

THE JEWISH RESPONSE TO CRISIS

Mortimer Ostow

THIS ESSAY IS BASED UPON and derives from the deliberations of an interdisciplinary seminar organized to study "The Response of Jews to Crisis."* The group included members of the Jewish Theological Seminary's faculties of history, Talmud and theology; historians, sociologists and philosophers affiliated with other academic institutions; observers of the Jewish scene; and seven psychoanalysts, four of them from the Department of Pastoral Psychiatry of the Seminary.** This seminar met about once a month during the academic year, that is about eight sessions a year, for about five years.

It was the intention of the group to attempt to learn something about the "nature" of the Jewish people — if such a thing exists — by studying the way Jews have responded to the many crises and tragedies of their history.

The participants were selected on the basis of their interest in this problem, some professional expertise which they could contribute, their openness to new ideas, their demonstrated originality and also their ability to work cooperatively in a group. One more requirement was imposed. Since the Holocaust was uppermost in everyone's mind and since we wished to minimize the kind of commitment to positions that personal suffering in the Holocaust might have induced, we did not consider for membership in the group anyone who had experienced the Holocaust personally.

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** The membership of the group increased as it became evident that a greater variety of information and expertise was required. Those who participated over a significant period of time included the following: Dr. Gerson D. Cohen, Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, who served as co-chairman along with the author of this essay; Jacob A. Arlow, Professor of Psychiatry, Downstate Medical Center, State University of New York; Samuel Abrams, Professor of Psychiatry, Downstate Medical Center, State University of New York; Samuel Atkin, psychoanalyst, private practice; Martin Bergmann, psychoanalyst, private practice; Mortimer Blumenthal, Professor of Psychiatry, Mount Sinai Medical School, City University of New York; Lucy Dawidowicz, Professor of History, Stern College; Chaim Zalman Dimitrovsky, Professor of Talmud, Jewish Theological Seminary; Henry Friedlander, Professor of History, Brooklyn College, City University of New York; Sidney S. Furst, Department of Pastoral Psychiatry, Jewish Theological Seminary; Milton Himmelfarb, editor, American Jewish Yearbook; Wolfe Kelman, executive vice-president, Rabbinical Assembly; Milton Malev, Department of Pastoral Psychiatry, Jewish Theological Seminary; Ivan Marcus, Professor of History, Jewish Theological Seminary; Ismar Schorsch, Professor of History, Jewish Theological Seminary; David Sidorsky, Professor of Philosophy, Columbia University; Seymour Siegel, Professor of Theology, Jewish Theological Seminary; and Allan Silver, Professor of Sociology, Columbia University.

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In order to attempt to understand internal motivation of behavior in addition to external pressures and constraints, we examined primary sources rather than secondary accounts wherever we could. When we dealt with accounts which were composed some time after the event, we studied them as reactions of their authors to contemporaneous circumstances.

Because the largest amount of primary source material derived from the Holocaust, and because of the uniqueness of the Holocaust and its immediacy, we studied it first and at considerably greater length than any other historical period. Professor Dawidowicz selected a number of published and unpublished journals and these formed the basis for the group's discussion. We then turned our attention to the period of the Roman conquest of Jerusalem, using Josephus and some selections from Talmud and Midrash as our study material. We also considered the sectarian heresies of two thousand years ago on the basis of Dead Sea texts and the Christian Bible. Thereafter we studied the periods of the Crusades, the Spanish and Portuguese expulsions, the Chmielnicki massacres, and finally the rise of Zionism against the background of the Russian pogroms.¹

1 The texts studied include the following: A. Holocaust materials.—Alton (Tauber), Ruth. *Litzmannstadt* (Lodz Ghetto). From Memoir Collection Leo Baeck Institute, New York. Translated by M. Goldschmidt, 1971; Atchildi, Asaf. "Rescue of Jews of Bukharan, Iranian and Afghan Origin in Occupied France (1940-1944)." *Yad Vashem Studies*, Vol. 6, 1967, pp. 257-281; Berlinski, Hersh. "The Organization of the Jewish Resistance Movement in Warsaw." Translated by Lucy Dawidowicz, from: *Dray: Ondenbukk: Pola Elster, Hersh Berlinski, Elyohu Erlikh*. (Tel-Aviv, Ringelblum Institute, 1966). Unpublished, in mimeograph form; Flinker, Moshe. *Young Moshe's Diary*. Published by Yad Vashem and Board of Jewish Education (New York), Jerusalem, 1971; Frank, Anne. *The Diary of a Young Girl*. Translated by B.M. Mooyart. Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1952; Goldstein, Charles. *The Bunker*. Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1970; Kalmanovitch, Zelig. "A Diary of the Nazi Ghetto in Vilna." In the *Yivo Annual of Jewish Social Science*, Vol. 8, (*Studies on the Epoch of the Jewish Catastrophe, 1933-1945*.) Edited by Koppel S. Pinson. Yiddish Scientific Institute — YIVO, New York, 1953; Kaplan, Chaim A. *Scroll of Agony, the Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan*. Translated and edited by A.I. Katsh. Macmillan, New York and Collier-Macmillan, London, 1965. Selections; Karski, Jan. *Story of a Secret State*. Houghton Mifflin, New York, 1944. Selections; Katznelson, Yitzhak. *Vittel Diary*. Published by Ghetto Fighters House, 1964. Selections, Tel-Aviv; Korbonski, Stefan. *Fighting Warsaw*. Funk and Wagnalls, New York, 1968. Selections; Kret, Jozef. "One Day in a Penal Company." In *Reminiscences of Former Auschwitz Prisoners*, translated by Krystyna Michalik. Panstwowe Muzeum, W Oswiecimiu, 1963; Mechanicus, Philip. *Year of Fear*. Translated by Irene F. Gibbons. Hawthorne Books Inc., New York, 1968. Selections; Miedzyrzecki, Wladka. "The Underground." In *The Root and the Bough*. Edited by Leo W. Schwarz. Rinehart, 1949, New York; Milejowski, Israel, Interview (from Ringelblum Archives, Document 86). In *Bleter far Geshikhte*. Vol. 1, No. 3-4, August-December 1948, pp. 188-194. English translation by Lucy Dawidowicz in mimeograph; Moen, Peter. *Peter Moen's Diary*. Translated by K. Austin-Lund. Faber & Faber Ltd., London, 1951. Selections; Orska, Irena. *Silent is the Vistula*. Longmans, Green & Co., New York, London, Toronto, 1946. Selections; Ringelblum, Emmanuel. *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto - The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*. Edited and translated by Jacob Sloan. McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York, Toronto, London, 1958. Selections; Schwartz-Bart, André. *The Last of the Just*. Translated from the French by Stephen Becker, Atheneum Publishers, New York, 1960; Trembaczowski, Jan. "The Road to Death." In *Reminiscences of Former Auschwitz Prisoners*, translated by Krystyna Michalik. Panstwowe Muzeum, W Oswiecimiu, 1963; Wells, Leon Weliczker, *The Janowska Road*. Macmillan, New York, 1963. Chapters 22 and 35; Yoors, Jan. *Crossing*. Simon & Schuster, New York, 1971; Zeitlin, Hillel. Interview. In *Bleter far Geshikhte*. Vol. 1, No. 2, April-June 1948, pp. 111-114. English translation by Lucy Dawidowicz in mimeograph; Zywulska, Krystyna. *I Came Back*. Roy, New York, 1951. Selections. B. Classical sources — *The Dead Sea Scriptures*. Translated by T.H. Gaster. Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., Garden City, New York, 1964, pp. 46-70, 291-340; Josephus. *The Jewish War*. Translated by J.A. Williamson, Penguin Books, England, 1970; *The New English Bible. The New*

During the course of the deliberations some subjects which were not associated with any specific historical incident came under consideration. For example, there was a good deal of discussion of the question of whether masochism in particular and passivity in general is especially characteristic of Jews. The nature of the ties holding the Jewish community together and the conflicts of the forces within the Jewish community were also considered. Such subjects as guilt, journal writing, myths and myth making, self-esteem, morale and demoralization, universalism versus particularism, messianism, apocalyptic and mysticism were given attention by the group.

