

SUBJECT: LITURGY AND RITUAL TO COMMEMORATE THE HOLOCAUST: PROJECT PLAN

MEMO

PURPOSE: The purpose of the project on Liturgy and Ritual is to insure the permanent remembrance of the Holocaust through establishing a base of ritual and liturgy in Jewish life, the Jewish calendar, the Jewish community, on a total community basis. The secondary goal will be to help Christians incorporate the Holocaust into their religious life.

PROJECT GOAL: Our project will attempt to collect and develop liturgy and ritual on a worldwide basis; to assess and evaluate the effectiveness and adequacy, filtering out the good from the bad; and to disseminate the appropriate liturgy and rituals to the entire Jewish community.

This is a two-year project. The almost entire first year will be used in collection and assessment. In the second year, the process of dissemination will begin. It is understood that the dissemination may last beyond the two-year life of this project.

To obtain the material which has been developed on a worldwide basis, we will need publicity, outreach to the established religious movements and organizations, a systematic policy of contacting existing Holocaust Memorial institutions and groups, research and collection by scholars, and special methods of stimulating the development of liturgy and rituals. The most important of these methods will be the special artistic competition we plan to run, for the creation of a menorah or some other appropriate ritual object to commemorate the Holocaust in the home.

The assessment process will be primarily carried on by the Task Force on Holocaust Liturgy and Ritual, which is being established by Zachor, of the National Jewish Resource Center. This task force will include the most capable and sensitive scholars who have worked in the area both of liturgy and of the Holocaust. They include representatives of all three denominations, and such other people who have made outstanding records in this area. The Task Force will meet repeatedly in order to develop guidelines of assessment and to deal with some of the actual material that is being collected. The Task Force will meet throughout the two years of the program. We will not begin any dissemination until they have had at least a preliminary review of the material available.

The dissemination function will involve the creation of a world committee for this project and an Israel committee. The world committee would include religious representatives and appropriate Jews of stature. The Israel sub-committee would be structured similarly, except that it would try to get a number of Chief Rabbis and government officials involved. It is anticipated that these people will

not only lend their names and be consulted along the way, but they will give the sponsorship and the entree for the work when the project is done. The dissemination process will also involve outreach to the rabbinic and synagogue movements in the United States of America, and to the religious authorities in Israel as well. It will also involve working with the survivor organizations and such other groups as may be motivated to stimulate inclusion of Holocaust liturgy and ritual in Jewish life. We believe that the publicity surrounding the project will also play a significant role in the dissemination of the consciousness of material. We will also work with the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, in the United States, and Yad Vashem, in Israel, to insure their help in the matter.

One major decision that must be made soon: I believe that we should work with Yad Vashem to insure that the Israelis will also send in material that has been developed throughout the country, and because Yad Vashem is the most respected address in the world when it comes to dealing with the Holocaust commemoration. The problem, in my judgement, is that Yad Vashem will ask for some financial help in return for its sponsorship. This would be based on the feeling that collecting the material (they should be the address for that in Israel) will cost them money, time, and staff. Yad Vashem has also held back, in part, because they developed a menorah some twenty-five years ago, although it did not succeed in winning acceptance. The tentative compromise is that we will develop a menorah for home use, whereas the menorah that they developed has been used only in public situations and institutions. I believe that a commitment of \$25,000-50,000 would ensure that Yad Vashem would lend its full support, and I think it would be a good investment on our part. However, at the present time, such a commitment is not envisioned in the funding proposal.

STRUCTURE: The project will be led by an Executive Committee, to consist of you and three or four people that you would nominate, plus a similar number of people that we would nominate. You should sit down with specific names and make a final decision. The Project Director will be Rabbi Daniel Landes, and Project Supervisor will be Yitz Greenberg. The American sub-committee should consist of up to fifteen people, including rabbis from Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform movements; lay leaders; and, possibly, several honorary rabbis from Canada, Latin America, and Europe. The Israeli sub-committee should include the Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi; Chief Sephardic Rabbi; Rabbi Frankel, Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv; Rabbi Lau, Chief Rabbi of Nitania; Dr. Joseph Burg, Minister of the Interior and of Religion; former Israeli President Navon; and rabbis from the different movements in Israel. Three leaders of the Israeli business community who are survivors should also be included. Ideally, the President of Israel and the Prime Minister of Israel should be involved as honorary sponsors or patrons of this project. We should also leave some places for such figures as leaders of the survivor groups, or people of the stature of Yitzchak Arad, the head of Yad Vashem. Again, we should sit down, draw up the list, and set a process in motion to recruit the people.

