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Soul survivor

The journey begins here . . .

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Soul Survivor

"Soul Survivor"

*is the official publication of
the Zachor Club of Yeshiva University.*

*It contains works of literature, art
and photography by students,*

*some of whom may not have necessarily participated
in a program like the March of the Living.*

*Selections are reflections of the intense feelings
and deep connection of every Jew to the Holocaust.*

*We are responsible for and obligated
to carry that connection with us throughout our lives.*

*Perhaps more imperative,
is the crucial necessity to convey that connection to others
for the memory of the six million who perished
and for the future of Am Yisrael.*

-The Editors

This is a publication of
The Student Council
and Torah Activities Council
of Stern College for Women

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For Opapa:

So Lachmo Anyo

by Joëlle Bollag

a barrack in Auschwitz
Pesach 1943:
a young man and his friend,
stealing a piece of bread
from a polish inmate.
it is seder night
and it is cold
it had been raining all day
no work in the fields could be done.
they had to stand in the rain
all day, just stand
no work could be done
still, tonight is seder night,
night of redemption
a little piece of bread.
they sit down
they sing with low voices
HO LACHMO ANYO-
this is the bread of the poor
it is seder night in Auschwitz
they are eating bread,
stolen bread
the polish man runs
he tells the kappo
the kappo storms in.
he beats them up,
he beats them with his stick
they do not feel a thing
they only hear the noise
the "clang" the baton makes
while beating onto their bones.
all they can think is
it was worth it,
we had a seder.
HO LACHMO ANYO
This is the bread of the poor.

Carry The Torch

by Rachel C. Frohlich

All my life I had listened and learned
About the Holocaust I had heard.

The stories I read,
The tales had been told;
Of those slain... dead
Jews, young and old.

The twentieth century
More civilized than those before,
Brought more technology
Which aided the destructive World War.

One may think the idea of annihilation is unreal
But hate only proves that our world is not ideal.

Just fifty years ago,
Only a few hours away by plane,
Millions of Jewish souls
Went up in flames.

So a year ago I journeyed to the land
To see the site of the Holocaust firsthand.

As I walked thought the death factories of Auschwitz and Birkenau
I thought of human beings, the world, and asked: "how"?

And as I walked through more concentration camps
I stared with disbelief;
While my stomach cramped,
I was too shocked to express my grief.

Majdanek had the most impact;
Its remnants tell the stories and show the facts.

When I walked through the bunks,
A poem I wrote

While choking on the lump
That had grown in my throat.

I wondered as I stared with dismay
At all the hats, clothes and belongings on display.
"Who wore each hat? shirt? pants?
For each head
Upon which one of those hats rested it dead.
I sat on the grass outside the 'hat bunker'
And began to wonder...
Who was on this grass before me?
Whose ashes made this grass grow?
I don't know.
What horrors were once on this street?
I walk retracing their steps with my feet.
Yet I have nothing to fear,
But they knew death was near.
Whose hair is in that box?
Those dried up, dead, colorless curly locks.
Who wore those glasses to help them see
Or who used those toothbrushes to clean their teeth?
Those combs and brushes for the hair
Which may very well be in the box over there.
A whole barrack is filled with shoes
Stolen from the feet of my Jews.
Who wore each one last?
Some murdered soul of the past.
Thousands of shoes fill the bunker; there's a terrible smell
In this place called Majdanek, this place of hell.
I walked in and out of the camp wearing my Keds;
They walked in with their shoes and ended up dead.
Another whole bunker is filled with the same
For each pair of shoes died a Jew with a name.
I can't believe what I saw
A third whole bunker filled with more."

Then, I stood only inches away from the crematoria.
I studied the pile of human ashes that remains this day on the floor.
The odor of our burning yahrzeit candles
Was reminiscent of the stench that was there just fifty years before.

The smell of burning flesh and human bones
Once permeated the air;
Surely it could be smelled in the nearby Polish homes
But no one said a word; no one cared.

The realization of horrors
That there once occurred;
Their cries of terror
Still can be heard.

The thoughts of children--- alone,
hungry,
naked
cold,
tortured,
scared
sends chills up my spine;
Yet I think about them all the time.

So at age eighteen, I beg you, my peers,
That we who are privileged to live out our years,
Don't think of World War II as mere history;
What happened to our grandparents could happen to you and me.

I ache for survivors I have met
And for all those live lost I do regret.
As a representative for the future the statement I set
Is never forget... NEVER FORGET!

As the Neo-Nazi movement is rapidly rising
The generation of survivors is gradually dying.

