ZEV GARBER

Key words: `Akedah, Armenian Genocide, Holocaust (various references), Jewish Responses, `Olah, Shoah

Language is a reciprocal tool: it reveals and, at the same time, it is revealing. We use language to explain the things that define our world, but, by the same token, the way we use language also necessarily discloses how we explain and define ourselves within that world. In general, everyone can instinctively grasp how a given word or phrase is used to demarcate, even create, that small bit of universe that it encompasses in linguistic terms. How this same word or phrase might disclose a part of our own identities, however, is less obvious and is less consciously considered.

Holocausts and “The Holocaust”

Take the term, “The Holocaust,” in contemporary American language. The term “holocaust” is commonly used to refer to a genocide, i.e., the systematic murder of any group. When used in this manner, the term is usually qualified so it is clear what “holocaust” is meant; “the Armenian holocaust,” “the Senti-Romani holocaust,”¹ and “the Biafran holocaust” are

¹ This refers to the slaughter of the Senti and Roma people (popularly known as “Gypsies”) by the Nazis. More than seventy years after the end of the Second World War, the site of the former camp for Roma people at Lety, in the Czech Republic, was finally treated with the dignity it deserved. The pig farm built on the site of the former concentration camp was replaced with a memorial acknowledging and teaching the Roma Holocaust, referred to in the Romani language as the Samudaripen (“mass killing”) or the Porajmos (“destruction”).

some examples.² Similarly, “nuclear holocaust” can be used when describing the elimination of the entire human race in a nuclear war - one simply shifts the qualifier from the object to the agent of destruction.

The most common and prominent use of the term “holocaust,” without any qualifiers, is as a reference to the murder of six million Jews by the Nazis; it is taken to be the archetype, the most extreme case, against which all secondary applications of “holocaust” are measured and from which they each draw their sense of meaning. One simply acknowledges the primacy of what has come to be identified as the most horrible event of the 20th century – the destruction of European Jews by the Nazis – by capitalizing the “T” of “The” and the “H” of “Holocaust.” “The Holocaust” serves as *the* designated term of record for the murder of two thirds of European Jewry; nothing more needs to be said.³

And yet the term “The Holocaust” did not evolve in a vacuum - like all semantic developments, it has a context. In examining that context, one is necessarily drawn into consideration of that other side of language, the self-revelatory aspect involved in the choice of a given word or phrase. For, as it turns out, “holocaust” is a rather strange term: its use as the label to designate the Jewish genocide is neither obvious nor inevitable; in fact, it is surprising.⁴

² Following much political turmoil including an anti-Igbo pogrom (1966), the Igbos seceded from Nigeria and established an independent country called Biafra in what was once eastern Nigeria, which led to the Nigeria-Biafra War (alternatively called the Nigerian Civil War or the Biafran War; 1967-1970). By the time Biafra was reconquered by Nigeria, approximately two million Igbos had died of starvation as a consequence of Nigeria’s land-and-sea blockade of Biafra

³ See, e.g., Wikipedia’s disambiguation page for “Holocaust.”

⁴ For an in-depth discussion of the term “Holocaust” and the psychology behind its popular usage, see Zev Garber and Bruce Zuckerman, “Why Do We Call the Holocaust ‘The Holocaust’? An Inquiry into the Psychology of Labels,” *Modern Judaism* 9 (1989): 197–211; repr. in Zev Garber, *Shoah: The Paradigmatic Genocide; Essays in Exegesis and Eisegesis* (Studies in the Shoah 8; Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994); a revised version of this article appears in Zev Garber and Bruce Zuckerman, *Double Takes: Thinking and Rethinking Issues of Modern Judaism in Ancient Contexts* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004).

The Origins of the Word “Holocaust”

The *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* attests that the word “holocaust” comes via the Latin *holocaustum* from the Greek word *holocaustos* (ὅλοκαυστος) or its more common variant *holocaustos* (ὅλοκαυτος). This, in turn, is a compound composed of *holos* (ὅλος), an adjective (or adjectival substantive) meaning “whole, entire, complete in all its parts,” and *kaustos* (καυστός),⁵ another adjectival form meaning “burnt, red-hot.”

Thus, the basic etymological meaning of *holocaustos* is “something wholly burnt up.” Whilst we usually think of that something being people, the original referent was something else.

Burnt Offering (‘olah): LXX and Vulgate

The Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of the Bible, employs the term *holokautōma* (ὅλοκαύτωμα) or its variant *holokautōsis* (ὅλοκαύτωσις), well over 200 times, and without exception the term is used to designate a sacrifice - specifically, the ‘olah (אֹלָה), the offering that was to be wholly consumed by fire (e.g., Lev 1:3, 6:9; 1 Sam 7:9, etc.). The Latin translation of the Bible, the Vulgate, uses *holocaustum*, the Latinized version of this Greek term, for ‘olah as well.

