Doron Mendels (ed.)

On Memory

An Interdisciplinary Approach

ARYE EDREI

Holocaust Memorial: A Paradigm of Competing Memories in the Religious and Secular Societies in Israel[1]

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Chapter 2

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Holocaust Memorial: A Paradigm of Competing Memories in the Religious and Secular Societies in Israel[1]

The twenty-seventh of the month of Nissan marks the day of memorial for the Holocaust, in the Jewish world, both in Israel and in the Diaspora. This day was first declared a day of memorial by the Knesset, the legislature of the State of Israel, and subsequently adopted as law.[2] The religious community in Israel known as "religious Zionist" participates fully in this day, but also commemorates the Holocaust on the tenth of the month of Tevet, as the universal day for reciting *Kaddish* (the traditional Jewish memorial prayer). In contrast, the *haredi*[3] community does not recognize the twenty-seventh of Nissan or the tenth of Tevet as Holocaust Memorial Day. This raises the question as to whether the *haredim* have an alternative day of remembrance, or if they are trying to obliterate the memory of the Holocaust. If the latter, how is it that the group that perhaps justifiably considers itself to be the group most affected by the Holocaust (Michman 1996, 616–25; Friedman 1990) does not pay attention to preserving its memory? Religious thought relating to the Holocaust

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2 The process of establishing the date for Holocaust Memorial Day in the Knesset is described in detail by Stauber 2000, chapters 2 and 4: Baumel 1992, 65–9.

3 The *Ashkenazi* (European) ultra-Orthodox community.

has been the subject of a considerable amount of research,[4] but the religious approach to memorializing the Holocaust has been marginalized. In this article, I wish to address this issue. My claim is that the religious conception of remembrance, including its goals, its content and its form, is considerably different than the accepted concept and practice in secular Israeli society. I will try to establish the fundamental distinctions between these two approaches. An understanding of the religious conception is critical to appreciating the ways in which the Orthodox community memorializes the Holocaust. I will contend that, in fact, the *haredi* community intensively memorializes the Holocaust, a claim that I will support through an analysis of the writings of rabbis and religious thinkers, and through an examination of the activities of the *haredi* community during the first few decades after the Holocaust. The degree of connection to the past and the question, to which events in the past to connect, are important values questions in every society. Yet in contemporary Israeli society, they are the fundamental issue. The debate over Holocaust remembrance in Israel in the second half of the twentieth century reflects a deep, yet often obscure, debate over the essence of remembrance, and its appropriate format. This debate concretely demonstrates the degree to which memory stands at the center of the agenda of modern Israel and reflects the competing positions in defining the essence of the State of Israel. In this context, it is important to keep in mind that every memorial incorporates forgetting as well. I will, therefore, investigate not only what each faction wished to remember, but also what they wished to forget or eradicate, and why. In the final section of the article I will suggest a unique model of Jewish remembrance that has found expression throughout Jewish history. And I will propose that the controversy in Israel is not only over the content of remembrance, but also over the very validity of this traditional Jewish model in light of the establishment of the State of Israel.

4 See footnote 37 below. With regard to the important variations within *haredi* society, see Caplan 2002.

1 The Lack of a "Memorial Day" in *Haredi* Society

a "Holocaust and Heroism" or "Destruction and Redemption": the Difference between the Tenth of Tevet and the Twenty-Seventh of Nissan as Days of Memorial

The tenth of Tevet was established as a memorial day for the Holocaust by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel in December 1948.[5] The twenty-seventh of Nissan was initiated as "The Day of the Holocaust and the Rebellion in the Ghettos" by a Knesset decision in April 1951, but was adopted as law only in 1958.[6] In spite of the similarities between these two days (Friedlander 1990), there are significant differences between them that are important for understanding the two prototypes of remembrance that will be described further on. The arguments raised in the deliberation of the Knesset and its committees by several religious leaders against the establishment of the twenty-seventh of Nissan as a day of memorial demonstrate that the argument over the date really reflects a deeper controversy.[7]

The tenth of Tevet is a fast day that has been recognized in the Jewish calendar for generations as one of the days of mourning for the destruction of the Temple.[8] The very idea of establishing a Holocaust

5 Although deliberations on this date, and apparently the actual conducting of ceremonies, already began earlier. See Stauber, 2000, 52–6; Steinberg 1991; Shaviv 2001. Even before the end of the war, Rabbi Yitshak Herzog, then the Chief Rabbi of Israel, wrote a letter regarding the establishment of an eternal day of memorial for the victims of the Nazis. See Hertzog 1999, 435; Hertzog 1971 Responsum 61.

6 "Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Day Law" 1958.

7 See the statements of MK Shlomo Yaacov Gross, Protocol of Knesset session 607, March 10, 1959, 1389; MK Yitshak Meir Levin, Protocol of Knesset session 249, March 13, 1961, 13; Yitshak Meir Levin, Protocol of Knesset session 229, May 18, 1953, 1337–9 (discussion of the Yad Vashem Law).

8 According to the account in 2 Kings 25:1–3, on that day, Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylonia, initiated the siege of Jerusalem that led to the destruction of the First Temple. According to rabbinic tradition, the tenth of Tevet is the day mentioned in Zachariah 8:19 as the "fast of the tenth." See *Tosefta Sotah* 6:10–11; *Sifri, Deuteronomy* 6:4 (Finkelstein edition), 51. On the establishment of

memorial day on a day that was already set as a day of mourning reflects a perspective that essentially views the modern-day tragedy within the context of Jewish history as part of a sequence of Jewish tragedies during the period of the exile. Furthermore, the prototype of this memorial – the imposition of a new tragedy on an existing memorial day and the use of fasting as an instrument of memorializing – is one that has existed and has been recognized in Jewish tradition for many generations.[9] Usually, destructions and tragedies worthy of

this day as a fast day see Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Ta'aniyot* 5:1–2; Yosef Karo, *Shulhan Arukh, Orah Haim* 549:1.

9 The argument that the Holocaust should be viewed as a "destruction" that is part of the series of Jewish destructions and tragedies throughout history was raised explicitly by part of the religious leadership. See the sources cited by Stauber 2005, 55–8. Rabbi Yitshak Hutner, one of the leading spokesmen of the *haredi* community in the United States opposed the use of the term "holocaust" (*shoah*), favoring instead the term "destruction" (*hurban*). In his explanation, he insists on the importance of using the traditional terminology, claiming that the use of the expression "holocaust" cuts the event off from the series of destructions throughout the history of the exile. See Hutner 1997. On the importance that the religious community attaches to viewing the Holocaust as part of the series of Jewish destructions and tragedies throughout history, see Goldberg 1998, 163–7. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein also stated that "it [the Holocaust] is in the category of all of the decrees in this long exile." See Feinstein, 1996, 57:11. See below pp. 70–1, regarding this responsum. The contrary Orthodox position found expression in the statements of Rabbi Yehuda Amital, one of the notable leaders of the religious Zionist community in the last generation, and of Rabbi Menahem Kasher, one of the most prolific writers in the *haredi* community, who is largely forgotten because his ideas did not always conform to accepted *haredi* positions. Rabbi Amital, himself a Holocaust survivor, wrote: "If a person doesn't feel that the *Book of Lamentations* and the elegies pale in contrast to the Holocaust – it means ignoring the Holocaust" (Maya 2002, 118). The following statement of Rabbi Kasher, also a Holocaust survivor, is recorded by Rabbi Yisrael Rosen from his recollection of a public address: "I am no longer able to say the elegies on Tisha B'Av. They do not speak to me after the awesome holocaust in Europe. It is impossible to cry over the martyrs of Meinz, Worms, and Spira, and to forget and debase the cry of the blood of our brothers from Auschwitz, Meidanik, and Treblinka" (Rosen 2000). Emil Fackenheim also insisted on the uniqueness of the Holocaust in relation to the other tragedies in Jewish history. See Fackenheim 1988. Kimmy Caplan discussed the interesting changes that took place in *haredi* society with regard to the Holocaust, as demonstrated by the penetration of the term "holocaust" in *haredi*