This essay is not intended as a definitive report of the transactions of the seminar. It is, rather, a synopsis of some of the arguments together with my own elaborations, and some original contributions which did not come up for discussion in the group. While most of the ideas presented were contributed by the seminar, I take responsibility for the presentation and elaboration. A full report of the transactions of the seminar is being prepared for publication.

It is not possible in such a study to compare Jewish behavior with the behavior of non-Jews for there could be no meaningful comparison experiences and no comparison groups to serve as controls. Therefore we can only describe the Jewish experience and the Jewish response. It is not easy to discern which components of the response were determined by the Jewishness of the group being studied, which were determined by the nature of the trauma and by the resources available to cope with it, and which were

Testament. Oxford University Press, 1971. Matthew, Mark, John, The Revelation of John, Letters to Romans, Corinthians I & II, Ephesians; "Second Esdras" in *The Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, Revised Standard Version. Edited by H.G. May and B.M. Metzger. Oxford University Press, New York, 1965; *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*. Chapter 4. Translated by Judah Goldin. Yale Judaica Series. Yale University Press, New Haven and Oxford University Press, London, 1955, pp. 32-38; *Babylonian Talmud*. Gittin, Folios 55b-58a. Translated by M. Simon. Edited by I. Epstein. Soncino Press, London, 1963; *Midrash Rabbah*. Translated and edited by H. Freedman and M. Simon. Soncino Press, London, 1961. Lamentations s.a. C. Medieval sources and materials.—Solomon bar Simeon. "Massacres in the Rhineland." In *Ideas of Jewish History*. Edited by Michael A. Meyer. Behrman House Publishers, New York, 1974, pp. 93-102; Lewisohn, Ludwig. *The Island Within*. Jewish Publication Society. Philadelphia, 1968. Selections; Spiegel, Shalom. *The Last Trial*. Translated by Judah Goldin. Pantheon Books, Random House, New York, 1967; Maimonides, Moses. *Epistle to Yemen*. Edited by A.S. Halkin. Translated by B. Cohen. American Academy of Jewish Research, New York, 1952; Maimonides, Moses. "Letters of Maimonides." In *A Maimonides Reader*. Edited by I. Twersky. Behrman House, New York, 1974, pp. 179-182; Maimonides, Moses. *Mishneh Torah*, Book I, Hilkhot Yesodot ha-Torah, Chapter 5. Edited and translated by Moses Hyamson, New York, 1937, Bloch Publishing; Maimonides, Moses. "Letter to Obadiah the Proselyte." In *A Treasury of Jewish Letters*. Edited by F. Kobler. Farrar, Straus & Young, New York, 1953, I, pp. 475-476; Cohen, Gerson D. "Messianic Postures of Ashkenazim and Sephardim (prior to Sabbethai Zevi)." In *Memorial Lecture No. 9*. Leo Baeck Institute. Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., New York, 1967, pp. 117-156; Joseph ben Joshua, ha-Kohen. *The Vale of Tears* (Emek Habacha), by Joseph Hacohen and the anonymous corrector. Translated from the Hebrew plus critical commentary, by Harry S. May, Nijhoff, The Hague, 1971; Usque, Samuel. *Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel*. Translated by M.A. Cohn. Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1977; Ibn Verga, Solomon. *Shebet Yehudah*. Edited by A. Shohet and A. Baer, Jerusalem, 1946-1947; Hanover, Nathan. *Abys of Despair* (Yeven Metzulah). Translated by A.J. Mesch. Bloch Publishing, 1950. D. Modern sources and materials — Pinsker, Leo. "Auto-Emancipation: An Appeal to his People by a Russian Jew" (1882). In *The Zionist Idea*. Edited by Arthur Hertzberg. Doubleday and Herzl Press, Garden City, New York, 1959; Herzl, Theodor. "The Jewish State" (1896). In *The Zionist Idea*. Edited by Arthur Hertzberg. Doubleday and Herzl Press, Garden City, New York, 1959.

conditioned by the culture in which the Jews lived.

We still do not possess an adequate theory to understand group behavior, nor to relate individual behavior to group behavior. Our efforts, then, were an exploratory effort. We considered theory of individual behavior, extrapolations from that to the group, and some tentative hypotheses about group theory. Obviously, the first step was to define the nature of the trauma.

trauma

TRAUMA IS AN EXPERIENCE which, by its quality or intensity, causes injury to an individual or a group, in such a way or to such a degree that the subject's ordinary coping mechanisms are overcome. A problem arises in applying the concept to such a wide range of historical events. While there are certain similarities, the various crises that the Jews have encountered have differed in many ways — so that the specific traumata that we attempted to study were far from uniform. Not only is it often difficult to determine the specific nature of the trauma, but there are usually many traumata involved. For example, what was the trauma which affected Judea 2000 years ago, to which the Jewish community responded by spawning a plethora of heretical sects? Was it Roman military oppression, economic oppression, social disorganization or demoralization? What was the trauma associated with the destruction of the Temple? It is obvious that there were military defeat, loss of many lives, miseries of the siege of Jerusalem, vast financial loss, and of course, loss of the Temple with a concomitant loss of a way of life. But there were other effects of a nonmaterial nature. The loss of the Temple deprived the Jews of their principal channel of communication with God. In fact, it deprived them of the sense of having a special relation with God and of being protected by Him. If God could not, or would not, protect his Temple, how could one believe that He would protect Israel? And if one lost one's view of a familiar universe, how then was one to maintain any orientation in life? In the aftermath of the defeat, there was a good deal of concern with its cause and with placing the blame. While various forms of misbehavior and immorality were adduced, perhaps one of the most painful facts that had to be acknowledged was that internecine strife contributed heavily. It would probably be correct to say that the military defeat, the siege that preceded it, and the enslavement, exile and expropriation that followed, traumatized the Jews in many ways. It is probably also true that a study of any of the serious traumata to which Jewish communities have been subjected in historical times would demonstrate a complex set of painful and injurious experiences.

As painful as all the physical and material effects of persecution were, an important and probably more persistent effect was a profound diminution in self-esteem.

Among the many parameters of psychic function, self-esteem is one of the most influential. It determines where one places oneself among the other

members of one's social group. It determines one's ambitions and goals and one's style of living. It plays a significant role in determining one's degree of success or failure in life.

Self-esteem in turn is determined by a number of influences, external and internal, group and individual. Clinical experience suggests that each individual is born with a degree of self-confidence and courage which appears even in childhood, and which serves as a baseline for perhaps the rest of his life. External influences elicit deviations from this baseline, either positive or negative, enduring or transient.

Self-esteem may be influenced seriously and permanently by intense childhood experiences. Current data and theory inform us that to elicit a child's maximum potential, parents should provide the care and love, protection and tenderness which the child requires at each stage in his development, while at the same time relinquishing surveillance and control gradually and to the degree that the child's maturation dictates. When parents reject or treat him with hostility or derision, the child's need for protection induces him to attempt more and more vigorously to elicit this protection by subordinating and degrading himself. He may grow up with a degree of self-contempt which he will carry for the rest of his life. Conversely, if a parent overwhelms the child with protection and love, discouraging his attempts to become independent, his continuing and excessive dependence upon his parents will also limit his self-esteem.