Burnt Offering (‘olah): LXX and Vulgate

From here, the term appeared in the Catholic translation of the Bible into English, the Douay-Rheims translation of 1609, which used the Vulgate as its base text. Translating ‘olah as “holocaust” was actually a sharp departure from older English translations. The Middle English translation of the Vulgate, done under the direction of John Wycliffe from 1382-1395, uses the term “burnt sacrifice,” while William Tyndale’s translation of the Bible, done directly from the original language (Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek, depending on the book), goes with “burntoffrynge,” as does the *Geneva Bible* of 1560 (“burnt offering”).⁶

⁵A derivative of the verb *καίω* (*kaiō*) meaning “burn.” The root appears in the English word “caustic,” which is used to describe burning acid or, derivatively, burning (sarcastic) wit.

⁶ He only lived long enough to publish a translation of the New Testament and half the Old Testament; the rest was completed by Miles Coverdale and published in 1535.

In fact, in the introduction to the 1611 Protestant translation known as the *King James Version*, the translators attack the Catholic use of the word “holocaust” among other calques, i.e., words taken from another language that aren’t really English. The KJV translators claim that use of this term is an example of “Papist obscurantism,” designed to make the text difficult to understand.⁷

Be that as it may, this “Latinism” entered the English language as a rendering for “burnt offering.” Thus, the first definition in the *OED* is: “a sacrifice wholly consumed by fire; a whole burnt offering”; while the second definition applies this sense of sacrifice in a more general fashion: “a complete sacrifice or offering; a sacrifice on a large scale.”

A Derivative Definition of Holocaust

The *OED* then offers an additional definition, which derives from a broader, more generalized sense of the term: “Complete destruction by fire, or that which is consumed; complete destruction, especially of a large number of persons; great slaughter or massacre.”⁸ Early examples of this usage are strongly connected to fire.

For example, in his 1833 book *Wanderings by the Loire* (p. 104), Leitch Ritchie quips that Louis VII of France was “a man of nice honour (although he once made a holocaust of thirteen hundred persons in a church).” Ritchie is here referring to how, toward the end of Louis VII’s war against Theobald II of Champagne (1142-1144), he attacked and burned the town of Vitry-le-François, during which attack over a thousand people who took refuge in the local church were burnt alive.

⁷ The introduction writes:

...[W]e have shunned **the obscuritie of the Papists**, in their Azimes, Tunike, Rational, **Holocausts**, Prepuce, Pasche, and a number of such like, whereof their late Translation is full, and that of purpose **to darken the sence**, that since they must needs translate the Bible, yet by the language thereof, it may bee kept from being understood. But we desire that the Scripture may speake like it selfe, as in the language of Canaan, that it may bee understood even of the very vulgar.

⁸ The history of the term in the context of genocide is discussed in, Israel W. Charny, “Holocaust: The Word and Its Usage,” in *Encyclopedia of Genocide*, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1999), 40-43.

The Armenian Holocaust and the Burning of Villages

As a reference to genocide, i.e., the systemic murder of one race of people by another, the term is first employed to describe the Hamidian (or Armenian) Massacres (1894-1896) and the burning of Armenian villages by the Ottoman Turks. For example, on Sept 10, 1895, the *New York Times* ran this headline: “Another Armenian Holocaust,” with the byline: “five villages burned, five thousand people made homeless, and anti-Christians organized.” One “holocaust” in particular stands out during this period: the burning of a cathedral in Urfa (formerly Edessa) with 3000 Christians still inside.

The term is again employed to describe various stages in the Armenian genocide:

- The 1909 massacre, which involved the burning of villages in Adana,⁹
- The 1915 massacre,¹⁰
- The systemic destruction of the Armenian population in the wake of WWI,¹¹
- Ataturk’s burning of Smyrna in 1922.¹²

⁹ Z. Duckett Ferriman, *The Young Turks and the Truth about the Holocaust at Adana* (London, 1911).

¹⁰ David Lloyd George writes:

The action of the British government led inevitably to the terrible massacre of 1895, 1909, and worst of all to **the holocausts** of 1915. By these atrocities, almost unparalleled in the black record of Turkish misrule, the Armenian population was reduced in numbers by well over a million.

David Lloyd George, *Memoirs of a Peace Conference*, vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939), 811.

¹¹ Winston Churchill writes:

As for Turkish atrocities marching ‘till they dropped dead the greater part of the garrison at Kut; massacring uncounted thousands of *helpless Armenians, men, women, and children together, whole districts blotted out* in one **administrative holocaust** *t— these were beyond human redress.*

Winston Churchill, *The World in Crisis, volume 4: The Aftermath* (London: Othams Press, 1939), 158.