remembering were observed on the ninth of Av, the date that traditionally marks the destruction of both temples. One who studies the book of elegies for the ninth of Av will find not only lamentations for the destruction of the first and second temples, but also poems memorializing victims of the crusades, the Spanish expulsion and other tragedies.[10] In contrast, the twenty-seventh of Nissan has no significance in the traditional Jewish calendar. It was chosen because of its connection to the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.[11] The significance of this connection was clear from the very declaration of this day as a Holocaust memorial day: "The first Knesset declares and establishes the twenty-seventh of Nissan as an annual Day of the Holocaust and the Rebellion in the Ghettos – an eternal day of memorial for the House of Israel."[12] The deliberations over the name

parlance. See Caplan 2002 and Schwartz 1986. The recent changes in *haredi* society with regard to the Holocaust are demonstrated in Farbstein 2002. With regard to the use of the term "holocaust," she writes in an apologetic manner: "The emphasis on the connection between Jewish existence before the Holocaust and during the Holocaust is part of the general worldview that sees the destruction of European Jewry as part of the flow of Jewish history, as a terrible link in the ongoing chain of destruction that began with the destruction of the Temple. The use of the term 'holocaust' does not imply that it is an anomalous and unique event in Jewish history, but rather to emphasize the awesome proportions of this tragedy" (Farbstein 2002, 9).

10 On the structure of history in the rabbinic perspective see Yerushalmi 1982, 25. On days of memorial and the imposition of other events on these days see Yerushalmi 1982, 40–1 and footnote 19. An interesting question is why the rabbinic council preferred the tenth of Tevet to the ninth of Av. See Steinberg 1990. Perhaps the ninth of Av was considered too congested to attach to it an event of the proportions of the Holocaust. It is interesting that the idea of remembering the Holocaust on the ninth of Av was already raised at Yad Vashem in 1946. See Stauber 2000, 50. In the latter part of the 1970s, Prime Minister Menachem Begin revisited this proposal.

11 For a comprehensive and orderly discussion of the history of establishing the date see Stauber 2000, 56–60. See also, Ben Amos 1999; On the gap between tenth of Tevet and the twenty-seventh of Nissan See also Steinberg 1990 and 1991.

12 The Protocol of the Knesset, April 12, 1951. The Knesset decision was not adopted as law and had little impact. Only in 1958 was the decision adopted as law: "Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Day Law." The law includes explicit guidelines as to how the Holocaust should be memorialized.

of the day clearly reflect the centrality of "heroism" in the creation of a Holocaust memorial,[13] and the difficulty that it raised for a portion of the religious community.[14] Similarly, it appears that the connection of the twenty-seventh of Nissan is not only to the ghetto uprising but also to Israel Independence Day, which falls one week later, reflecting a clear perspective that views the establishment of the State of Israel and of Jewish self-defense as a "response" to the Holocaust.[15]

In comparing the two approaches to Holocaust memorial, geographical location also has significance. The place chosen by the Chief Rabbinate for a Holocaust memorial was Mount Zion in Jerusalem,

13 See Stauber 2000. A fascinating detail in this regard is the competition over the name of the day of memorial until the name was established as the "Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Day Law" in 1958. To that point, the day of memorial on the twenty-seventh of Nissan was called by a number of names by Yad Vashem, such as "The Day of the Ghetto Uprising" and "The Day of Memorial of the Holocaust and the Rebellion." See idem. This was true even though the phrase "Holocaust and Heroism" was set already in the "Martyrs and Heroes Commemoration (Yad Va-Shem) Law" in 1953. The argument appeared again explicitly in later Knesset deliberations. See the Protocol of the Knesset, session 262, March 27, 1961, 1505; see also the statement of Yitshak Zuckerman cited by Stauber 2000, 140.

14 In 1951, the Chief Rabbinate published a "prayer book" in advance of the twenty-seventh of Nissan entitled "Prayer Book for the Twenty-Seventh of Nissan – The Day of Holocaust and Mourning"! The prayer book can be found in Baumel 1992, 155. The benefit of the expression "Holocaust and Heroism" as opposed to the name originally adopted ("Holocaust and the Ghetto Uprising") is that it leaves the expression "heroism" open for interpretation. The religious Zionists could interpret it in the traditional Jewish sense as martyrdom to sanctify the name of God. There were those who opposed this name for that very reason, so that it not be given that interpretation. See the statement of MK Rabbi M. Nurock of the National Religious Party and the opposing stance of MK Emma Talmi of the left wing Mapam party in the deliberation on the law in the Knesset plenary in the Protocol of the Knesset, session 607, March 10, 1959, 386.

15 The interior minister, Ben Yehudah, who introduced the legislation for a Holocaust memorial day, stated as follows in the deliberations: "This proposal is worded in light of another law that was adopted previously by the Knesset in the context of another event that is worthy of being etched in the memory of our people – Israel Independence Day" (Protocol of the Knesset from 10 March, 1959, 1385).

near the traditional burial site of King David.[16] There is no doubt that Friedlander is correct in asserting that the selection of this site derived from the perspective that the State of Israel is the first stage of messianic redemption. The setting establishes a connection between the Holocaust and the redemption,[17] which is symbolized by the "Messiah, the son of David." In addition, Mount Zion and King David are associated not only with the future redemption but also with the Temple that was destroyed. As such, this placement creates an unequivocal link between the Holocaust and the essence of ancient Jewish history.[18] In contrast, the placement of Yad Vashem, the official Holocaust memorial, opposite Mount Herzl, expresses the connection between holocaust and rebirth. Both the twenty-seventh of Nissan and the placement of Yad Vashem lack any connection to Jewish tradition. Looking toward a new Jewish future characterized by Jewish independence and self-defense, in contrast to the prototypical

16 Mount Zion was transferred to the authority of the Ministry of Religion immediately after it was liberated in 1948. Minister Y. L. Maimon appointed the Director General, S. Z. Kahane, as the one responsible for the holy sites including Mount Zion. Rabbi Kahane was the son of the last rabbi of Warsaw and was highly motivated to create a memorial for the Holocaust, an effort in which he was involved already in 1946. He therefore initiated the move to turn Mount Zion into a Holocaust memorial. In 1949, the ashes of victims of the Holocaust were brought to Israel and buried on Mount Zion, a point that contributed to turning the site into a Holocaust memorial. Indeed, the Hall of the Communities on Mount Zion was for many years the focal point for conducting prayers and activities to memorialize the Holocaust, and served as a meeting place for survivors on various memorial days for particular communities. See Stauber 2000, 136.

17 See *Agadat ha-Sorfim ba-Esh*, which was written by Rabbi Kahane, the founder of the site (mentioned in the previous note), at http://moreshet.co.il/kahane/tavnit2.

18 In those years, Jerusalem was divided and Mount Zion was the closest place from which to see the Temple Mount, the site of the destroyed Temple. Many Jews came there, particularly on holidays, to see the Temple Mount, to pray and to perform an act of remembrance for the commandment of the festival pilgrimages.

"exile Jew," they find in the ghetto uprising the historical anchor onto which the "new" Jew can grasp.[19]

The gap between the past and the future hovers between the tenth of Tevet and the twenty-seventh of Nissan – an attempt to create a memorial for the Holocaust that views it as part of the continuity of Jewish history versus an attempt to create a memorial that views it as a cataclysmic event representing the beginning of a radically new era in Jewish history. It is a gap between "holocaust and redemption" and "holocaust and heroism," between divine redemption and human strength, between the Davidic messiah and Herzl. It is a gap that pits tradition and continuity against rupture and change.

b Haredi Opposition to Holocaust Memorial

While the religious Zionist community observes both of the official Holocaust memorial days, the *haredi* community, as mentioned earlier, observes neither. Neither day is mentioned in *haredi* journalism, in *haredi* synagogues or in *haredi* educational institutions. It is easy to understand *haredi* opposition to the twenty-seventh of Nissan, since it clearly has no connection to Jewish tradition.[20] Why, however, do the *haredim* reject the tenth of Tevet, which reflects a traditional approach to memorializing. Even if we assume that the opposition is based on the "innovation" of imposing the Holocaust on the tenth of Tevet rather than on the ninth of Av, or on a challenge to the authority of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, we are left with the compelling question of why the *haredi* community did not establish an alternative date to remember the Holocaust. The liturgy – the elegies of Tisha

19 For comprehensive research on the discussion regarding the relationship between the Holocaust and the rebirth of the State of Israel, see Gorny 2003.

