

# Post-Shoah Dialogue: Confronting Moses and Paul in Auschwitz

Zev Garber

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The subject of the Shoah, the near total destruction of the Jews of Europe and others, is one of great moral significance in the history of western civilization. Genocide, the obliteration of all members of a national group, is the most horrible of crimes and one of the most difficult to deal with in the field of social studies; it reveals the human race in its worst perspective. Researchers in the shadow of the Holocaust testify to the stubborn persistence of the Shoah to “the past that weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living,” as Jean-Paul Sartre once described history. It is the “deadly weight” of the Shoah – the horrific tradition of state-sponsored victimization and murder, and the unaccountable human, spiritual and material loss that followed in its smoke – that has aroused many to speak out against the Bitburg spirit of “storycide”<sup>2</sup> and to articulate how the lessons learned from the Shoah (e.g., the need to combat the twin evils of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism) might help prevent future animosity, disparity, disputation, and genocide.

The study of the Shoah has proceeded over recent decades through a variety of venues, including history (political, legal, social, military), sociology, psychology, religious thought, literature, and the arts. However, we (Zev Garber, Steven L. Jacobs, Henry F. Knight, and James F. Moore) believe that each of these approaches, while valuable, represents an incomplete segment of the Shoah and will not provide a comprehensive sense of understanding the events. As practicing Jews and Christians, we propose to examine the impact of the Shoah on our religious lives by demonstrating how a dialogical encounter with selected biblical texts can foster mutual understanding and respect as well as personal transformation among its participants. Moreover,

because we believe study of the Shoah requires that we transcend the objectivity and data driven detachment of standard academic approaches, we encourage readers at whatever level to enter into a confrontation with the reality of the Shoah, its aftermath and the potential directions which we can take in a post-Auschwitz world. The development of an interfaith approach to this confrontation offers a model for dialogue as well as a subjective approach to learning.<sup>3</sup>

It is our view that no one philosophy can be superimposed on the Shoah agenda. Suggestions come easily when they deal with facts and figures. But issues in Shoah education reflect the vitality of live concepts. Thus, our interfaith discussion mirrors causes of existence and conditions of being and respond to the imperative “remember and not forget” in ways different from exclusively piloted agendas as found, for example, in strictly ecclesiastical or survivors conclaves. Also, Shoah thinking cannot function under ideological imperialism. Its stream of consciousness is like the natural world: only diversity and adaptation will energize it.

Our *modus operandi* is presented in the following essays presented in an earlier draft at the 37<sup>nd</sup> Annual Scholars Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches held at the Marriott Cleveland Downtown at Key Center, March 11-13, 2007, on the general theme, “Legacies of Nuremberg: 60 Years of Trials and Tribulations (1947-2006).” Our post-Shoah Jewish-Christian dialogue focuses on Torah and Grace as reflected in Deuteronomy 30 and Romans 3, and features religious and theological responses to the role of God and Man in Auschwitz.

## Notes

1 A portion of the Introduction is extracted from Zev Garber, “An Interfaith Dialogue on Post-Shoah Jewish-Christian Scriptural Hermeneutics, with a Report on the Case Colloquium,” CSSR (The

Council of Societies for the Study of Religion) *Bulletin* 34.4 (November 2005), pages 76-79.

2 “Storycide” here suggests distortion of Holocaust facts. It is related to the May 5, 1985 visit of the American President Ronald Reagan and Chancellor Helmut Kohl of West Germany to Bitburg’s Kolmeshohe military cemetery, where soldiers from the Second SS Panzer Division are buried, to honor soldiers killed during World War II. The occasion was to commemorate in good faith the fortieth anniversary of the end of World War II. However, many veterans’ groups, members of US Congress, and Christian and Jewish groups protested this event as revisionist history.

3 One can find samples of our efforts in “Jewish-Christian Dialogue After the Shoah,” a special issue of *Shofar* 15.1 (Fall 1996); *SIDIC (Service International de Documentation Judéo-Chrétienne)* [International Jewish-Christian Documentation Service] 24.3-25.1, 29-43 (2001-2002); James F. Moore, ed., with Zev Garber, Steven L. Jacobs, Henry F. Knight, *Post-Shoah Dialogues: Rethinking Our Texts Together* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004), and recently, “Facing Our Texts Together: An Invitation to Midrashic Dialogue,” *CSSR (The Council of Societies for the Study of Religion) Bulletin* 35.3 (September 2006), pages 52-67.

# “Law, Nuremberg, Gospel: What is There Left to Say?”

Steven Leonard Jacobs

## Introduction

The late Holocaust/Shoah and religious studies scholar, devout radicalized Roman Catholic, Harry James Cargas, known to many of us from these Scholars Conferences and equally beloved by many of us, used to give public voice, in both his writing and his speaking, to his personal anguish that the Holocaust/Shoah occurred “in the heart of *Christian* Europe.” If I understand him, at least partially, and attempt to confront that pain, even minimally, for I am not a Christian though I am the child of a now-deceased survivor-escapee, the *successes* of Nazism – and there were many! – are, at the very least, in larger or smaller measures, the *failures* of both Catholic and Protestant Christianities. How to address those failures appears to me to have been the post-World War II journey of at least *some* in the Christian communities, nobly represented by my beloved colleagues Henry Knight and James Moore, among others, and has resulted in the kind of seriously critical reassessments of the very meanings of Christianity, as well as an equally-serious recognition of the complicit responsibilities of historical Christianity for providing foundational evidence upon

which the Nazis could draw in their murderous designs primarily against Jews, Roma, and others. Equally, it has resulted in a commitment to Jewish-Christian relations and dialogue unknown prior to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and which gives no evidence whatsoever of slacking off. (Parenthetically, I would, also, suggest that this same Holocaust/Shoah has *not*, however, resulted in an equally-serious religio-theological examination of the various understandings of Judaism within the organized Jewish denominational communities except among very, very few; has *not* resulted in asking the kinds of difficult, hard, and uncomfortable questions which are crucial to good and better scholarship; and has *not* been the continuing impetus for Jewish involvement in Jewish-Christian relations and dialogue, the State of Israel and her continuing existence and survival dominating the agenda [though the “specter of the Holocaust/Shoah” has *always* part of the conversation among some, in greater or lesser degrees].)

Returning, however, to the aforementioned failures of both Catholic and Protestant Christianities within this context of the Holocaust/Shoah (and I do hope and trust that those of you who hear my words appreciate,

even minimally, my own angst in presenting them here this morning), at some baseline level, the successes of Nazism are a *refutation* of the religio-theological messages of Christianity, of their *failures* to become normatively reflected in the behaviors of too many killers and bystanders who, evidently, saw no interior conflict – spiritual, moral, or other – in engaging in their “work” (or failing to respond to evil) and their Christian selves. To be sure, some *did* view their work and/or their silence as a rejection of prior Christianity; some among the Nazis *did* view Christianity as a Jewish “tool” exploited by Jews to manipulate and thus weaken the masses; and some *did* embrace National Socialism as a pragmatic iteration of historic Christianity, now able to accomplish authentically long-sought for Christian goals with the modern advent of technology and bureaucracy.

It is, then, in these contexts and conflicts that I, for one, see the texts which the four of us are addressing this morning as “polar opposites,” representing and articulating two positions diametrically opposed to one another with an accuracy borne of tragic hindsight.

### “Law” Vs. “Love:” *Devarim/Deuteronomy* 30:15-20

The tired and trite cliché “Judaism is a religion of law; Christianity is a religion of love,” sadly, however, more than adequately summarizes the outsider’s perspective and understanding of Jewish life under a post-Biblical rabbinic-constructed *Halakha*/the “Jewish Way” or “Jewish Path.” It, also, devalues much of the Torah/Hebrew Bible, and fails to centrally address the nature of the human (or should we say “inhuman”?) person. It may, also, reflect a mutually-exclusive understanding of our initial birth between that of Judaism, which see the person born *good in potential*, gifted with the ability to *choose* between doing good and doing evil, and a Christian *Weltanschauung* (i.e. world perspective), whereby the birth of the human person is already one born tainted and sinful, but one from which only the redeeming and atoning death of the Christ can alleviate this crushing burden.

For our Rabbis, and for us, the way to God, the way to life, the way to success, is through the *mitzvoth*, the commandment-system of the Torah/Hebrew

Bible, which, through the brilliance and genius of their own interpretative processes, will evolve into the halakhic-system which undergirds normative Judaism, even in its more creative re-interpretations of Reform, Reconstructionist, and Conservative Judaisms. From the mined original 613 *mitzvoth* (“Hebrew, “*TaRYaG mitzvoth*”) of the Torah/Hebrew Bible, collected, organized and catalogued by the Rabbis, have come the ritual-ceremonial and moral-ethical ways of Jewish doing, much of which have been adopted by others, and which have enabled this small people to survive, and not only to survive, but to create and to prosper as well. Alone among the ancients, this people is still here, refusing to go away, committed to *tikkun olam* (i.e., repairing a broken world), and maintaining itself in its historic birth-land.

Behind the *Halakha*, for the Rabbis, was the honest realization that we human beings are so constructed – perhaps “genetically hard-wired” if you prefer the most recent linguistic turn of phrase – that we function best within boundaries; that, given our natures and choosing abilities, behavioral norms work best when both reward and punishment, “carrot” and “stick,” are clearly enunciated; and that societies, themselves aggregates of individuals, parallel the process. Not so different from raising a child, the Rabbis, through the halakhic-system, were raising a society. There is no loss of love here; if anything, for the Rabbis, it was their own love of their people – and their love of Torah/Hebrew Bible and their God as well – which led them to see in their Judaism a transgenerational system which would enable them to further survive beyond their own generations.

How else, then, to read Moses’ words, spoken in the name of his God, to his people, and well expressed through the setting up of opposites:

30:15 Look! I have set before you today *life and prosperity* on the one hand, and *death and disaster* on the other. 16 What I am commanding you today is to *love* the Lord your God, and to *obey* his commandments, his statutes, and his ordinances. Then you will live and become numerous and the Lord your God will bless you in the land where you are going to take possession of it. 17 However, if your heart turns aside and [you] do not obey, but are lured away to worship and serve other gods, 18 I declare to you this very day that you will certainly perish! You will not extend your time in the land you are crossing the Jordan [River] to

possess. 19 I invoke heaven and earth as a witness against you today that I have set *life and death, blessing and curse*, before you. Therefore *choose* life so that you may live – you and your seed! 20 I also call on you to *love* the Lord your God, to *obey* him, and cling to him, for he is your life and the means of your length of days, to live in the land the Lord swore to give to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” (*The NET Bible*, Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 1998; emphases added)

Loving God, obeying God’s commandments, choosing life, achieving prosperity, increase, and longevity in the homeland – these are the keys to life! Abuse of the keys will result in tragedy, and, even though neither the text itself nor the Rabbis articulate it, sometimes tragedies will arise not of one’s own or collective making. For just as the Torah/Bible tells us that the ancient Hebrews/Israelites *did* abuse their covenantal relationship with their God, and there have always been throughout history Jews who *did* dishonor the privilege and blessing of being Jews, the slope has *always* been far too slippery to conclude that we Jews, up to and including the Holocaust/Shoah, are primarily responsible for our own misfortunes and worse, though, in all honesty, very traditional Orthodox Judaisms continue to read all of Jewish history through this myopic Judeo-centric lens (i.e., Jewish tragedies the result of Jewish failures before a punishing God; Jewish successes the result of solely Jewish doings).