Self-esteem is influenced by current experience, but such influence will persist for relatively short periods of time as current experience changes. Self-esteem will be increased by affection returned, by admiration, by success, and by the experience of living up to one's ideals. Self-esteem will be diminished by affection rejected, by the contempt of others, by failure, especially in relation to one's ideals.

The social group, the community among whom one lives, also influences self-esteem — in two ways. The individual and the group together establish a position for the individual within the group, a position vis-à-vis other members of the group, a status. This status influences self-esteem. It is also true that the individual's self-esteem influences the station that he strives to achieve within the group. To the degree that he achieves that station, or transcends it, his self-esteem is reinforced. To the degree that he falls short, his self-esteem is diminished. Secondly, the community itself is assigned a status by surrounding communities. That status adheres also to its members. In a surrounding community in which the Jewish community is assigned low status, the self-esteem of the individual Jew will be diminished. Where the Jewish community is respected, individual Jews will acquire reinforcement of their self-respect.

I have taken this time to discuss self-esteem because it is my impression that one traumatic influence common to perhaps all of the various traumatic

experiences which have affected the Jewish community is a sharp diminution in self-esteem. Diminution in self-esteem is both a result of trauma and a trauma in its own right. The diminution may have been caused by military defeat, persecution of individuals, exile, various forms of expression of hostility by surrounding communities, by loss of lives and loss of wealth. That the painful humiliation was not the least of the components of the trauma is suggested by the vivid and poignant references to it in Lamentations, and in several warnings and prophecies in other portions of the Scriptures (some citations are included in the semi-weekly Taḥanun prayer²).

But challenges to Jewish self-esteem have characterized even tranquil intervals in the many centuries of exile. The very word "tolerance" implies a difference in status between the host community and the Jewish guests. I should like to suggest that the assault on Jewish self-esteem by external tolerance or intolerance has played a shaping role in the determination of the character and personality of the individual Jew, as well as the behavior of the Jewish community and the culture it has created. Specifically, I believe that we can attribute, to some extent, to the need to overcome Jewish low self-esteem: Jewish ambition and success, Jewish cohesiveness and divisiveness, Jewish loyalty and disloyalty, Jewish self-effacement and Jewish ostentation.

resistance

IN EACH INSTANCE JEWS RESISTED the trauma to which they were subjected.

In recent considerations of the Holocaust, much effort has gone into attempts to establish that Jews actively resisted rather than passively accepted the systematic efforts to destroy them. Accusations that the Jews were too passive have been voiced within the Jewish community itself. If we try to look at the controversy we realize that what is at issue is whether or not Jewish behavior complied with the generally accepted notions of a heroic ideal. In other words, did we Jews conduct ourselves in a manner we can be proud of? Again the issue is self-esteem.

If we study the history of Jewish resistance we find that modes of resistance were determined primarily by the nature of the danger, the resources available to the Jewish community, the opportunity for resistance, the availability of actual or potential allies, cultural modes which the Jews had absorbed from their environment, and the history of past persecutions and Jewish responses to them. Therefore the question arises: Are there any modes of resistance exclusively Jewish, or characteristically Jewish? It is doubtful that one could find social behavior responses that are exclusively Jewish. It would even be difficult to establish that any behavior response is characteristically Jewish. All we can do is catalogue what the Jews did in response

² See *Weekday Prayer Book*. Rabbinical Assembly of America, 1961, pp. 71-79. For annotations see also *Avodat Yisrael*. Edited by Isaac Baer, 1868, pp. 112-118, reprinted Tel Aviv, 1957.

to the various crises that they encountered.

Consider for example the simple response of unification of the Jewish community. The efforts to mobilize the Jewish community under attack, and its surrounding Jewish communities, do not always succeed as one would hope and expect. It was only in the past 140 years that Jews in different parts of the world have attempted to protect each other.³ In the Roman campaign against Judea, only a fraction of Jewish inhabitants of Palestine participated in the struggle. In medieval times, there is no evidence that the Ashkenazic and Sephardic communities responded to or even took notice of each other in good times or bad. Ibn Daud, for example, in 1161 gave no evidence of knowing about the 1096 massacres in the Rhineland. It is true that Jews are instructed in the Talmud to rescue each other when the opportunity presents itself. It is also true that many Jewish communities around the Mediterranean accepted exiles from Spain and Portugal. However, the kind of active mutual assistance reaching all around the world that we expect today does not antedate the middle of the nineteenth century. Certainly the availability of communication influenced the ability of Jews in different parts of the world to be aware of each other and to request and offer assistance. Yet even such geographically close communities as those of Southern France and Northern Spain seem to have had little contact, and what contact there was seems to have been hostile. Furthermore, assertions of mutual responsibility in the case of the Damascus Affair in 1840 preceded the era of modern communication. Perhaps, more than anything else, it was the Emancipation that facilitated international Jewish mutual concern and assistance. It was the Jewries of England and France, the most emancipated groups of European Jewry, that responded to the Damascus Affair.⁴

While we now take for granted mutual assistance and Jewish unity under attack, that unity has seldom been impressive. One of the best known aspects of the tragedy of the conquest of Jerusalem (in 70 C.E.) is the costly internecine strife. In most of the tragedies of Jewish history, we learn about individual dissidents and traitors. Even with respect to the Holocaust, we continue to learn of disreputable and disloyal behavior, many reports of which are probably true. The Jews of the United States today could probably be considered one of the most activist groups in terms of self-defense and defense of Jews in other parts of the world. Yet fewer than one-third contribute anything to the United Jewish Appeal.

One fairly common Jewish response to catastrophe is recording the events. There are two kinds of recording: that done by the victims of their experiences, and recording done by the community, considerably later, of a

3 For the Damascus blood libel and its impact, cf. Howard M. Sachar, *The Course of Modern Jewish History* (New York, 1963), pp. 134 ff. On the Mortara affair and its impact, cf. I. Elbogen, *A Century of Jewish Life*, tr. M. Hadas (Philadelphia, 1945), pp. 30 ff., 34 ff.; Sachar, *op. cit.*, pp. 178 ff. On Kishinev, cf. Elbogen, p. 378 f., Sachar, pp. 249 ff.

4 See Sachar, pp. 134 ff.

preceding trauma.

Why do victims keep journals? Inspection of some Holocaust journals suggests a number of answers. Some victims see the journals as witnesses that at some time in the future will testify against their persecutors. To a certain extent such an expectation is realistic. The journals that have survived the Holocaust do bear eloquent witness against the Nazis and their collaborators. On a conscious level, the diary is addressed only to human survivors, but on an unconscious or perhaps only a minimally acknowledged level, it is addressed to God, in whatever religious or secular form He may be perceived. The hope is that God will take vengeance. Other journal writers felt that the journal is a form of communication with God, not only for the purpose of obtaining revenge, but also as a way of feeling close to God, and feeling loved, protected and cared for. Many journals were produced by individuals who were incarcerated alone or in relative isolation. These journals created the illusion of contact with a companion. Writing such a journal combatted the feeling of isolation and the anxiety and the hopelessness which isolation itself brings about. Even in normal times, lonely individuals write diaries to create the illusion of companionship. Writing a journal recreated to some degree the ambience of normal life and permitted the writer to reaffirm his commitment to ideals. We find these last two motivations in the diaries of Anne Frank and Moshe Flinker.⁵

How Jewish is it to write a journal in the face of persecution? The journals we have date mostly from the past two centuries. While we have written records of previous persecutions, they were mostly created after the event, and in retrospect. Certainly journal producing is not an exclusively Jewish activity. We possess journals written during the Holocaust by non-Jews (e.g., Pater Moen). However, the concern with maintaining moral standards in adversity, with remodeling reality by mental creativity, with reaching out to a protecting transcendent Deity — these are Jewish, if not exclusively Jewish concerns.