Do not let history reoccur.
Do not let the deaths of Nazi victims go unavenged,
Take a vow with me now to always remember
And strongly proclaim: NEVER AGAIN!

Majdanek: Conversation With A Shoe

by Orly Goldenthal

What is your name?
How old are you?
Where did you come from?
What paths have your worn soles tread?
When did you last run, skip, jump, and dance?
What were your hopes, goals, and dreams?
Did they fall apart,
As did you-
Pieces of sole, fragments of lace
Scattered by the wind.
There still remains your skeleton frame,
Loosely dangling leather,
The rest is gone:
The faint echoes of your step.
The luster and shine of your brass buckle.
But not your sole!
The soul remains,
Perhaps
Speaking through me.

Passengers*by Dina Herbst*

The Train pulls out at dawn,
The Passengers are me and myself.
My seat was soft with cushion,
Hers was not even a slab on a wooden shelf.

Along the side the window was wide,
I stood back and watched the plain.
She had a slit with only light coming through,
Barely able to breathe, not taste the rain.

I smell the perfume of the open seat next to me,
She smells the broken pride of man.
I recline and reflect on the work that was done,
She is crouched, thinking where is God's hand?

I exit the Train to the freedom of the crisp air,
She huddles, naked, bound with chains and numbers.
I go home to my bed and sleep in comfort,
She returns Home and watches over me.

Soul of Judaism

by Deborah Jeff

There was a place who's soul was filled with Torah
Righteous Jews of all ages would study the words of Hashem
For these holy passages were part of their Mesorah

This scroll of parchment guided all to follow the path of our Beloved
forever

Young boys would be called up to the Torah, on the day of their Bar
Mitzvah

And the holy scroll would be danced with, on Simchas Torah
The parshat hashavua would be read from it on every Shabbat
It would discuss Mitzvot and our righteous Avot and Imahot

The Torah was the foundation of European Yiddishkeit
For is strengthened the Jews' emunah to greater heights
But then one day, this all went up in flames
An enemy of the Jews, the Nazis, had stolen our Torah away
The Jews' most precious possession was burned to the ground
These sacred pages of parchment were torn and desecrated

But the Jews knew that they had not been defeated
For their enemy could never take away what was instilled in their
Jewish heart
The love and emunat Hashem that was engrained in every Jewish
Soul!

(Refer to the drawing entitled *Soul of Judaism*.)

they never saw another butterfly...

by Adina Weinstein

they never saw another butterfly...

Incarcerated, their childhood marred forever
By the thick stone walls of the ghetto
By the Nazi dogs ready to shoot for any transgression
By the Nazi dogs ready to shoot for any damn reason
By the coils of barbed wire blocking any exit
By the trauma of murder in front of their eyes

they never saw another butterfly...

But once, just once they saw a spot of color
A filter of peace and childhood
Once they saw a remainder of before
But then it ended

they never saw another butterfly...

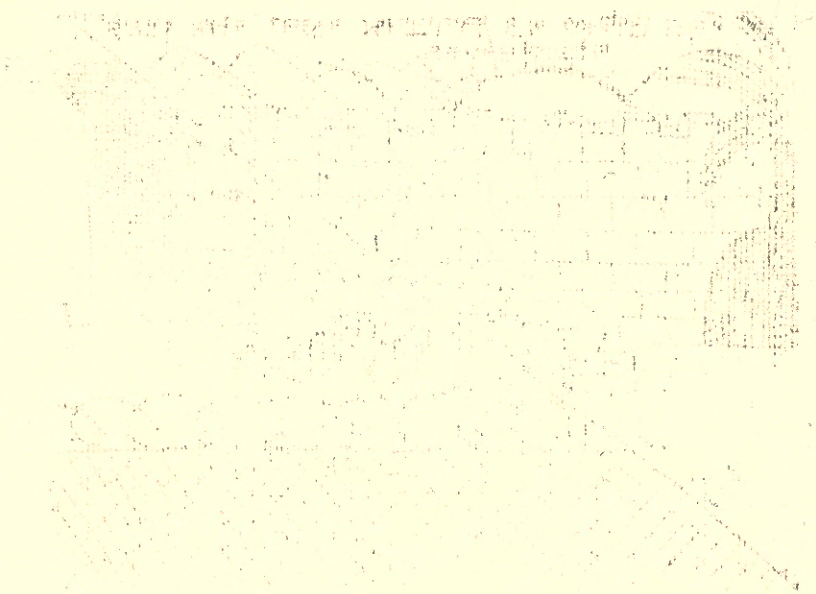
But we do
And they see the butterflies through us