The understanding presented here in *Devarim*/Deuteronomy 30:15-20, and further adumbrated by the Rabbis of the Jewish religious tradition, and the countless generations of its interpreters, is a view of God, Jewish humanity, and the covenantal interconnection between the two which will best be realized through a fully-articulated system of permissible and impermissible behaviors designed to fully achieve the continuation of life itself (30:19b “Therefore *choose* life so that you may live – you and your seed!”). Not without abuse at times, it remains a dream partially realized and capable of so much more.

### “And Along Came Paul” – Romans 3:21-31

A Judaic reading not only of the New Testament Gospel accounts of the life of the Christ (themselves extraordinarily problematic in relationship to the Holocaust/Shoah as this Post-Holocaust Midrash

Reading Group “Gang of 4” has presented and written on numerous occasions<sup>1</sup>), but Paul’s writings as well, reveal a conflicted Jew, ambivalent about any number of issues, but one now possessed of a new vision of his Judaism who sees in his Christ the long-sought-for and much-needed *mashiach*/messiah/savior of his people, but who is, by and large, unsuccessful at convincing them of his truth, far more successful among the Goim/Gentiles (i.e., non-Jews), but one who, nevertheless, refuses to turn his back upon his own. For later Christianity, *Halakha* has been superseded by the Christ, the realized result and tragic misreading not only of this passage from Romans 3, but that of the unknown author of Matthew.<sup>2</sup>

Turning to the latter first, in Matthew 15:17-18, we find the following, revolving around the translation into English of the Greek *plêrôsai*:

5:17 “Do not think I have come to abolish the Law (n.b., better here “Torah”) or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish but to *fulfill* them (i.e., the laws found in both). 18 Truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law (better here “Torah”) until everything is accomplished.<sup>3, 4</sup>

Substantially, the Jews who remain committed to *Halakha*, at least according to the misreading, are embracing the “old way;” Jews and Gentiles who come to the Christ are followers of the “new way,” no longer in need of such strictures, belief superseding practice, or, in classical terms, faith superseding works as the means by which one will arrive in God’s Holy Presence. Mistranslating both word and intent has led to this terribly tragic divide between Jews and Christians for the last 2,000 years – including the Holocaust/Shoah – and the inheritance of today’s Christians of a gentilized Christianity rather than an authentic and Judaically-evolved form of Christianity which could have, would have, and should have embraced the larger, gentile world in ways in which the halakhic form of Judaism would not and could not do so. Indeed, as my teacher Ellis Rivkin used to say “the New Testament is a midrash on the Hebrew Bible, and Christianity is a midrashic interpretation of Judaism.” Today, I would presumptuously suggest that early Judeo-Christianity was a reformist possibility within the worlds of 1<sup>st</sup>

century Judaism, but the vagaries of history being what they are, the successes of the evangelizing missions of Paul and others, and the collusion of Church and state which led to the “parting of the ways” by the time of the 4<sup>th</sup> century Emperor Constantine (~280-337 CE) drove the original people asunder with tragic and ongoing consequences for Jews (and Christians as well), but the breeches and chasms of which are only now being fragiley and hesitantly crossed over.

As to this passage from Paul’s Letter to the Romans, Chapter 3, verses 21-31, I would make the following observations:

(1) Paul has obviously accepted a thoroughly minority view within the vast corpus of possible Judaic interpretations which would suggest that the *yetzer ha-ra* (Hebrew, “the evil inclination”) dominates the *yetzer ha-tov* (Hebrew, “the good inclination”), thus inhibiting our psyche’s ability to *choose* to do good, the realized result of inheriting the taint (“sin”) of Adam’s and Eve’s misbehaviors in God’s Presence in *Gan Eden*/the Garden of Eden (i.e., eating of the “Tree of Knowledge of God and Evil” as the story is presented in *Bereshith*/Genesis, Chapters 2 and 3), and causing their expulsion. With Christ’s willing atoning and redeeming death, all those – Gentiles *and* Jews – who embrace this Christ are now equally pure before God (i.e., they have become “righteous” as Christ himself is “righteous” before God).

(2) The critique, however, which should be neither minimized or dismissed at first read, is reserved for those who “boast” of their religious superiority before God because they are followers of the Judaic *Halakha* and see themselves as superior to those who are not. Paul’s understanding of God does not render inferior those who are not followers of the *Halakha*. For Paul, faith in God, and here specifically faith in Christ Jesus, is primary and central, but a misreading would suggest a dismissing totally of those who observe *Halakha*. Rather, *Halakha*, which the Rabbis themselves understood to have come from God, *requires* faith in God or its own observances and requirements are, even at best, hypocritical, works *without* faith. Thus, I would suggest, a much more plausible and nuanced understanding of Paul’s words in this passage in this letter is an attempt to bridge the “gap to God” for Gentiles and Jews

– requiring faith in the universal God of humankind, and then, for Jews, to observe *Halakha* since that is “the Jewish way,” *and then*, for Gentiles, a re-interpreted moral-ethical code as Paul understands it here and in other texts (i.e., a Gentile or Christian *halakhah*, if you will), but one which would *not* require the Judaic commitments of Shabbat, circumcision of the flesh, and dietary system. Responsibility then falls to later commentators, including the Fathers of the Church (e.g., Tertullian, Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, Irenaeus, Clement, Origen, Athanasius, and Chrysostom), in their ongoing desire to sever their connections to historic Judaism to disassociate themselves and their followers from the “old ways,” now regarded as not only inferior to faith in Christ Jesus but unnecessary, and those who still observe as worthy of their condemnation.

(3) Thus, two significantly different conceptions of humanity: A behavioral system, *Halakha*, which articulates a reward and punishment understanding of humanity that will enable it to function best and realize it rewards by *choosing* to do good and *refusing* to do evil; and a belief system in Christ Jesus, misreading Paul by later generations, rejecting any commitment to the parent-faith community’s practices, and trusting (perhaps, naively so) that the *power* of such enabling belief will serve strongly and forcefully those who come to believe, and result in good works. And here, I would suggest, that western civilization, as it has evolved and as we have come to know it, is a *betrayal* of this Christian belief system, and, sadly and tragically, a flawed misunderstanding of the very nature of the human person. The flaw, however, is not that we are born into sin and belief in Christ Jesus cleanses us from our taint (though we Jews, of course, disagree with this reading); it is that, once having been so cleansed, God no longer requires or commands us to operate systematically in the moral and ethical realms of our behavior. I would suggest to the Christians among us this morning, and to my two colleagues, Hank and Jim, as well, however, that the “*Halakhic way*,” at least in the moral-ethical realm, whether presented by fundamentalist Orthodox or moderate Conservative Judaism or a more liberal Reform or Reconstructionist Judaic reinterpretation is the way for Jews, and what must be culled from the very best of the Christianities as they have evolved over

the centuries is the need for a *Christianized halakha* built upon the same understanding of humanity as that articulated by Judaism, all the more so if we are to take into our reality not only the Holocaust/Shoah of the past, but the genocides of the present, and, God forbid, the genocides of the future as well.

### Enter Nuremberg and the International Military Tribunal

From 20 November 1945 until 1 October 1946, the Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal (IMT) was conducted at the Nuremberg Palace of Justice, Nuremberg, Germany (site of the infamous *Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor* and *Reich Citizenship Law*, both of September 15, 1935, and both designed to further segregate Jews from others in Germany by denaturalizing them, and, thus, depriving them of their citizenship.). The charges against the twenty-four defendants were four-fold: (1) Participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of crimes against peace, (2) Planning, initiating and waging wars of aggression and other crimes against peace, (3) War crimes, and (4) Crimes against humanity. The results were as follows:

<b>Death</b>	Martin Bormann (in absentia), Hans Frank, Wilhelm Frick, Hermann Göring (suicide), Alfred Jodl, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, Wilhelm Keitel, Joachim von Ribbentrop, Alfred Rosenberg, Fritz Saukel, Arthur Seyss-Inquart, Julius Streicher*
<b>10 Years</b>	Karl Dönitz
<b>15 Years</b>	Konstantin von Neurath
<b>20 Years</b>	Baldur von Schirach, Albert Speer
<b>Life</b>	Walther Funk, Rudolf Hess, Erich Raeder
<b>Acquitted</b>	Hans Fritzsche, Franz von Papen, Hjalmar Schacht

\*Robert Ley committed suicide before the trials, as did Heinrich Himmler; Alfred Krupp von Bohlen was tried in a separate trial.

Though not without controversy, including the claims of “unprecedented-ness” (i.e., such an international trial and sentencing had never taken place before) and legal biases the result of so-called “victors’ justice,” the International Military Tribunal affirmed the commitment to law as the foundation of nation-state responsibility as the only reliable system for enforcing the rules of human and societal behavior and the violations thereof. It, also, ultimately, provided the basis for two important such tribunals in the aftermath of the genocides at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and the International Criminal Tribunal for the (Former) Yugoslavia (ICTY). And, while certainly not addressed, it, also, affirmed the religio-theological understanding of the halakhic system of Judaism, incorporating belief so central to Christianity – in this case, however, belief in the efficacy and implementation of law – and manifesting itself in the rewards (e.g., acquittal) and punishments (e.g., 10 years to life and death) necessary to the functioning of both persons and societies. It did not, however, expend its energies by discussing a belief system which *hoped* that “good people” would do right and oppose “bad people” because of either their belief system or their inherent goodness in the aftermath of the Second World War and the growing revelations of the Holocaust/Shoah (even then as Allied forces were liberating the death camps of Eastern Europe and uncovering mass grave sites).