20 In 1983–5, two *haredi* educators in the United States contributed articles to *The Jewish Observer* that constituted a reformulation and finalization of Rabbi Hutner's article in 1977. These articles summarized the points of opposition to the twenty-seventh of Nissan: that no mourning is permitted in the month of Nissan, that the date emphasizes the physical heroism aspect rather than the spiritual and that it hints at a connection to Israel Independence Day. See Baumel 1992, 81.

B'Av and other penitential poems – is recognized in the *haredi* community as a medium for preserving collective Jewish memory (Yerushalmi 1982, 43–5). Why, then, did the Holocaust not find expression, at least, in the elegies of the ninth of Av?

In fact, quite a few elegies were written on the Holocaust. The first was apparently the well-known liturgical poem "*Eli, Eli, Nafshi Bekhi*" (Oh God, my God, my soul cries), which was written by Yehudah Leib Bialer in Warsaw in 1948 (Bialer 1957, 45). In addition, notable rabbinic figures composed elegies on the Holocaust, including Rabbi Shmuel Wazner, one of the important rabbis in the Bnei Brak community, and the Rebbe of Bobov, Rabbi Moshe Halberstam.[21] Nevertheless, these works were not included in the elegies of Tisha B'Av, nor did they find their way into printed prayer books. In places where these elegies were recited, they were read from printed sheets that were distributed among the congregation. Even the significant pressure from lay and rabbinic leaders to have them included in published prayer books was rebuffed.[22] It seems to me that the most important factor that prevented the inclusion of these works in prayer books was that a number of notable rabbis expressed explicit and forceful opposition to the recitation of elegies on Tisha B'Av in memory of the Holocaust. The stature of the rabbis who took an oppositional stance was much greater than those who supported the formal adoption of these elegies. Those who expressed their op-

21 The most complete collection of elegies written for the holocaust can be found in Mayer 2002.

22 On the attempts of Rabbi M. Kasher see Rosen 2000. On the pressure exercised by Uri Haim Lifschitz in the mid-1970s, see Mayer 2002. On the pressure exerted by Pinchas Hertzka and his correspondence on the matter see Hertzka 1984. On requests to the Hazon Ish to establish a memorial day for the Holocaust, see Brown 2003, 429–31. On the discomfort with the lack of a process of memorial and mourning for the Holocaust see Schwartz 1986 (esp. 282–9). In this context, it is important as well to see the comments of the Rebbe of Slonim, who writes: "Should we not fear that God will, heaven forbid, take revenge on the great scholars and enlighteners of Israel who denied tens of thousands of victims a proper eulogy?" See Brazovsky 1987, 15–16. For a summary of the arguments that appear in halakhic literature against the establishment of a process of mourning and memorial for the Holocaust see Mayer 2002, 10–11, although his approach is to try to prove the opposite.

position included some leading rabbis: Rabbi Avraham Yeshayahu Karlitz, the Hazon Ish (Karelitz 1939, 1: 96); Rabbi Yitshak Zev Soloveitchik, the Brisker Rav in Jerusalem (Sternbuch 1989, #721); and Rabbi Menachem Shach, head of the Ponovitz Yehiva (Schwartz 1986, 288); also prominent Chassidic leaders: Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Rebbe of Lubavitch;[23] and Rabbi Yekutiel Yehudah Halberstam, the Rebbe of Klausenberg (Mayer 2002); and even Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, the unquestioned leader of modern Orthodoxy in America (Arazi 1972). These rabbis were without a doubt the most influential personalities in the Orthodox world in both Israel and the United States in the latter half of the twentieth century. Since they were from the generation of Holocaust survivors, their authority on this issue had additional weight. Many of them experienced the horrors of the Holocaust and lost their families. For example, Rabbi Yitshak Zev Soloveitchik lost his wife and four children, and the Rebbe of Klausenberg lost his wife and her eleven children. The opposition of these rabbis precluded any possibility that the attempt to include memorials to the Holocaust among the elegies of the ninth of Av, and even more so those of the tenth of Tevet, would succeed. This opposition is surprising and begs for explanation.

It was not only the recitation of elegies in memory of the Holocaust that was rejected. Other methods of memorializing – such as the establishment of an eternal day of memorial, a collective period of *shiva*, etc. – that were proposed both by Holocaust survivors and by rabbis who had a particular affinity to this issue were also unable to overcome the opposition of the rabbinic leadership.[24] As a result, no

23 See Rosen 2002. Rabbi Jacob Hecht, one of the prominent figures in the Chabad movement, explains his opposition to the composition of a new elegy for the Holocaust. Among other arguments, he claims: "We have enough elegies. [...] What we need now is healthy Jews, both physically and emotionally whole, who conduct their lives and their households according to the Torah, happy to do the will of their creator [...]." (cited in Baumel 1992, 42). See also on the Chabad Internet site, *The Laws of Tisha B'Av* by Rabbi Y. Ginzberg.

24 See note 21. The discomfort of the *haredi* community with regard to the lack of a memorial day for the Holocaust is evident in Schwartz 1986. See also Weinberg 1998, vol. 2, section 31: "In my opinion, it is appropriate to establish a day of memorial for the rabbis and the martyrs who were killed, slaughtered,

traditional memorial was established or organized by the *haredi* community.[25]

The nature of the rabbinic opposition to Holocaust memorial is even more surprising when we consider that during the period that Jews lived in Europe, they established a number of memorial days in the Jewish calendar on which were observed the same traditional practices of mourning as those practiced on days of mourning for the destruction of the Temple. Thus, for example, the twentieth of Sivan was observed as a day of prayer and public fasting until the outbreak of the Holocaust. This day was established by Rabbeinu Tam in memory of those who perished in the Edict of Bloish in 1171.[26] On this same date in 1648, the Nemerov pogroms took place, in which thousands of Jews were killed by the troops of Bogdan Chmielniczki. In 1650, the date was established by the Council of the Four Lands as a day of memorial for the victims of the Nemerov Decrees (Halperin 1945, 78). Once again, a new day of memorial was imposed on an

and burned to sanctify the name of God, and to remember the souls of these martyrs on this day."

25 It is interesting to note in this context the more popular manner in which memorials were created in the course of time without the approval of the great religious authorities. See, for example, the article by Baumel 1995, who surveys the various ways that individuals and groups chose to memorialize the Holocaust in a private, unofficial manner. One of the methods was the publication of memorial volumes for communities, similar to the *Memoir Bukh* (Memory book) that was the custom in the Middle Ages. Baumel surveys 300 volumes of this sort.

