

**STARING INTO THE VOID- GOD & THE HOLOCAUST**  
**WAS GOD AT FAULT FOR "LETTING THE HOLOCAUST HAPPEN" ?**

**414**

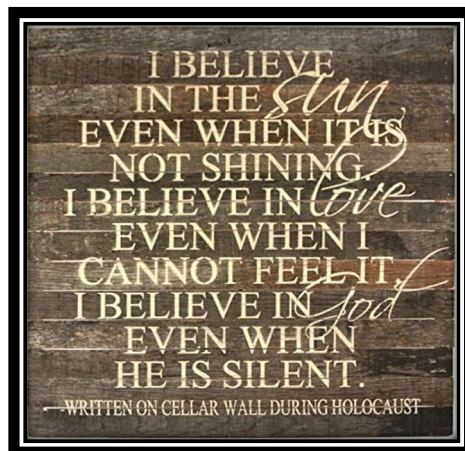
THIS ARTICLE HAS REFERENCES TO GOD AND THE HOLOCAUST. THERE ARE NO INDIVIDUAL STATEMENTS OR WRITTEN OPINIONS EXPRESSED. IT IS POSTED EXACTLY AS STATED ON THE INTERNET

**\*WARNING \***

**GRAPHIC HOLOCAUST PICTURES AT THE END OF THIS ARTICLE**



In a dark and damp cellar in Cologne, Germany, where thousands of Jews once hid from Nazi torment, an inscription was discovered not long after the end of World War II. Scrawled across a stone wall by an anonymous author who was likely killed, the words serve as a prayer against the unspeakable evil of the Holocaust.



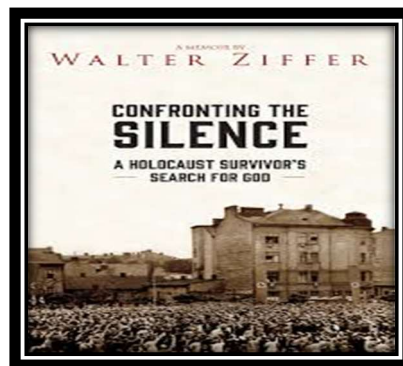
Today, those words echo through time and memory as Holocaust survivors and those who search for meaning within the madness struggle with questions that have no answers. How could God allow the state-sponsored mass murder of innocent Jewish men, women and children deemed "life unworthy of life" by the Nazis? Where was God when those Jews, along with more than 1 million other "racially inferior" groups, were being beaten and robbed, starved and humiliated, gassed and buried?

Why God? Why? "No one emerged with their faith unchanged," says Holocaust scholar and author Michael Berenbaum, who currently serves as adjunct professor of theology at the University of Judaism in Bel Air, Calif. "Even the most devout believer left with the innocence of their faith shattered." But even Holocaust victims who lived through the worst degradations and pain retained their faith.

"If it weren't for God, I would have died," says Riva (Schuster) Hirsch, a Holocaust survivor living in Birmingham. "He's the only thing I had left. They took everything else.

Hitler was evil, but God never abandoned us. He was always there." Hirsch will be the guest speaker Thursday night as part of Jacksonville State University's annual Holocaust Remembrance.

Ilse Scheuer Nathan, who now lives in Birmingham, witnessed firsthand the worst of humanity. When she was 9 years old, her entire family - mother, father, brother and sister - were transported to the concentration camp Auschwitz in the spring of 1944. One morning, Nathan and her younger sister, Ruth, were forced to walk naked through the gas saunas where many Jews before them had died. And yet they came through the other side unharmed.



"The other prisoners looked at us like we were ghosts," Nathan says softly. "God spared us both that day." Though one miracle may have saved their lives, Nathan was not completely able to avoid the brutality of the Nazi guards. While marching back from a forced-labor camp where they built landing strips for German airplanes, Nathan noticed that one of the prisoners dropped a piece of paper. Without thinking, she stopped to pick up the note. A female SS officer saw what Nathan had done. Later that night, Nathan was horse-whipped with a thick leather strap while lying naked across a stool. She was made to count each lash out loud. One ... two ... three ... "But I fainted and couldn't count anymore," she says. "They woke me up and made me start all over again."