TIMETABLE:

1. Organization: September to November 1983--select members of committees and Task Force, and invite them to join. Prepare a publicity campaign, including press releases, letters to the appropriate organizations and individuals, placement of speakers on media, and contact with rabbinic and synagogue groups. From November

to January should be the actual publicity and announcement campaign. One logical date might be November 10, which is, of course, the anniversary of Krystallnacht.

2. Competition: September 1983-March 1984: A competition to design a menorah or other appropriate ritual object to commemorate the Holocaust in the home, should be planned and set up between September and March 1984. This would include establishing the rules, including the fundamental decision whether it shall be a totally public competition, or whether we approach a limited group of established or recognized artists. Announcements of the competition should go between February and April 1984. Again, a logical focus point would be Yom HaShoah, which occurs in April. (One drawback being that many other Holocaust-related events will be focused on during that period.) We should allow up to one year for the deadline of the competition. This would mean that the judging would take place between March and June of 1985.

3. Assessment: September 1983-June 1985. A Task Force on Holocaust Liturgy and Ritual should be established by September 1983. It will meet regularly, and use subcommittees for its interim periods and assess existing Holocaust prayer and liturgy. It will try to draw up some guidelines as to appropriateness and religious significance. Throughout this project, it must be borne in mind that we are reaching secular as well as religious Jews, and that any ritual or liturgy must have the capacity to be used by all the synagogue movements and not just one. The goal will be to incorporate material that is appropriate for Yom HaShoah, but equally important will be to incorporate liturgy and ritual into the existing observances of the Jewish people.

4. Dissemination: September 1984-August 1985. The project will seek to provide material that can be incorporated within existing religious life, starting from the second year of the program. Among the elements that come to mind are the following: An insert for Holocaust remembrance in the Passover haggadah. An extra section or component of the seder plate, such as potato peelings or whatever is appropriately decided upon. The inclusion of Holocaust remembrance in a wedding ceremony. At present, the glass wrapped in a cloth or napkin is broken by the groom. Perhaps the covering may be a yellow cover, thus giving a double meaning: remembrance of the destruction of the Temple and of European Jewry, who wore a yellow star. The inclusion in daily life of an object of yellow color, symbolic of the yellow star worn by Jews during the period of the Holocaust. An additional prayer for Yom Kippur or Rosh Hashanah. If it is possible to incorporate shofar ceremony, which is the focus of Rosh Hashanah, this would be even better. The possibility of a special blast should also be brought up. However, it is probable that the Orthodox would object to any new blasts on the shofar, and therefore this, in itself, may not be feasible. The possibility of a yellow band or a yellow marker on the usual white kittel worn by the person blowing the shofar should certainly be explored as well. Incorporation of Holocaust remembrance in the ceremony of circumcision. The blood drawn in the ceremony has always been a symbol of Jewish suffering; perhaps it might be connected in some way to the Holocaust.

Other possible inclusions are: a kaddish in the regular Shabbat services, or even daily services, that is dedicated to the six million. Insuring that Yom HaShoah is included in all Jewish calendars. It is equally important, however, to insure that Yom HaShoah itself become widely recognized and its liturgy be developed. To this end, we will help develop such elements as the moment of

silence which may be marked on this day; liturgies or rituals for the day, supplying witness or testimony, including possibly film clips that can be used as part of Yom HaShoah commemoration. Another possible way would be the development of a calendar that is truly an almanac of Holocaust memory. Thus, a comprehensive calendar that listed the yahrzeit of the destruction of the various communities, could have significant impact. On Yom HaShoah, in particular, we will work closely with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, in America, and with Yad Vashem in Israel, since both have legal standing on the calendar by legislative enactment.