A Blade Of Grass

by Mechal Weiss

As I sat upon the grass,
I watched the breeze blow each blade,
The grass was such a deep, rich, color,
Brighter than I had ever seen,
Each blade seemed to stand on its own,
Like a soldier in an army,
Protecting its turf,
As the cool brisk wind struck the ground,
The mighty green soldiers stood strong and proud,
Nothing would ever harm them again,
They were powered by the strength of those who died,
Never again would the grass die out,
Although it appears fragile to the world,
It really is a most powerful form of nature,
These soldiers in green will represent the souls who created them,
Never again will a soul be lost without a trace,
The beauty of nature will be their memorial.



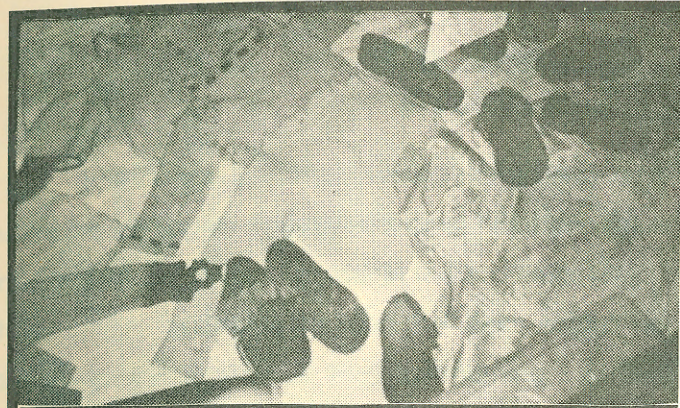




The Shoah

by Heidi Baker

In eleventh grade, I went with my classmates on a seven day trip to Poland. We visited many cemeteries and concentration camps including Auschwitz, Treblinka and Majdanek. During the first few days that I was in Poland, I did not really feel that I was actually standing in the place where the *Shoah* took place only fifty years earlier. Rather, I felt that I was just at another Holocaust memorial museum. However, on the last day of our journey, reality hit. We were in Majdanek. Majdanek is one of the camps that remains almost exactly as it appeared during the *Shoah*. I will never forget that day. Our *madricha* led us into the gas chamber and then shut the door. We were seventy girls in one small room. It was crowded. There were no windows. It was very stuffy. The walls were stained blue from the gas. There were holes in the ceiling containing vents. Through these holes the gas canisters fell. Looking around me, I began to feel nauseous and light-headed. I left the gas chamber and went outside to get some air. Once outside, I began to think how fifty years ago the Jews were gassed in that exact chamber. They could not leave as I had just left. From that moment, the *Shoah* became real to me. I will never forget my experiences in Poland. No matter how many movies one may see, stories one may hear, or museums one may visit, it is not the same as walking through the actual place where the *Shoah* occurred.

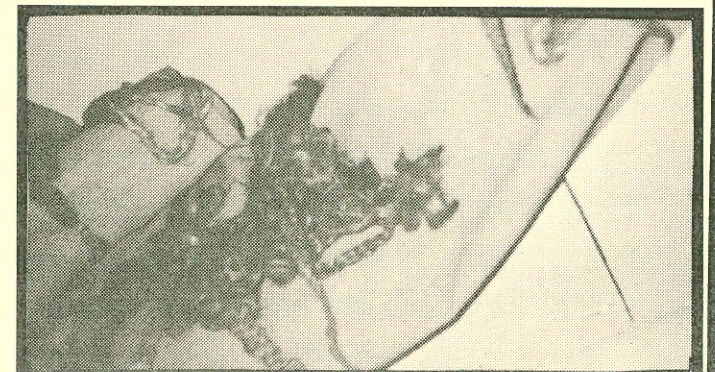


Display of children's clothing at
Auschwitz.

Journal Excerpt

by Orly Goldenthal

"Kitty Hart [a survivor] said that whenever she sees a person she picture them in her mind at Auschwitz. She imagines what his or her job would have been and what would have been that person's chance for survival. What would she say if she looked at me?"



Display of some prisoners' hair at
Auschwitz.

My Present*by Dina Herbst*

I never thought that I would wake up one morning and find my entire life changed. However, it does happen. On April 12, 1996, change hit me straight in the face at four in the morning. I had been having one of those gratifying sleeps; the kind that comes after hours of restlessness and anxiety in anticipation of the next morning's excitement. When you finally drift off for a few hours of rest, you know that you will be having pleasant dreams about the upcoming event. No one likes to wake abruptly from their sleep, even if it is only two hours' worth. Already, I tasted the beginning of change. I somehow knew that once the clock hit four in the morning, I would become a different person. This was the day I was to travel to meet the ancestors that I had only heard about in stories; my trip to Poland.