26 *Sefer Hazekhirah* (Memorial volume) written by Rabbi Ephraim of Narvonne is quoted in Haberman 1997, 126: "On Wednesday, the twentieth of Sivan 4931 [=1171], all of the communities in France, distant counties, and the Rhine accepted upon themselves a day of eulogizing and fasting on their own accord and in fulfillment of the directive of Rabbeinu Yaacov ben Harav R. Meir (Rabbeinu Tam), who wrote correspondence about it and informed them that it would be appropriate to establish a universal fast day for all of our people, that would be greater than the fast day of Tzom Gedaliah ben Ahikam, for 'it is a day of atonement.' This is the language of our master, and so he wrote, and it is correct, and so it has been accepted by the Jews. The liturgical poem '*Hatanu Tsureinu*' is based on this." See Urbach 1980, 111–12. On this entire matter see also Yerushalmi 1982, 48.

existing day, "a day on which the troubles multiplied."[27] The authority of the rabbis to establish memorial days was clearly recognized, not only in practice, but also in Jewish legal literature. Thus, for example, Rabbi Yoel Sirkus wrote:

> The positive commandment [of reciting prayers at times of need] includes a commandment to cry out and fast on days on which decrees were issued and great troubles occurred, even after the trouble has passed. This is also a component of repentance, that all should know that these horrible events took place because of their inappropriate behavior.[28]

The "Magen Avraham," one of the prominent commentators on the *Shulhan Arukh* who himself experienced the Chmielniczki pogroms, writes of the custom to fast, to afflict oneself, and to say penitential prayers that were composed to memorialize the Decrees of 1648–9:

> On Friday of the week in which the Torah portion of *Hukkat* is read, some individuals fast because on that day, twenty wagons filled with holy books were burned in France [...] and also in the year 1648, two large communities were destroyed on the same day as recorded in the penitential prayer composed by the *Siftei Kohen*. There is also a custom to fast on the twentieth of Sivan in the entire Kingdom of Poland.[29]

27 It is an interesting fact that at the beginning of the discussion on Holocaust memorial, the twentieth of Sivan was suggested as an appropriate day by Dr. Yom Tov Levinsky. See Stauber 2000, 50–2. Similarly, it is a fascinating fact in this context that, because of the censor, Haim Nahman Bialik called his essay on the Kishinev Pogroms in 1903 "*Masa Nemirov*" and only later changed it to "*Mi-gei Ha-harigah*" (From the Valley of Death).

28 The Bakh (one of the great Jewish legal authorities in Poland during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), *Tur*, *Orah Haim* 580.

29 Rabbi Avraham Avli Halevi Gumbiner (Poland, 1637–83), *Magen Avraham*, *Shulhan Arukh, Orah Haim*, 580:8; the *Siftei Kohen* mentioned here is the *Shakh*, Rabbi Shabtai Kohen (Lithuania, 1621–62), one of the important legal authorities, who also experienced the Chmielniczki pogroms and wrote elegies on the events. See also Rabbi David Halevi, *Taz* on *Shulhan Arukh, Orah Haim*, 566:2.

Armed with these arguments and this tradition, many survivors turned to the rabbis to request the creation of a memorial for the Holocaust, but their request was refused.[30]

A *haredi* writer who addressed this issue, expressing criticism of the lack of a day of Holocaust memorial in *haredi* society was Rabbi Yoel Schwartz. In spite of the conspicuous criticism, he writes:

> Not all of the scholars of the generation agreed with the Hazon Ish on this matter (see, for example, the response of Rabbi Yehiel Weinberg, Responsa *Sridei Esh*, Vol. II, p. 53). Nevertheless, it is clearly understood that it is impossible to enact any enactment without the agreement of the greatest scholars of the generation. The very opposition of great scholars such as the Hazon Ish inherently nullifies any possibility of establishing a memorial day for the Holocaust (Schwartz 1986, 287).[31]

The Hazon Ish, Rabbi Avraham Yeshayahu Karlin, was the unquestioned leader of the *haredi* community in the 1940s and the early 1950s.[32] Schwartz's point was precisely correct: the opposition of the Hazon Ish silenced the discussion. His decisive stance prevented the entry of elegies for the Holocaust into the prayer book, the establishment of a day of Holocaust memorial, or any other traditionally accepted form of memorial. The Hazon Ish not only prevented memorial of the Holocaust in the modern Israeli fashion, he prevented any expression through the liturgy or other accepted forms of Jewish memorial. In response to a person who requested the establishment of a halakhically acceptable day of mourning for the Holocaust, the Hazon Ish wrote:

30 On the despair of Rabbi M. Kasher because of the refusal of the rabbis to cooperate with him in his attempt to establish elegies for the Holocaust on the ninth of Av see Rosen 2000.

31 Schwartz is one of the prolific writers in the *haredi* community, but his writings are not stereotypical. His reflective look at *haredi* society and his veiled criticism of the rabbis is an unusual phenomenon. See as well his discussion of the connection between Zionism and the Holocaust, 122–37. On Schwartz and his discussion of the Holocaust see Caplan 2002, 144–58.

32 On the central position of the Hazon Ish in fashioning the character of *haredi* orthodoxy in Israel see Brown 2002, 2003.

> Halakhic matters are established by the Torah, where the fundamental principles are recorded in written form and are explained in the Oral Law. Even a prophet is not allowed to innovate something without some reliance on the Torah. Just as a failure to fulfill a commandment is an aberration, so too an addition beyond the commandments of the Torah is an aberration.
>
> On this basis, one must ask a legal question of a scholar whether it is appropriate to observe seven days of mourning for the terrible troubles that we experienced. If we are obligated, we do not need confirmation. But if we are exempt, we must take care to observe the exemption, because it is the Torah that exempts us, and "to obey is more important than offering a sacrifice." The suggestion to gather, establish and do, decree, and fulfill is to deal flippantly, heaven forbid, with the foundation of Jewish law. It is appropriate to remove it from the agenda before it is raised.
>
> So too, the establishment of a fast day for generations is considered a rabbinic commandment, which could only be done at the time that we still had prophecy. How can we be so brazen, a generation that should remain quiet, to consider establishing things for the generations. Such a suggestion testifies that we rebuff all of our sins and our lowliness, at a time when we are sullied with our sins and transgressions, poor and empty of Torah, and naked of commandments. Let us not make ourselves greater than we are. Let us examine our ways and repent. This is our obligation, as it is stated: "Is this the fast that I have chosen?" (Greinimann 1939, 111; Brown 2003, 426).

The words of the Hazon Ish reflect a total rejection of any idea relating to the creation of a memorial to the Holocaust. On the surface, the argument of opposition is anchored in the belief that our generation is not capable of innovating, and should not aspire to do so. Indeed, there is no doubt that in the modern period, there has been a great sensitivity in rabbinic circles to any innovation. Orthodox Judaism was built on opposition to the modern aspiration to reconstruct and innovate, and was therefore cautious of any innovation, even if it was halakhically legitimate and had a precedent (Samet 2005; Katz 1992). In the context of memorializing the Holocaust, this viewpoint found expression in the positions of other rabbis as well.[33]

33 It is possible that in the age of renewed Jewish sovereignty, this concern took on an added dimension. The addition of a special day to the Jewish calendar could have been seen as identification with the religious Zionists, who sought to initiate holidays relating to the Jewish state, such as Israel Independence Day, as religious holidays. Yet it is important to note that the fierce opposition of the Hazon Ish came to expression as early as 1945, when Chief Rabbi Herzog

For example, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik said with regard to adding an elegy for the Holocaust as follows: "Who in our generation can be arrogant enough to compose new prayers?" (Arazi 1972, 324). Rabbi Shach also gave explicit expression to this view in strongly opposing the recitation of elegies for the Holocaust on the ninth of Av: "This constitutes a breaking of boundaries and provides a precedent for those who wish to restructure and reform to utilize for justifying further reforms."[34]

Nevertheless, it seems to me that in spite of the validity of this reasoning, it is not sufficient or convincing enough, particularly given the awesome proportions of the Holocaust. The Hazon Ish, in his previously mentioned correspondence, deals directly with the aforementioned commandment to establish fast days in memory of the destruction. His response, that it "could only be done at the time that we still had prophecy," is both weak and unclear. It would seem that the opposite is the case, that the prophet might not innovate while the rabbis were entrusted with the power to issue enactments, particularly with regard to additions and stringencies as opposed to leniencies. In fact, the rabbis did so throughout the generations (Brown 2003, 428–9). In reality, in spite of the unquestioned status of the Hazon Ish, his position with regard to the Holocaust was subject to halakhic challenge by a Holocaust survivor who served as a rabbi in the United States, an individual whose stature was much below that of the Hazon Ish (Spitz 1980; Brown 2003, appendix 28: 195). This critique, and the fact that it received a respectable voice, is an unparalleled phenomenon. It is difficult to find another subject on which such a strong attack was waged against the opinion of the Hazon Ish. This fact strengthens the argument that the *haredi* community felt uncomfortable with the positions of its leaders. At the same time, this

proposed to organize a day of mourning or memorial for the Holocaust. See Brown 2003, 425.