¹²Jon Petrie references two publications about the burning of Smyrna whose titles contain the word “holocaust”: 1. In 1922, a poem titled *The Holocaust* was published as a booklet. 2. In 1923, a preacher from New Zealand named Charles Dobson, who

This last episode was described as “the Smyrna holocaust” by Melville Chater, a well-known American journalist and travel writer for the *National Geographic*, who had spent years reporting on the tragic plight of the Armenians.¹³ He writes:

[T]he initial episodes of the exchange drama were enacted to the accompaniment of the boom of cannon and the rattle of machine gun and with the settings pointed by the flames of **the Smyrna holocaust**... The dance of flames became a fiery hurdle race, as the wind-fanned flames leaped from a balcony to balcony across the narrow streets: then the race became a hungry conflagration whose roaring mouth ate through and gulped down that mile-and-a-half breadth of city down to where the 300,000 refugee souls huddled between a waste of fire and a waste of sea... Maddened horses... ran amuck through the press, leaving a wake of crushed bodies, which roasted where they lay...

The connection between the massacre of Smyrna’s inhabitants and the burning of the city, elegantly expressed in Chater’s prose, highlights the deep connection between fire and death or destruction that inheres in the world holocaust.

The Jewish Holocaust

Eventually, during and after World War II, when the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis against the Jews became clear, the term was adopted by many as a reference to this Jewish genocide, which was even more systemic and large scale than the Armenian genocide. The connotation of not merely massacre, but the destruction by fire seems to give the term appropriately tangible overtones. That is to say, the horror of the event may be said to be properly emphasized by a term that evokes the smell of burning corpses in the Nazi furnaces. Seen in this light, “holocaust” appears a most apt term to characterize what the Nazis did to the Jews.

spent time in Armenia, published *The Smyrna Holocaust* (Publications of the Anglo-Hellenic League, no. 50) detailing his experiences and what he witnessed. See, Jon Petrie, “The Secular Word HOLOCAUST: Scholarly Myths, History, and 20th Century Meanings,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 2.1 (2000): 31-64 (33).

¹³ See Melville Chater, “History’s Greatest Trek,” *National Geographic* 48.5 (Nov. 1925): 533–583 (533). See also Panayiotis Diamadis, “Aegean Eucalypts,” *Modern Greek Studies* 13 (2005), 86-105 (88); Colin Martin Tatz, *With Intent to Destroy: Reflecting on Genocide* (Verso, 2003), 18. Both Diamadis and Tatz credit Chater with the first application of “holocaust” to the genocidal murder of a people, but this appears to be mistaken, as noted above.

The Problem with Holocaust as a Term for Genocide

Acknowledging the semantic development of the term holocaust outlined above, the word's origin as a reference to a "burnt offering" remains. Personally, I find the religious imagery implicit in "holocaust" objectionable when applied to genocide, insofar as it seemingly designates the murderers as priestly officiants engaged in acts of divine propitiation, and brings up the grotesque image of Nazis burning six million Jews as an offering to God.

Moreover, in the Jewish imagination, such an offering is associated with the *'akedah*, the "binding" of Isaac, in the biblical story in which Abraham is tested and Isaac is victimized and almost offered as an *'olah* or "holocaust" by his own father at God's command (Genesis 22:2). These are troubling images to have juxtaposed to the slaughter of six million Jews by the Nazis.

Other terms can appropriately describe the sense of utter destruction that "holocaust" conveys without adding a religious, sacrificial connotation to the event: e.g., extermination, annihilation, destruction, massacre, slaughter, or genocide (a term coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1944). Indeed, "Holocaust" is not the only term for the Nazis' near destruction of European Jewry.

Hurban, Die Milhomeh Yohrn, Shoah, – The Many Names of the Holocaust

Most Yiddish speaking victims and survivors refer to the Nazi period as *Hurban Europa* (אײראָפּע הורבן), "the European Destruction," or just the *Hurban* (הורבן), "Destruction," a rabbinic term describing the destruction of the First Temple in 586 B.C.E. and the Second in 70 C.E. Others simply refer to it as *Die Milhomeh Yohrn* ("The War Years").

But neither of these terms seem particularly appropriate to the Nazi genocide. The former is associated with other national calamities, thus failing to reflect the category-shattering character of the German Judeocide. The latter is simply a Yiddish reference to the Second World War, hardly a fitting designation for the murder of six million.

The modern Hebrew term for the European Jewish genocide, "Shoah," has no religious or sacrificial overtones. It is a powerful term, which comes into modern Hebrew from biblical Hebrew, and means "devastation, desolation,