

Commemorating the Shoah

The changing face of Holocaust memory

A Politically Incorrect view

By Jerry Klinger



"It [the Holocaust] is something like a religion.... The Intellectual Adventure is that we are reversing this entire trend within the space of one generation -- that in a few years time no one will believe this particular legend anymore. They will say, as I do, that atrocities were committed. Yes, hundreds of thousands of people were killed, but there were no factories of death. All that is a blood libel against the German people."¹

David Irving, Speech in Portland, Or. September 18, 1996

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http://www.adl.org/Learn/ext_us/irving.asp?LEARN_Cat=Extremism&LEARN_SubCat=Extremism_in_America&pic_ked=2&item=Irving

Never Again
 Cambodia
 Never Again
 Bosnia
 Never Again
 Rwanda
 Never Again
 Darfur

May never forget mean more than never again.

Thank you to those who keep the memory from dying, so that others may live

Ketzirah (Carly) קצירה on January 26th, 2005

"Yesterday, the man who calls the Holocaust a lie (Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran) spoke from this podium. To those who refused to come and to those who left in protest, I commend you. You stood up for moral clarity, and you brought honor to your countries. But to those who gave this Holocaust denier a hearing, I say on behalf of my people, the Jewish people, and decent people everywhere, have you no shame? Have you no decency?"

Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu Binyamin Netanyahu at the U.N.

Sept. 25, 2009²

The weather was perfect – clear skies, warm, in the 70's, a perfect Sunday to be out and enjoy life. In the morning, Adas Israel Congregation, the largest Conservative Congregation in Washington, D.C., held it's Garden of the Righteous Ceremony in Commemoration of Yom Hashoah. Later that afternoon, the Washington Jewish Community held its annual Yom Ha'Shoah v'Hagvurah Community-Wide Holocaust Memorial Observance. Yom Hashoah was on Monday April 12. Conveniently Sunday was the 11th. It was close enough to ensure better attendance.

May 8, 1945, World War II in Europe officially ended. The President of the Flensburg government, the successor government to the Nazis, Admiral Karl Donitz, unconditionally surrendered to Allied forces in Reims. Hitler had committed suicide in his bunker April 30, 1945. Millions of people in Europe, the U.S. and around the world, celebrated. The War was over! The War was over!

² <http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/god-and-country/2009/09/25/quote-of-the-week-binyamin-netanyahu-at-the-un>

Life, the future, will begin again.

For one third of world Jewry there would not be a rebuilding of life. The *Final Solution* had been final. They were dead, murdered. The shock, the horror, the magnitude of the crime against the Jewish people was not comprehended, little less understood. The survivors of the *Final Solution* looked for what was left of their lives, their families. They dazedly tried to peer from behind the barbed wire of the Death Camps at an uncertain future. They knew there was a past. They knew there was a life that was gone. They could not just forget it. Most survivors internalized their trauma. Most were not able or did not want to speak about it. The reality was too overwhelming.

Many a survivor's child grew up in a home of silence. There was no past to speak of.

Some survivors could not forget. They would not forget. They owed it to their families, their friends, their communities and to the future, not to forget. The process of knowing, remembering and not forgetting began almost immediately.

Inside Death Camps, almost from liberation, homemade and personal memorials were erected. Permanent memorials were quickly erected by survivor communities. They structured themselves into *Irgunim* of mutual support, such as the World Federation of Bergen Belsen Associations.

A Congress of liberated Jews, in the British Zone, mainly survivors of Bergen Belsen, was held September 25, 1945. Belsen was a site of unspeakable horror. More 30,000 people, primarily Jews, had been murdered there.

At liberation, thousands upon thousands of bodies lay strewn about the Bergen Belsen, unburied, decaying, festering, when the British soldiers arrived. The Germans had planned a final act of extermination for the starved, emaciated still surviving inmates. They had stored "white powders", as a former Jewish prisoner described it. It was a poison to be mixed with a large ration of food the Nazis had hoarded for a special purpose. The Nazis planned give it to the walking near dead and those still clinging to life in the camp. The Germans methodically planned to complete their objective, to exterminate the last Jews of Bergen Belsen.

