

The spiritual roots of the Holocaust

by Jakob Kraemer

I prefer the term "shoa" because it better describes "the indescribable". "Holocaust" can be translated with "complete burnt offering" and that might invoke certain positive associations. On the other hand, "shoa" means something like demolition, catastrophe, destruction. The shoa is the dramatic experience of the Jewish people, which became the omnipresent national trauma of Israel.

We must understand this – or we will not understand anything at all about Israel. Once I gave a lecture and afterwards I was approached by a young man who was visibly angry and said: "If you mention the 6 million Jews who have been killed during the Holocaust, then you also have to talk about the millions of dead who have been killed by Stalin and Mao."

This young man has not yet understood anything about the mystery of Israel, which together with the mystery of Christ belongs to the greatest mysteries of the bible. Whereas one of those mysteries helps to understand the other one. The more you try to separate the two, the more they blur into each other. It is purely by God's grace and not by our understanding, that we are allowed to understand small pieces of it - it is really only partial.

In the context of the millennium-long persecution of the Jews and the Jewish people worldwide I would like to closely examine the spiritual roots and the spiritual background which gave a basis to the Holocaust.

The shoa is the biggest atrocity ever committed against the Jewish people, it is the mega tsunami of sorrow, which befell this people in the 20th century. The preliminary quakes took place over the last 3200 years and have been recorded both in the bible as well as by historians. These preliminary quakes happened at many locations and during various times.

The earth has not yet quieted down and there are still after-quakes! And there is no telling when those that haven't yet erupted will erupt.

In trying to find an answer for the cause of the Holocaust, I will therefore not confine myself to the 20th century and "National Socialism". It is a well-known rule that "the particular will be understood by studying the general."

It wasn't only Jews who were killed at Mauthausen; even so, Mauthausen in Austria is representing the great number of concentration camps where Jewish people were killed.

When people entered the concentration camps of the National Socialists, they looked death in the face – and Jews were confronted with a certain death. Why particularly the Jews?

A short extract from Theodor Herzl's book *The Jewish State* says: "We have honestly tried to assimilate with the group of people surrounding us and keep apart purely by keeping the faith of our fathers. But it is not to be permitted. It makes no difference that we are loyal, and in some cases even enthusiastic patriots, and it is in vain that we try to increase the honour of our chosen homeland with art and scientific feats and to increase their wealth through commerce and travel. In our chosen homelands, in which we lived for centuries, we are treated and shouted at like foreigners, often by those whose ancestors were not yet even in this country, when our fathers lived in it with sighing and moaning. The majority decide who is the foreigner; it is a question of power." These lines, written by Herzl, confirm that which is known by many, but they do not provide any answer for the question of "why?".

What have we done wrong? What are we doing wrong today? Why are we the only people in this world which has been persecuted from the beginning of their existence and has never been accepted or considered to be equal by the rest of the world?

At the time when Herzl wrote these lines, he lived in the fantasy of believing that all this would change if the Jewish people would have their own state. Has anything changed? Today there is a Jewish state. As a consequence of it, anti-Zionism has been added to anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism. There are a number of questions about the history of the Jewish people, which virtually force themselves upon us:

Why were the new-born boys of the Hebrews slaughtered upon the order of the pharaoh? What did those boys do wrong? Or – who felt threatened by their existence? Who was the true target behind that?

Why did Amalek desire to destroy the Israelites and to keep them from entering the Holy Land? What was the true reason? Who was truly meant to be hurt by that?

Why was it that the Persian Haman wanted to kill all Jews within the Persian Empire, which stretched all the way from India to Greece? Why is it that today the Persian Ahmadinejad wishes to wipe out Israel?

Why were the children of Bethlehem killed? By the way – Herod was not a Jew but an Idumean, a descendant of Esau. Whom were they threatening? In whose place did they have to die?

Does the horrific answer, which is known by us all, has to be continued throughout all of the centuries of persecution of the Jewish people? It takes one's breath away.

Why was it that during the crusades, during the time of the Spanish inquisition, the Jews were persecuted and either killed or forced to give up their Jewish identity, their

affiliation with the people of Israel?