### Conclusions? What is There Left to Say?

What is there left to say, in light of the tragic consequences of these two differing visions and understandings of what we are as human beings, how we operate and function in this world of reality, who we should be, and what we have done? Only this: That the Holocaust/Shoah continues to makes its demands and foist its claims upon people seriously committed to their own religious traditions who seek to build bridges to those of other religious traditions, be they Jews, Christians, Muslims or others. In a world where the genocides of others are too much a part of all human reality, and tomorrow’s genocides are still unknown to us, we can no longer afford the luxuries of not asking the most difficult and painful of questions of ourselves

and of others no matter where they take us. Perhaps, and it is only perhaps, the hesitant answers we will present will contain within themselves real solutions and real healing. If not, one shudders to think that we will all-too-soon become enveloped in a darkness in which there is no light in a tunnel in which there is no end.

## Endnotes

1 For example, Moore, James F. (Special Editor) (1996), *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, 15(1): “Jewish-Christian Dialogue After the Shoah,” 1-118; Moore, James F. (ed.) (2004), *Post-Shoah Dialogues: Re-Thinking Our Texts Together* (Lanham: University Press of America).

2 There are any number of important texts which address the Gospels’ and Paul’s relationship to Halakha, but none do so within the context of the Holocaust/Shoah. I would, however, take note of the following volumes: Farmer, William R. (ed.) (1990), *Anti-Judaism and the Gospels* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International); Hübner, Hans (1984), *Law in Paul’s Thought* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark); Räisänen, Heikki (1983), *Paul & the Law* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), especially Chapters II, pgs. 42-93, and VI, pgs. 199-202; Sloyan, Gerard S. (1978), *Is Christ the End of the Law?* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press); Stern, Frank (2006), *A Rabbi Looks at Jesus’ Parables* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield); Thielman, Frank (1994), *Paul & the Law: A Contextual Approach* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press), especially Chapter 8, pgs. 160-188; and Vangermeren, Wilem A., Bahnsen, Greg L., Kaiser, Walter C. Jr., Moo, Douglas J., and Strickland, Wayne G. (1993), *Law, the Gospel and the Modern Christian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House.)

3 *Plêrôsai* = *fulfill* is found in the following translations: Today’s New International Version (2005), New International Version—UK (1984), Wycliffe New Testament (2001), Holman Christian Standard Bible (2003), Darby Translation (public domain), Young’s Literal Translation (public domain), American Standard Version (1901), 21st Century King James Version (1994), New King James Version (1982), English

Standard Version (2001), King James Version (public domain), New American Standard Bible (1995), New International Version (1984), The NET Bible (1998). *Plêrôsai* = *complete* is found in both The Message (2002) and New Life Version (1969) of the Bible. To attempt to bridge, and possibly correct, this problematic misunderstanding, the Worldwide English Bible (n.d.) renders it “do what they say must be done;” New International Reader’s Version (1998) by “give full meaning to what is written;” Contemporary English Version (1995) “give their full meaning;” New Living Translation (2004) “accomplish their purpose;” Amplified Bible (1987) “complete and fulfill.”

4 I, also, therefore find myself in agreement with David Stern’s commentary on this passage with what I trust are the obvious Judaic hesitations:

Replacement theology, which wrongly teaches that the Church has replaced the Jews as God’s people...understands this verse wrongly in two ways

First Yeshua’s “fulfilling” *the Torah* is thought to mean that it is unnecessary for people to fulfill it now. But there is no logic to the proposition that Yeshua’s obeying the *Torah* does away with our need to obey it. *In fact, Sha’ul (Paul), whose object[ive] in his letter to the Romans, is to foster “understanding that comes from trusting” in Yeshua, teaches that such trusting does not abolish Torah but confirms it (1:5, 3:31).*

Second, with identical lack of logic, Yeshua’s “fulfilling” *the Prophets* is thought to imply that no prophecies from the *Tanakh* remain for the Jews. But the Hebrew Bible’s promises to the Jews are not abolished in the name of being “fulfilled in Yeshua.” Rather, fulfillment in Yeshua is an added assurance [to and for Christians, not Jews – SLJ] that everything God has promised to the Jews will yet come to pass....

Yeshua did not come to abolish but “to make full” (*plêrôsai*) the meaning of what the *Torah* and the ethical demands of the Prophets require. Thus he came to complete our understanding of the *Torah* and the Prophets, so that we can try more effectively to be and to do what they saw to be and do.

(*The Jewish New Testament Commentary* [Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1996], CD-Rom Edition. Emphases added.)

# A Letter to Paul from a Place Called *After*

Henry F. Knight

How do we read our sacred texts after catastrophe? More specifically, how do we read them after Auschwitz? Beginning in 1993, I joined my colleagues Jim Moore, Steve Jacobs, and Zev Garber in reading them dialogically and midrashically in venues like this one <sup>1</sup> where our reading takes place across our confessional boundaries as Jews and Christians. Each of our readings has been a return to the text in hand “according to the scriptures,” reading *with* our scriptures even as we wrestle with and resist the texts we are facing together.

Today we face a new textual partner in this inter-confessional enterprise: a text of Paul’s, his letter to the Romans, particularly Romans 3. How do we face Paul “according to the scriptures?” How do we bring Paul into our dialogue – our multi-layered, post-Shoah midrashic conversation with each other and with yet another text chosen from Torah – Deuteronomy 30?

May I be so bold as to suggest what, on the face of it, looks like a simple strategy – writing a letter? However, writing Paul from our post-Shoah vantage point is no simple matter, even if choosing this approach reflects the hermeneutical strategy Paul employed in seeking dialogue in the aftermath of Jesus. That is, Paul also wrote after – after Jesus’ ministry, after the cross, and in the after-event called Easter. For that matter, the Deuteronomist wrote after too: after the destruction of Jerusalem, after Exile and at the cusp of return to his cherished and wounded home. And, in doing so he wrote according to his tradition, re-entering the narrative of his people in the time after the Exodus, in the wilderness approaching the land promised them by God. In that circumstance, Moses addressed his people then *and* in the time of later return, reminding them of the laws and commandments that articulate their covenant walk with God and each other. In other words, writing with the texts of scripture may not be as simple a strategy as it first appears – even if the form at hand is that of a letter. Nonetheless, that is the strategy I wish to pursue.

## **The Letter**

To Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles, especially those moved by the Jewish belief in one God, particularly those who have discovered that in and through the son of the covenant known as Jesus of Nazareth, they have a doorway into creation’s full promise of life lived responsibly with and for others. Grace and peace to you and to others who might overhear our words and want to join us in conversation.

I write to you grateful for your witness but acutely mindful of the distance between us, in time, language, culture, custom and circumstance. So much has occurred since you first wrote to congregations in the Empire. The dangers of Empire continue, albeit in changing forms and faces. <sup>2</sup> Your words from then have been turned to serve other purposes than I believe you had in mind.

The Gentile admirers called “God-fearers,” or “God-worshippers,” in your world <sup>3</sup> have been replaced by people who surround Jews with disdain and contempt. Indeed, your very words have been turned to this end. Words you appeared to use to express confessional caution have fed a rhetoric of replacement and repudiation. Where you were alert to issues of false pride in being a member of the House of Israel, either because of fears that others might romanticize your walk with God or because of your keen sensitivity to the dangers of self-righteousness and spiritual arrogance, or some combination of both, your words have been turned into a denial of your identity as a child of the covenant, not a chastening of it. You would be shocked and appalled by this development. Worse, you would have been victimized by those who turned your words against you, because to them you were still a Jew and to be viewed as less than human as a result. Lest you protest that you would have been prepared to give your life for your beliefs, as we know you eventually did, I must add that you would have been denied that opportunity as

well. Your life would have been taken from you because of the sick beliefs of others, not yours. Your moral and spiritual agency would have been discounted from the beginning since your claims for yourself would never have been honored. As a Jew, they would not have counted.

Ironically, that attitude, being treated as a negative object of contempt, is the reverse of what you may have originally feared from the “God worshippers” who wished to emulate Jewish ritual and practice without grasping its inner spirit. The reasons for your confessional caution, your chastened view of Jewish life, are not the attitudes you would face today. Indeed, your cautionary language would be dangerous, not just misplaced.

As I understand it from reading accounts of the times in which you lived and wrote, you expected the ways of Empire to be set right in a final reckoning of history by God, a realignment of all our broken relationships according to the character of creation you and other followers of Jesus experienced in the aftermath of his death and rebirth in your midst. You lived with a sense of “after” that tempered your views of Torah, halakhah, and other signs of ordinary life in the community of God’s people. It was urgent that Gentiles be brought in to the covenantal way as you understood it then. That urgency may remain; but as I read the times, it requires an understanding of the covenantal way that discloses the divine wager that God has made with creation and the subsequent human responsibility that such a partnership requires of us for it to be manifest in our midst.

In your letter to the congregation in Rome you declared your understanding of God’s righteousness as a way to introduce yourself and to articulate the spirit of God’s actions you had experienced as his healing power embodied and disclosed in the life of Jesus. You shaped your understanding in the light of what happened even and especially after his death and the betrayal of those who followed him; and in your case, the healing power of being embraced in spite of active resistance and opposition to those who claimed he was changing them in this time after. You saw it as the manifestation of God’s ways with creation, God’s faithfulness to creation in a covenant we could not break, whether in our limited and fractious ways as human beings, or

even in our active resistance of it. This was your *hineni*, as it were, which we have read from other times “after” as your *manifesto*.

That difference, between *manifesto* and *hineni*, I believe, is important. Instead of a witness to life-in-relation with others, a declaration of covenantal readiness, we have read your letter as a concluded argument set over-against others. One declares “here I am” offering oneself and one’s understanding to others; the other reading proclaims “there is only one way to understand this matter and you may join me if you choose.” Given your fears about spiritual arrogance, I remain alert to your own propensity to this latter option. Permit me, therefore, my own *hineni* as a reply to yours. I believe there is much at stake in this.

My dear Paul, I live in a time distinguished by diversity and violence, great gaps of wealth and poverty, disproportionate accumulations of power and its absence. I live in a time marked by the word “after.” I live “after” a place called “Auschwitz,” after a time your people call “Shoah” – a rupture in the sacred order of life, a time after the near total annihilation of your people. Indeed you would have perished in its storm of hatred and violence – but not as I mentioned earlier, as a follower of Jesus; rather because you were a Jew. I live in a time that still wrecks with the stench of human atrocity. After the Shoah, the impossible has become possible and happens “ever again.” I write, wounded by what I know of its violence and the complicity of members of the “so called” body of Christ in it, a reality we claim to share. And so I limp, not just in my walking but in my writing as well.