34 Cited in Schwartz 1986, 288. See also the discussion of Rabbi Yissachar Goldstein, in Goldstein 1989 #40. Rabbi Goldstein was one of the radical *haredi* rabbis who waved the banner of opposition to innovation. Therefore, in his support for the recitation of elegies for the holocaust, he dealt explicitly with the problem of innovation. The concern with regard to innovation in this context has a unique and important quality.

reaction seemed to strengthen the resolve of the leadership, in spite of the criticism and the internal lack of comfort.

In reading the previously cited quote from the Hazon Ish, I also get the strong impression that the argument against innovation actually conceals the real reason for the ruling, which is not explicitly stated. First, the response is not an orderly halakhic discussion, characteristic of the Hazon Ish, and in fact, it relies on no halakhic sources.[35] In addition, the statements of the Hazon Ish are characterized by an undercurrent of denigration for the request to create a memorial for the Holocaust. One example is his use of the terminology "to gather, establish and do, decree, and fulfill." Similarly, the biblical verses that he quotes also imply a denigration of the very suggestion proposed.[36] Benjamin Brown, in his thesis on the Hazon Ish, suggests that the opposition of the Hazon Ish derived from the difficulty that the *haredi* community faced in dealing with the Holocaust on an ideological level. First, is the theological problem of how to explain God's involvement in the world in the face of such a great destruction of Jews. Second, is the problem of how to explain the failure of the great Torah scholars to help save their people, especially in light of accusations raised by the Zionists. Brown claims that the Hazon Ish, and many other rabbis, wished therefore "to lessen the memory of the Holocaust and the difficulties inherent in it" (Brown 2003, 432). Brown admits

35 In contrast, see the halakhic discourse of Chief Rabbi Herzog, Herzog 1999, 435.

36 The first verse is taken from 1 Samuel 15:22: "And Samuel said: 'Has the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in hearkening to the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams'." It expresses sarcasm toward those who believe that it is possible to atone for an external action by not following the true word of God. The second verse, quoted from Isaiah 58:5–7, also expresses sarcasm toward those who believe that fasting rather than good deeds are the essence: "Is such the fast that I have chosen? The day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the fetters of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out to your house?" See Brown 2003, 426–7.

that this sense remains only a speculation, since it does not emerge from the text, but he contends that it is not without foundation (Brown 2003). It seems to me that Brown's contention is unconvincing, at least as a sole argument. *Haredi* literature does in fact deal specifically with both of these issues in a broad manner. The theological problem is the classical issue of "the righteous person who suffers," which has been discussed at length by Jewish thinkers throughout the ages. The subject was also dealt with extensively in religious literature in the wake of the Holocaust.[37] The issue of the behavior of the great Torah scholars was also addressed, although to a lesser degree and somewhat apologetically (Caplan 2002; Friedman 1990).[38] Paradoxically, the *haredi* community viewed the Holocaust as a theological victory of sorts, since they utilized it to attack modernity after previously having been on the defensive against modernity before the Holocaust. The question posed was not "Where was God in the Holocaust?" but "Where was man"? – where were humanistic ethics and progress? (Schwartz 1986, 138–79). This viewpoint was even expressed by Rabbi Yehudah Amital, a modern Orthodox rabbi:

> Can we believe in mankind after what the Nazis and their collaborators did to our people? [...] It is not possible to have faith in man after this. Furthermore,

37 In reality, this subject was already addressed during the time of the Holocaust. The most famous person to deal with it was Rabbi Kalonymus Kalmish Schapiro, the Rebbe of Pietsesna who was one of the most influential spiritual leaders in the Warsaw Ghetto. See his book, written in the ghetto during the Holocaust and preserved and published after he perished, Kalonymus 1960; Farbstein 2002, 429; Michman 1996; Schweid 1996. On religious thought after the Holocaust, see Berkowitz 1973; Schweid 1996; Fackenheim 1989, 65. Fackenheim rails against any attempt to find a theological "explanation," a reason, or meaning for the Holocaust. Rather, he emphasizes in his writings the Jewish will to live, and the dedication of the Jews to their people and faith, which came to expression in the establishment of the State of Israel as a manifestation of commitment to the continuity of Jewish history. See Schwartz 1986, 37–137. A fascinating and important religious approach is that of Rabbi Yehudah Amital: Maya 2002, 116. See the analysis of Maya 2002, 42–50. On the position of Rabbi Tsvi Yehudah Kook, see Rosen-Zvi 2002. See also Berkowitz 1979; Fackenheim 1978.

38 Among other things, they launched an attack against the Zionists and their "collaboration" with the Nazis. See Porat 1994.

> [...] they say that they believe in man and that is what gave them the power. We saw to what depths man is able to sink. Happy are we, and how good is our lot, that we believe in God (Maya 2002, 103; Wolf 1980, 192).

From the perspective of the believing Jew, the world of those who cast their fate with man and his ethics, with equal rights and the enlightened culture, was shattered.[39]

39 One explanation that arose for opposition to any type of memorial for the Holocaust was that the depth of the pain did not allow for it to be expressed in words. It is difficult to be convinced that this is not an apologetic argument. An excellent example of this position is the statement of the Rebbe of Slonim, whose positions will be discussed further on. With regard to the holding of prayer services or days of mourning and the like, he writes: "Not only that no memory remained of the martyrs, may God avenge their blood [...] but that also after the Holocaust, their deaths and memory were not given an everlasting memorial. [...] The heart languishes that after such a vast destruction, no memorial, eulogy or lament was established, as was done following the edicts of 1648–49 – the establishment of the 20th of Sivan as a day of fasting and penitential prayer – which was relatively a much smaller tragedy, or the way that elegies were written regarding the massacres in the Middle Ages and the Crusades [...] When Jews sit on the floor on the ninth of Av and lament the destruction of the Temple, they pour out their hearts for these tragedies as well, and in this manner their memory is preserved among the Jewish people. How are the decrees of the Holocaust different from these other decrees? Without a doubt, it would be appropriate to establish for them a day of fasting and lamentation" (Brazovsky 1987, 15–16). The response of the Rebbe is that silence is preferable, in the same sense that "Aaron was silent" (after the deaths of his two sons – Leviticus 10:3), in that there are no words that are capable of expressing the depth of the pain.

2 The Function of Memory: Renewal of the Continuity of the Generations

a Building or Rehabilitation: The Holocaust and the Jewish World in its Wake

I would like to suggest alternative reasons for the rabbinic opposition to memorializing the Holocaust, be it in the format accepted by Israeli society or even in the more accepted traditional formats discussed above. I will try to demonstrate that this difference of opinion reflects a gap between different objects of memory, that the past that the *haredi* leaders wished to preserve was fundamentally different than the past that Israeli society sought to preserve. This distinction mandates different formats of memorial. My claim is that both Holocaust memorial day and traditional days of memorial share the desire to remember the tragedy and to preserve consciousness of the destruction and its catastrophic implications. I argue that the rabbinic leaders did not want to memorialize the Holocaust in this manner. They wished to focus not on the destruction and the destroyers, but rather on the world that was destroyed. Following the Holocaust, the religious community felt that its world had been shattered, and that memorializing this destruction was a privilege that it could not grant itself at this stage. The existential imperative was to awaken memory of the world that was destroyed. Clearly, this memory focused on a very specific aspect of that world. In order to strengthen its importance, it was necessary to forget other aspects of the Jewish world that was destroyed. This approach does not differ in its perception of the enormity of the catastrophe but derives from the sense of urgency, that most energies had to be directed toward restoration and rebuilding. For this purpose, the function of remembering was to preserve the memory of the world before the destruction, so that its image could serve as the blueprint for the world that was to be built.

The State of Israel in its very essence sought to create a new Jewish world, a world that constituted a response to the Holocaust.