They would have succeeded except for the rapid disintegration of German military resistance and the speedy approach of the British. The Nazis fled Belsen, unable to complete their plans, running to save their own lives. The *white powder* was never distributed. Even after the British arrived, the Belsen victims died daily from typhus, starvation and the effects of the Nazi death machine. The British did what they could. It was a terrible struggle to try and save lives. The bodies continued to pile up as typhus spread.

Orders were issued – burn the camp. Take all survivors out and nurse them as best as possible. Burn the camp. The bodies, strewn in heaps about the camp were ordered pushed into huge mass graves by bulldozers guided by British soldiers with white surgical masks on their faces. Mound upon mound of mass graves sprang up around the camp site, five hundred here, two thousand there, five thousand.....

Five months had passed since liberation. The Jewish Congress that met that September decided that they had to remember, to commemorate, not forget the dead of Bergen Belsen.



Bergen Belsen

April 15, 1945, one year after liberation, a large stone and concrete memorial was erected in the camp area. A large concrete ball capped the memorial – a symbolic world globe. On its sides, carved in pain, the words cried out:

**"Israel and the world shall remember
 Thirty thousand Jews
 Exterminated in the Concentration Camp
 Of Bergen Belsen
 At the hands of the murderous Nazis
 Earth conceal not the blood
 Shed on thee!
 First anniversary of liberation
 15th April 1946
 /14th Nissan 5706
 Central Jewish Committee
 British Zone"**

The need to remember, and not forget, never left survivors. It never left them even as they struggled in a post-War world that still did not want them. Some went to America. Few could and did return to their former homes. With the American doorway and Western Europe unwelcoming, most chose to resettle in the only place that did want them – Israel.

How to remember the Holocaust was not the most important thought in the early years after the war. There was no ritual, no commemorative date, no liturgy, secular or religious, nothing that comprehensively responded to the need for memory. The first permanent interpretive memorial, a museum of pain and expression, appeared in Jerusalem in 1949.

June 1967, heavy fighting took place outside of the Old City's Zion Gate. The Ottoman stone walls were heavily pock marked from bullets. Israeli troops fought their way into the city

through the ziggurat entrance. Fighting, they pushed through the very gate the Jewish refugees of Jerusalem were ejected through by the Jordanian Legion eighteen years earlier, when the city fell.

The scarred walls of the gate are flanked today, by the reputed grave of King David and a dark museum. Some religious Jews come to pray at *David's Tomb* even though archeologists suggest that the site dates from the 4th century AD. The tomb may have been a Judeo-Christian religious site. On the opposite side of the road, though a small steel arched portico and cinder blocked low grey walls, a courtyard opens to the reconstituted 1949, *Chamber of the Holocaust*.



Chamber of the Holocaust – Jerusalem's Old City

Within the courtyard is a rectangular memorial erected by the Jew's of Bergen Belsen. The *Chamber of the Holocaust* is a dark memorial. It descends below ground level into a series of foreboding, depressing rooms of Holocaust artifacts, art, and tombstones of destroyed communities. There is little attempt to ease the impact of the Holocaust, its images, the feel or the environment. In the *Chamber of the Holocaust*, the Holocaust is what it was – a chamber of horror.

Both locations are maintained by the Diaspora Yeshivah.

Yom HaZikaron laShoah ve-laGvura, (The day of Shoah (Destruction) and Heroism (Resistance), Remembrance), was created by the Knesset in 1951. The name is contemporarily truncated to Yom Hashoah. The imagery of Jewish resistance, Jews as freedom fighters, has faded into the background. Political correctness and turmoil as to the character of Israeli self defense and militarism have become confused. Equal emphasis on Jewish resistance and Jewish survival through defensive strength has been muted.