In the winter of 1945, while Russian troops advanced towards Germany, the 800 girls were forced on a death march that lasted from January to March. The goal was simple, Nathan says. The Nazis planned to kill them all so that no one would learn of their imprisonment. And they almost succeeded - less than 50 survived, including Nathan and Ruth, who escaped one night by hiding under the wheel of an abandoned wagon. Later, after learning about the end of the war from a Russian soldier, they found a razor blade. Scared and alone, sick with typhus and starvation, they contemplated suicide. "We were so desperate that we wanted to die," Nathan says. "We didn't know what freedom meant. All we knew was pain and suffering. "But through the grace of God, we stopped ourselves." The girls eventually made their way to Holland and in the summer of 1946 came to America. Nathan struggles to understand why the Holocaust was allowed to happen.

"There has been so much pain in the name of religion," says Nathan, who attends a Birmingham synagogue regularly. "They killed 6 million Jews ... 6 million ... and why, because we went to the temple,

and they went to church? That is something I'll never understand. "Our God is the same. He is in all our hearts; some of us just speak to him differently.

"Trying to understand the conflict of God's presence during the Holocaust attacks so many of our most sacred beliefs, Berenbaum says.

"The Holocaust is about ultimate events – life and death," he explains from his California home. "Consequently, it pursues the question of faith. How are we to grapple with that idea of a benevolent God balanced against the kind of evil that was the Holocaust?" Coming to terms with God in the Holocaust is not merely a question for Judaism, Berenbaum suggests. "It challenges everyone's fundamental faith, including the Christian belief that their own faith is able to withstand evil," he says.

"Christianity is a religion based on love. Knowing that, it should have manifested itself in acts of love – and there were a few, but they were far from dominant." Perhaps the only way that Jews who experienced the Holocaust are able to maintain their faith is to see the event as affirmation of a fundamental failure of humanity – not religion.

"It is God who has given freedom to human beings," Berenbaum says. "Consequently, with that freedom, we can either do what is godly or we can betray God by destroying all that is beautiful and free in the world. "The Holocaust was the fault of man, not of God. And while it has not taught us much about the nature of God, it has taught us a great deal about the nature of evil."

But there are many respected Christian theologians who argue that, in the grim light of the Holocaust, the traditional doctrine of a benevolent and all-powerful God must be altered. "It's no longer possible to accept that God has such attributes," says Dorothee Solle, author of *God's Pain, Our Pain*. "Instead, we must acknowledge that God is all-loving, but not omnipotent.

He suffers along with those who are victimized. God experiences our pain and thereby consoles the afflicted." Whether Jewish or Christian, we all must show certain modesty because we are completely incapable of understanding the divine, Berenbaum says. "What the Holocaust proves is that the way we see him is far too simplistic," he says in the measured tone of a man practiced in simplifying the profound. "Our age calls for theological humility. We do not understand God and therefore we should not pretend to understand God." "The Holocaust shatters faith – faith in God, faith in human decency and faith in meaningful progress," Berenbaum writes in the forward to *The Holocaust Chronicle*. "The Holocaust shatters. Our task is to mend." Though never shattered, Aisic (Isaac) Hirsch, the husband of Riva (Schuster) Hirsch, has his faith tested.

He was 9 years old in September 1939 when German tanks rolled through his small town of Mogielnica, outside of Warsaw, Poland. The Nazis soon set fire to both Jewish synagogues in town. "That's when I knew just how bad the Germans were," he says from his home in Birmingham. "If they'd burn temples, they burn people, too." In 1941, Hirsch, his mother and 5-year-old brother were transported to the Warsaw ghetto, the largest of the ghettos organized by the Nazis in Poland. A tiny section of the city – about 3 ½ square miles – became home to half a million Jews. Each building housed an average of 400 people. Daily food allocations equaled roughly 200 calories per day. Many ate only boiled potato skins and water. "It was absolute misery – rats and sickness everywhere," Hirsch remembers. Watching helplessly as his 5-year-old died of typhus and his mother slid into madness, Hirsch escaped.

After two full nights of walking, he arrived at the home of a family friend who agreed to take him in. He hid out in a barn for several months, studying a book of Catholic prayers the friend had given him. "Somehow I knew those prayers would save my life," Hirsch says. After some neighbors became suspicious, Hirsch was forced to leave.