This leads us to ask what the explicitly religious response of Jews has been to catastrophe. It is generally thought that in times of crisis, people become religious. The cliché is: "There are no atheists in fox holes." This is not really true in individual life. Faced with crisis, religious individuals become more intense in their observance; secular individuals continue to ignore religion; and those partly committed may first renew their interest, but later they may become angry and deliberately flout religion. It is also common to see superstitious behavior that appears consistently, at all times and all places. Again it is true that Jewish experience has left changes in religious doctrine and observance, but these lasting changes are adopted only years after the fact.⁶ In the recent past, at least within the Jewish community,

⁵ See Note 1 for references.

⁶ See Gershom G. Scholem, "Jewish Mysticism and Kabbalah," *Jewish People Past and Present*, New

the religious have become more religious, and those not wholeheartedly committed have gone either way, or first one way and then the other.

Within the religious community, the crisis poses four problems: How can one continue to observe religious law in the presence of external obstacles? How can religious values be used for guidance in making moral decisions? What assistance can be expected from religion? And how can one understand current events within the framework of a religious *Weltanschauung*?

To those who are committed to a religious life, the existence of a crisis makes observance even more necessary. It is vital to retain the forms of observance and worship that have signified continuity with the past and that protect against discontinuity. Maintaining one's way of life under hostile attack serves also to sustain one's self-esteem, which is always at risk under pressure. Some of the most moving documents we possess about Jewish suffering deal with the determination to adhere to religious precepts.⁷ Our history of course records the instances of determined resistance, but the many instances of capitulation are seldom recorded. (With respect to the latter, Rashi, for example, in his Responsa, refers to Crusade apostates.⁸) The major exception is the willingness of some Sephardic Jews, tolerated by Maimonides, to adopt the Moslem religion.⁹ The difference between this behavior and the martyrdom of the Ashkenazim of about the same period requires explanation. It has been suggested that the difference may be attributed to the fact that Christianity was unacceptable because it requires belief in a Messiah and a new Divinity, whereas conversion to the Moslem religion seemed less heinous because it requires acceptance merely of a new prophet. It has also been suggested by Gerson D. Cohen that the medieval Ashkenazi Jews accepted the otherworldliness of the medieval Christians, whereas the Jews living in the Moslem world were influenced by the this-worldliness of their hosts, and were therefore more willing to make compromises.

Persecution invariably generates conflict among various loyalties and commitments. There are selfish interests, the interests of one's family, the interests of one's community, and then there are moral and religious commitments. Life and death decisions are often demanded which require a choice among these commitments. They are always heartbreaking and inevit-

York Jewish Encyclopedic Handbooks, Central Yiddish Culture Organization, Vol. I, 1946, pp. 322 f. idem; *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, Schocken Books, New York, 1961, 3rd Edition, pp. 244 f. where the chronology of kabbalistic expression after the expulsion of Spain provides the evidence for our assertion.

⁷ Irving J. Rosenbaum, *The Holocaust and Halakhah*. Ktav Publishing House, New York, 1976; Hirsch Jacob Zimmels, *The Echo of the Nazi Holocaust in Rabbinic Literature*. Marla, London, 1976.

⁸ On Jewish apostasy in the face of medieval persecutions, see Jacob Katz, *Bejn Yehudim Legoyim* (Jerusalem, 1960), Ch. 6.

⁹ Moses ben Maimon, "Iggeret haShemad," *Iggarot*. Edited and translated by Joseph Kafih (Jerusalem, 1972), p. 107-120.

ably they give rise to guilt. If one can look to the priorities established and sanctified by religion, and accept its guidance, one can minimize the guilt, though often at the cost of sustaining painful personal loss.

Inevitably one wishes for magical rescue within the religious context. These wishes are seldom voiced for fear that their nonfulfillment might give rise to blasphemous thoughts. Generally, too, one finds in the classical and medieval sources more or less disguised expressions of anger with God. The anger may be expressed still within the context of the tradition or it may result in frank and open repudiation of the tradition.

At some point there is an attempt to understand the reason for the catastrophe. The demand to understand it in terms of the philosophy of the religion arises from two sources. It is characteristic of the human psychic apparatus that it requires an understanding of cause and effect relations. Psychoanalysts speak of a "need for causality."¹⁰ When one's physical, social and familial moorings are being broken abruptly and violently, one strives to retain at least the sense that one lives in a comprehensible world. Normally one can tolerate a degree of ambiguity and uncertainty. Under stress the need for consistency grows greater. For example, in the case of organic brain disease, which interrupts the patient's conceptual contact with his familiar universe, he becomes panicky in the presence of almost any change. That is why old people cannot move from the homes in which they have lived for decades. The need to understand arises also from a second source, that is, the need to justify God, in order to overcome the temptation to repudiate God because misfortune has occurred without a valid religious reason.

When an individual finds himself confronted with an intolerable and unyielding reality, he resorts to defensive maneuvers which do not change the reality, or prepare him to deal with it, but which spare him pain. Such defensive maneuvers include: denial, which is simply refusing to acknowledge that the distressing reality exists, ignoring the facts and their implications and suppressing one's own emotional response; hysterical detachment, which is a more profound disengagement in which not only the unpleasant reality but the entire area of concern is rejected, the affect is blunted and the individual busies himself with some substitute activity; and psychotic detachment, which is detachment from reality complemented by commitment to a fantasy in which the world is presented in distorted form, a form which complies with the individual's conscious or unconscious wishes. While these defensive maneuvers do protect the individual from the pain of confronting his unacceptable reality, they do so at the cost of impairing mental function so that he cannot assess reality objectively, and more realistic endeavors, if any are possible, are delayed or prevented. Therefore we consider their use pathologic.

¹⁰ See H. Nunberg, *Principles of Psychoanalysis*, International Universities Press, New York, 1955, pp. 151-152.

There is a similar though somewhat different maneuver, sanctioned in our society and many others, in which consensually recognized reality is acknowledged, but it is seen alongside a wish fantasy which is also designated reality and is in fact labeled an "ultimate" and "transcendent" reality. This transcendent reality outweighs material reality but does not obliterate it, so that affective commitment to it can blunt the pain of material reality and yet permit appropriate response to it.

We know of three types of transcendentalism: mysticism, apocalyptic, and messianism. Of these messianism is closest to normative Judaism, apocalyptic most remote, and mysticism between. These manifestations of transcendentalism exhibit themselves in two forms: personal belief and commitment, and a social movement. The evolution of a transcendental movement requires a period of time. It does not therefore occur in the midst of an acute crisis. It is seen more commonly during the process of recovery from tragedy, or during a protracted period of oppression, for example during the period of the Roman rule of Palestine.