The 27th of the Hebrew month of Nissan corresponds to the Gregorian calendar as a floating date in April or May. It became the designated compromise date for Yom Hashoah observance.

The young State of Israel, with its huge survivor population, needed to commemorate the Holocaust and at the same time interpret the Holocaust with a context of positive Zionist rational. The 14th of Nisan was originally proposed for Yom Hashoah. It was the anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising (April 19, 1943). The religious community strenuously objected.

The 14th of Nissan was the day before Passover. Even the 27th was a difficult compromise for the religiously observant when proposed. It came during the counting of the Omer, the days leading to Shavuoth and the giving of the Torah. The period was not one of religious mourning and lamentation. It is a happier period. Pragmatic interpretation permitted a compromise. Yom Hashoah would have no religious connotations. The date was fixed. Yom Hashoah would be eight days before the Zionist affirmation of its meaning; Yom Ha'Atzmaut, Israel Independence Day. Israel Independence day is a celebration. It is a day of pride, of accomplishment or success, of achievement that negates the Holocaust. It is a statement of *Never Again* will Jews be victims.

Both holidays, Yom Hashoah and Yom Ha'Atzmaut are secular holidays. Neither is mandated with obligatory religious overtones or observances.

The law creating Yom HaZikaron laShoah ve-laGvura was signed by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and President of Israel, Yitzhak Ben Ziv. For two years, after its signing in 1951, Yom HaZikaron laShoah ve-laGvura languished. There was little national interest.

Israel was intently focused on immigrant absorption, building of an economy, creating a national ethos and the continued existential threats to its very life from its Arab neighbors.

Remembering the Holocaust was a necessity that could not wait. Proper commemorations had to be instituted.

“Yad Vashem (Hebrew: יד ושם sometimes written as Yad VaShem; "Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority") is Israel's official memorial to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust established in 1953 through the *Yad Vashem Law* passed by the Knesset, Israel's parliament. The origin of the name is from a Biblical verse: "And to them will I give in my house and within my walls *a memorial and a name (Yad Vashem)* that shall not be cut off." (Isaiah, chapter 56, verse 5).”³

On the eve of Yom HaShoah and the day itself, places of public entertainment are closed by law. Israeli television airs Holocaust documentaries and Holocaust-related talk shows, and low-key songs are played on the radio. Flags on public buildings are flown at half mast. Throughout the country memorial programs are conducted. A unique national moment exists. At 10:00am, and for two minutes, sirens blare across the nation. Traffic stops, people emerge from their cars, or stop what they are doing and where they are going, to stand, silently, for a moment of reflection.

In contemporary Israel, as the sirens sound, increasingly drivers eager to make the changing light, drive around those stopped and standing in the street. The day, full of Holocaust programming, T.V. and radio, community observances, is increasingly viewed with tiredness. It is even ignored or denigrated among some Israeli communities.

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yad_Vashem

Some members of the Orthodox community object to the practice of stopping by their cars for a moment of silence when the siren sounds. The observance remains acceptable to the majority of Israelis because Yom Hashoah is not a religious holiday. There is no religious ritual or requirement violated for a moment of secular observance by standing by one's car. Religious individuals have rationalized the practice as a secular minhag or custom to be respected.

Haredim and some Hassidic adherents prefer to integrate Yom Hashoah into traditional days of mourning such as Tisha'b'Av or the Tenth of Tevet. "Several well-known Haredi rabbis, including Rabbi Michael Dov Ber Weissmandl, Rabbi Shlomo Halberstam of Bobov, Rabbi Shimon Schwab, and several others, wrote kinnot about the Shoah, to be said on Tisha b'Av."⁴

"The Chief Rabbinate of Israel, in 1949, decided that the Tenth of Tevet should be the national remembrance days for victims of the Holocaust. For this day, it recommended traditional Jewish ways of remembering the dead, such as the study of the traditional Mishnah section about ritual baths, saying Psalms, lighting a yahrzeit candle and saying Kaddish for those Holocaust victims whose date of death remains unknown. On other occasions, the Chief Rabbinate also referred to Tisha b'Av as being a date of remembrance for Holocaust victims.