My family decided to wake at that most indecent hour and accompany me to the airport. As we ran to catch the plane, I said good bye to my parents, brother and sister, and sensed that this was the moment my life would change. That one moment began the next phase of my journey towards adulthood.

The whole rear section of the plane was filled with the people with whom I would travel for the next two weeks. It was an awkward flight; each one of us trying to make agreeable conversation with the people with whom we would be traveling. We had spent three hours each Sunday for the past three months acquainting ourselves with each other, but nothing had prepared us for the level of trepidation that would greet us at the onset of our trip. We all knew that the next time we would see Los Angeles International Airport, we would see it with new eyes.

We arrived in Warsaw that Sunday evening and ardently ran to our awaiting rooms. We all sensed that we should get a good night's sleep in preparation for the week's activities. The next morning we began our official tour of Poland. We visited the sites of many communities which once flourished with life and the cemeteries to which they were relocated. Then the day that we had all awaited arrived. The day that we would visit the once fearsome death camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau. The program of which we were a part was called the March of the Living. Every year Jews from around the world gather on the Holocaust Remembrance Day to march the miles from Auschwitz to Birkenau in lines of six, as a memorial to those who perished on the very same march, known as the Death March, decades before. This year it was our turn to join in the commemoration.

Many of my friends cried out of sorrow for their relatives who had passed at Auschwitz. When we toured the extermination camp, they were in awe at the places where their relatives had stood and each step had a special meaning. I could not empathize with their memorials to their relatives who had perished in Auschwitz, for it was not known where my grandparents' entire families had perished. I could not share in their tears. I did, however, leave a part of my innocence behind and took with me visions forever imprinted in my soul.

Two days later we traveled to another death camp known as Majdanek. The camp had been evacuated and left in full working order. It was said that within two hours the gas chambers and crematorium could be running. As we walked through this camp I imagined members of my family sleeping in the rickety beds. I saw them standing for hours in the courtyard in the middle of the barrack buildings. I saw them walking into the gas chambers and I saw their souls coming out of the

crematorium's chimneys. As I walked through this very generic looking camp I pictured all these people about whom I have only heard stories and, for the first time, I began to cry. I was finally able to mourn the loss of my own relatives.

On the plane home, I finally understood what America meant to my grandparents. America represented their hopes and dreams for their future. America would ensure that the next link in their chain would have every opportunity in the world within reach. Two generations later, I have taken those opportunities and traveled back to my roots. I was fortunate to have been able to attend the March of the Living. It gave me the opportunity to introspect, to learn, and it gave me new insights with which I would make life-changing decisions. During this trip to Poland, I experienced the harsh reality of mankind without humanity.

Instead, I learned to take that hope for the future that inspired my grandparents' survival and translate that to my life. I learned that I should not hesitate but rather I should jump at every opportunity to increase my educational capacity. I learned that I should consider each day a blessing and I should look at life with a positive attitude, for that is what my ancestors would have wanted me to do.

Soul Survivor

by Deborah Jeff

It is the year 1997, 5757. Over half a century has passed since the destruction of European Jewry in the Holocaust. One of the worst tragedies that has ever occurred in Jewish history. It seems as if it happened centuries ago, but it did not.

We cannot let the world think of the Holocaust as just another event of history which is written down in textbooks. The whole world must remember the way the Nazis dehumanized and persecuted the Jewish race. It should not become just another page in the history textbooks. It is us, the Jews of the world, who must remind ourselves and the rest of the world about this catastrophe. We must do this everyday, for the rest of our lives. No matter how many times the words NEVER FORGET are written or said, it will never be enough. Actions speak louder than words.

We must speak out with not only our words, but our actions. The Shoah foundation, founded by Steven Spielberg, exemplifies the words "Never Again". It is organizations like this one that will help keep the six million Jewish SOULS "alive".

It is our responsibility to fight off the "Nazis" of today for the sake of the Jews who were brutally murdered by the Nazis of yesterday. It is our obligation not to let the six million souls die in vain. The least we can do is keep their memories alive. We are their SOUL SURVIVORS.

Conflicting Thoughts Strengthen The Soul

by Chana Kapustin

In a gray and dreary city, within the borders of a primitive and poor country, stands a girl. She stands amid stones and bricks and dirt. She stands while those around her run. She stands in the chaos of shouting voices. Yet, she stands alone. She stands and is silent.