All such transcendental phenomena are based upon psychologic regressions from normal, reality-oriented function, and correspond to the dynamics of certain clinical syndromes. The mystical orientation toward a fantasy world, constructed to accommodate conscious or unconscious needs, resembles the delusional phase of schizophrenia. But there are important differences. The schizophrenic regression occurs automatically, beyond the control of the individual, while the mystical regression is optional. Similarly, the schizophrenic regression is fairly fixed, while the mystical regression is reversible. The schizophrenic cannot understand the fact that he has displaced the quality of reality from the material world to the fantasy world, while the mystic preconsciously understands that he has done violence to the reality principle, but sees that violence as a paradox. The schizophrenic regression prevents the individual from engaging in realistic affectionate relations with others, while mystics retain the capacity to cohere in groups and to work together. Schizophrenic delusions are usually accompanied by unpleasant affects because the schizophrenic retreat itself creates anxiety, and the conflict in schizophrenia is internal and therefore finds representation even within a problem-solving delusion. On the other hand mystical fantasies convey pleasant affects, although even a mystical trance retreat can elicit anxiety.

Mysticism occurs in two forms: the mystical trance state or fantasy and the mystical way of life. In the trance state, the individual enters into a state of altered consciousness, a personal retreat which can be called narcissistic because external reality is replaced by internal pseudo-reality. In the mystical way of life, the individual conducts his life in an unremarkable way, but experiences it subjectively flavored by the ecstasy and awe appropriate to the mystical fantasies with which he lives.

In the paradigmatic mystical fantasy, the individual approaches God. In the Jewish prophetic vision, only the approach is experienced. Other accounts describe proximity, *deveikut* (adherence). In the Christian fantasy, they may be an illusion of actual union, i.e., *unio mystica*.¹¹

The apocalyptic fantasy that the world will be reborn at "the end of days," following a final struggle between the forces of good and evil, resembles the acute attack phase of the schizophrenic breakdown. This is characterized by what has been called the "*Weltuntergang*" fantasy, namely, that the universe is being destroyed by some violent forces, and that thereafter it will be reborn. The fantasy indicates the existence of murderous fury in the subject, literally a wish first to destroy the world, and a wish then to remake it according to his own design.

The messianic fantasy corresponds to the belief among a few schizophrenic patients that they will be rescued from their unhappy situation by some redeemer. It represents a fairly uncomplicated yearning for rescue by a parent or parent substitute.

The recurrence of these transcendental phenomena in individuals is of less significance than the organization of movements based upon them. There are times when large portions of the population organize themselves into groups, based upon the adoption of such transcendental beliefs. We know of mystical movements, messianic movements and apocalyptic movements (e.g., the Dead Sea Sects). What these movements have in common is a repudiation of reality, including the reality of the current organization of society, temporal and spiritual. That is, the movements are deviant, or rebellious or heretical. Being derived from personal "revelation" rather than conventionally recognized tradition, they are essentially antinomian. They secede from, or attempt to take over, current social organization. Those that are more realistic may succeed; very few do. Those that are less realistic usually fail, so that we hear little or nothing of them in the annals of history.

Any of these movements can justify and motivate passive acquiescence to the march of history, attempts to strive only for personal righteousness, or political or even military activism. The outcome depends upon external factors such as opportunities, allies, resources and morale. While these movements usually begin as rebellions, if they endure, they are sooner or later incorporated by the establishment and become part of it, giving up their original antinomian thrust; or, if they are successful, the revolutionary organization becomes the new "establishment."

In essence, transcendentalism attempts to deal with intolerable external reality by distorting one's view of it. When the readiness for transcendental commitment facilitates the organization of movements and sectarian heresies, these movements usually die because their entire basis is unrealistic. In the

¹¹ See Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (London, 1930), pp. 413-443; and Sholem, Gershom G., *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1971), p. 123.

case of activist movements, the participants attempt to change external reality so as to make it conform to their subjective view. When the change is entirely subjective and internal, psychoanalysts speak of autoplasmic efforts to accommodate to reality; when an attempt is made to change reality, we use the term alloplastic. Alloplastic movements, even though driven by commitment to a transcendental vision, may be sufficiently realistic to become successful in the real world. The transformation of a messianic Zionist vision into the reality of the State of Israel exemplifies such a process.

demoralization

IF THE ATTACK CANNOT BE RESISTED effectively, as defeat becomes likely, morale becomes impaired and then destroyed. At that point courage and idealism vanish and give way to primitively conceived self-interest.

What are the conditions for demoralization? The disappearance of any reasonable chance of survival; isolation, that is, separation from the group; starvation; illness; loss of leaders; and systematic and consistent degradation.

What are the consequences of demoralization? Abandonment of commitment to the group; deflection of hostility from the enemy to group members; defection from standards of personal and group behavior; pessimism; and ultimately, panic.

We read relatively little about demoralization in historical documents. We have some material from Holocaust sources. Josephus describes demoralization during the siege of Jerusalem. Vivid and accurate descriptions are provided by Scripture: for example, Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, which are presumably warnings, may well be based on eyewitness accounts of catastrophe. Lamentations is construed as an actual account of the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. What we see in all of this is murder and oppression of individuals by the enemy; poverty and starvation; hostility within the group and within the family; and humiliation.

The reason we possess so few documents describing demoralization is that most descriptions of catastrophe are written years later, in retrospect. They are written for specific purposes other than simply historical recording. A record of demoralization usually does not serve these specific purposes and so it is not provided. We have no reason to believe that Jews behaved differently in demoralization from others.

working through

WE USE THE TERM "WORKING THROUGH" to designate a relatively long process by means of which the individual, and possibly the group psyche — if we may use such a term — accommodates to the traumatic disruption of its ordinary activities and finds a new basis for functioning. Working through includes such activities as recollecting the traumatic events in detail so as to overcome the denial which was the initial response to overwhelming trauma; examining

the implications of these events for the present and the future; recollecting similar events from the past and taking courage from the fact that they were overcome; reconstructing personal and group myths which provide a sense of origin, continuity, identity and destiny; making practical plans for the future that will compensate for the losses of the trauma and that will promise a reasonable prospect of protection against similar trauma in the future. In a sense one constructs a new image of the universe to replace the one that has been lost. When the working through process has been completed the individual experiences a sense of invigoration, remoralization and renewal, which in the unconscious is represented as a feeling of being reborn.

It is because one of the initial procedures of working through is the recollection of the traumatic events, that we have the written accounts of past crises; that is, the events were recorded not for the purposes of history in its modern sense but for the purpose of working through.

Gerson Cohen observed that most of the written accounts of traumatization of the Jewish community were recorded no earlier than a generation after the event. The Holocaust is different in that recording started very soon after liberation for the following reasons: journalism encourages the writing of history; modern historians record events for the purpose of history-making as a discipline; the creation of the State of Israel has accelerated the process of working through; and the availability of restitution payments was contingent upon the recordings of injuries. And yet in the case of the Holocaust, too, we see even greater interest in recent years, that is, about a generation after the trauma.

The records of previous crises that we do have were probably prepared as part of the process of working through. They vividly recount the suffering of the victims. They were intended to influence Jewish thought and behavior of the time at which they were written. Many of these accounts were intended to be incorporated into the liturgy. They often associated the recent crisis with previous similar catastrophes of the Jewish past. This association reassures one of continuity with the past, and thereby encourages hope for the future. The author often presents the accounts with emphases and distortions which seem to validate and reinforce the central themes of Jewish history. For example, accounts of the persecutions by the Crusaders in the communities of the Rhine refer to the Akeidah as a paradigm of Jewish suffering.¹² These retrospective, slanted accounts serve the purpose of encouraging a spirit of Jewish elan and courage to resist oppression, to attempt to forestall similar catastrophes, and to proceed hopefully with efforts to rebuild. In our own day, Holocaust material is presented early in the training program of the Israeli air force.

