

COMMEMORATIVE RITUALS AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

Response by David G. Roskies

1. The papers present the topic in ascending order of abstraction
 - a. Hol. survivors trying to ritualize their grief
 - b. Israelis trying to fashion a secular mythology
 - c. Modern nation states establishing permanent war memorials

2. The more generalized the form and context, the less they draw on prior forms of Jewish response

Dobkin - DP camps: very little that is new either in form or content *renormalize Jew. burial*

- i. collective mourning rites go back to Crusades, Chmielnicky; 10 beTevet
- ii. the one community that stands for the many
- iii. the juxtaposition of feasting/fasting

Zerubavel - the dynamic of selective retrieval remains the same;

- i. the reinterpretation of Hanukkah
- ii. test case in the growing importance of hist. in redefining Jewish self-understanding

Young - Jewish collective memory now in the hands of the [non-Jewish] state

- i. irreversible centrifugal movement
- ii. US Holocaust Commission as unprecedented as Yad Vashem *- the political dimension*

3. Methodological critique

- a. The historical evidence

Dobkin - must know more about the troyer-akademye; the making of secular martyrs in revolutionary politics

דבריהם / מ"ד

Zerubavel - how myth informs action: Masada and the Warsaw ghetto uprising; Masada reenacted on Mt Carmel

Young - how do these memorials differ from standard war memorials? how do they function within civil religion? Everyone: read Nathan Wachtel!

- b. The literary evidence

Dobkin - must know the repertoire; parent-child relationship central to songs of the Holocaust; no one is a mourner because everyone is

Zerubavel: cf. the symbol of the poppy in lit. of the Great War

Young: examine which archetypes each nation brings to its monuments; of course "Liberation" is a latter-day Pieta! but who sees the Krajewska monument as broken tablets?

Everyone: read Paul Fussell!

- c. The political dimension

Dobkin - who controlled the memorial process? what political parties were most active? How did the Zionist / Bundist split play itself out?

Zerubavel -

Read Lucy Dawidowicz The Holocaust and the Historians