I write to you mindfully wounded by the ways of Empire.<sup>4</sup> In your time it was Rome and its logic of scarcity and conquest.<sup>5</sup> Only one power, one authority, one way of life can know and experience the truth – whether it is God’s or Caesar’s claiming to be God. If truth is simply one, Empire must possess it and control it. That is its totalitarian way. We have known modern manifestations of the ways of Empire, or Reich, to use a word that may put the matter boldly for us. Empire’s logic did not disappear when the first Reich ended. We know it in every over-reach of power that denies the fundamental abundance of life we know as creation and that denies others a place under its roof.

The relational heart of creation calls forth articulation. That is the secret of Jewish law, the Torah, as they testify on their behalf. Your letter, likewise, bears its witness to this abiding summons as you offer your covenantal *hineni*. The presence of others calls forth response. Because the spirit of that articulation is relational, the speaking may be expressed in various ways – all of which are specific opportunities to serve life – instantiations of covenantal regard for the other which the laws and commands of Torah express. But those articulations do not exhaust the possibilities for expressing this relational character and our obligations to the other. A static orientation, a logic of scarcity if you will, reduces the claims of otherness and the richness of relation to a singular articulation of it, that in the end, renders the other in one's own image and no longer truly other. In this regard, relationality is unrecognized, denied, even betrayed.

In your letter to the Romans you acknowledge the importance of Law in Jewish life, indeed in life before God and neighbor. But you go on to add that others can approach the relational dance of responsibility that *halakhah* and Torah serve in other ways. Indeed, you seek to help Gentile believers recognize this feature in the relationships they know in Jesus Christ even pointing them away from the Law of Torah as if they might not grasp the relational character of the Law otherwise.

Your concern is not unlike the articulation called forth by Moses in his time after, to which Torah turned in a later time after catastrophe and exile. (Deut. 30) In that time, other leaders evoked Moses and the choice he put before the people in an earlier era. In both cases, articulation was essential, an articulation in lived expressions with others and in a deepened grasp of what Torah was all about. But the articulation was a response to the relational heart of God's ways with the world that transcends every evocation. That part is likewise essential. There is a logic of plenitude at work here. The relational richness of creation calls forth its own articulation; and that articulation points to the richness that summons it to expression.

The ramifications of this double observation are significant, especially for those of us who live after Auschwitz, after the Third Reich's abuse of power.

Nazi policy abolished articulated rights for Jews and then sought to annihilate them as a people. To be sure the removal of written accountability did not erase the relational obligations that bind human beings to each other. In the aftermath of what happened, Germany as a nation was held accountable to those obligations and its leaders were put on trial for their "crimes against humanity." The trials proclaimed that the obligations we have toward one another as human beings exist even when they are not expressed in treaty or in law. Those obligations bind us each to the other as human beings, and help us understand how we dwell together in a shared world of relational regard. However, when we fail to articulate these fundamental connections, or allow them to be erased, we put others at risk, as our time *after* makes abundantly clear. The night of terror began with the diminishment and abuse of law.

Sadly, these implications reverberate in current events as well as recent history. Indeed my own nation struggles with questions of empire, the rights of others, and the nature of mutual obligations that lie beyond the limited, but essential, ways we seek to articulate these relationships. Clearly then, as I write to you from my time *after*, I do so seeking clarity about more than what you have to say. I seek to come to terms with my world as well as yours. In the end I write to locate myself in the "after" life of my wounded and still wounding world. So I close, where I started, grateful for your witness, troubled by your rhetoric, and instructed by what we share, living in a place called *after*.

Perhaps the best that I can do is offer this prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts (and that of our hands as well) be acceptable in your sight, O God, our Rock and our Redeemer; and may they be credible in the presence of the children who perished in the time before. Amen.

### ***After Thoughts***

Typically after the closing of a letter, the communication ends, perhaps waiting for a reply from the one being addressed in the letter. In this case, waiting for Paul to answer might be asking a bit much from the imagination of the reader, not to mention Paul. Instead, I wish to add some critical thoughts that have arisen from the unfinished nature of this missive and from comments

that have come from others other than Paul who have offered their reflections. In other words, although the letter has been finished and concluded, the engagement with its issues continues, hopefully in the same spirit that Paul wished his original addressees to respond.

In my letter I use several terms that invite further clarification. They signal important dimensions of the reality I seek to serve and share with others, from Paul and those he was addressing in his letter to those who may read my words today. Early on I referred to Paul's letter as a relational declaration of articulated presence, using the Hebrew term *hineni* (Here I am) in contrast to a public statement of principles signaled by the more ideologically-pointed term *manifesto*. With *hineni*, I seek to emphasize the relational quality of identifying how one is present to the other at any given time and place. *Hineni* is more typically a responsive declaration to the implied or explicit question, Where are you? It expresses relationship and engagement. *Manifesto*, on the other hand, usually denotes a position or rationale in an argument that one offers to convince an other to join one's group or to agree with one's stated position. If we read Paul's letters as manifestos they mean something altogether different than if we read them as relational declarations of "Here I am." One honors difference-in-relation; the other seeks unanimity and the erasure of difference (i.e., sameness); or separation.

I have shaped my letter with the understanding that Paul was addressing an identifiable population of Gentile admirers of Jewish life that are mentioned by Luke in his *Acts of the Apostles* and separate archeological evidence<sup>6</sup> as "God-fearers" and "God-worshippers." Crossan and Reed have argued that this group of pagan sympathizers accounts for the apparent discrepancy of Paul's characterization of his work as a mission to Gentiles and Luke's report that he did much of his preaching at synagogues in key cities of the Empire. Typically this in-between group of Gentile supporters attended synagogue ceremonies and expressed commitment to Jewish monotheistic belief and moral principles.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, if Paul is addressing himself to this community, which Crossan convincingly claims, then Paul's description of his work is not at odds with Luke's description of Paul's work being oriented toward Diaspora synagogues.<sup>8</sup>

Another set of terms, scarcity and plenitude, are used to identify two distinct ways of viewing the world, logics of perception or imaginal mindsets. The logic of scarcity refers to a way of viewing the world as well as reading one's most sacred texts that seeks a single, over-arching truth or value that can be known and related to in limited if not singular fashion. In contrast, the logic of plenitude recognizes the richness of truth, even if it is singular, overflowing all attempts to grasp and express its full meaning. Adopting the categories of Regina Schwartz, I have used these terms to characterize two basic ways of holding one's faith and seeing the world. The former, a lens of scarcity, is an either-or logic that sees truth and revelation in unambiguous clarity that is to be chosen in contrast to untruth and false knowing. The latter, a lens of abundance, is a both-and or dialectical logic, that sees truth and revelation as complex phenomena and frequently expressed in parabolic ambiguity. The terms, however, are not meant to describe direct correlations with the world in which we live. In fact, they represent choices we face in any environment and should not be confused with the lived realities of scarcity and plenty that confound our life together on this planet. Indeed, in many situations of plenty, the logic of scarcity is at work leading those with abundant resources to hoard their wealth, or to use it wastefully with attitudes of entitlement regarding what they have. The opposite attitude is often expressed when those with little resources at all go to great lengths to share what they have with visitors to their communities, or others among them who have greater need. In other words, the logics of scarcity and plenitude are hermeneutical lenses that often operate in great contrast to the manifest realities in which they are employed.

Lastly, though not in any final sense, I have used the word *articulation* to refer to the way in which our words express our sense of connection to the plenitude of life that we seek to honor and share even in the presence of scarcity and situations of abject barrenness. This expressed identification of the More that is hidden in plain sight in our midst invites a mindful awareness of the gift-like character of life and our responsibilities to care for it – and the loss of life we experience when we deny it. The word functions much like it does in the British use of the term to identify a tractor-trailer

rig with a cab and trailer – an articulated lorrie. The two units are connected by a special device called a fifth wheel in which a connecting pin enables the separate units to turn so that the two function as one with capabilities greater than the two alone. The word *articulate* embodies the importance of language as the connecting mechanism we employ to relate to the More that is made available to us through its articulation, when, if you will, breath or spirit gives the word life.<sup>9</sup> Whether the More is called Law, or Gospel, or Torah, the More remains more, like an overflowing cup as in Psalm 23, calling forth further articulation and the contemplative fullness of respectful silence. It also remains More when we identify its presence by declaring its violation. Together the articulated More of Paul's letter and the More that surpasses its articulation provide the black fire of the text and the white fire of our midrashic discourse about it.

Any "re-reading" of a letter, midrashic or otherwise, can only generate after-thoughts. A letter in antiquity, particularly one like Paul's, was an occasional communication drafted to be read aloud to a specific audience, time, and circumstance. It was given life in the reading. And we who continue to interpret this written correspondence are always striving to over-hear a previous communication, seeking as we do, to honor the depth and breadth of that which the text can only partially represent.

## Endnotes

1 Morning Midrash at the Annual Scholars' Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches, Cleveland, Ohio. March 2007.

2 The dynamics of Empire as a particular mindset is the subject of John Dominic Crossan's recent book, *God and Empire: Jesus Against Rome, Then and Now* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2007) esp. 1-48, *passim*.

3 I am indebted to the work of John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan Reed in their book, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus' Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom—A New Vision of Paul's Words & World* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004) especially 27 – 41 and to Crossan's *God and Empire*, 141-190 for providing the context for my reading of Paul in my letter and commentary.

4 For anyone seeking information on the background and significance of the Roman Empire for Paul's writings, John Dominic Crossan's *God and Empire* is indispensable; likewise, his book with Jonathan Reed, *In Search of Paul*.

5 I have extrapolated this point from Regina Schwartz's discussion of the logics of scarcity and plenitude and particularly her exploration of the logic of scarcity as a logic of conquest when applied to land. See Regina M. Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997) 39-76.

6 *In Search of Paul*. 23ff.

7 *In Search of Paul*. xi, 32, 34-41.

8 *In Search of Paul*. 37-39.

9 Brandon Scott and Margaret Dean are completing a book on the importance of understanding the Greek text of the New Testament having its primary meaning in the spoken word that it signifies. Private reading of written texts is a modern consequence of the printing press making numerous copies available to individuals. In biblical times written texts were read aloud by those with the skill to decipher them. Such readers gave voice to sacred texts so that the spoken message they represented could be communicated. Moreover, the cues for meaning were carried by sound, not the visual guides of punctuation marks. Those were absent. Instead, the texts were marked for vocalization and intonation. With few texts, reading was a specialized skill. Texts served an oral culture. As Scott remarked in a private conversation about the work in progress, Paul's statement that the spirit (*pneuma*) gives life and the letter kills is quite literally true. If the word is not spoken (i.e., given articulated breath) then its meaning does not exist for the community for which it is intended. Unless that word is spoken aloud to others, it lies unvoiced, a promise yet unrealized.