Certainly, the memory of the Holocaust served this goal. The Holocaust represented the great crisis, the turning point from the old order to the new. The memory of the Holocaust represented a paradigm of the suffering of the Jews in dispersion, the injustice that was perpetrated against them and their helplessness in the absence of a homeland of their own and the ability to protect themselves. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the Holocaust became a moral justification for the state. It validated the aspiration to create a new reality of Jewish sovereignty in which Jews would be able to defend themselves. In contrast, the rabbinic leadership wanted to rebuild the old world, to piece together the shards of the world that had been shattered, a world that was from their perspective a living and vibrant spiritual world.

While Israeli society wished in its memory of the Holocaust to emphasize the catastrophe as a contrast to the new Jewish world that was in the process of being built, *haredi* society wished to deemphasize the catastrophe in order to claim that it was rebuilding a world that was a direct continuation of the world that was. Each society sought in the collective memory a legitimization for the world that it wished to create – for Israeli society, the catastrophe and the helplessness; for *haredi* society, the memory of the rich spiritual world that was destroyed.

b "At Least Let Us Save Their Spirit": Memory of the Holocaust or Memory of the World That Was Destroyed

Rabbi Shalom Noah Brazovsky (d. 2000), the Rebbe of Slonim, one of the important and prolific leaders and thinkers in the post-Holocaust Hassidic community, dealt a great deal in his writings and speeches with the Holocaust, its meaning, its implications, and the means of preserving its memory. A number of his writings and speeches on the subject were collected and published in one volume (Brazovsky 1987). The collection opens with an article entitled "Remember What

Amalek Did to You," which deals with the biblical commandment to remember:[40]

> And behold, it is distressing that from year to year what Amalek did to us in our generation is increasingly forgotten. Even if forgetting is a natural process, for such a horrible catastrophe the likes of which have not been witnessed since the creation of the world, the process of forgetting is much too rapid. This will lead to a new generation that will not know at all what took place there, and what great Jews lived in that generation (Brazovsky 1987, 7).

We see that the forgotten memory that so disturbed the Rebbe was the memory of "the great Jews who lived in that generation." The Rebbe continues and elaborates:

> The imperative to remember includes firstly what we find in the Torah – that a Jew is obligated to always remember what Amalek did. Amalek represents the evil forces of creation [...] at one time Amalek and Agag, at another time Haman or Hitler, may his name be blotted out [...] The intent is to delve into it and understand, but even if it is impossible to grasp,[41] you must remember what Amalek did *to you* [emphasis in the original text], what we lost. The fact that we lost in our generation a complete link in the chain of the generations, a complete generation lost, an especially great generation, with outstanding people and spiritual giants. The meaning of remembering includes an aspect of study -- to follow in their footsteps and learn in their ways (ibid., 7–8).

The original interpretation of the Rebbe with regard to the biblical commandment to remember, "Remember what Amalek did to you," is that he transferred the emphasis from the word "Amalek" to

40 Amalek was a nation that attacked the Israelites just after they were liberated from Egypt. The Torah includes a commandment to remember what Amalek did. The use of the term "Amalek" to refer to the Nazis is significant, as it demonstrates the desire to view the Holocaust within the accepted historical contexts, and to see it as part of the continuity of Jewish history. It also implies that its remembrance is associated with the biblical commandment. See note 9, above.

41 The intent is that it is impossible to understand the Holocaust using the usual instruments of thought and faith, and that perhaps there is therefore no reason to deal with it. In the beginning of the article, the Rebbe stated in this context as follows: "The history of the Jewish people is filled with difficult chapters that are impossible to understand and grasp, but there is one chapter that is completely closed, and that is the very appropriate expression for the horrible destruction [...]" (Brazovsky 1987, 7).

the word "you." The commandment to remember Amalek does not relate to Amalek at all, but "the meaning of remembering includes an aspect of study." Memory does not relate to the destruction, and certainly not to the destroyers, but rather to what was lost. The method of preserving the world that was lost is "to follow in their footsteps and learn in their ways" – in other words, restoration and reconstruction.

In his introduction to the section cited above, the Rebbe indirectly negates an alternative method of remembering the Holocaust:

> Six million Jews, among them one million children and infants who had not tasted of sin, were murdered in abnormal ways, publicly burned alive in fiery ovens. The mind and heart of man are limited in the amount of pain that they are able to tolerate, and they cannot internalize more than their measure. There is no expression that can express the tragedy, there is no brain that can grasp it, and no heart that can feel the depths of the pain (ibid., 7).

It is clear from his words that there is no sense in dealing with something that cannot be fathomed. Although we are not capable of handling the depths of the pain of what was lost, the same is not true of the recognition and understanding of the world that was lost. In another place, the Rebbe addresses the commandment to remember Amalek in the concrete context of the Holocaust:

> This commandment is placed on the conscience of every Jew in our generation – to remember and not to forget. Let us awaken and exalt the memory of "Jerusalem," the memory of the source of holiness with which we were blessed during our exile in Europe, that was wiped out with such awful brutality without a remnant. We will pass on to the coming generation the imprint of this most glorious period, a time in which Torah Judaism and Hassidism were at the pinnacle of their development and growth: we will tell them about the spiritual giants, the cedars of Lebanon and the pillars of Torah who enlightened our people (ibid., 1987, 17).

In using the term "Jerusalem," the Rebbe is referring to Lithuania, which he viewed as the penultimate Jewish community. The summary and essence of remembering is that we "pass on to the coming generation the imprint of this most glorious period." Therefore, the "source of holiness" that was wiped out, the "imprint of the

period," and the "spiritual giants" are the objects of our memory. By remembering them, we fulfill the biblical commandment to "remember what Amalek did to you."

In the continuation of his speech, the Rebbe explains the essence and importance of transmitting the story to future generations. This is, in my opinion, the essence of his approach:

> This remembering serves as the foundation for the spiritual standing of coming generations. For the continuity of the generations is based on the concept of "*mekablin dein min dein*" ("receiving one from another"). It is like a chain in which each link is intertwined with its neighbor. This connection is the basis of its existence. The great difficulty for the generation after the Holocaust is how to bind the chain together [...] For when one link of the chain is loosened, the two sides can no longer be joined. How will the next generation receive the light that comes down from generation to generation? (ibid., 18)[42]

The validity and vibrancy of a tradition is in its power to serve as "a chain in which each link is intertwined with its neighbor, and this connection is the basis of its existence." The Sages placed great importance on the claim of continuity of the tradition of Oral Law from which their power derived: "Moses received the Torah at Sinai and passed it on to Joshua, and Joshua to the Elders [...]" (Mishnah Avot 1:1). There is no question that the narrative of preserving continuity and the transmission of Torah occupied a central position in all of the generations, for inherent within it is the basis of the authority and validity of Jewish law (Yerushalmi 1982, 31–2). The argument of the Rebbe is that the force of the Holocaust grants it a significance that transcends the tragic deaths of millions of people. The Holocaust severed the continuity of the generations that is the source of the vibrancy of the Jewish people and its culture, and thus threatened the continued spiritual existence of the people: "how will the next

42 The amazing thing is that the Rebbe made comments of this sort at a gathering of Slonim Hassidim at the very end of the war in May 1945: "We have gathered here, the remnants of our people – shaken, dazed, broken, and neglected from enormity of destruction of our people, to strengthen ourselves and comfort one another, those who God left as a remnant, to restore our ruins and strengthen our holy society, and to continue the golden chain from generation to generation" (ibid., 9).

generation receive the light that comes down from generation to generation?" From this, we can understand why remembering has such importance and spiritual significance: "it serves as the foundation for the spiritual standing of coming generations." Remembering has the potential to restore and renew the continuity of the tradition:

> The memory of the destruction and annihilation obligates us. If we were not able to save these martyrs physically, it is our obligation to at least save their spirit. [...] The special role of our generation is to establish anew the legion of the King that was destroyed and to dedicate our best energies to the education of the new generation. [...] The memory of the Holocaust awakens us to this task (Brazovsky 1987, 18–19).