He arrived in a village named Goschyn one Sunday morning. "And where was a little boy like me going to go on a Sunday morning?" Hirsch asks rhetorically. "I went to church. They knew that I was a stranger but not that I was a Jew." Because of his blond hair and blue eyes, Hirsch blended into the congregation. And when the children rose and made their way to confession, he followed right along. "I knelt down, but I couldn't confess," he says. *"All I could do was cry."* I was paralyzed. At that moment, I thought I was dead."

The young priest knew the boy was not Catholic yet showed pity on him. He slid open the confessional window and placed his hand upon Hirsch's head. "And I'll never forget the words he said to me," Hirsch remembers. *"He said, 'Listen, this world will not go on forever. It will end. One day, you will find all your loved ones again.'"* "That priest was my guardian angel. He lifted my life. He probably put in a lot of prayers to God that filled my heart. And is because of him that I'm here today, telling this story." With the priest's help, Hirsch found work on a German farm, where he remained until he was liberated by the Russians. He met and married Riva Schuster in Israel in 1950.

*And hardly a day passes where he doesn't think of God and the blessings given to him amid all the fear and suffering.* "I have no choice but to believe in God," he says. "God watches out over all of us. We just don't always understand what he is doing. But he is always there.

The Holocaust entered the life of Riva Schuster (Hirsch) with a knock at the door. One afternoon in early 1941, the 7-year-old was sitting at dinner with her family when a friend came by the house. The friend was in an obvious panic. "Joe," the man said to her father, Joseph. "I think something very bad is coming." Not wanting to scare his young children, her father calmly walked them outside. But as soon the door opened, the fear was unavoidable. The Germans had invaded her small village of Novaseletz in eastern Romania. The sky was black with the smoke of burning buildings. The ground shook with falling bombs. Joseph led his family away from the village and into the forests that led to Chotin, where his parents lived. They would never arrive. Instead, they were captured by Nazi SS troops. "We didn't know where they came from," Schuster says. "They were just there with their motorcycles and their shiny boots.

All that we had in our hands they ripped away and threw to the ground." Schuster, her mother, father and two older brothers were forced to join a convoy with thousands of captured Jews. For miles and miles, day and days, they walked endlessly. Schuster's shoes were gone. Her feet were frozen and bloody. "Everywhere were dead bodies," she says, dread filling her voice. "Children. *Old people – piles and piles of dead bodies with wild dogs ripping them apart.* And me, as a child, I was terrified to even lift my head and ask ... 'Why?'" Anyone who stopped, slowed down, spoke or made eye contact was shot. Everyone else just kept walking. They finally arrived in the town of Sukarein, where trains were waiting to send Jews to camps at Belzec, Chelmno, Sobibor, Majdanek, Treblinka and Auschwitz-Birkenau. Millions of Jews were transported to their deaths in cattle cars. Up to 100 people were crammed into these small livestock trailers. The terror was amplified because the Jews didn't know where they were going. Once the doors were sealed, prisoners were deprived of food, water and proper sanitation facilities. Some died, others went insane.

Separated from her family amid the chaos, 7-year-old Riva Schuster was forced to travel alone. "When they opened the doors ... that smell and the screaming," she says. "I still hear those awful noises sometimes at night in the dark. That's why I can't sleep when it's quiet." After days in the cattle cars, standing on the bodies of dead children, Schuster and thousands of other Jews arrived at Luchinetz, a camp in the Ukraine. "I was filthy," Schuster says. "My clothes were rags. I was starving, sick with typhus and malaria. The lice covered me and were falling into my eyes and mouth. I was more dead than alive. "I was so miserable I wished they'd kill me, *but it was only God who kept me alive."*

Schuster lay in a corner of the barracks for weeks until late one night she felt someone pulling at her shoulder. At first she played dead, but the stranger wouldn't be ignored. He turned her over, placed a hand over her mouth so she couldn't scream and ran her out of the camp. Hidden in a wagon underneath piles of hay, she was taken to a local convent. For two years – 1943 to 1945 – Schuster lay alone, naked in the darkness of a six-foot square room with only a blanket for warmth. Every few days the nun would sneak in to give what food they had. Sick and malnourished, she couldn't eat because of her teeth. The rats took all they could find.

Finally, the door opened, and she was pushed out into the road. Liberation had come. "They just let me go. But where?" she says. "I was lost and alone, no family, no home, no hope.