The stones and bricks and dirt are the rubble remnant of her home and the homes of her friends. Those who run are the proud Nazi soldiers. Those who shout are the screaming Jews, begging for escape.

"Juden raus" barks a soldier in the girl's ear. And, as if woken from a trance, her face registers recognition- and fear. She runs blindly with the crowd, stumbling over the rubble until she falls to the ground. Falling, she hears a beckoning voice call, "Sara". All is black.

Sara shifts abruptly as if awakened from a terrible nightmare, from the acrid smell of human excrement and sweat. As she turns, retching, seeking clean air to breathe, she feels comforting hands on her shoulders, and that same voice: "Sara, it's me. Rivki from the shtetl. Please Sara, listen closely and do as I tell you. I have heard of these trains and the tortures that lie beyond. Many say there is no way out, but I have faith. Do as I do, and we will survive- together."

"Rivki from Rebbe Yakov's shtetl, I remember. Where am I?"

"It is dark because night has fallen. We are in a train; a cattle car. The Nazis have piled us one on top of the other. Stay calm and breathe shallowly. You will survive."

"It is hard to breathe," Sara says faintly. "Rivki, I don't remember boarding the train. The last thing I remember is the Nazi soldiers storming the ghetto of my city. How did I get here?"

"Sara, do not be alarmed, but you fell and were struck unconscious. It was my turn to buy food supplies from the city for the shtetl and, when I saw you fall, I knew you would be left to die. I carried you with me and, with the help of God, I managed to bring you on the train, unnoticed by those Nazi brutes." Rivki looks down ashamedly as she continues: "I don't know if I acted correctly."

"Rivki, you saved my life!" Sara assures her. "I will never leave your side."

Rivki and Sara cling to each other throughout the interminable train ride. The stench is abominable and it is a struggle to continue to breathe. In addition to the odors from before, there is now the added stench of dead bodies- those who did not have the strength to cling to life.

As the sun rises in the east, the train pulls into Treblinka. Some of the kapos, who are unloading the train full of starving and half-dead Jews, begin to whisper the secrets of the camp. The secrets of what the future holds in store are passed from ear to ear, as the corpses of those dead from the journey are thrown into a pit where a large flame is burning, consuming flesh and bone- and life. As they pass, Sara realizes that it is here that the extermination of the Jewish people takes place- these are the fires of hell... but Rivki is oblivious to them.

"Ani ma'amin- I believe." Rivki repeats over and over. "Just believe in God and He will show His strength," she declares boldly. "Perhaps," thinks Sara, "there is truth in Rivki's words." However, as the herd of Jews follows the dirt path through the camp, Sara no longer believes. While Rivki sways wildly in prayer, Sara leaves faith behind.

Unaware of what lies ahead, the girls follow the hundreds of Jews before them down a narrow stone tunnel, dimly lit and reeking of unknown

chemicals. They turn to see behind them the endless line of Jews that follow their lead. When the girls enter the chamber together, the scratches on the wall jump out at Sara- they scream for her help, and she now understands what her fate must be. As the gas descends upon her, she screams to Rivki: "Where is your God?" But in her soul she knows the true question...

WHERE IS MAN?

The pain of my experiences on AML will haunt me for the rest of my life. I walked in Sara and Rivki's footsteps and, as many before me, I was torn between my undying faith and belief, and my inability to comprehend and accept the magnitude of the horrors and atrocities of the Holocaust. However, I have come to my own truth, and so I ask one simple question: Where was man?

But nobody can answer.

The Ethical Imperative in Creating a Community

by Rina-Claire Weinstein

Dina was my grandmother's best friend. They grew up together in Warsaw, both poor, religious girls, content with each other's friendship. Of the two friends, Dina was the more assertive, knowing how to take charge of a situation and knowing how to protect herself. My grandmother, on the other hand, though always possessing a rebellious and lively character, has always been a small woman with little physical strength. But the enormity of her spirit has more than matched the poverty of her size. Dina and my grandmother, as two good friends should be, made up for each other's weaknesses with their own special strengths.

A few days before Hitler invaded Poland, Dina came to my grandmother and told her, "We have to get out of here." My grandmother, not wanting to abandon her father, at first refused to leave. However, Dina continued to insist that Hitler would kill them all if they did not leave. After much deliberation, my grandmother decided to leave with Dina, without saying good-bye to her father, stepmother, brother or sisters, thinking she would one day see them again. She did not know, however, that their fates led them to the death-camp Treblinka, while hers would be a continuous struggle for survival.