The assimilation of this material by the Jewish reader results in a sense of

¹² See Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial*, full reference in bibliography, Note 1.

renewal and rebirth. The history of Jewish catastrophe is presented no more movingly or concentratedly than in the Yom Kippur service. The penitential service of Yom Kippur aims at creating a sense of renewal and rebirth, primarily by encouraging a recommitment to religious values and abandonment of sensual pleasure as a means of seeking gratification. The recollection of Jewish tragedy seems intended to contribute to that feeling of renewal. I refer here not only to the *Eileh Ezkerah*, but also to the *piyyutim*, some authors of which were themselves *m'kadeshei hashem* (martyrs).¹³ Personal losses are also commemorated in the Yizkor service, and the loss of the Temple is vividly dramatized. In this Yom Kippur service we see two things: Personal losses are brought together with historical tragedies including both recent history and more remote mythological events, as though they were all congruent but separate manifestations of a recurrent process. The losses are recollected and commemorated as though they conveyed some special merit to us, the survivors.¹⁴

Perhaps the most compelling and complex religious concept that has allowed Jews to cope with history is that of sacrifice. Psychiatrists and psychoanalysts are frequently confronted with the seeming paradox that individuals often seem to act against their own best interests. Examples of such paradoxical behavior include: recurrent behavior that is self-defeating and self-destructive; melancholic depression with its self-criticism, self-degradation, paralysis and occasional suicide; personality disorder manifest chiefly by timidity, fearfulness, self-effacement and diminished self-esteem; and masochism.

Various explanations have been suggested for all of these, the most common of which is that they are forms of expiation for guilt. The explanation which I favor is that to the small child, submission, self-effacement, self-degradation and accepting abuse and hostility all seem intended to secure mother's protection and love or to appease father. In mental illness the same mechanism probably obtains. Even in suicide, the individual cultivates the fantasy that in his death he will be rejoining mother. (In the Hebrew idiom, one rejoins *Avraham avinu*, Abraham the Patriarch, as in Josippon's account of Hannah and her seven sons.)¹⁵ The normal adolescent and adult will be ready to make sacrifices for the welfare and protection of his family and community. This readiness I see as a normal instinct, related to and perhaps derived from the childhood readiness to submit. The same impulse may be

13 For *Eileh Ezkerah*, see reference Note 17, p. 568 ff. *The Book of Memoirs*. Penitential Prayer and Lamentations Rabbi Ephraim Bar Jacob of Bonn. Edited by A. M. Haberman, Jerusalem, 1970. Bernstein, Shimon. *Al Naharot Sfarad*. Tel Aviv, 1956.

14 In contemporary High Holy Day prayerbooks, a special commemorative service on the Holocaust has been added. See, for example, the *Mahzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur*, edited by Jules Harlow (New York, 1972), pp. 556-569. There, the Mourner's Kaddish is interwoven with the names of the death camps and of other centers of atrocity.

15 See Gerson D. Cohen, "Hannah and Her Seven Sons (in Hebrew literature)" in *The Mordecai M. Kaplan Jubilee Volume*, Hebrew section (New York, 1953), p. 109.

regarded as the motivation for accepting a subordinate place in the social order and submitting to a leader.

Certainly society can function and in fact can exist only when nourished by the contributions, that is, the sacrifices of its members. In the words of Thomas Jefferson, "The tree of liberty must be nourished from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure."¹⁶ The mechanism which I am proposing may be the instinctual basis for social organization. The individual is motivated to submit and make his contribution. In return he obtains the feeling of being entitled to protection and beneficence. This instinctual and affective basis of social organization finds representation in the institutions of religion (from which civil government has only gradually and recently been differentiated). Religion involves submission to the authority of God who is father and ruler.

In the religious context, however, the concept of sacrifice has been modified by the addition of the possibility of vicarious sacrifice. Thus "human sacrifice" means not that one gives up something of one's own, but that one murders another and hopes thereby to obtain some religious advantage. If the victim is a stranger such as an enemy, the "sacrifice" really means no loss to the sacrificer but rather a gratification of hostile wishes. If the victim is someone whom one presumably loves, the sacrifice does represent a loss to the sacrificer though an even greater loss to the victim. Animal sacrifice in Jewish practice included a number of separate elements. It was a personal gift, a giving up of one's property for the maintenance of the institution by which one relates to God, and thereby of the relation with God. It was a replacement for human sacrifice, and therefore gave expression to a certain amount of murderous aggressiveness, in sublimated or purified form. It was a device for the support of the Temple establishment. Because it did discharge religious obligation, presumably it left the worshipper with a feeling of righteousness, of being entitled to and indeed of possessing God's favor.

But the concept of vicarious sacrifice applies not only to the ritual concept but to the social context as well. By virtue of a sacrifice offered by, or victimizing, any member of the group, the entire group feels entitled to special favor. The Hebrew word is *zekhut* (merit). We acquire *zekhut* by virtue of sacrifices of others, especially our predecessors. Every morning, in the Shoharit prayer, we remind God of the Akeidah and ask him to treat us with compassion, in recognition of the obedience of Abraham. (It is interesting that we do not claim the virtue of Isaac, the intended victim, but that of the father who was torn between duty to son and duty to father.) On Yom Kippur we recite the *Eileh Ezkerah* hoping to acquire merit on the basis of the sufferings of our predecessors. In the Goldschmidt Mahzor the *Eileh*

16 Thomas Jefferson, Letter to William Stevens Smith, November 13, 1787.

Ezkerah is followed by the verse:

חֲסִידִים אֱלוֹהֵי הַיְיָ, אֲבֹתֵינוּ זָכְרֵנוּ
זְכוּתֵנוּ וְזְכוּת אֲבוֹתֵינוּ יִעֲמְדוּ לְבָנֶיךָ בְּעֵת צָרָתֵנוּ

“Lord of Mercy remember/These righteous and their murder./May their merit and the merit of their fathers/Protect your children in time of need.”¹⁷ The Christian religion is based upon the claim that salvation can be acquired by virtue of the sacrifice of Jesus. He is the “Sacrificial Lamb” whose blood purifies his adherents.

But what is the relevance of these considerations to the working through of trauma? It is reported that during the Crusades, the Jews of the Rhine valley, when their position became hopeless, slew each other by common consent. They compared their acts of mutual and self-slaughter to the Akeidah and to acts of animal sacrifice in the Temple.¹⁸ We do not know whether the identification of the martyrs with the Akeidah was literally theirs, or whether it was projected back to them by those who, a generation later, recorded the events, or whether there was some of each, that is, perhaps the idea existed at the time of the Crusades, but in recording, it was given a much larger role than it really had.

If it accompanied the event, what thoughts and feelings could it have reflected? A desperate plea for divine intervention? Repressed anger directed toward God who now again seems to require human sacrifice? I suspect also that the idea that they were reenacting a completed Akeidah gave expression to the hope that in death, they would be resurrected like Isaac and accepted into *olam haba*, the world to come.

But then what could the association of these events with the Akeidah have meant to the recorders a generation later? If it expressed repressed anger, the anger could not have been the major issue. The writers themselves were not victims. They were probably attempting, by recollecting and recording past events, to deal with their current problems, including their need to come to terms with past generations, their own children, their own economic and political situation, and their own relation with God. We, a generation after the Holocaust, are puzzled, guilty and ashamed, but not many of us are angry. I would assign greater importance to a need to come to terms with God, and to reinforce one’s cosmology and theology. By establishing an identity between the Akeidah and the catastrophe of the Crusades, the succeeding generation seeks to acquire credit with God. The community of Israel, having made this sacrifice, is now entitled to the *zekhut* of their forebears. Second, the same identity confirms the continuity of the community of Israel and reassures the survivor of his future.

