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"When Messiah comes, he will say to us/I apologize that I took so long/But I had a little trouble finding you/Over here a few, over there a few/You were hard to reunite/But everything is going to be alright."  
-"When Messiah Comes" by Sheldon Harnick and Jerry Bock, cut from Fiddler On The Roof

very interesting.  
probably cut because it's too particularistic.

Allowing for the exceptions that are an inevitable part of any broad generalization, one might say that the tone of Holocaust literature encompasses four primary emotional states: grief, rage, acceptance, and exultation. Sometimes, often in fact, one is juxtaposed to another (although they are not consecutive stages of development); rarely, however, are all four simultaneously balanced. Grief exists on a personal and on a national[istic] level; the enormity of the Holocaust binds the victims together even though no private experience, despite the fact of the mass tragedy, could ever be duplicated. Rage is directed at a variety of targets, almost all of them worthy of it: Jewish passivity; Gentile ignorance (and/or) inhumanity; God himself. \*Acceptance is both the act and the means of coming to terms with the two forces above on an individual scale; grief and rage must be recognized if they are to be transcended. Exultation belongs to a realm all its own: it is the stage that few can reach, perhaps the stage that few choose to reach.

\* Is this the proper order of blame?

Exultation functions on what shall for now be called a private scale made public in much the same way that acceptance serves the individual. That is: it would seem to be virtually impossible for a community to acknowledge their grief and rage, work through those emotions and then go beyond them as a community. For one thing, the experience of the Holocaust, though it may connect to the 'Jewish experience' over the course of all time, cannot be translated from one person to another. For another, there was and is no set pattern of response. I write of grief and rage because they seem to be the predominant and the necessary responses, but they are certainly neither mandatory or exclusive. For many who lived in the midst of the Holocaust, for instance, the essential factor was that, despite the death and destruction all around them (and their horrible awareness of it), they were at each moment even more



aware that they were living reminders of the bonds between God and his Chosen People.

This is one element of the exultation that pervades Holocaust literature. Out of this great tragedy some saw an affirmation of Judaism. Shapiro's vision of God weeping--how different this is from an indictment of God for not caring, for not acting! "For the Jew is part of the sacred triad:" wrote Kalmanovitch, "Israel, the Torah, and the Holy One, blessed be He." For both authors, a Jew is sanctified by the very nature of his being; outside of the relationship between God and Man lies chaos. Twenty years later, the thought is echoed by Agnon: "Heaven and earth know that if it weren't for Israel who accepted the Torah, they would not be standing."

In this understanding, the Jew cannot be merely a private individual; he is part of the life force itself, by extension part of the community, and it is here that the concept of exultation is expanded into the necessary realm of public behavior, public morality--and public history. In a discussion of the Holocaust, in my view at least, catastrophe, messianism and exultation are closely linked. Catastrophe is the vivid reminder of the sacred triad (According to a more modern view, for Emil Fackenheim, "From Auschwitz as from Sinai God addresses Israel." Katz, Jewish Philosophers, 229), messianism its outgrowth, and exultation--rather than grief or rage--the dominant theme.

For those who see the Holocaust as a positive symbol of Jewish strength, messianism is related less to (though it is not a denial of ) apocalypse than it is to nature and rebirth. "My rebuking pen, ripping the clouds apart, shall make a flood descend!"; Greenberg's anger will not be denied. At the same time, however, his poetry is framed by a recognition that "I replace [the slaughtered] in the world...lest, one link lost, their chain of eternity drop from the hand of the living: the chain of the race whose latest link I am." The messianic vision, thus, is not of a Savior or a Redeemer. As with all of the authors, the emphasis is placed on the fundamental relationship seen to hold not only Israel but also the world together. For those who lived during and/or through the Holocaust, this responsibility was indeed a cause for exultation; it was almost a messianic fulfillment by itself. The Jews, by virtue of their relationship with their God, must shape not only the next but also this world.

Is there something of you in here? If so, you're not really the atheist  
you make yourself out to be!

10/10

his form is  
to be  
avoided

good

✓