In these comments, the Rebbe placed upon his followers a difficult and responsible role. Yet, he also aroused enthusiasm and inspiration to save the world that was destroyed from oblivion: "to at least save their spirit." Their role is to be the next link in the chain of tradition – "to establish anew the legion of the King," "to know the great responsibility to establish the future generation."[43] Toward that end, it is necessary to reconnect to the chain the link that was so damaged. In order to achieve this goal, the Rebbe suggested, among other things, to make the survivors of the Holocaust talk, so that they would tell their stories:

> The remnant, the survivors who still merited to see the light, must serve as a conduit to transmit the flame that shined in previous generations to the youth of the new generation. [...] This heritage will provide a small degree of balm and healing to the broken of our generation, and will help to connect the two ends of the chain, so that our new generation will inherit its path from our glorious past (ibid., 18).

The encouragement of Holocaust survivors to tell their stories is well known to us today. Its goal is to give testimony to the horrors of the Holocaust. In contrast, the Rebbe wished to achieve, through the testimony of the survivors, a completely different goal. He viewed the survivors of the Holocaust as those "who still merited to see the light,"

43 Brazovsky, ibid., 10, delivered at the gathering of Hassidim at the very end of the war.

the light of the world that preceded the destruction. The Rebbe would not even consider encouraging survivors to talk about where they were and what they experienced during the Holocaust, nor apparently would he consider it important. Rather, he viewed it as crucial to hear the stories of the survivors about the world that they experienced prior to the destruction. This story serves as the "conduit" that transmits the light from the generation before the holocaust to the generation after. It connects "the two ends of the chain." If the popularly recognized slogan of Holocaust memorial is "Never again!" the slogan of the Rebbe would be "Again, forever!" – we will continue to live and restore the world that was destroyed.

One of the central motifs in the religious, and particularly the *haredi*, narrative of the Holocaust is that of *Kiddush Hashem*[44] (the sanctification of God's name) during the Holocaust, the story of Jews who struggled to continue the observance of a few of the commandments, even at the gates of hell.[45] Not only is the heroic struggle to continue the observance of commandments stressed in this literature, but also the preservation of faith, prayer and trust in God – clinging to

44 The concept of *Kiddush Hashem* in Jewish tradition relates to giving up one's life rather than saving oneself by forfeiting one's faith. See Maimonides, *Sefer ha-Mitzvot*, Positive commandment 9: "This is the commandment of *Kiddush Hashem* that all Jews are commanded to follow – that is, allowing ourselves to be killed by force because of our love of God and our belief in His unity." In other words, it is giving up of one's life for the sake of religious belief, a practice that has a long tradition and is deeply ingrained in the memory of Ashkenazi Jewry from the Edicts of 1096, known as the Crusades. Nevertheless, we must remember that the Holocaust was not a religious struggle per se and could not be escaped by forfeiting one's religious beliefs. Therefore, the concept of *Kiddush Hashem* was actually transformed, with regard to the Holocaust, to refer to the readiness to accept difficult sacrifices for the sake of dedication to the Torah and its commandments.

45 See Eliach 1988. Eliach analyzes the significance of observing tradition as the acquisition of spiritual freedom – the creation of a meaningful life within the reality of slavery in which they found themselves. It is important to note that this idea is found in the tradition of the Sages, who spoke about the fact that the Children of Israel in Egypt preserved their identity through spiritual freedom.

faith in spite of the great tribulations.[46] The Rebbe of Slonim wrote in the previously mentioned volume as follows:

> These will I remember – also the lights in the fog that shone within the darkness, specifically in the days when vision terminated, [...] the unvanquished holy ones whose natural Jewish spirit was not broken and did not surrender [...] The essence of their war of opposition was not expressed in terms of temporal rebellion. [...] Therefore, they went to the altar with an exalted spirit of pride and exalted holiness (ibid., 23–4).

Amos Goldberg, who studied this phenomenon in the *haredi* press, claimed that the *haredi* use of *Kiddush Hashem* as the dominant theme in the memory of the Holocaust served three functions: (1) it provided meaning to the Holocaust within traditional categories; (2) it emphasized the standing of the believing Jew within the supreme challenge posed by the Holocaust; and (3) it established a myth of heroism to compete with the Zionist myth of physical heroism (Goldberg 1998, 167). Although I concur with all three of Goldberg's points, I believe that there is an additional and very important point that must be added, as I will explain.

In her book entitled *Be-Seter Ra'am: Halakhah Hagut u-Manhigut bi-Yemei ha-Shoah* (*Hidden in Thunder: Perspectives on Faith, Theology, and Leadership During the Holocaust*), Esther Farbstein, a *haredi* educator and historian, attempts to shed light on another dimension of the Holocaust – traditional life in the ghettos and camps, the heroism of dedication to faith and tradition.[47] The book demonstrates that the concept of *Kiddush Hashem* in the Holocaust is apparently the central concept of the memory of the Holocaust in *haredi* society, and that it is designed to accomplish the goals outlined by Goldberg. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the author has an additional, and perhaps even more important, goal – that by projecting the image of the Jew who remains true to his heritage in the face of the

46 For examples of this literature, see Aibeshits 1975; Eliav 1965; Prager 1980; Prager 1974. For examples of Jewish legal response literature, see Oshry 1983; Meisels 1954; Efrati 1947; Efrati 1960; Fuchs 1995. For research in this area, see Michman 1988; Eliach 1988; Caplan 2002; Avneri 1982.

47 See Farbstein 2002. The publication of this book represents a prime example of the increased scope in dealing with the Holocaust in *haredi* society in recent years. See Caplan 2002.

Holocaust, the author wishes to penetrate into the Jewish world that existed before the destruction. She wishes to foster the memory of a world that was, in her opinion, forgotten or erased, a world in which Torah and faith were the central components.

Elsewhere, Farbstein wrote a programmatic article on the teaching of the Holocaust, the goals and methods for teaching about Jewish life during the Holocaust.[48] The point of departure of the article is that research and instruction "ignore the reaction and experience of a large and vital part of the Jewish population that responded in its own way to the tragedy." The author surveys three existing methods of dealing with this area, and suggests a fourth method. The approach that she proposes is called the "integrative approach," which "integrates the study of religious life and spirituality into every chapter on the Holocaust." In explaining the preferability of this approach, she writes:

> They [the methods] have to uncover before the students a world of reaction that derives from their common past, to at least provide a small window to the rich Jewish world that the enemy was unable to defeat and that flowed through the ocean of troubles, and thus to strengthen the Jewish identity of the student and the pride of his belonging to the Jewish people. In this manner of teaching, religious life during the Holocaust will achieve its proper place in history, in which they were intertwined even during times of distress.

We clearly see here the deep-seated desire to utilize the Holocaust as a window for understanding the collective Jewish past, for understanding the spiritual components that the Jews brought to the Holocaust, those components that "the enemy was unable to defeat." The power of these Jewish components, rather than the power of the enemy, constitutes in the eyes of the author the object of remembering the Holocaust. The discussion of Jewish life during the Holocaust is essentially designed to understand the spiritual world that accom-

48 See E. Farbstein, "*The Unique Perspective of the Center for the Teaching of the Holocaust.*" which appears on the Internet site "Zachor: Jewish Faith during the Holocaust" at www.zachor.org.il. This site is administered by the Center for the Teaching of the Holocaust of the Michlalah College for Women in Jerusalem, a seminary for religious teachers. Ms. Farbstein is the founder and current head of the institution.

panied the Jews to the Holocaust. The real goal is to penetrate and observe the world that was destroyed in the Holocaust through a recognition of the "alternative heroism" – the response of the believing Jew to the horrors of the Holocaust. This is a good medium for achieving this goal, since the various "religious responses" were the direct result of the preparation and values that preceded the Holocaust.[49]