# Paul Died in Auschwitz: A Midrashic Reading of Deuteronomy 30 and Romans 3

James F. Moore

Paul died in Auschwitz. That seems an odd way to begin a reflection for this Midrash group unless we recall that all of our work is an attempt to read text as post-Shoah readings. So, then, Paul died in Auschwitz, and this changes everything that we might say about Romans and Deuteronomy. This will become abundantly clear once I turn to a reading of the texts we have before us today. However, even more to the point, that death also challenges all of our efforts to apply a religious ethic in a post-Shoah world. It is surely and especially the Shoah that forces this reality upon us, but it is also present in Bosnia/Herzegovina and in Rwanda. That is, every place that we might be inclined to think of a Christian ethic as giving foundation for a post-Shoah global ethic we face this same truth, Paul died in Auschwitz. And, we may find ourselves facing a dilemma even in thinking our way toward a basis for judgment at Nuremberg if we take with full force the meaning that I have started my reflections with that Paul died in Auschwitz.

## Turning to the Texts

Let me begin with Romans and especially the claim found in Romans 3:30: “since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through the same faith. Do we then overthrow the law by faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.”<sup>1</sup> This one text as much as any surely forms the grounds upon which so many have claimed that Paul is the true founder of the “Christian” religion. It is surely true that Paul knows that the faith he sets forth is that which is in Jesus as the Christ. But, just a minute!! I have argued elsewhere that Paul does not do theology in the way that we Christians have come to think of as doing theology. Instead, my claim is that Paul envisioned some kind of Halakah for the gentiles. But this is, of course, not possible since the Rabbinic

halakhic tradition post-dates Paul and so this that Paul does is something else but something like what will be.<sup>2</sup> My claim is that we must read Paul in the reverse direction than is normal for thinkers in the Christian past. We begin with the practical question which gives rise to the response. For Paul this seems to be so often the issue of what to do about the increasing division to be found among those who were of Jewish heritage (the circumcised) and those who were of gentile heritage (the uncircumcised) in the church. The issue is a principle that can allow for real difference in the church (not erase identities) but also preserve a unity. This is not a polemic against the Jews as such.

Thus, the claim in Romans 3:30 takes on a different meaning in that Paul rightly appeals to the same faith which holds both groups together. In this, Paul is following what will be typically the Rabbinic view that there is a Noachide covenant which includes all people. On this basis, Paul can argue later in Romans for a respect of the Jewish people apart from the churches (chapter 11) and caution against Christian arrogance. Thus, Paul can argue that in this the law is upheld. This is a bold move which perceives a solution to the rift which can foresee a church which includes both Jews and gentiles held together by a common faith. Indeed, this does seem to be the basis for the beginning of a new religion since Paul does not see a need to call the Jews to this movement since they are saved by the covenant with the “fathers” (as he will argue in Romans 11). Even so, the boldness of this claim is the confidence that this does indeed give an ethic which will mean both followers of the Christ and the Jewish people will live with respect for each other without diminishing difference.

But Paul died in Auschwitz. Paul could not have seen a world that would count his argument as nothing since what would matter is that Paul was a Jew. Paul

also could not have seen a world in which the followers of Jesus would lose touch altogether with their roots in Judaism, the roots of Jesus since he saw a church always open to both gentiles and those of Jewish heritage. Perhaps he believed that this would not be a long wait since the end was near, as so many claim about Paul's vision. But the churches became a fully gentile institution and gained the power of the empire. The Jews became the outsider that was never welcomed in the churches as an equal, as a Jew, or respected for the difference. The Pauline solution falls apart and even those who would claim to be Christians would die for having even ¼ Jewish blood. And the Christians, that is far more than we would like to think and hope for, stood by as Paul died in Auschwitz. Some, even, pulled the switch for the gas or pulled the trigger of the gun or pulled the lever of the gallows. And in this dark moment of reality we face the dilemma that the religious solution also falls apart.

### **Deuteronomy**

But we are left with still more in our struggle to understand. The text from Deuteronomy, which contains the choice to either put trust in the God of Moses and the commandments or to choose otherwise. But the text says that by this we choose either death or life. In choosing life do we do away with the law? This is Paul's question. By no means!! We uphold the law since this is the way of the commandments, the way of halakhah. But Moses also died in Auschwitz. Indeed, all died in Auschwitz since the choice is meaningless in a world where even ¼ Jewish blood means death. To uphold the law means to choose death. To turn away from the law also means death. And in this moment of dark reality we face the dilemma that the religious solution falls apart.

Naturally, the image is metaphorical and reflects in this way only the needed reminder of the Jewishness of Paul. And it is metaphorical in that we know that religion and religious solutions did not die in Auschwitz in actuality. In fact, much of the religious world continues without any real need to be post-Shoah at all. This continuing is a puzzle to be sure since any and all religious solutions face what Irving Greenberg has called a credibility problem after Auschwitz. This is never more

clear to us than it is in thinking about the choice posed in Deuteronomy 30 – “Choose this day between life and death.” The choice to obey God was the choice to be children of that covenant which would determine the fate of millions in the twentieth century, both Jews and Christians. And it is also obvious in the resolution posed by Paul in Romans – that the principle of faith is a bond which holds together both circumcised and uncircumcised in community.

But this is then not purely metaphorical since the religious solution cannot possibly be the same after Auschwitz. We cannot merely skip around the credibility problem as if we had not known of the 11 million that were murdered in the Shoah. And if this were not enough, we cannot avoid the conclusion that both Bosnia and Rwanda have re-confirmed this credibility gap. So, yes, the religions still function, even as if they were the final solution, but the reality is that they do so only by denying their own failures. It is in the face of the failure of religion that we must turn to Paul and to Deuteronomy and think again about our traditions together.

### **Can we Find a Midrash Here?**

If we think about Romans 3 for this moment as a Midrash on Deuteronomy 30, then we have a twist to the story that is perhaps a way to consider the dilemma of religious failure. The choice in Deuteronomy is posed at the point of entry into the land of Promise. If this text is read with this in mind we certainly see that the religious quest – to choose life – is a future event which lies in the vision of hope and trust. It is this trust which is given such a test in the reversal of Auschwitz – the entry into the land of death. What then can we make of the Midrash that this choice is based on “the principle of faith?” In the post-Shoah world this can only mean that faith survives in the form not merely of survival but in the form of a world without genocide. That land of Promise also lies only in the future in a vision of hope and trust. The Pauline solution is by no means a claim that such a community is actually present (there surely was no such community in the churches of Rome in Paul's time). It is the vision which remains as the sole offer that religions can give. We lose out in the credibility game if we think religions actually do make such a community.

Indeed, the end result of both the Mosaic claim on the people in Deuteronomy and also of Paul's claim on the churches in Romans, that is the way these two visions have been implemented, has been to construct divided communities, communities at war with each other. In spite of the vision, religion has meant so often a reality of us and them and we see little reason to believe that this is likely to change in our own time.<sup>3</sup> In this way, Greenberg is more than correct.<sup>4</sup> There is a credibility problem and will continue to be a problem so long as religions are seen to be real solutions, for religions have only too often taken this to imply walls of separation like what Paul found in the churches in Rome. Religion cannot be the basis of an ethic unless religions give up this role of shaping identities in a world of us and them, that is unless they stop being religions.

But neither Paul nor Moses envisioned religions as a solution. In the world we actually must live in, solutions arise from the messiness of politics, economics, and social interactions. The credibility gap also exists in this world but religions do not have a special claim on giving real shape to human problems without the connection to the real sources of power. Instead, the Midrash is that religion gives way to the vision, a vision of a world without boundaries and without the need to produce an us and them. This means truly the "end" of religion both in the demise of religious isolationisms in the name of absolute truths and in the sense of the only legitimate purpose of religion. But both Paul and

Moses still died in Auschwitz and the vision itself hangs tenuously on our knowledge that the world continues to produce hate in abundance in the name of religions as well as in the name of various other ideologies. Can we say that in balance the vision of a real dialogical community is even yet stronger, ready to win the day? I doubt that we can affirm this if there is not the kind of activism that stands ever ready to challenge those who seem to know the truth and those who would impose their truths no matter what. If this is what Paul really knows in his words "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God", then we can know that the vision survives only through the tenaciousness of those who would refuse to allow any final solutions at all, any dividing lines, any oppressions or threats. This vision still lies ahead of us and we still may have the chance to choose this day between life and death. We just may.

### Notes

1 All texts used are from the NRSV version of the Christian scriptures.

2 This argument is made much more completely together with references to other sources in James F. Moore, "Midrashic Christian Theology for a Post-Shoah World," *Toward a Dialogical Community* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004), pp. 13ff.

3 This point has been made by many but an interesting argument based on this theme can be found recently in the work of James Waller, *Becoming Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, second edition, 2007).

4 Irving Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire," *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?* Eva Fleischner, ed. (New York: KTAV, 1977).

# It is Not in Heaven: Interpreting Romans 3 and 10 in Light of Deuteronomy 30

Zev Garber

Questioning God in the face of Evil is as old as the Bible, as the story of Job and the words of Jesus at the Crucifixion attest.<sup>1</sup> But the savagery of the Shoah places the Nazi brutality in a category by itself. For many survivors of the Kingdom of Night, the aching question, “Where was God when Six Million Jews, 1.5 million of them children, and others perish in an indescribable catastrophic evil?” is answered by a deafening silence from Heaven and righteous anger born in frustration on Earth.

Take, for example, the shattered belief of retired US Army Maj. Gen. Sidney Shachnow.<sup>2</sup> Born in Kaunas, Lithuania he and his family were arrested in 1941 with other Jews from in the Kouno ghetto. His father escaped, but Sidney, then 7, was imprisoned three years in a Nazi forced-labor camp. His mother was sent to a concentration camp. Of 220,000 Lithuanian Jews, 96% lost their lives. Shachnow and his parents survived. After being liberated by the Soviet army, the family was reunited and immigrated to the United States in 1950. Later, Shachnow enlisted in the U.S. army as an infantryman and rose in the ranks.

He was commanding general in Berlin during the Cold War, protecting Germans from the Soviets who liberated him. He resided in the home that had been used by Hermann Wilhelm Goering, second in command to Hitler. Shachnow also served as commanding general of U.S. Army Special Forces Command, Airborne (the Green Berets) at Ft. Bragg and saw action in Vietnam and in the Middle East during Operation Desert Storm. He retired in 1994.