*But God was with me always. God wanted me to live even if I didn't want to do anything but die.*

She was eventually picked up by other liberated survivors and handed over to the Red Cross. She was reunited with her father, whom she didn't recognize. Her mother and one of her brothers died during the Holocaust. In 1948, at the age of 15, she arrived in Israel – where she met and married her husband, Aisic. Today, reliving these stories is difficult for the Hirschs. It takes days for them to recover from the emotions that are churned up. But both agree that telling about their survival is important. Perhaps it is why they were spared. "*God was there ... always there, and I know this as good as anyone.*" Schuster says. "*How could I possibly question that it was the will of God that allowed me to survive when it was nuns – true people of God – who saved me from the evil that was everywhere.*"

---

### **I CANNOT FORGET** **THE CREED OF A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR**



Alexander Kimel died Jan 24, 2018 of complications from pneumonia. He was 91

### **THE ACTION IN THE GHETTO OF ROHATYN, MARCH 1942.**

by Alexander Kimel- Holocaust Survivor.



### **DO I WANT TO REMEMBER?**

by Alexander Kimel- Holocaust Survivor.

Do I want to remember?  
The peaceful ghetto, before the raid:  
Children shaking like leaves in the wind.  
Mothers searching for a piece of bread.  
Shadows, on swollen legs, moving with fear.  
**No, I don't want to remember, but how can I forget?**

Do I want to remember, the creation of hell?  
The shouts of the Raiders, enjoying the hunt.  
Cries of the wounded, begging for life.  
Faces of mothers carved with pain.  
Hiding Children, dripping with fear.  
**No, I don't want to remember, but how can I forget?**

P 2417

Do I want to remember, my fearful return?  
Families vanished in the midst of the day.  
The mass grave steaming with vapor of blood.  
Mothers searching for children in vain.  
The pain of the ghetto, cuts like a knife.  
**No, I don't want to remember, but how can I forget?**

Do I want to remember, the wailing of the night?  
The doors kicked ajar, ripped feathers floating the air.  
The night scented with snow-melting blood.  
While the compassionate moon, is showing the way.  
For the faceless shadows, searching for kin.  
**No, I don't want to remember, but I cannot forget.**

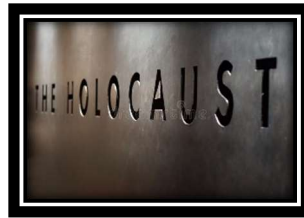
Do I want to remember this world upside down?  
Where the departed are blessed with an instant death.  
While the living condemned to a short wretched life,  
And a long tortuous journey into unnamed place,  
Converting Living Souls, into ashes and gas.  
**No. I Have to Remember and Never Let You Forget.**



First they came for the Communists...  
And I didn't speak out because I was not a Communist..  
Then they came for the trade unionists,  
And again, I didn't speak out because I wasn't a trade unionist...  
Then they came for the Jews,  
Once more, I didn't speak out because I was not a Jew...  
Then they came for the children,  
And still, I didn't speak out because I was not a child....  
And then at the very end they came for me...  
**And there was no one left to speak out for me...**



## THE CREED OF THE HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR



ALEXANDER KIMEL

*I do believe, with all my heart*, in the natural Goodness of Man despite the blood and destruction, brought by one man, trying to be God, In the Goodness of Man, I do believe.

*I do believe, with all my heart*, that God gave man the blessing and the curse. Man can select the curse of envy, hatred and prejudices, or the blessings of love, harmony and beauty despite the painful curses of the past, in the blessing of the Creator, I do believe.

*I do believe, with all my heart*, that God created a beautiful world. The sun and the trees, the flowers and the bees. And the best way to serve God, is to enjoy the fruits of His labor of love, despite the painful memories from the past, In the joyful celebration of life, I do believe.

*I do believe with all my heart*, That God has created man in image of His own and killing of man, is like killing of God. Despite the massacres in Rwanda, the cleansing in Bosnia, the folly of Muslim fanatics, and the cruelty of Pot Pol. In the love and compassion of the Creator, I do believe.

*I believe with all my heart* that the Messiah and the Kingdom of Heaven will come; when man will conquer his destructive urge and learn how-to live-in harmony with nature and himself.

