

### XXIII: Religion: Where was God?

Religion is not a sufficient condition for the Holocaust, but it is a necessary one.

The problem: After genocide, God becomes Inconceivable.

Survivor Testimony:

53% Changed their faith, 69 % believed because of the Holocaust. 75% lost it. Yet 5% began to believe in God AFTER the Holocaust. But this is more personal and emotional than theological. Uneasy Atheism. The diversity of responses and characterizations of God after Auschwitz suggest that no single idea of God is Possible. So how can one believe after Auschwitz?

Answers:

Christian Responses:

1. Anti-Semitism is a Christian creation, not a Nazi one.
2. Free Will?

Does FW negate Omnipotence?

Philosophical God	v.	Hebrew God	v.	Christian God
Omnipresent		Vain		Loving
Omnipotent		Selfish		Forgiving
Omniscient		Vengeful		
Omnibenevolent		Angry		

3. Providence? (God's Plan): Progress and Redemption

Does FW negate Providence?

4. Can't God just go around FW?

A: No. It cheapens life

5. Where was God?

A: Suffering with his people.

6. Is God responsible for the Holocaust?

A: Partially. He made the rules, so he has to share the blame.

Covenant and Election

Jews are his chosen People, not chosen individuals (all or nothing)

So, is the Holocaust God punishing his people?

Jewish History Cycle = Transgression → Exile → Redemption

For both Judaism and Christianity, Major Disasters are punishments by God.

They just disagree on the nature of the transgression:

Jews: break the Law v. Christian: Don't recognize the Divinity of Jesus

Is Hitler a tool of God to Punish the Jews?

In both C + J, the innocent suffer for the sins of the Guilty, but not every misfortune is a punishment. But in Judaism, God only Knows the Jews, so he punishes them alone. So the suffering of others is not God's punishment.

Q: So is the Holocaust a punishment by God for breaking the Covenant?

A: It appears so.

3 major communal Disasters:

Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE  
Titus' destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE  
Hitler's Destruction of 6M European Jews 1942-1945

Jewish Response (all ends of the Spectrum)

1. Ignaz Maybaum

Holocaust is a divine sacrificial offering for humanity (like the Crucifixion). The Jews died because they were chosen. Auschwitz = modern Golgotha. Rebirth. In 586, god was given to the heathen; in 70, the Jews got the Synagogues, in 1945, we toppled the medieval feudal system that enslaved the Eastern Europeans. The isolationist and xenophobic Jews were the sacrifice. 6 M deaths For our sins.

2. Richard Rubenstein

Q's Maybaum's conclusions. This is insanity. This is a religion most would never accept. This religion is too obscene to accept. In this system, Hitler would be innocent and God would be the perpetrator. Jews only hope would be to become Christian?

Instead, the thread uniting God and man has been severed. This is the end of a god who acts in history. The End of an Immanent God and the birth of a Transcendent god. God exists, but he is unlike our interpretation from the Bible. The Jews are not chosen; they are a culture just like any other. Israel is the End of Jewish History. Jewish History is now Complete. All that is left is for Jews to marry Gentiles. To remain Jewish is to remain a stranger. When Jews remain at home in the OT, they turn from God.

3. Emil Fackenheim

The Holocaust creates the 614 Commandment. We can never deny or despair for to do so, makes us accomplices. Hitler wins. Necessity of *Tikkun* (mending, healing). Living was resistance in KL's (carrying births to term in KL's knowing that the child will be instantly killed). *Tikkun* and resistance are eternal imperatives. But understanding should never turn into acceptance. Martyrdom as *Tikkun*. *Kiddush ha-Hayyim* = Sanctifying the life (v. the name). Refusing to die is holy. *Tikkun* can only take place in Israel.

4. Arthur A. Cohen

The Holocaust is the Tremendum—too much for academic work to tackle. Must create a constructive Theology after Auschwitz. 1) Evil and God's presence are Real. 2) The relationship between God and all mankind must be ubiquitous: meaningful and valuable to all. 3) The Reality of God is not distinct from his involvement in the life of creation.

Maintaining a silent faith in a God who will save us from ourselves will only lead to future genocides and thus, the end of God and life. To continue to accept the traditional Judeo-Christian God is to accept that the Holocaust is part of God's plan. We have no credible or authoritative alternative.