Addressing a community wide observance of *Yom HaShoah* held at the prestigious Orthodox Beth Jacob congregation in Beverly Hills, CA , in April 2001, Shachnow asked where was the biblical God during the

Shoah—not the philosopher’s theoretical abstraction nor the psychologist’s God spot nor the theologian’s necessary being but God the intervener, the miracle worker. Where was the God so palpable that walls tumbled at the sound of the trumpets and evildoers perished beneath the thunderous judgment of cresting waves? His child-self inquired what sin merited the murder of countless innocent children and women? His observant-self lamented that if the Jews are God’s chosen people, why are they so despised? And the soldier in him revealed that in combat he prayed to God, and as soon as the danger was over, he asked all kinds of questions and he did not receive many answers.

How may a Jewish traditionalist and modernist respond to General Schachnow’s painful questions? The traditionalist may say that there are miracles recorded in biblical literature but there are also fundamental principles. The Torah is clear that the staff Moses used to split the Sea of Reeds lost its power soon after the battle against Amalek (Exodus 17). May this not be the Torah’s way of saying that in the face of evil, heavenly intervention is not necessarily determined by Man’s plight. There are abysses in history that man will have to conquer. The lachrymose history of the Jews in Christian Europe served as a preamble to Hitler’s inferno. And the world in general and Christendom in particular did very little. Thus “where was God?” should be discussed fairly. It should not be an emotional retort where fairness is not given to God’s defense.<sup>3</sup>

The modernist rejects the idea that God is a super ally in the sky. In Judaism, every individual is created in God’s image (Genesis 1:26). In classical rabbinic theology this is understood that Man and God are co-creators and co-responsible. However, substitute “godliness” for God. Why? Because wherever God is used as noun He

becomes a person, a thing, an object or a Son, and this for the modern rationalist becomes idolatry. Godliness has all the attributes which monotheists ascribed to God, and which Man is obligated to imitate. When humankind is callous, when it turns its back to the predators, when it allows homelessness and brutality to exist, it betrays the Godhood in all of us. Man has to behave in godliness. That God will intervene in times of agony and anguish is illusory and therefore will end in disillusion. The question is, does the individual have an ethical and sophisticated conception of the God idea to make one understand what the world is and what the world ought to be? The point is that Man must never forget the evil that was committed before and during the Shoah, but we dare not forget the altruistic good done by individuals against all odds. The good is that spark of humanity.<sup>4</sup>

My position, however, is to view theodicy and history by “historiosophy,” whose importance is demonstrated in biblical and rabbinical literature. The agonizing questions may be anchored in historical events, but its religio-understanding lies in the paradigmatic value of “faith knowledge.” The position taken is that in responding to God and Shoah, one must move beyond historiography to historiosophy if the goal is to maintain a commitment to life and memory and not affixation on death and finality.

In the face of Evil, Godspeech is the language of silence. I believe that was the condition in Deuteronomy 30: 11- 20, which states that God brings life and death, curse and blessing. The divine instruction proclaims choose life so that you and your offspring would live. Having said that, the very same passage says that the command is not in heaven, as the Torah is not in heaven. The text says that the command is very near to you. It is “in your mouth and in your heart, to observe it” (verse 14). That is where you begin with the response to the question of faith after the Shoah. If Judaism’s understanding is a covenant with God, then God is restricted by choice of both Heaven and Earth. Man has free will. For man to have free will means that God is self restricted when it comes down to Man’s determination, one’s fate, for better or worst. It is one way of suggesting that Judaism as a religion is a religion of accomplishment and achievement. The Jew has got to see this as a sign

of seeking life under all circumstances, including the Shoah. It is not a question of where was/is God in travesty. The question is, where was/is Man?

In sum, it is O.K. for General Shachnow to Godwrestle. That is basic Judaism, and its greatest strength. To ask “where was God?” in the Nazi inferno is permissible. And the response is intuitively conveyed in Exodus 24. Moses read from the Book of the Covenant before the people, and they respond, “All that the Lord has spoken, we will do (*na`aseh*), and we will hear (*nishma`*)” (verse 7). I profess (“in your mouth”) therefore I act and by so doing I understand.

### Paul Matters

On the Apostle Paul, who he was, what he believed, and his signature role in the origins of Christianity, a great deal has been written on his contribution and influence in Christian *Geistesgeschichte*. Here we ask a fundamental question: What may be said about a devout Jew of Tarsus albeit tinged by Stoicism, who became a Jerusalem Pharisee loyalist and teacher and how and why did it come to pass that he, rival to contemporary ideologies within and without first-century Judaism, emerged as the catalyst in separating followers of Jesus from the fellowship of rabbinic Judaism. The short traditional answer is by the authority of God-in-Christ who supersedes the rabbinic God-as-Sage incarnate in a monolithic Torah and *halakhah* (Jewish law).. To offer a typology of models of natal Christian authority (individual, institutional, textual), that posits that one-dimensional explanations of Christian belief and authority are hard to defend and are best avoided. In addition, the Pauline epistles uncover a multi-faceted Pauline mind, nurtured by desperate teaching encounters and molded by exegetical and hermeneutical principles (legal and homiletic), which were acquired gradually in the growth and maturing of Paul. We view Paul in the long line of Israel’s visionaries who, separated from the authority of James and Peter, incised the Torah of Moses into bits and pieces, and profoundly decided that this teaching is not binding on Gentiles baptized in the Spirit.

Paul, born in Tarsus in Asia Minor to a wealthy and identified Jewish family, traveled to Jerusalem to drink from the wellsprings of Pharisaic thought. His words

and psychological drive molded and constrained in the Greco-Roman Diaspora clashed with core beliefs of the Jerusalem Jesus party, and led to bouts of anguish, depression, and discomfort. Nonetheless, his conversion on the road to Damascus stilled his prolonged sense of guilt-by-persecution of malcontents to the Temple authority and endowed him to proclaim the “Son of God” triumphant among the Gentiles.

Christian Scriptures focuses on Paul’s discontent with other Jewish believers in the fledging Christian movement in how to teach meaningfully God-in-Christ, his teaching about Jesus for the different Christian communities in the Mediterranean world, his emphasis on the centrality of Jesus’ resurrection, and his ubiquitous teaching to Jew and Gentile alike that the title “Israel, the Chosen People” is not conscripted by kinship nor land nor sanctuary nor obedience to the Torah but defined by the faith-claim that the risen Jesus, the Christ, is the Son of God. On the latter, he severely departs from thousands of co-believers who attest to the divinity of Jesus while obeying the teaching of Moses; and from the elder Apostles James and Peter, who affirmed respectfully God’s Spirit in the way of Torah and the centrality of the Temple worship and its purity laws and baptize not pagans but God-fearers.

Paul’s way was to teach biblical covenantal theology by way of the resurrection in order to proclaim that Jesus’ sense of himself is the new Adam, whose death at Cavalry has joined the people of the circumcision and the people of the uncircumcision as “one body for God” (Ephesians 2: 11, 16). To enact his radical Christology and to challenge the Temple obsession of the mother church, Paul trekked to Jerusalem, the heart of the Jesus movement. There, he went to the Temple, the bosom of Judaism, to offer a sacrifice on behalf of Gentile Christians, and by doing so, unite Gentile and Jewish believers in a single Israel. Alas, this was not to be. Paul with a large group of Nazirites in his entourage was met by a riotous mob in the Temple precincts. He was beaten by temple police, charged with profaning the holy place and had to defend his honor before the Sanhedrin. In order to avoid a conspiracy that sought to kill him, for his safety he was handed over to Claudius Lysias, the Roman captain, and later to Felix, the prefect in Caesarea. In 62 C.E., the year that James was stoned

to death by the order of the High Priest, Ananus—which broke the link to the centrality of the Temple—Paul was released and spent his last years unfettered in Rome. Contesting Rome’s imperial ideology, he was executed under Nero in 64 C.E.

Scriptural Christianity sets for the Christian reader a difficult but commendable task: to proclaim core Christian dogma (Easter faith) and dicta (Jesus “the living bread that came down from heaven” [John 6:51] heralds a *eucharista*, “the Lord’s death, until he comes” [1 Corinthians 11:26] ) without a hint or utterance of anti-Semitism. However, the necessary faith in Jesus Christ has bred in Church history a minimalist teaching on the importance of Torah. “The word is near you on your lips and in your heart because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is the Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:8-9), suggesting that Christ not Torah is the centrifugal force in confession and belief. Nonetheless, Paul advocates that the circumcised and the uncircumcised share in the oneness of God through faith (Romans 3:27-31).

The Jewish reader should be aware and sensitive to claims of Christian identity that are derived from the Hebrew Scriptures. For the most part, progressive New Testament scholarship penetrates the wall of separation and suspicion of “law and grace” and enables the believer in the Second Testament to appreciate the story of how Jesus was not only God’s Son but the cosmic reality of divine nature itself fully in terms of Israelite religion, that is to say, in accordance with the teaching of Moses but not necessarily in the exegesis of the sages of Israel. Alongside—not in place of—the Jewish insights, the how and why of the Christian relationship to the Sinai covenant is presented in the Christian spirit of Scriptural inspiration and tradition. A strong sign that centuries-old “teaching of contempt” is not desirable nor doable for Christians in dialogue with Jews, where a shared biblical tradition is the surest sign that the stumbling blocks of religious intolerance can be overcome.

In conclusion, the hope is for the gentile Church to return back to its Jewish origins and for Jews to know and appreciate the mystery of God’s presence in the “body of Christ.” That is to say, respect the integration of Sinaitic divine revelation (Written Torah) with

rabbinic activity (Oral Torah) and recognize that a Jew named Saul later known as Paul was destined to change Judaism's mental landscape forever.

### **Confronting Post-Shoah Jewish Theology: God-as-*Na'aseh***

Initial Jewish theological responses to the Shoah either affirm or challenge the authority of Jewish religious tradition on issues of belief and morality. From Richard L. Rubenstein's "death of God theology" (i.e., letting go of traditional Judaism's doctrine of God for a new symbol of God's reality conducive to lessons learned from the Shoah<sup>5</sup>), to Eliezer Berkovitz and Hasidic masters who argue classical Orthodox belief rooted in religious experience,<sup>6</sup> Elie Wiesel maintains that the Shoah transcends history and the living are neither capable nor worthy of recovering its mystery; nonetheless he relates witness stories. They bear testimony to the depths of Jewish suffering and the dignity of the Jewish dead, while promoting Jewish survival as an unshakable dogma. Emil Fackenheim's 614<sup>th</sup> Commandment, no posthumous victory to Hitler, suggests that the Shoah claims another victim whenever a Jew doubts his/her Jewishness; conversely, when a Jew lives up to Judaism's creeds and deeds, s/he advances *tikkun 'olam* ("repairing the world").<sup>7</sup> Also, Irving (Yitz) Greenberg's recognition that we live not in ever-present faith but in "moments of faith, moments when Redeemer and vision of redemption are present, interspersed with times when the flames and smoke of the burning children blot out faith—though it flickers again,"<sup>8</sup> signals that Israel's covenant is no longer obligatory but voluntary.