The Knesset decision taken on 21 April 1951 to designate the 27th of Nisan as Yom HaShoah ignored the Rabbinate's decision from two years earlier, and the Chief Rabbinate, in turn, decided to ignore the Knesset's chosen date, one reason being the fact that Jewish law forbids fasting and certain laws of mourning during the month of Nisan, which is considered to be a month of happiness. Another view, held by influential Haredi Rabbi Avraham Yeshayeh Karelitz (known as the 'Chazon Ish'), held that nowadays we do not have the power to institute new days of mourning or commemoration for future generations.

"Most stores do not close, schools continue and most people do not stop walking when the siren sounds. The non-participation of Haredim in Yom HaShoah is one of the points which regularly cause friction between Haredim and non-Haredim in Israel, as non-Haredim consider the Haredi position of ignoring the siren and Yom HaShoah altogether to be disrespectful.

Thus, a situation has come into existence where religious forms of commemoration take place primarily on the Tenth of Tevet and on Tisha b'Av, while secular forms of commemoration take place primarily on Yom HaShoah, and either part of the population ignores the other's day of commemoration."⁵

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yom_HaShoah

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yom_HaShoah

The memory of the Shoah is fading even faster than the passing survivor generation. Of the 250,000 estimated survivors in Israel, far too many live in poverty, loneliness and neglect still tortured by the demons of the *Final Solution* in their minds, bodies and souls.

Physical memorials to the Shoah, sculptures, windows, gardens, plaques, etc. are ubiquitous in Israel and the Diaspora.

Yom HaZikaron laShoah ve-laGvura, outside of Israel, its meaning and observances, are varied, contradictory, ill defined and poorly coordinated.

“Most Jewish communities hold a solemn ceremony on this day, but there is no institutionalized ritual accepted by all Jews. Lighting memorial candles and reciting the Kaddish—the prayer for the departed—are common. The Masorti (Conservative Judaism) movement in Israel has created *Megillat HaShoah*, a scroll and liturgical reading for Yom HaShoah, a joint project of Jewish leaders in Israel, the United States and Canada. The booklet was subsequently converted into a kosher scroll by sofer Marc Michaels for reading in the community and then into a tikkun—copyist guide for scribes—'Tikkun megillat hashoah'. In 1984, Conservative Rabbi David Golinkin wrote an article in the journal *Conservative Judaism* suggesting a program of observance for the holiday, including fasting, speeches, Holocaust survivors light six torches symbolizing the approximately six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust and the Chief Rabbis recite prayers. (With the passing of the Shoah generation, teenagers, grandchildren, even great grandchild, light the candles on behalf of the survivors unable to do it for themselves anymore.)

Those Jews in the Diaspora who observe Yom HaShoah may observe it within the synagogue, as well as in the broader Jewish community. Commemorations range from synagogue services to communal vigils and educational programs. Many Yom HaShoah programs feature a talk by a Holocaust survivor or a direct descendant, recitation of appropriate psalms, songs and readings, or viewing of a Holocaust-themed film. Some communities choose to emphasize the depth of loss that Jews experienced in the Holocaust by reading the names of Holocaust victims one after another—dramatizing the unfathomable notion of six million deaths. Many Jewish schools also hold Holocaust-related educational programs on, or around Yom HaShoah.

Also during this day, tens of thousands of Israeli high-school students, and thousands of Jews and non-Jews from around the world, hold a memorial service in Auschwitz, in what has become known as "The March of the Living," in defiance of the Holocaust Death Marches. This event is endorsed and subsidized by the Israeli Ministry of Education and the Holocaust Claims Conference, and is considered an important part of the school curriculum – a culmination of several months of studies on World War II and the Holocaust.