17 Daniel Goldschmidt, editor, *Mahzor LeYamim haNoraim lefi Minhag Bnei Ashkenaz* (Jerusalem, 1970), II, p. 574.

18 Spiegel, *op. cit.*

The theme of the Akeidah and its relation to persecution is preserved in the often repeated tale of the woman (Hannah) and her seven sons. This tale was told (in later sources) of the Hasmonean persecution, and also of the Roman persecution. Yet the Akeidah was not invoked by Josephus in his description of the contemporary mutual murder and suicide at Masada. This last seems consistent with my suggestion that the Akeidah paradigm served a more useful purpose for succeeding generations than for the victims themselves. It can also be ascribed to the fact that the authors of the Crusade chronicles were writing for Jews, while Josephus was addressing himself to the Romans. (Possibly, the Akeidah came to be used this way only after Josephus.)

The concept that the death of others acquires *zekhut* for us is demonstrated by the simple fact that we demand and expect special consideration by virtue of having been the victims of the Holocaust. On the most literal level, many Jews demand and expect financial restitution payments. On the political and social level, we expect that all non-Jews will understand that we are entitled to special consideration. We do not literally ask for special privilege. But nevertheless we expect it.

Our enemies too seem to agree that persecution purchases a right to special treatment. They argue that there was no Holocaust and that Jews suffered no more than others during World War II. The purpose of this argument is to deprive the Jews of this credit. But the argument implies that they recognize that Holocaust experience does acquire credit.

I would infer that vicarious sacrifice is a central and cohesive feature of all religions. We have already observed that it is the central feature of Christianity. Judaism however differs in several respects. The sacrifices are not freely offered; they are extracted. They are recurrent — over millenia. They affected large numbers of ordinary people, rather than a single or a small number of legendary figures. They threaten each generation.

To return to the issue of working through, we can see that persecutions of the past, however understood, are endowed with the power to protect the Jews now living.

Jews respond to catastrophe not only with the feeling of having acquired credit, but also with a feeling of guilt. The feeling of guilt as a response to misfortune is well-known in individual psychopathology and psychology. It is encountered in almost every patient with melancholic depression. Psychodynamically it represents an attempt to become reconciled with a protecting parent and to submit. What is implied is that the reconciliation and submission will purchase rescue and relief.

Self-blame occurs frequently in Jewish liturgy. The best known formula is *mipnei ḥata'einu galinu mei'artseinu*, "because of our sins we were exiled from our country." This statement is followed by the petition *shetashuv u'terahem aleinu*, "[may it be Thy Will] again to have mercy on us." The issue

of guilt is often raised at the time of persecution, but it is overshadowed by the real need for self-defense. In the process of working through the trauma, accepting guilt implies that one has control over one's fate and that God can be persuaded to favor the community.

Guilt appears not only in a religious context but also in a personal and social context. In a paper written in 1961, Dr. William Niederland described what he called "the survivor syndrome" which includes as one of its major components, "survivor guilt."¹⁹ This is a phenomenon which Dr. Niederland says he observed in almost all of the large number of concentration camp survivors who consulted him and whom he examined with respect to their applications for restitution payments. These individuals expressed the feeling that they did not deserve to survive their relatives and friends who had perished. Dr. Niederland does not know how prevalent this feeling of guilt may be because he has seen it only among those individuals who have come to him for examination, that is, among individuals who present themselves with pathology. Feelings of guilt were expressed in journals by individuals facing imminent death. It is my impression that these sentiments really express a wish to be reunited with those who have been lost — in death, if not in life. I expect that the "survivor guilt" observed by Dr. Niederland derived from an underlying state of depression. In conversations with me, he concedes that that might be true.

We know of a somewhat different type of guilt observed among many Jews, now alive, who lived through the period of the Holocaust. They feel guilt that they were not more active in combatting it. This differs from survivor guilt in that it is not accompanied by clinical depression, it does not relate to the loss of someone personally known or loved, and it does not relate specifically to survival, but rather to inactivity in the presence of serious danger to fellow Jews.

Among the various kinds of guilt, religious and liturgical, depressive and personal, and social, which is most likely to be specifically Jewish? Perhaps the depressive and personal would occur universally. That guilt which is based upon the feeling of responsibility to *klal yisrael* can probably be considered most specifically Jewish. I have already observed that mutual defense had not been observed among Jews of different communities before the nineteenth century. In modern times, Jews of different communities have accepted responsibility for each other. Mutual defense has become far more aggressive since the Holocaust and the reconstruction of the State of Israel. I believe that we must include among the reasons for this greater aggressiveness both the feeling of guilt which prevails among surviving Jews for having failed to rescue European Jews from the Holocaust, and the greater assertiveness of small peoples everywhere. While examples of mutual loyalty

19 William G. Niederland. "The Problem of the Survivor." In *Massive Psychic Trauma*, edited by Henry Krystal, International Universities Press, New York, 1968, pp. 8-22.

among segments of a people are encountered not infrequently, the degree of involvement of the various Jewish communities with each other far exceeds that seen among others. For example, Jews are astonished by the apparent lack of concern of the Christian religious establishment for the fate of Lebanese Christians. If we keep in mind the fact that "working through" the trauma at any given time means utilizing the memory of the trauma to meet current needs, then we understand that the relative ineffectuality of American Jews in saving European Jews from the Holocaust is recollected in the hope that the guilt which that memory induces will help to mobilize the Jews today to support the State of Israel and to protect Jews living in countries in which they are in jeopardy.

Certainly the concept that Israel suffers because of its sins can be considered characteristically Jewish, though I don't know to what extent it prevails also among others. Although the Book of Job argues that suffering does not establish guilt, it expresses only a minority opinion. The doctrine of *mipnei hata'einu* continues to be held valid in accordance with the dominant view voiced in Deuteronomy 28 and the Book of Chronicles. What is its function in the working through of trauma? Primarily it reasserts the principle of God's justice in the face of events that might tend to question belief in it. If we have suffered it is because we have sinned, not because God is unjust. The doctrine of reward and punishment, so basic in Jewish thinking, must not be challenged. When it seems inconsistent with the facts, then our view must be questioned. In individual depressive illness, the feeling of guilt occurs almost universally. Clinical evidence demonstrates that the guilt arises from the conflict between resentment against the protecting parent image who failed, and a wish, notwithstanding, to attempt to maintain a loving relation. In effect the depressed individual says: "It isn't your fault, it's mine. Please take care of me." It seems reasonable to assume that a similar mechanism prevails with respect to the guilt which appears in the religious context. We repress anger directed toward God and redirect it against ourselves, in the hope of retaining or increasing God's protection. We do this because otherwise we should have to repudiate our entire understanding and view of the universe, to reject the cosmos as we have known it. Those who cannot do that try to reconcile the facts of the misfortune with religious theory by assuming blame.

Each society develops its own mythology. We have seen in our time how the Palestinian Arabs have quickly developed a mythology about a "Palestinian entity" which they energetically pass on to succeeding generations. The mythology functions to facilitate the cohesiveness of the group and to mobilize the energies of the individual to the service of the group and its purposes.

The mythology usually includes myths of origin and myths of crisis. Specifically one set of myths will speak of the origins of the group: The group was created despite efforts to thwart its creation at the earliest stages.