Not surprising, Jewish belief one generation after Auschwitz says more about the concern for a meaningful Jewish present and future than about the Nazi agenda for Judeocide. What connects these theological views is the Jewish potential and self-accountability in bridging the chasm between God and the Jews and the Jews and the world. For Jewish traditionalist and modernist alike this is played out in the Jewish return into history, as exemplified in the restored Jewish State of Israel. Admittedly, Shoah theology expresses a pathos of victimization, suffering, and innocence and the necessity of Jewish empowerment for survival. However, Marc H.

Ellis, Rosemary Radford Reuther, Dan Cohen-Sherbok and others on the Left, question the moral price paid now that a shattered people has attained statehood and, since the 1967 Six-Day War, wields unlimited state power against the Palestinians, "whose territory it now occupies."<sup>9</sup> They call for a new Jewish agenda, beyond Shoah and Zionism, embedded in liberation theology and in solidarity with the Palestinian nation's (and other people's) struggle for justice.

Advocating an end to Shoah theology informs the most telling example of powerlessness in the twentieth-century, the Shoah survivor, to shut down his or her cycle of pain. This is arguably unacceptable but what is one to make of the current ferment in post-Shoah Jewish theology? Do we accept the age-old absolutism of divine authority and man's responsibility (God commands, humans obey)? Is scriptural faith after Auschwitz believable, changeable, redeemable? For many post-Shoah Jewish thinkers, the model of the ineffable God-in-God's-self is portrayed in patriarchal sovereign terms dominated by what the Torah and prophets call, "the Hidden Face" (*hesder panim*) of God, interpreted as "unfathomable mystery" or divine deferral to humanity's free choice. This may well explain the economy of violence and genocide in Auschwitz and the ethics of war to confute it. Simply put, traditional Shoah theology posits an integral role of absolute *novum* in the divine plan or equally unconscionable, evil independent of God. Yet holocaustal history records the failure of God-as-warrior to save His people. How, then, to redeem divine presence after Auschwitz?

Perhaps the response does not lie in the reigning theology which rejects or questions God's role in the Shoah. Rather the answer is suggested in the image of God-as-*Na'aseh*, as testified by acts of concentration camp inmates, whose caring, kindness nurturing, sacrifice, and suffering are sacral acts of everyday *kedušša* (holiness) that places God's presence on the cremated body of Israel.

Mistaken is the teaching that God is absent in Auschwitz. Pitiful is the post-Shoah thinking that is unable or unwilling to reconcile human suffering with the existence of a good and loving God. Acknowledge that God dwells among Israel, in her travels and travails, even if the people cannot sense Him in exilic and

genocidal acts. Counter the trope of divine hiddenness by finding Rudolf Otto's *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* in that which attracts and repels even to what is defiled. Sense that the rupture of the Sinaitic covenant is restored by everyday acts of humaneness. Think historiosophically that the covenantal love between God and Israel is sensed in God's suffering presence in the camps. Know that revelation and redemption were continually retrieved and sustained in the Event by genuine nurturance and close human relationships

Never forget the sanctified heartmind of the women of the Shoah. Their ability to reveal the female face of God, while always respecting Her male component, is inspiring. From Abraham being acquiescent to offering his beloved son as a holocaust on Moriah to God's permitted crucifixion of his Beloved Son at Cavalry to the murder of His chosen children in Auschwitz, the *kol ishah* (woman's voice) has been traditionally neglected, distorted, or worse. For example, in the camps, the male covenantal relationship (circumcision mark, facial hair, fringes, phylacteries, prayer, responsa, Torah-Talmud study, etc.) are ubiquitously expressed and remembered even in death. But the woman is without overt and covert religious signs. Her naked body, analogous to the naked face of God, speaks volumes of indifference, silence, and forgetfulness in Judaism, the patriarchal religion. Yet her last earthly act, caressing a babe, before both are shot by the Nazi murderer, brought Heaven down to Hell. God's presence in the pit and in the fire with woman and child is a stark wake-up call that post-Shoah theology should not continue as usual. This way of correcting masculinist theology does not diminish the paradox of God and the Shoah, but serves to make the issue more significant and inclusive, and therefore also unveil God more completely.<sup>10</sup>

### **Auschwitz Midrash and Musings: Godwrestling in the Night**

Midrash, in the Rabbinic mind, is hermeneutics derived from biblical inquiry; an attempt to explain the text in as many ways as seems possible to the inquiring mind of the Jewish sage. In Jewish and Christian dialogue on sacred texts, the term also embraces doctrinal, ethical, religious, and social concerns. The message of Auschwitz then for the Jew and Christian is not survival alone.

There is something more important than physical survival, and that is preventing moral bankruptcy. When Auschwitz (survival at any price) contends with Sinai and Cavalry (moral standards), Sinai and Cavalry must prevail. Nazi Germany is an example of what can happen when Auschwitz prevails. On European anti-Semitism, Sigmund Freud argued that the practitioners were "badly christened," and were forced into Christianity by bloody compulsion. Their true essence, barbaric polytheists, subliminally rejected the triumphant Church militant. So "(T)he hatred for Judaism is at bottom hatred for Christianity, and it is not surprising that in the German National Socialist revolution this close connection of the two monotheistic religions finds clear expression in the hostile treatment of both."<sup>11</sup>

Holy Scriptures teaches that God's proclivity is with the destiny of Israel. Moses professes that the Children of Israel are eternal and Paul confesses that the foundation of *Heilsgeschichte* is founded in their being<sup>12</sup> and both acknowledge that their fate testifies to the transcending power of God in history. In Exodus 32, Moses defends Israel who is referenced as a stiffnecked people but in whom God's moral self in history is rooted. Moses argues that however just God's position is (e.g., the Golden Calf apostasy), His decision to destroy them would be *the sine qua non* factor for the Egyptians (that is to say, the nations of the world) not to expect any notion of heavenly justice. The Torah declares, *tsedek, tzedek tirdof* ("justice, justice shall you pursue")<sup>13</sup> and Moses requests that God must be perceived as doing no less. Also at stake is God's covenantal promise to the Patriarchs that He will enable their "offspring [to be] as numerous as the stars of heaven" (verse 13). And the Lord relented and "renounced the punishment He had planned to bring upon His people" (verse 14).

So what to make of Auschwitz? In the fire of the crematoria, God's Child (Exodus 4:23) was cremated. Was this ultimate crime for the sake of the covenant and for the glory of His Name? In Egyptian bondage of yore, God heard the cry of the people, and God remembered His covenant with the Patriarchs, and He redeemed. The thousands and thousands of Jews from the *shtetlakh* (Jewish villages) of Eastern Europe refused to abandon the yoke of the covenant. Their oath of survival, mixed with dirges of pain, hoped that God would stop the

indescribable *churban*. But Heaven shed no tears. The position that the Shoah twins Jewish history and the Jewish conception of God is decisive and stark. Are we to conclude that in the “Flicker of the Jews’ last hour, Soon Jewish God, Your eclipse?”<sup>14</sup>

The question underscores the perpetual dilemma in covenant theology. Were the *Endlösung* to be fully enacted there would be no covenant, since on the altar of Auschwitz, the commitment to the Torah directive, “Choose life”<sup>15</sup> would go up in flames. Were the Jews treated as ordinary victims of Nazi incarceration, this would forsake the ultimate concern of covenantal belief. In Auschwitz, God is challenging Israel’s commitment to the covenant. In actuality, the Jew is also challenging God’s commitment to the covenant. In the context of covenant theology as played out in the death camps, mutual challenges are expected. Indeed, these challenges do not diminish the paradox of Auschwitz, but serve to make the issue more significant and more troubling, and therefore also more of hope. In the heat of the Nazi inferno, the unconditional commitment of both partners is tested and endures.

And what to say to the post-Shoah Jew and Christian? To honor the memory of the brutally murdered, we must never forget nor forgive. True, “in (y)our mouth” we cannot still the anguish cry of bodiless millions, but we can restore flesh to bones, personality to numbers, and novelty to *novum*—a doable memorial to those who suffered in the consuming fire and we believe were sustained by the supernal light which does not consume nor diminish.

## Endnotes

- 1 The Jesus words at the Cross of Cavalry, “Eli/Elohi, Eli/Elohi, lama sabachtani’ (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34) exemplify the ubiquitous cry of the Jew, “Why, O’ Lord, do you remain silent?”
- 2 Information on the life and career of General Sidney Shachnow is extracted from the *Los Angeles Times*, April 21, 2001.
- 3 From an interview with Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean and founder of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, *LA Times*, April 21, 2001.

4 From an interview with Rabbi Harold M. Schulweiss, senior rabbi at Valley Beth Shalom, Encino, CA, *LA Times*, April 21, 2001.

5 On the state of Richard L. Rubenstein’s Shoah thinking, see chapters 1,2,3 written by John T. Pawlikowski, Zev Garber, and John K. Roth, respectfully, in Michael Hayse et al., eds., *Hearing the Voices: Teaching the Holocaust to Future Generations* (Merion Station, PA: Merion Westfield Press International, 1999).

6 See Eliezer Berkovitz, *Faith after the Holocaust* (New York: Ktav, 1973) and *With God in Hell: Judaism in the Ghettos and Death Camps* (New York: Sanhedrin Press, 1979). On Hasidic responses, see Pesach Schindler, *Hasidic Responses to the Holocaust in the Light of Hasidic Thought* (Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav, 1990).

7 For an appreciation on the life and thought of Emil L. Fackenheim, see the special section in *Shofar* 22.4 (Summer 2004) on *Reflections on Emil L. Fackenheim*, pages 107-135, edited by Zev Garber. Contributions by Peter J. Haas, Zev Garber, Michael L. Morgan, Franklin H. Littell, Richard L. Rubenstein, and David Patterson.

8 Irving Greenberg, “Clouds of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity after the Holocaust,” in Eva Fleischer, ed., *Auschwitz: Beginnings of a New Era? Reflections on the Holocaust* (New York: Ktav, 1977), page 27. More recent reflection on Greenberg’s “moments of faith” covenantal theology is interspersed in Shalom Freedman and Irving Greenberg, *Living in the Image of God—Jewish Teachings to Perfect the World Conversations with Rabbi Irving Greenberg* (Northvale, N.J.: Aronson, 1998), and Irving Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth: the New Encounter between Judaism and Christianity* (Philadelphia: JPS, 2004).

