



July 6, 1982

Professor David Roskies
545 West 111th Street
New York, NY 10025

Dear David,

About three years ago, the National Jewish Resource Center, through its project ZACHOR, convened a small group to begin the process of thinking through liturgy for the Holocaust. I still recall those sessions with great pleasure and excitement because the depths of the group and the interchange were illuminating for me, personally. Due to the limited organizational resources, we were not able to follow through on the project.

Now, after two years of further plan and work, we have cleared our priorities to give this project the attention it deserves. We are developing a project to make what I believe will be an historic contribution to the development of liturgy and ritual to commemorate the Holocaust. We propose to collect, on a world-wide basis, what the Jewish people has generated both in terms of specific rituals and specific liturgies. This in itself will be a major organizational challenge to reach the widest possible audience of Jews. The theory underlying this is that no individual can claim the monopoly of wisdom and inspiration to be the liturgist or the creator of ritual for so momentous an event. However, the Jewish people, as a collectivity, has sufficient religious inspiration and spiritually significant individuals, to generate many such. We propose to collect them first.

At the same time, we wish to reconvene our task force to begin the process of thinking through or coming up with standards for that which we collect. The group discussions will focus on assessing and dealing with some of the difficult religious, spiritual, and liturgical issues raised by trying to commemorate the Holocaust.

We assume that the collection will take the better part of the year. During this year and the following year, our task force will meet regularly to think through the fundamental principles, and on that basis to begin the assessment. In Year Two, or possibly Year Three, we will convene a broader group of liturgists and scholars, and other appropriate people to react to the formulation of the task force and assessments which will be either developed or commissioned.

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Thereafter, we will disseminate what is appropriate and possibly even commission what is still needed. Up to now, we have not had the resources to do an adequate job in this area. However, I believe that now we shall have sufficient staff and budget to do a modest but absolutely necessary job. This would mean to not only be able to convene the group and pay the expenses of coming to the group, but also to have minutes typed up and circulated, and do whatever additional acts are necessary to make sure that the group is used to the maximum, and supported appropriately.

All this is by way of extending an invitation to join our task force. I give you the background in part to show you both the significance of the work and the fact that this time we shall be in a position to treat your time with the respect it deserves, i.e., there will be the back-up and the discussions which will be both focused and adequately prepared. I believe that you can make a truly unique contribution to this group. The combination of theological depth and liturgical sensitivity and sense of history that is called for in a member of this group is truly extraordinary. You would do us great honor and would participate in making a historical contribution if you would accept.

We ask that you give this the commitment that it deserves. We will plan out the meeting dates and make it possible for you to attend, although we understand the sacrifice and the effort involved in such a busy person as you attending these meetings. We suspect that the reward of personal growth will be almost as great as the reward of a job well done in so significant a project.

Please let me know your ability to participate. Warmest best wishes.

Sincerely yours,

*Without you - it can't be done
or at least - not done right -*

Irving Greenberg

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