That very day, Dina saved my grandmother's life. Her insistence that they leave Warsaw together was only the first in a series of acts which would save my grandmother's life. In the cold and brutal labor camp of Russia, my grandmother was often too weak to engage in the demanding work required to keep her alive. Dina, with her abundance of strength and kindness, would care for her friend when she was ill, doing extra work

without first discussing the basis of morality. Generally, the Nazi-community's actions are considered "immoral", whereas the Victim-community's actions are considered at best "moral", and at worst, not immoral. What factor determines the immorality of morality if a particular action? Who determines the standards of morality?

One might suggest that immorality is when one person's actions infringe upon another's rights, as determined by society. However, governmental or societal actions may infringe upon certain individual rights, but these laws are made and upheld for the benefit of the general population. Similarly, the actions of the Nazi-community, though it infringed upon the rights of others, were done in the hopes of bettering their own community at large. Additionally, who determines what qualifies as the "infringement" upon other's rights? Assuming that society determines the boundaries of morality, what is "society" but for an association of individuals? One association, the Victim-community, felt that they were bettering their community. Here is an example of two societies who have each established their own moral code, yet each society's standards is in conflict with the other! Which set of standards is ethically correct?

If each society is allowed to invent its own moral code, then moral standards can potentially be in a constant state of fluctuation, changing when a particular society feels it should change. Even if one would say that the majority determines morality, it should be noted that the majority does not always act wisely or think rationally. For instance, the majority of the world population used to believe that the world was flat, yet scientific investigation has now proven that the world is indeed round! If it is true, then, that ethical standards cannot be determined by individual societies, not by the majority, then how can we judge one society's actions more

moral than another?

Perhaps one would suggest that we can condemn the Nazi-community because intuitively we feel that their actions are wrong. Though intuition is a powerful device, it cannot play a role that individuals, or an association of individuals, in evaluating ethical responsibilities. We have already established cannot possibly determine ethical standards, for then it would constantly be subject to the whimsical "intuitions" of those individuals. Indeed our "intuitions" must be based upon standards that are above human determination, then these standards would have to be accepted by "society" as immutable and everlasting.

Who, then, is responsible for the creation of moral standards for all time? I shall refer to Him as "G-d," the Ultimate Creator, and therefore the sole determiner of ethical values and moral responsibilities. Since G-d is above humanity, and has existed before mankind existed, and in fact created mankind, man is subject to His moral instructions as written in the Bible. Once we believe in a G-d who has instructed us through the Bible, the Torah, with guidelines to govern our ethical behavior, these imperatives are ingrained forever in the moral conscience of mankind.

It is possible to believe that the dictums of moral behavior are above the resolve of humanity, yet disagree with the assertion that one must believe that G-d is the source of this moral code. Perhaps the belief in G-d is not essential, rather the belief in something, in anything, as long as it is something more powerful than man. Many scientists believe that the "Big Bang" started the creation process, and that the idea of "God" is merely liturgical terminology developed through the religious fanaticism. This idea about the Creation process will therefore outdate the notion of Biblical morality. Just as man evolved from the monkey, perhaps moral codes have likewise evolved. These moral codes are then

more powerful than any individual or single society, because they date back to what we call the beginning of human civilization. Though this is a possible alternative for the source of ethical codes, it still does not put morality above man's determination. Rather, this theory states: "A long time ago, man decided to make up rules for moral living, which now govern man's actions for all time." As long as man is the creator of morality, then man can always change its rules. Additionally, any possible alternative to the belief in G-d as the Ultimate Creator of moral behavior, strips humanity of its purpose. One leading physicist, SteverWeinberg, has written, "The more we know about the universe, the more it is evident that it is pointless and meaningless" (Matt 30). If creation is just a random, haphazard accident, and if ethics are constantly reevaluated by society, then what real purpose is there to life? Unless we can believe in something that is stronger than us, that lives longer than we will live, and that ultimately drives all human action, why should we behave morally? Life is so short, why not enjoy the few years we have on this planet to their fullest! But if there is a G-d, then life extends beyond our immediate present, and give us a reason to live within a framework that will forever immortalize a part of us. If G-d is the Ultimate Creator of morality, then everything He has created must be good and true. The G-d I write about, therefore, is a moral G-d; all of His commandments legislate an ethical code of living. The Torah states in Genesis 1:27: "And G-d created Man in His image." If G-d is a moral G-d, and if we are created in His image, then logically we are also moral creatures. As the creations of G-d, we are thereby instructed to behave according to the principles dictated in the Bible, all the way from "Thou shalt not kill" to "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbors possessions."