Why is it that over centuries whole regions of Eastern Europe and Russia were "cleansed of Jews" through Pogroms, their murderers traveling from village to village, sacking and pillaging, murdering women, children, the young and the old?

Why then did the unthinkable finally happen, that which is referred to today by historians as the Holocaust? An unbelievable, gruesome drama which cost 6 Million Jews their lives, among them 1.5 Million children. What did they do wrong, after all? Or who was really meant to be the target of all that? When our children ask – what answer are we going to give them? Why were they truly killed? Only because they were Jews? That in itself cannot be the reason. But one dares not to think any further, for fear of staring into the gorge of hell itself.

The explanations, the answers for the great why, provided by sociologists, political scientists, historians and religious scientists are well known. Even so, they are usually too cheap, too superficial, not truly convincing nor satisfying.

For in the end all their explanations feed the ever-present latent suspicion: "Somehow it's their own fault. If they were different, all that would not have happened to them!" Whereas no one is really capable of explaining what this "otherness" actually is supposed to be.

A pinnacle of ignorance are the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. (A malicious pamphlet, a pure fabrication, created by the Russian secret service which supposedly exposed the "true results and objectives" of the Zionist congress of Basel in 1897. Today it is a bestseller in the Arab Islamic world).

The Why of the persecution of the Jewish people demands a "Therefore" which makes sense, even if it appears to be total madness.

In Shma Israel the one God reveals himself to his people and at the same time calls them to witness. Deut. 6:4-9. "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone. And you must love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, all your soul and all your strength. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again. Tie them to your hands as a reminder, and wear them on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

It's even clearer in Isaiah 43:10-12: "But you are my witnesses, O Israel! Says the Lord. And you are my servant. You have been chosen to know me, believe in me, and understand that I alone am God. There is no other God; there never has been and never will be. I am the Lord, and there is no other Saviour. First, I predicted your deliverance; I declared what I would do, and then I did it – I saved you. No foreign god has ever done

this before. You are witnesses that I am the only God, says the Lord."

I will try to find the "Therefore" to answer the "Why". An answer, which does not claim to be an all-encompassing one!

But nevertheless, an answer which allows us to comprehend more deeply the mystery that is Israel. Even so, it requires the grace of God's revelation in order for us to be able to understand with our heart. That is what we have to pray for, because it's a mystery, which will only be revealed to the praying person.

Personally, I am convinced that Hitler and National Socialism were "created" for one single purpose. Apart from all the other atrocities which have been caused by them, namely to continue that which the others before them have not yet succeeded in doing. And that is to destroy the Jewish people, the people which for all time have been and will be the ones chosen by God. To destroy them in order to destroy the witness of the One and Only God. The God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, who is our God too.

Israel is the witness of this One God, and Israel will remain witness of this one God. As long as the one who testifies lives, the testimony will live as well.

I am absolutely convinced that the true motive for any antisemitism, antijudaism and antizionism lies in this ongoing chosenness of Israel by a sovereign God! However, this motive remains well hidden and disguised, and is therefore an occult motive.

Antisemitism, antijudaism and antizionism are a form of occultism! Ignorance of this motive, or denying it, will not change the factuality of this occultism. For the one who rejects the chosen ones simultaneously rejects the one who has chosen!

By discriminating against the one who has been chosen, he denies the one God who has the right of free choice. By doing that he has created his own God, he has made his own image of God and has in fact broken the first commandment! And what makes it worse is that he isn't even aware of the fact that he is worshipping an image of God. He can, in fact, give this image the name of Jesus. But this image will never result in the Jesus as He has revealed Himself in the Scriptures. Because it is impossible to reject the one who has been chosen without, at the same time, rejecting the one who has done the choosing. That is the sad story of the Christian churches!

God neither limits the witness by time, nor is Israel's ability to act as a witness dependent upon circumstances or upon the "spiritual and moral condition" of this people! Simply by the power of its existence, which is solely based on the unique selection by God, as witness of this One God. If you can accept it as that, it is the witness par excellence. Even if Israel has failed many times and has broken the covenant, Israel nevertheless is and remains the witness and God's firstborn. God's mercy wins over God's anger over Israel's sin. That has to do with God's faithfulness and his love, with his decisions and promises.