When all the preachers of hate will be silenced and man will become his brother's keeper and when man will stop killing man, in the name of God, and nation will not lift weapons against nation.

*When it will be, I do not know, but despite all the signs to the contrary, in the dawn of a Better World, I do believe.*

### COMMENTS

The War ended in 1945, 75 years ago which means that the Survivors of the Holocaust are growing older, and many have passed away. The question "Why did God allow the Holocaust" has been with us for many years and may soon be a victim of "The Let's Kill History Movement" that has taken over our country. From what I understand, it has already started to disappear from some of the History books in our school system.

The article above shows that while there were "survivors" that blamed God for allowing this to happen, and voiced this opinion many times over, there were also many who believe that they survived only because of their faith in God.

*If you are a scholar of The Final Solution/ Holocaust or just want to know more about it, please copy and paste the below link into your browser.*

*Hopefully, the writings contained here will help you to understand and provide answers to the #1 question of the Holocaust era.*

[LINK BELOW](#)

<https://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1094&context=iss>

International Social Science Review

Volume 90 | Issue 2 Article 3

2015

## **A DEFECTIVE COVENANT**

### **ABANDONMENT OF FAITH AMONG JEWISH SURVIVORS OF THE HOLOCAUST**

#### **A GOOD READ**

#### **AFTER THE HOLOCAUST, HOW CAN WE SAY GOD CARES FOR US?**

#### **COPY AND PASTE THE BELOW LINK INTO YOUR BROWSER**

<https://www.thejc.com/judaism/rabbi-i-have-a-problem/after-the-holocaust-how-can-we-say-god-cares-for-us-1.53631>

#### **SOME QUOTES FROM SURVIVORS WITH \* GRAPHIC PICTURES BELOW\***

"Through the steam, I saw a sign: 'Auschwitz.' I didn't know what it was, but a minute later, I found out."

"They said separate: children, men, women, and the older people. Me and my sister were separated from the young ones. I had my little sister in my arms, and one of the SS came over and picked up my little sister and gave her to my stepmother. He pushed me to the other side."



"They brought us into Auschwitz. I could see the chimneys burning, smell the smoke. I did not think about it. They gave us tattoos: 33076. I did not have a name anymore; just a number."

"I was a little girl. I had done nothing to nobody, and I had to go there"

"One of our friends we knew from the ghetto, Danka Joskowicz — she ran to the barbed wires. I yelled to her, 'Don't go to the barbed wires! You will get electrocuted.' She said, 'What should I have to live for?'"

"The smell was awful — things like that, you do not want to talk about it. Because the pain and memory of suffering comes back to you. You cannot deal with it"



She was beautiful, my little sister. You cannot imagine how beautiful she was. They mustn't have looked at her. If they had, they would never have killed her. They couldn't have."

"The Holocaust manifested the veneer of civilization so thin and fragile that repetition was possible."

"There were five defining moments in my life and as I look back, each provided a lesson which taught me how to live my life, and hopefully teach others as well. [One of them was the] last week of January 1945. Meeting the first Soviet officer after escaping from the Auschwitz death march. Seeing him made me realize what freedom means."





**"My family was in the Warsaw Ghetto. We wrote to them in code for a while and secretly sent them money. Then, we received a letter saying they were living in a cabin in a camp. (CONTINUED BELOW)**

**And then the letters stopped coming. We never heard from them again. I later found out the camp they were in was Auschwitz. I've never forgotten them.**



**"The SS guards pushed people with their [rifles] from both sides, and the crowd surged forward. As I searched for my father with my eyes and tried to catch up with him, I felt the firm grip of my mother's hand on my arm. I knew she and I had to stay together — that going after my father would only separate me from my mother too.**

**"Everybody, every human being has the obligation to contribute somehow to this world.**



**Wedding rings of the Victims**



**Glasses of the victims**



**Shoes of the victims**



**Gold teeth of the victims**



**The showers – Actually gas chambers**

## **DISCLAIMER**

PLEASE UNDERSTAND THAT EVEN THOUGH THIS INFORMATION HAS BEEN TAKEN FROM WHAT APPEARS TO BE AUTHENTIC WEBSITES. I CANNOT ENSURE THAT ALL THE DATA IN THIS ARTICLE IS ACCURATE AND CORRECT.