Though we are created in G-d's image, the Creation and the

Creator differ in one fundamental way: while G-d is limitless in His creative capacity, man is limited by his humanity because he is a creation. Whereas G-d is complete because He exists, we must work at our completion. However, since man is created in the image of G-d, we can look inside His "rule-book" to find how we can complete ourselves, and live morally true and ethical lives.

The Torah tells us in Genesis that Man was alone when G-d decided to create for him a "helpmate," called Woman. "It is not good for Man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18), G-d said to Himself. G-d foresaw that in order for people to strive for the perfection that is inherent within Himself, they can only do it within a communal framework, where one's weaknesses are the other's strengths. G-d therefore created Adam and Eve to grow and learn from each other, and to come as close to G-d's perfection as they could. Consequently, Adam and Eve were not only the first people, but they were also members of the first community.

In an effort to imitate G-d, since we were created in His image, we too must create a community in which we can build and grow and learn from one another. Through this community, our ultimate goal is to come as close as we can to perfecting ourselves by imitating G-d's actions. If G-d is compassionate, then we too must learn the quality of compassion. If G-d is kind, then we too must learn to be kind. If G-d punishes when it is deserving, then we must learn to punish only when punishment is due.

While striving to imitate G-d, we must realize that we can never become G-d. Through every action, we must always remember that there are rules to be followed. Adam and Eve's fatal mistake in eating from the Tree of Knowledge was that they tried to exclude G-d from their community by ignoring His rules. We too must realize that we cannot make up our own standards for ethics; those standards have already

been established. When we create a community, we must therefore create it within the ethical parameters that have already been defined. Therefore, "Do not murder" does not mean: "Do not murder the people you deem worthy not to murder," rather "Do not murder *anyone*, even if *you* deem them inferior." The rules of ethical living are established for all time, and are not subject to modification by any human being, be it an individual or a particular society.

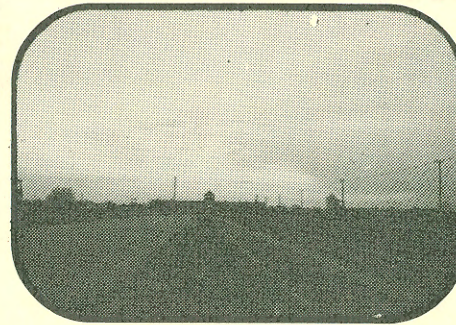
With this in mind, we can now begin to understand the differences between the Nazi-community and the Victim-community, and why we morally abhor one while we praise the other. Though both were involved in the creation of a community, only the Victims established their community by imitating G-d's qualities of compassion and kindness. The Nazis, on the other hand, created their own rules for who should be considered a part of their community. Instead of imitating G-d, they chose to exclude G-d by ignoring the ethical standards He created. Our ethical obligations are to imitate G-d and to follow His rules. The Nazi-community, however, did not build and perfect their community according to these guidelines. In creating their own code for moral behavior, they distorted the truth that had already been established in the Bible.

For obvious reasons, I can never thank Dina enough for saving my grandmother's life; she is my hero. However, I do not admire her only because of the continuous kindness she bestowed upon my grandmother, but also because of how she fulfilled her obligations to the Victim-community of the Holocaust. In becoming a part of that community, Dina had to live up to the ethical obligation of the Torah to "love your neighbor like yourself." Dina, in fact, treated my grandmother with respect and love, and in so doing, she saved her life.

We each have an obligation to perfect ourselves by building a community of friendship and love, just as the Bible prescribes. Unfortunately, many times we only accomplish this when we become victims, and we are forced to bond out of necessity, instead of through wisdom. On a lesser scale, we are more often building a Nazi-type community of self-interest, in which we try to fulfill our own desires though we may have to "infringe upon the rights" of others. A Victim-community is full of self-sacrifice and hardships, but through those sacrifices, moral standards and ethical obligations can be met fully.

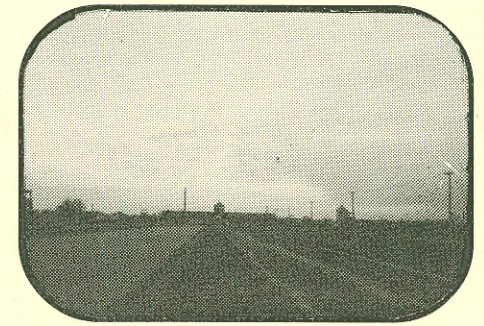
There are many lessons mankind should have learned from the Holocaust. Let us hope we have learned that we should always strive to build a community like the victims of the Holocaust, BEFORE we become VICTIMS.