Where would we be, where would the Christian Church of the nations stand, if we would

not accept this standard as God's general standard towards His people? And Israel is His people! If this witness were not to exist any longer, then that which it gives witness to would not exist any longer! Deuteronomy 28:10: "Then all the nations of the world will see that you are a people claimed by the Lord ...". Therefore, antisemitism exists among all nations!!! How then would the nations recognize the name of the Lord God, if Israel no longer existed? Looking at Israel we recognize who and what God is.

Can the Christian church replace that which is being witnessed to? Can it replace this witness? Can it? Is that even intended by God?

The church can neither replace Israel as the witness, nor that which is being witnessed to, but she can and shall complement it. That is what Paul meant in the letter to the Ephesians when he said in 2:14: "He is our peace who has unified the two".

What God intended are two witnesses who are unified and who, in this unity, give witness to Him, but at the same time retain their own nature, individuality and uniqueness. (Could it be that these are the two witnesses who are referred to in Revelation 11?)

However, the church from the nations is only able to be a true witness of the one God if she acknowledges the ongoing position of Israel as a witness. If she's committed to this witness and identifies with Israel's position as a witness. If she accepts the necessary consequences of commitment on that basis! And if she loves this witness, simply because Israel is also loved by God.

If the church from the nations fails to do that – and in the past she has often done exactly the opposite – she cannot be a believable witness for Jesus Christ, who is the true son of Israel.

Jesus and Israel cannot be separated without distorting both their countenances! He is the fulfillment of Israel; in Him all the promises given to Israel have been fulfilled (Rom 9:1-5). In a way, Jesus is Israel's forerunner towards the goal. Because he reached the goal, all of Israel will reach it too (Rom 11:26). Israel was not only God's witness up to the first coming of Jesus, but will be a witness until his second coming – until the whole plan of salvation has been fulfilled!!!

Israel did not offer of her own accord to be God's witness! Israel has been created by God for that specific purpose. It is the basic reason for its existence! Israel is the sole nation in this world, which has been created by God. The existence of this witness - elected and destined to be a witness for this world, to give witness of this one God, and this is the one and true reason of any kind of persecution of the Jewish people.

It is the true reason for all persecution of the Jewish people and the true reason for the animosity towards the Jewish state. Many Christians don't really know what to make of the Jewish state. However, this secular state of Israel is not yet the end product of God's promise! It is the raw product which God will shape into the final product!

We have to align ourselves with this flawed beginning because it is the true raw material called into existence by God! For the church, this must be an integral part of being a witness. Both the Jewish people, as well as the Jewish institutions are as sinful as the rest of the world!

Even so, on that memorable night at the Jabbok, where God transformed the human Jacob into Israel, the prince of God, right when Jacob met Jesus, so also in the same way God will transform the Israel of today, which still possesses the nature of Jacob. Then it will be transformed into that final form intended and foretold by God. And he is already in the middle of revealing himself to Israel!

Only by a revelation and realisation of Jesus will Israel take on its intended form. It will happen as described in Zechariah 12:10: "*They will look on me whom they have pierced ...*". This is already happening. Israel is in the middle of a process of change. This process is causing pain both to Israel as well as to God. This becomes clear when we read Ps. 22 and Is. 53. But it is not normal pain, it is birth labour. These pains point towards something incredible, which will be "life for those who were dead" (Romans 11:15).

It was intended to cause pain to the Christian church as well, as we are created out of Israel! We are part of Israel! Instead it is us, the Christian church, which has caused pain to Israel throughout all of history, right into our present time. By doing that, it also caused pain to God and to itself.

So, what is the spiritual cause for the Holocaust? The true reason for it? What is the purpose behind Auschwitz and Mauthausen? For, if there is no purpose behind it, if it is nothing but a coincidence, or could be explained purely on the basis of inner-worldly explanations, I would consider myself completely deceived in my understanding of God.

Who was the true target for it? What truly was meant to be achieved or avoided? The answer is right before our eyes, and by God's grace we can perceive it: "In the end it was God himself who was the target; He was meant to be done away with". However, because God is in heaven while his witness is here on earth, again and again it will always be the witness who will become the target.