In 1981, members of the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs FJMC, a branch of the mainstream Conservative movement, created a special memorial project specifically for Yom HaShoah. A dedicated yahrzeit candle was conceived, with yellow wax and a barbed-wire Star of David logo reminiscent of the armbands Jews were forced to wear during the Holocaust. This object has come to be known as the FJMC Yellow Candle (TM). Approximately 300,000 candles are distributed around the world each year, along with relevant prayers and meditations. FJMC Yellow Candle

In 1984, Conservative Rabbi David Golinkin wrote an article in Conservative Judaism journal suggesting a program of observance for the holiday, including fasting. In his article he noted that while private fasts are indeed prohibited during Nisan (a major Orthodox objection to the placement of the day), communal fasts for tragedies befalling Jewish communities had indeed been declared throughout the pre-Modern period.

Another prominent Conservative Jewish figure shared the Orthodox sentiment about not adopting Yom HaShoah. Ismar Schorsch, former Chancellor of Conservative Judaism's Jewish Theological Seminary of America held that Holocaust commemoration should take place on Tisha b'Av.

The Masorti (Conservative Judaism) movement in Israel has created Megillat HaShoah, a scroll and liturgical reading for Yom HaShoah. This publication was a joint project of Jewish leaders in Israel, the United States and Canada.”⁶

None of the efforts at creating a contemporary tradition have succeeded in renewing a significant resurgence in memory, or the desire to remember the Holocaust, in the Jewish community. The memory continues to fade. Rising anti-Semitism and varying existential threats, require Jewish communities to remember. How they remember varies.

The secular Jewish community has attempted to deify the Holocaust through museums, books, Holocaust awareness programs and efforts to create a pseudo-secular religion. Their efforts distinctly lack generational durability.

The religious community has relegated the Shoah to another in the long series of Jewish tragic experiences, without clarity of differentiation. They observe, preserve and remember, and will remember, the Shoah on the recognized days of mourning. With the integration of the Shoah into the traditional days of mourning, Tisha'b'Av and the 10th of Teveth, the Shoah loses its uniqueness. Mourning for the many victims of the Crusades is equated with the wholesale

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yom_HaShoah

effort to exterminate the entire Jewish people during the Shoah. The Shoah will fade into relativism and obscurity.

Adas Israel's Yom Hashoah commemoration was its 19th annual program honoring Righteous Gentiles. This year's honoree was Hiram Bingham IV.

Bingham, an American consul in Marseille, acted counter to direct, but unwritten American policy. He issued thousands of visas to refugees to America from Vichy France.

Bingham worked closely with Varian Fry to save Europe's intellectual and artistic elites and anti-Nazi activists, many of whom were Jewish. At his own personal risk, despite his diplomatic immunity, he sheltered Jews in his home. He did not act specifically to save Jews because they were Jews. He acted because they were human beings. . Bingham's motivation came from deep, moral and religious convictions. He saved many, many lives.

Bingham ruined his career as a U.S. diplomat. He made many powerful enemies in the U.S. State Department going against Breckenridge Long. President Roosevelt appointed Long, his personal friend, Assistant Secretary of State. Long's jurisdiction was over immigration and refugee issues during World War II. His policy was to deliberately withhold thousands of visas intended for Jewish refugees.

Yad Vashem acknowledged and honored Bingham for his courageous actions. After extensive investigations, they did not recognize his actions as rising to the level of a "Righteous Among the Nations."

More than 300 people packed the chapel for the Adas memorial ceremony. The attendees were mostly in their forties, Christians and Jews. A large number of young people interspersed with a modest sprinkling of white/silver haired congregants appropriately completed those present.

Adas' alternative Yom Hashoah ceremony was conceived nineteen years ago by Adas Israel's former Chief Rabbi, Jeffrey Wohlberg. He understood the necessity of recognizing that there are good people in the world. He changed the tenor of Adas' annual Shoah memorial from negative to one of hope for a better future. By recognizing, honoring and focusing on the few good people, who during the Holocaust, risked everything to do what was right, Wohlberg gave to all attendees, a belief that in the face of evil – good is possible. Evil is not absolute.