9 See Marc H. Ellis, *Beyond Innocence and Redemption: Confronting the Holocaust and Israeli Power—Creating a Moral Future for the Jewish People* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990). Ellis’s mantra that the State of Israel is racist toward the Palestinians continues in his *Israel and Palestine out of the Ashes: The Search for Jewish Identity in the Twenty-First Century* (Pluto Press, 2003).

10 Remarks inspired by Melissa Raphael, *The Female Face of God at Auschwitz: A Jewish Feminist Theology of the Holocaust* (London: Routledge, 2003). See my review in *Review of Biblical Literature* 2004, pages 592-595.

11 Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1939), page 117.

12 Romans 9:1-6 and Romans 11.

13 Deuteronomy 16:20.

14 Jacob Glatstein. On Jacob Glatstein, the man and his poetry (Yiddish), see my entries in the *Reference Guide to Holocaust Literature* (Detroit: Gale Group, St. James Press, 2002), pages 110-111, and 466-467

15 Deuteronomy 30:19.

# Afterward: The Dialogue in the Midrash

James F. Moore

The articles in this issue of MM are an example of what we have come to call a post-Shoah midrashic reading of Scriptures. We mean that together we read our texts in dialogue so that we take account of the full meaning of the Shoah as we interpret these texts. This approach follows a very old pattern of interpretation that was begun by the Rabbis in the early centuries of modern Judaism. This reading comes to the fore quite clearly in our reading together of a text from the Christian scriptures written by Paul of Tarsus. The question is exactly who is this Paul, and the answer is that he is a Jew who became a follower of Jesus. This fact is a source for a play on his name in Zev Garber's approach since indeed it is Paul and not Saul. This is the convert Paul who authored this text. It is quite clear that this is Steve Jacobs' reading of this author who has created the basis for a real division between Judaism and what will become Christianity.

But why is this important? It is important in any post-Shoah reading of this text since Paul's beginning has become a foundation not only for difference but also for a "teaching of contempt" in Christianity which certainly laid the groundwork for the Jew-hatred that fueled the Shoah. If we are to take on key texts in our dialogue which make a difference in our relationship, Jews and Christians, then we must talk about Paul. No other text is more likely to choose to start this discussion than this one from Romans 3. In this text, Steve Jacobs rightly suggests that Paul already creates a division that implies a clear form of supersessionism, a belief that Christians who believe in Jesus have taken over God's promise from Jews and only belief in this Jesus will provide salvation.

But all of this is irrelevant in yet another way. No matter what Paul's identity might have been, he would have, had he lived in the twentieth century and not the first, in Europe rather than the Roman Empire, this Paul or Saul would most likely have died in Auschwitz

or some other place of death, for according to the Nazis he was a Jew. Does this fact make a difference? If we are true to our midrashic reading as we are in these essays, then it does and must make a difference. With all of the effort in recent years to reclaim the Jewish roots of Jesus, we now must urge that Christians reclaim the Jewish roots of Paul. If we do this, then we change, perhaps, our reading of Romans and other Pauline texts. Indeed, Romans under this light comes to be more consistent with the appeal in Deuteronomy than at first seems to be the case. Far from dismissing the law, Paul may have found a way to incorporate the law as the central cornerstone of relationship with God.

This seems to be the journey that Hank Knight takes as he composes his letter to Paul, to a person who will not answer, now because we know that Paul died in Auschwitz. Indeed, the appeal, says Knight, might be like the choice that Moses laid down for the people in the desert. Garber is troubled by easy maneuvers such as this one since the decree in Deuteronomy is surely built on the agreement to act first. Faith is not the opening gambit. The choice is life to be sure but a life of action. Do we see this in Paul? Perhaps we must see this in Paul since Paul died in Auschwitz. And Moses also died in Auschwitz. It seems that acting or deciding for either comes to the same fate in the context of Nazi ideology.

It is this fact that seems to bring us ever closer as dialogue partners since we see that now the choice is clear. To choose life surely means now more than ever to act on behalf of those who are in danger, under oppression. No theology can lead toward a position that makes us again bystanders. Jacobs is correct to push us in this conversation toward what we must now do, that genocide is not only possible it is becoming all the more likely in our world. But this is the crunch for us. The choice to act for life is always staring us in the face

and so many times we, all of us, have failed. Thus, we return to the texts.

We see in these texts another interesting parallel. For Moses, the decision comes before the entry to the Promised Land. The decision is made in trust in the promise. For Paul, the decision is made before the expected coming Kingdom of God. The choice is again made in trust of a promise. We act before knowing whether God will act, trusting that choosing life will in fact be our only choice. Now, we do this together. We cannot let the division that seems to have emerged in the words of Paul be a dividing line anymore. To choose life means that Christians and Jews and all others of moral good will must act decisively together to protect the lives of those under threat. On that we have agreed and this becomes the central beginning point in our dialogue for the next stage – how that acting is to be done.

### **So Where is the Dialogue?**

Our decision to dialogue together on Paul's letter to the Romans has led us in some new paths for our conversation. It is possible that together we can accept that Jesus was clearly a Jew and the observation that Jesus' teaching is nearly identical to much of what we see in the rabbinic texts. In fact, Jesus appears to have worked with the approach to his tradition in a way that also fits within the later rabbinic tradition; it is midrashic. Having said that, we observe in this conversation that the Jewishness of Paul is quite another matter. Christians, like myself and Hank, have a need to acknowledge the trouble that Paul's words have caused in many ways, not the least being the foundation for a supersessionist Christian theology. We also are seeking ways to re-think Paul so that this teaching of contempt that Paul, maybe more than Jesus or the evangelists, is responsible for can be corrected. That is, we seek a new reading.

Our colleagues are less enthused about moving too quickly from the "Christian" Paul. Steve Jacobs is concerned about the language which despite our efforts to re-think, remains in the texts. He does not want us to leave this issue too quickly. Zev Garber accepts that Paul died in Auschwitz, the metaphor that is the lead theme in my paper, but he also wants to note that it is the Christian Paul that dies. That is, Paul dies as a

Christian even if he would have died because he was Jewish, by Nazi standards. This theme which is not new remains for us a task. How do we move forward in a way that pushes the Christian to a new level while remaining long enough in the historical truth of Paul's effect?

I have argued that the experiment that Paul wanted to put into effect (a community of both Jews and Christians built on a respect for difference) falls apart if we think of these texts in the context of Auschwitz. Of course, Paul's vision quickly shifts into something very different early on in the history of the church. So we face this remaining dialogue question which cannot escape us that the Church has become the instrument of the destruction of the Jews even in spite of what Paul might have tried to teach. To what extent is this built into Paul's teaching as Steve Jacobs wants to remind us? Perhaps Hank Knight wants to push us in a way to explore the answer in his letter to the apostle.

Above all, we have left this troubling task of how we as proponents of two religions find resources in these religious traditions for working together against genocide. On the one hand, it seems easy for us even though we know both traditions can also be used for the sake of violence even against each other and Christians by far have had the privilege of power to do so. Both traditions, even in the promises of the two texts considered in these essays have the resources. However, the events of Auschwitz call into question the viability of any such claims. A study of Paul and Deuteronomy clearly shows this. So what is in our hands and how do we through our dialogue take this further?

Let me suggest two thoughts for our future dialogue. Zev shows a concern that even today we find a troubling situation in which the situation in Israel/Palestine thrusts us into a challenge of loyalties. If we are silent in the face of what appears to be a concerted effort to rid the Middle East of the Jewish presence, then we can hardly speak of a dialogue with much to say. If we are silent in the face of what a fight for survival on all sides means for the innocent of both the Israelis and the Palestinians, we have failed again our promise. It is our silence that is the key. But we need a dialogue on this. What is it that a Midrash like we propose can contribute? The challenge remains for us.

Yet another matter seems even closer to our personal agendas. I am aware that our campuses have already become places for a new form of anti-Jewish attack to take root and do so with the justification of moral arrogance. So many have rushed to the side of the victim Palestinians, and clearly there are victims among the Palestinians. The point is not to deny this. Still, we see so often that such a moral position has resulted in campus forums and protests which produced slogan like pictures not only of the Israelis as the new oppressors but also of the entire American Jewish community as guilty by association. This means that no Jew can speak with honesty in such forums without being castigated and no Jew will be invited to begin with because “they” are the enemy. I had said so long ago that no Christian theology is authentic in a post-Shoah world that does not have as a

central commitment never to say anything that threatens the survival or contributes to the destruction of the Jewish community in any way. That commitment for us all is on the table now. We are all academics and we now face a challenge that we do have the capacity to address. We cannot be silent in this context but we must find a way for authentic dialogue like we have tried to model over the years as is shown in the essays in this issue. So dialogue is the model and dialogue on these matters is the immediate challenge. We cannot back down now and we offer these essays as an invitation for all who read them to join us not only in our conversation but in the real activist goal of vocalizing our commitments and refusing to be silent.

# DAS ORDENS ÀS CONGREGAÇÕES RELIGIOSAS: Metamorfoses da vida consagrada católica (uma perspectiva histórica)

José Eduardo Franco<sup>1</sup>

**From Orders to Religious Congregations:  
Metamorphoses of Roman Catholic monastic  
life (a historical perspective)**

This brief study aims to offer an overview of the origins and evolution of Christian monasticism since its beginning to the modern metamorphoses of Roman Catholic life.

“Logo desde os inícios da Igreja, houve homens e mulheres que, pela práticas dos conselhos evangélicos, procuraram seguir Cristo com maior liberdade e imitá-lo mais de perto, consagrando, cada um a seu modo, a própria vida a Deus. Muitos destes, movidos pelo Espírito Santo, levaram vida solitária ou fundaram famílias religiosas que depois a Igreja de boa vontade acolheu e aprovou com a sua autoridade.

Daqui proveio, por desígnio de Deus, a sua variedade admirável de família religiosa, que muito contribuiu para que a Igreja não só esteja preparada para toda a obra boa (cf. 2 Tim. 3, 17) e para o ministério da edificação do corpo de Cristo (cf. Ef. 4, 12), mas ainda, aformoseada com a variedade dos dons dos seus filhos, se apresente como esposa ornada para o seu esposo (cf. Ef. 3, 10) e por ele brilhe a sua multiforme sabedoria de Deus”.

**Concílio Vaticano II<sup>2</sup>**

A vida monástica, vida regular e também denominada tecnicamente vida religiosa ou vida consagrada na Igreja Católica é umas das maneiras de viver a experiência cristã de forma radical que se afirmou no fim do período da Igreja Antiga com uma pujança extraordinária e