But it is also the church in the nations, which has become a target, even though they have been largely blind to it, and still are! Whenever Jews have been persecuted or are being persecuted, the church becomes the target for the enemy. The enemy has good reasons to conceal this and it is his best-kept secret.

This church, up until now, has done preciously little or nothing to combat antijudaism and even if she acted, it did not do so in all determination. She herself was paralysed and blinded by the seeds of antijudaism sowed throughout the centuries through teaching and practice.

This Church, and with it I am referring to the whole body of Christ, not any particular

denomination, did not – apart from a few exceptions – take its place at the side of her older brother! Nor did she give witness to him and his godly calling!

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was one of the few who did. He wrote: "Only the one who takes his place at the side of the Jews is entitled to sing Gregorian chants." There were only a few back then who understood that.

This Church, in some way, actually created the condition for the Jews to become fair game, by stripping Jesus of His Jewish identity and creating their own Jesus – even though the Lord says, "Thou shall not make yourself a picture of me".

The other irreplaceable brother was supposed to be taken from the Church. (Eph. 2,11-22 and Rom.11,25-26). The fate of the Church and the way of the Church is inextricably connected with the Jewish people, the "precious oil tree".

With the Holocaust and its precursors over thousands of years God's plan of salvation was meant to be torpedoed: initially by the first coming and now by the return of Jesus.

Many attempts have been made to offer an explanation for the Holocaust – historical, political, economic, ethnical, sociological and religious ones! When these explanations are simply accepted by the Christian Church – that is by us Christians –, without at the same time being qualified and then proven to be, in fact, completely irrelevant – then the church, or rather we, have wasted our chance and missed the opportunity to learn from it. By doing that we have become guilty as well. By satanic design, these explanations detract from the foundational reason and explanation.

In what way were the Jews then responsible for the developing Shoa? One can only answer this question with the evidence that they are guiltless like a lamb led to its slaughter (Ps. 22 und Isaiah 53). There is no fault or responsibility on the side of the Jews which would explain the Holocaust. There is only the mystery of God's plan and God's view of Israel. The fault and the responsibility lie with the Christians and their churches. It lies with the so-called Christian nations which should have known better! Who else but we Christians should realize this by God's grace?! How have we dealt with that grace and how do we deal with it today?

In fact, things have not changed materially and the hate of Jews continues. Israel and the Jewish people are once again the focus of accusation and attack.

The land of their fathers, into which this people have been led by their God, is supposed to be re-named. Why? Because the name Israel is the name of God's witness. People who don't know better, who don't know the prophetic word (including Christians), are heard saying, "So what! What matters is that peace is restored". For 2000 years this land did not carry the name Israel, and nevertheless Jews were killed. Synagogues still burn today, people are being killed because they are Jews, and again, know-it-alls provide explanations.

Such know-it-alls exist even in our churches and fellowships. We are called to love them, but nevertheless to contradict their explanations. Usually they are those who do not yet understand the mystery of Israel, because it takes grace to understand it. But there are also those among them, who do not want to understand, because to understand carries its price.: "Know that it is not you who carries the root, but the root who carries you".

God's intention is for the fellowship in the nations to be dependent upon the "noble oil tree", and it is a Jewish tree. And that is humiliating for the nations! It is exactly this humility that is the price for understanding.

God gave us the grace to see further, to be able to see the very bottom, and to come to an understanding of the true cause! For my part, I want to explain the cause to my children and grandchildren in order to provide them with an instrument of navigation for the times to come.

Let us take advantage of this chance. Let us take advantage of a sense of remorse, a remorse that leads to true repentance in order to bow before God for our own wrongdoing, the wrongdoing of our churches and nations! Let us remain bowing down until God lifts us up again.

Let us take advantage of God's grace in order to intercede for God to remove the veil from the eyes of His people. Intercede for Him to wake Israel from their deep sleep that it may find itself reflected in the One who is the perfected Israel, namely Jesus, the true son of Israel. Let us pray for the church in the nations, so that God may reveal the mystery of Israel to them.