The program opened with the Star Spangled Banner, the American national anthem and remarks by Adas Israel Rabbis, Steinlauf and Wohlberg. The remarks were followed by musical selections presented by the Georgetown Day School Choir, composed of Christians and Jews. Members of Adas' 11th grade Gelman Religious School made a video presentation about Mr.

Bingham. The ceremony continued with additional singing and the presentation of a Menorah to Harry Bingham's son and daughter. Rabbi Feinberg, also of Adas, recited a benediction and the synagogue's hazzan closed the ceremony with the Hatikvah.

The Holocaust Kaddish was not recited. El Moleh Rachamim, the traditional religious prayer for those who have died martyrs for "Kiddush Hashem", the sanctification of God's name, was not recited. Speeches about the Holocaust, presentations by survivors or lighting of six symbolic ceremonial candles were not done.

Everyone retired to the "Garden of Remembrance" for the unveiling of Mr. Bingham's name added to the memorial plaque.

No emphasis on the murder of six million, the destruction of 1/3 of the Jewish people, or the uniqueness of the Shoah was given during the ceremony.

What Rabbi Wohlberg had recognized and what he had developed was a ceremonial negation of hate, bigotry and violence by honoring those who fought it. Adas Israel had moved on from the reflection of Yom Hashoah as a Jewish tragedy to a more acceptable, and endurable interpretation, a Universalist response. It was a variant on the Passover theme. *Into every generation evil is born but God shall protect us and bring us forth.* Only God was not present in the story. The uniqueness of the Jewish story and the experience has been diminished.

Later that afternoon, at B'nai Israel Congregation in suburban Maryland, the annual city wide Yom Hashoah commemoration was held for the city of Washington's Jewish Community. There are an estimated 100,000 Jews in Washington. Three to four hundred attendees, mainly elderly, with very few young people, sat in the main synagogue sanctuary. The extension seating doors were closed – there was no need to open them, the room could hold 500. The speakers and guests were impressive; the Governor of Maryland, Michael Oren, Ambassador from Israel, representatives of the Obama administration, local and county officials, the elderly Yiddish Holocaust poet, Hermann Taube and the leadership of the Washington Jewish community.

The program began with a ritualized procession of young people, dressed in white shirts and dark slacks or skirts, carrying the names of countries where the Holocaust took place on placards. The fifteen or so countries represented needed to have a few of the young people do double duty and carry more than one sign, during the ceremony. There were not enough young people to do the job individually. A lighting of six candles for the six million Jewish victims was ritually performed. The speakers, unanimated and quite forgettable, told of the Holocaust and the struggle against the evil that it represented. The Ambassador spoke of the meaning of Israel in the light of the Holocaust.

Kaddish and El Moleh Rachamim were recited. As an afterthought, almost, at the end, a muted unfocused few sentences of remembrance and acknowledgement of the Righteous Gentiles, who gave their life fighting against the Holocaust, were muttered. It was a relatively new part of the ceremony that almost went unnoticed. The next generation, the children, and the 3-G

generation – the grandchildren of some of the survivors rose; a small contingent of enduring witnesses. They solemnly, publicly, pledged with the attendees, to keep the memory of the Shoah alive.

The ceremony closed with the singing of the Hatikvah. The program ended on a depressed and somber note. Not because of the subject matter, but because of the method of presentation. It ended without any sense of hope, change, or resolution except for prayers to God.

Each year, the attendees of the city wide observance get, older and older, fewer and fewer.

