

## The Third Great Cycle of Jewish History

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### Partial Summary

#### The Third Era from page 8

The Nazis tried to show that Jewish life was worthless. They made a frontal assault on Judaism.

Theologically speaking, this was an attempt to kill God, the covenantal partner known to humanity through the Jewish People. It was counter-testimony to the Jewish witness that life is precious and that humanity will be redeemed through its partnership with God.

On the other hand, the rebirth of the State of Israel is a redemptive event of historical magnitude.

These two events are dialectically opposed to each other, yet profoundly linked.

The third era continues the trajectory begun in the second era, meaning that God's presence becomes more and more hidden. God's withdrawal is a call to human beings to greater covenantal responsibility.

There is no longer a particular realm of the holy where God is revealed. Therefore there is no longer a realm that is secular. Rather God is hidden everywhere, meaning that the whole secular realm is potentially holy. Religious activity must fill the secular realm.

This is not a time to talk about God. One, because the smoke of burning children obscures His presence, meaning that it is shameful to talk about what reality seems to show to be false. (I take this to mean that we should not talk of God's providence and His involvement, exactly the things that so many religious people talk about) Secondly, because the murders hijacked God's name and it is almost sacrilegious to speak that name until the memory of the murders is erased.

It is time not to talk about God but rather to do for God. That is, to reaffirm the life that God created, through acts of life giving and loving life. Also, to keep the covenantal chain going which is a tremendous reaffirming the covenant in and of itself and a great act of faith.

After the holocaust religion must be saved from the Hitler. All that gave rise to Nazism must be eradicated from Christianity and from Judaism must be expunged any prejudice against human beings. Justice must be multiplied.

The continued existence of the Jewish People after the holocaust testifies to God. That testimony must be strengthened. More Jews and especially more Jews in Israel, and the building of a just Jewish society in Israel, testifies to God.

The claims of absolute secular humanism were shattered by the holocaust. Since the holocaust, teaching of the infinite value of human beings, and teachings of justice and mercy, are to be understood as testimonies to God.

God is now overtly nowhere and covertly everywhere. God is everywhere means we sense His expectations everywhere. God's call is to prevent another holocaust, to fill the world with life and the conviction of the holiness of life.

God is everywhere, expecting of us good, crying when we fail and rejoicing when we succeed. God is counting upon us taking responsibility.

Jews must learn to see the potential of covenantal activity everywhere, in everything that relates to Israel or the Jewish People or the value of life or justice. Nothing related to this should be denigrated or classified as secular.

Just as the Temple was once the abode of God but is no longer, so synagogues may have been the center of the realm of the holy but no longer. Now the holy is everywhere; synagogues that don't adjust will become irrelevant.

The third era builds on the insight of the Talmud in Tractate Shabat that says that a coercive acceptance of the covenant is not binding and therefore Purim supersedes Sinai as the model. Now we say that the creation of the State of Israel after the Holocaust supersedes Purim as the model. The acceptance of Jewish fate with all the dangers involved, when we see clearly that God will not step in to save us - that is the highest level of covenantal acceptance.

From Powerlessness to Power, from page 13

The creation of Israel is an affirmation that the covenant is now focused in worldly effort. It is a classic expression of divine hiddenness (just like the holocaust) and new holy secularity.

The state of Israel, with all the mundaneness of a political state, becomes close to the center of Jewish religious life. Backing the state of Israel becomes a religious act. The daily acts of running the state take on transcendent meaning.

The Nazis extraordinary success was made possible by Jewish powerlessness. In this era it is now clear that Jewish survival is incompatible with Jewish powerlessness. Since our survival is a mitzvah, therefore Jewish power is a mitzvah.

Jewish powerlessness is also immoral because it tempts anti-Semites, putting before them a stumbling block as it were.

Power requires sovereignty. Israeli's sovereignty now becomes a sacred principle. Denying Israel and endangering her power becomes a cardinal sin and supporting her a primary mitzvah. These obligations today have the same central status as denying the Exodus and of God's providential power and role in it.

Jews playing a role in the politics and governance of diaspora countries is a sign of the psychological end of exilic Judaism.

In the exilic phase of Judaism, the great task of religion was to give dignity to the powerless. For example - martyrdom; the philosophy of because of our sins we were exiled from our land and through repentance we can reclaim it; the dignity of suffering, the hope for the world to come; the moral heroism of asceticism. These things will no longer be at center stage.

Now Jewish values will be tested in the real world.

Of course, utopias are not created in the real world. Creating a better society, a Jewish society, will be a gradual process of negotiating reality. Jews who will judge Israel according to the idealized standards of powerless will be ultimately collaborating with attempted genocide.

On the other hand, power must be exercised morally. The memory of Egyptian slavery and of the suffering of the Holocaust must condition us to compassionate, restrained and moderate exercise of power. Power must learn sensitivity and openness to critique. Otherwise it becomes idolatry.

Skip from the middle of the right hand column of page 15 to page 24

The Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel are revelatory, reorienting events. Jeremiah already said in 23:7-8 and 14:14-15 that the days will come during which God will be known more as the God of the events of the ingathering of the exiles than the God of the Exodus. New Scriptures are in effect being written in our generation.

Next time begin with Voluntary Covenant