Another set of myths describes a series of critical adversities, each of which threatens to destroy the group. But the group weathers each storm and survives nevertheless. These myths are usually based upon actual historical events, but they are molded and worked so as to comply with the current needs of the group.

They are offered as factual history to children, who respond to them by seeing themselves as integral parts of the group. Membership in the group becomes a major component of the core of their identity, their self-image. As they mature, and especially with the acquisition of education and some intellectual sophistication, they are able to replace mythological history with veridical history while still retaining the identity feelings and commitments which were elicited by the myths.

Why are children and even adults so ready to take these myths seriously? The myths appeal because they can apply to the individual too, i.e., we each entertain fantasies in which we combine actual memories and distortions. These fantasies serve specific purposes within the intrapsychic economy. In effect they become personal myths. Most of these myths deal with our own ideas about our origin, for example: whether we were wanted by our parents and welcomed by them; how were we received by our siblings; whether we were in danger of serious injury or death at some early point in our lives; what adverse circumstances and influences did we overcome? In other words, personal and group myths become congruent with each other. The individual then feels that his personal history and the group's history are the same, and therefore that their fate is identical.

I introduce the subject of myths here because as part of the working through process, the crisis is mythologized. That is, the account of the events is crystallized in a form which lends itself to the current needs of the surviving community. For example, the community constantly requires encouragement of cohesiveness. Both at times of crisis and at times of ease, the Jewish community is troubled by factionalism and divisiveness. Recollection of mortal danger to the community does encourage commitment. Usually the form imposed upon the recent accounts of the last crisis emphasizes its congruence with past crises and so conveys a sense of timelessness and continuity with Jewish history. As we recite in the Haggadah every year: "In every generation tyrants have sought to destroy us, and the Holy One, blessed is He, has delivered us from their hands."

Yet there are specific features of each myth which make it seem particularly apposite to some crises rather than to others. For example, myths in which the Jews fought to defend themselves, as they did at Masada, or in the ghettos of Eastern Europe, are recalled now during periods of serious concern for the State of Israel. On the other hand, on occasions when flight and migration are called for, myths such as the Exodus, of ben Zakkai's establishment of the academy at Yavneh, or the story of the four captives become

appropriate. (The last, according to Gerson D. Cohen, sought to validate the transfer of authority from Babylonia to Spain.)²⁰ When passive resistance and surreptitious teaching of Judaism become necessary, myths of the Hadrianic period are recalled.

One would think that such crisis myths might discourage Jews from adhering to a community which seems inevitably to incur misfortune. Perhaps some or many Jews do defect under this influence. I know of at least one individual who, as a child of about ten, when he learned about the tragedies of Jewish history, decided that assimilation was the best course for the Jews and made an effort to assimilate. To be sure there were other motives, but this probably did play some significant role. On the other hand, many young Jews, perhaps most, under the influence of these myths, are encouraged to commit themselves to the community even more intensely. In fact, at a time when many adolescents are finding it difficult to emancipate themselves from their attachment to their parents, some find not the dangers to the Jewish community but the compelling power of the myths too constraining. The attempt to escape these constraints often lies behind the tendency to seek out companionship with non-Jews and to marry them.

Group myths also function to augment the self-esteem of the community. When there has been an actual victory, its commemoration helps to overcome current humiliation by reminding one of past glories. When there has been an actual defeat, its commemoration may achieve a similar result by pointing up the nobility of the victims, the injustice, the bad character of the persecutors, and the virtue acquired by the community as a result of the sacrifices made by its members in the past, and as a result of expressions of guilt and contrition.

summary

IT IS DIFFICULT IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE to determine whether any specific pattern of behavior is exclusively Jewish.

Our study of the psychology of Jewish behavior must be limited by the absence of a good theory of the psychology of group behavior in general.

Traumas to the community are usually multiple and complex so that it is not always easy to know, in the case of any given historical event, what the various traumata were and how significant they were.

One of the major and consistent effects of persecution has always been serious impairment in Jewish self-esteem. This impairment in self-esteem has had important consequences both positive and negative for Jewish individual and group behavior.

Modes of Jewish resistance to crisis were determined by the realistic

²⁰ See Gerson D. Cohen, "The Story of the Four Captives," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 29, 1960-1961.

qualities of the nature of the persecution, the availability of external help, the condition of the Jewish community, and the history of past persecutions and responses to them.

Cohesiveness of the Jewish community under stress has not always occurred to the same extent as we have seen it in recent decades.

One of the most common responses to Jewish catastrophe has been the recording of the event. There have been both contemporary and retrospective records made. In each case the record has been made for the purposes of the recorder at the time of the recording.

Persecution of the Jews has caused some Jews to abandon Judaism and others to adhere more intensely.

In many instances where the trauma was a continuing rather than an acute crisis, the Jews developed commitment to a transcendental orientation.

The ultimate effects of trauma, namely demoralization and dissension, are described vividly in Scriptural sources, which emphasize not only murder, oppression and starvation, but also humiliation.

The late response to crisis may be called "working through." The latter is a process of accommodating to the traumatic disruption of the group's life by taking proper cognizance of the facts, remoralizing the group, and making appropriate plans for the future.

Recording serves the purposes of working through.

Viewing the past injury as a form of sacrifice helps the community to derive both a sense of comfort and a sense of credit and virtue (*zekhut*) from it.

Guilt in many forms usually appears among the survivors of Jewish catastrophe and the process of working through must help the individual to come to terms with that guilt and respond to it.

In the process of working through, the crisis being dealt with is made to conform to the mythical history of the Jewish people, and in addition, the event itself becomes mythologized.

THE LAST OF THE FIRST: MAMA G

Eli Ginzberg

WHEN LOUIS GINZBERG brought his bride to the Seminary synagogue in the late summer of 1909, the Jewish Theological Seminary had graduated only four classes of students after its reorganization in 1902, when Solomon Schechter was appointed President and Ginzberg was named Professor of Talmud. Alexander Marx, Israel Friedlaender and Israel Davidson had been teaching for only five years.

When Mama G died on May 10, 1980, the day before her ninety-fourth birthday, the last link between the twentieth-century founders of Conservative Judaism and the movement today was cut.

Mordecai M. Kaplan, now in his ninety-ninth year, lives in Jerusalem. But important as was Kaplan's role in the early history of the Teacher's Institute, he was not among the founding members of the Seminary faculty. And important as Kaplan's role later became in influencing the Conservative movement, his influence was always greater outside the Seminary than within. Many graduates responded to his efforts to harmonize Jewish tradition with American life and thought. But on the faculty he was a loner. The key members of the faculty would do nothing to protect him from virulent attacks from the Orthodox but they refused to seek his ouster.

When my mother arrived in New York, Jacob H. Schiff was the Chairman of the Board; Louis Marshall, Felix Warburg and Solomon Stroock each would become chairman in time.

The Schechters, Marxes, and Davidsons lived within the shadow of the Seminary, then located on 123rd Street between Broadway and Amsterdam. The Ginzbergs and Friedlaenders lived about a mile and a half to the north; the Kaplans lived an equal distance to the south. This residential pattern may have had more influence on the social than on the professional relations among the Seminary faculty, but it did have an influence. The closest bonds were between Ginzberg and Marx. Gerson Cohen recently told me that the only time Dr. Marx spoke sharply to him was when he, Cohen, wished him a long and healthy life after my father's death on November 11, 1953. Marx said that no one should ever wish that a man live alone in this world; with Ginzberg gone, Marx was alone and he died before the year was out.

My mother's early activities in this country were centered around making an attractive home for Louis Ginzberg. She provided a son (I was born in

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