Yom Hashoah was observed, on the actual day, by a small synagogue in Rockville, Maryland. Tikvah Israel, a synagogue community long past its prime, joined with the Silver Spring Presbyterian Church to observe “Yom Hashoah: A Holocaust Commemoration.” The two communities came together, April 12 at the synagogue, for an evening service. Traditional prayers were offered, symbolic lighting of the six candles was done. A poem describing the experience of the Shoah was passionately read. A few 2G or 3G’s were present among the elderly congregant attendees. Younger attendees were mostly from the Presbyterian community. A non-denominational hymn was sung. It was written by a non-Jew, Charles Butler, *Am I My Brother’s Keeper*. Dr. Barry Lever, from the Maryland Jewish Museum delivered the keynote presentation on the *Exodus ’47*, the famous Jewish refugee ship that came to symbolize the desperation of the Death Camp survivors for a Jewish homeland, a refuge. Few Jews know the true story of the *Exodus*, or even care to know it anymore. Reverend Burris spoke of ecumenical unity, sensitivity and understanding of the Jewish experience. The two communities have been coming together for many years. The sixty attendees recited Kaddish and the community retired to a small kiddish.

Three different congregations with three ways of remembering the Shoah: The universality of common struggle and vigilance of all humanity to defeat evil was offered by Adas Israel. The uniqueness of the Shoah in Jewish religious expression and thought downplayed. The B’nai Israel program, the surrogate program for the huge number of Washington Jews, emoted decay, mandated, passionless, commemoration to a fading population. Tikvat Israel’s program, a hybrid of the two, ritually, religiously, remembered the uniqueness of the Shoah with a Christian community. They reflected on the terribleness of the Shoah and the hope of a better future for all people by a unity of good people of all faiths.

At the back of the Conservative High Holiday Mahzor is a section known as the Martyology. It had been recited annually with its clear chilling images of slaughter, degradation and murder to remember those who met their death in the Shoah. The section is dramatically concluded with a recitation of the Holocaust Kaddish – Kaddish interspersed with the names of the death camps and places of horrific killing. The recitation of the Martyology and the Holocaust Kaddish is increasingly truncated and even skipped by Rabbis as they argue for the need to move the service along and save time.

In many synagogue Hebrew schools, the teaching of the Holocaust is a difficult, sensitive area. Parents of young children complain annually, that even the Board of Jewish Education's approved and recommended, age appropriate methods of teaching about the Holocaust, should be prohibited or at least reduced. They fear the potential *traumatization* of their children. Within the few hours of weekly Jewish education, they do not want the negative of being Jewish overshadowing the importance of feeling good about being Jewish.

There is a difference in the use of the term Shoah – disaster and Holocaust, between Jew and non-Jew. Jews, religious and not religious, see use of the word Holocaust in personal terms. It could affect them, or their families, personally, again someday. Non-Jews use the word Holocaust loosely. Non-Jews have co-opted the term Holocaust to infer a bad situation to any problem. The term and the Jewish experience have been demeaned in Jewish eyes. Jews never use *Holocaust* to describe comparatively minor incidents such as house fires, multiple car accidents, or weather disasters. Non-Jewish writers and media reporters never describe a house fire as a Shoah. It is common for anti-Israel proponents to describe the Palestinian people as living in a Holocaust. There are no gas chambers, no Death Camp machines, no starving communities rife with disease for Palestinians. The term *Holocaust* has been perverted by them, portraying Jews as Nazis and Palestinians as Jews. It is an almost deliberate effort to desensitize the meaning of Holocaust.

No commonly accepted liturgy, commonly accepted ceremonial practice, date of common remembrance or even unique acknowledgment of the meaning of the Holocaust has emerged with the Jewish world. Nothing of a durable, generational, method of ensuring memory has evolved. Rabbis, when asked why the Holocaust, why not a religious day of remembrance, they respond obliquely. *Perhaps in a hundred or two hundred years, after sufficient time has passed, an accepted commonality of Holocaust remembrance and even religious sanctification will be understood, will develop.*

The generation of memory and their children will have long passed by then. Perhaps it is what the Rabbis wish. They will still struggle for the meaning of the Shoah. They know they will not come up with a good explanation for the silence of God.

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