Works cited: Matt, Daniel C. God and the Big Bang: Discovering Harmony Between Science and Spirituality. Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1996.

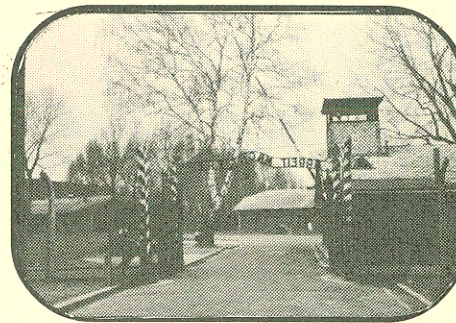


Train tracks leading to Birkenau.

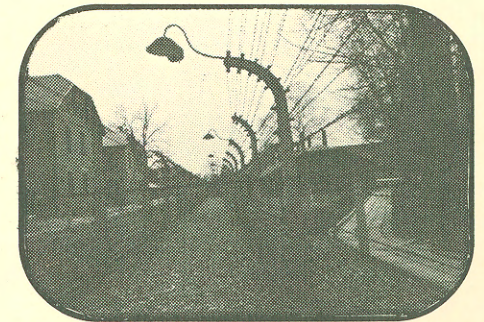
The Selection Platform along the tracks of Birkenau.

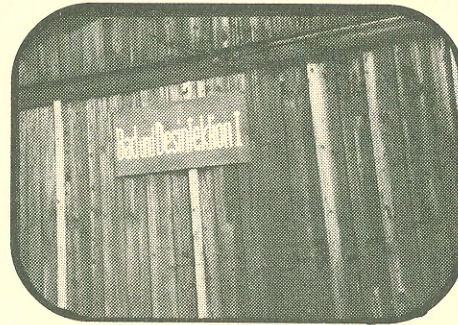


*The gates to Auschwitz -
"Work Will Make You Free".*



The high-voltage barbed wire fences which surround Auschwitz to prevent escape.





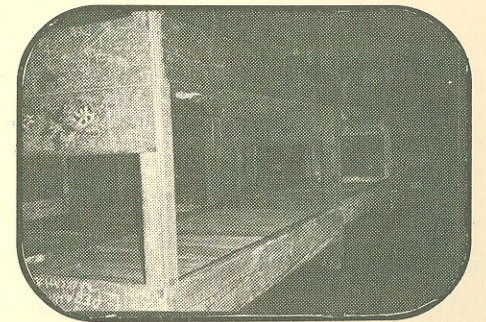
"Disinfection" at Majdanek.

One of the several barracks filled with shoes of the victims at Majdanek.



On display at Auschwitz, the suitcases brought by the victims.

The bunk beds inside one of the barracks at Majdanek.



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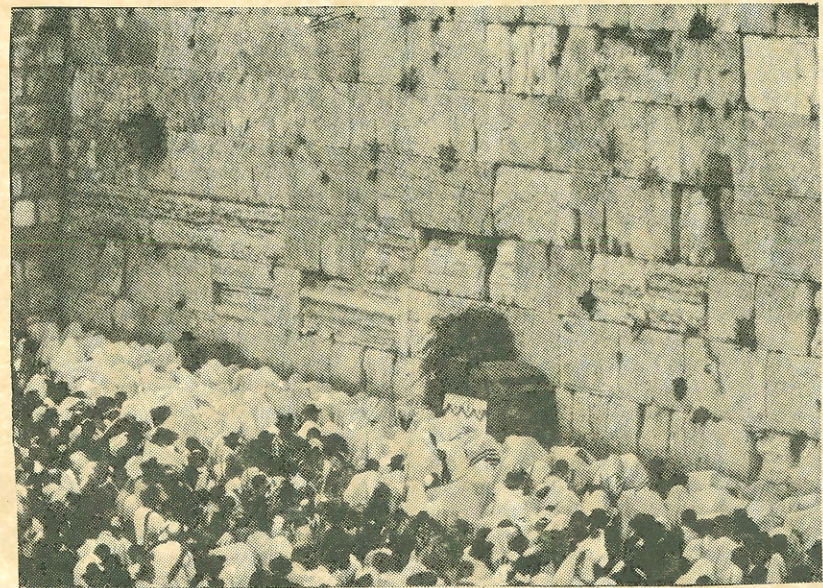
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