Rabbi Ephraim Oshry, the Rabbi of the Kovno Ghetto, who survived the Holocaust, subsequently published the religious questions that were addressed to him during the Holocaust and his responses. In this book, as well, the very difficult events that the rabbi experienced are generally mentioned only when they are relevant to the Jewish legal issue being discussed. In the introduction to his book, Rabbi Oshry indicates that it took him 15 years after the end of the war to review all of the materials that he had from the war:

> And I saw the possibility of creating with them outstanding and very valuable material that would give a comprehensive picture of the spiritual life of the prisoners of the ghetto against the backdrop of daily life during the war. And I said to myself, "this was from God" – to record responses and establish through them a memorial to the righteous and pure souls that sanctified the name of heaven in their lives and in their deaths, to be a remembrance and a remnant of

49 See Esh 1973, 240. As a historian, Esh speaks about the need to bring to light the character of the Jewish collective before the Holocaust in order to understand its responses to the events: "We must recognize the character of each segment of the Jewish community – its demographic and economic profile, its social and cultural activities, its degree of political consciousness, and its religious life. By doing all of this, we will open a window for understanding the reactions of each group when placed in distress." Farbstein goes in the opposite direction: she claims that by studying the *Kiddush Hashem* of the Jews during the Holocaust, we will thus know their world before the Holocaust. These different goals are achieved through different methods. To understand reactions to the Holocaust, Esh studies the Jewish world just before the outbreak of the Holocaust, including the spiritual background that each group brought to it. Farbstein, on the other hand, studies the behavior of Jews during the Holocaust in order to penetrate and know the world before the Holocaust. Clearly, Farbstein is interested only in one particular dimension of life before the Holocaust.

> the Jews of Lithuania, a Judaism that was rooted in its glorious academies and its outstanding rabbis (Oshry 1983, vol. I: Introduction).

According to the statement of Rabbi Oshry, the spiritual heroism of the Jews in the ghetto that comes to expression in his book is not designed to create an "alternative heroism." Rather, it is designed to enable the reader to decipher the life and values of the Jews before the outbreak of the war: "Judaism that was rooted in its glorious academies and its outstanding rabbis." Indeed, he states this more explicitly in his introduction to the fourth volume of his work:

> And this was essentially the goal that I set before myself when I published the three volumes of *Mi-Ma'amakim* (*Out of the depths*) – that just as the impact of the Jewish community of Lithuania on the larger Diaspora community was recognized because it served as a sanctuary of Torah, wisdom and ethics, so its destruction should be projected in the pages of this book (ibid., vol. IV: Introduction).

3 Restoring the Continuity of Torah Learning

a The Yeshivot *(Talmudic Academies) as Realms of Memory*

As mentioned above, the memory of the destruction of the Holocaust in Israeli society constitutes the cornerstone for the building of a new world, a different world, in which the Jews know how to deal with such threats. In contrast, in the *haredi* community, the memory of the world that was destroyed serves as the cornerstone for the restoration and reconstruction of the lost world. During the first decades after the establishment of the State of Israel, the central claim of the *haredi* community, whether explicit or implicit, was that that they were involved in restoring the world of Torah that was lost in the Holocaust.

A central and fundamental component in this process was the reestablishment of *yeshivot* that were destroyed. Both the *haredim* and the religious Zionists viewed the restoration of the *yeshivah* world as

the true monument to the world that was destroyed. The *yeshivah* was perceived and projected as the symbol of the world that was lost, a world in which Torah learning was the primary spiritual, intellectual and religious activity. Furthermore, the *yeshivah* as an institution of Torah learning was viewed as a symbol of the continuity of the generations. As such, the reconstruction of the *yeshivah* world was viewed not only as the reconstruction of the world that was lost in the Holocaust, but also as the restoration of the continuity of the chain of tradition.

One of the outstanding *yeshivot* in Israel during this period was the Ponevitch Yeshivah in Bnei Brak, which was founded by Rabbi Yosef Kahanaman (1886–1969), who prior to the war had been both the head of the *yeshivah* and the rabbi of the town of Ponevitch in Lithuania. At the time of the German occupation, Rabbi Kahanaman was on a mission of salvation outside of Lithuania and was thus able to find refuge and survive. He subsequently moved to Israel and reestablished his *yeshivah*, which became the most important and influential *yeshivah* in Israel. The building of the *yeshivah* was accomplished with the complete support, encouragement, and cooperation of the Hazon Ish. Ten years after its founding, after the *yeshivah* began to flourish and its reputation was established, Rabbi Kahanaman succeeded in completing its permanent building. He set the date for the dedication of the building on the twenty-seventh of Sivan 5713 (10 June 1953), the day on which the Nazis entered Lithuania. The dedication ceremony took on the character of a memorial ceremony, opening with the reading of the traditional memorial prayer in memory of the martyrs of the Holocaust. In the opening address at the founding of the *yeshivah*, Rabbi Kahanaman stated:

> This day, the 27th of Sivan, is a bitter and violent day on which the Nazis occupied Lithuania. [...] And thank God, on that very day we are standing here in the Holy Land, and dedicating this great and holy abode, that will serve as an eternal memorial to the students of my *yeshivah* in Ponevitch, [...] an eternal living memorial in the Holy Land (Koll 1970, 426).

Rabbi Kahanaman described the occasion of the setting of the cornerstone, ten years earlier, as follows:

> On the day of the setting of the cornerstone of the Ponevitch Yeshivah in the Land of Israel – in memory of the *yeshivah* that was destroyed in Lithuania – we did not drink juice, we drank tears. The Hazon Ish and I recited two Psalms, we poured a shovel of cement, and with this everything was concluded (ibid., 355).

The biography of Rabbi Kahanaman records the following story:

> Once, [Rabbi Kahanaman] was invited by a group of Lithuanian immigrants in Israel to a memorial service for the martyrs of Lithuania and Latvia. The speakers that preceded [Rabbi Kahanaman] said that the martyrs of Lithuania should be remembered by naming streets after them and by planting forests in their memory. The exiled Rabbi of Ponevitch reacted as follows: "The true memory of the martyrs of Lithuania will be honored and eternalized only if we build the spiritual values of their Judaism" (ibid., 392).

Thus the *yeshivah* is the ultimate memorial to the martyr of the Holocaust because it restores "the spiritual values of their Judaism." Consciously and explicitly, the *yeshivah* was built "as a memorial to the *yeshivah* that was destroyed in Lithuania," and consciously and explicitly, it constitutes "an eternal living memorial."

Approximately twenty years after the founding of the Ponevitch Yeshivah, Rabbi Kahanaman established a branch in Ashdod, a new city that was being established in the southern part of the country. The *yeshivah* was not named the Ashdod Yeshiva, nor was it called the Ponevitch Yeshivah, for it was already memorialized. Rather, it was called the Grodna Yeshivah. At the ceremony for setting the corner stone, on the fifth of Kislev 5724 (11 November 1963), in the presence of the leading rabbis from various parts of Israel, Rabbi Kahanaman stated:

> I saw my goal and my mission in life to establish a name and a remnant for the essential image of Lithuanian Jewry. [...] The crowning glory of the memorial activity will be the establishment of eighteen *yeshivot* in the Holy Land, in memory of the eighteen *yeshivot* that were destroyed in Lithuania, that have not yet merited to have their names and memory established (ibid., 485).

This motif repeats itself again and again. The *yeshivot* are the "essential image of Lithuanian Jewry," and they constitute the mem-

orial for that Judaism. The memorial is accomplished by establishing them anew, to "establish their names."

At the same event, Rabbi Yehezkiel Avramsky, the president of the Council of the Heads of Yeshivot and one of the outstanding rabbinic leaders at that time, spoke as well. In his words, he compared the activities of Rabbi Kahanaman with those of Isaac in the Book of Genesis:

> "And Isaac dug again the wells of water, which they had dug in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham; and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them" (Genesis 26:18). The Nazis, may their names be blotted out, not only sealed the wells, but also filled them in with dirt so that they never function again. But the Rabbi of Ponevitch returned, dug them again, and called them by their original names. Thus, *yeshivot* and fortresses of Torah, synagogues, and schools are being established in the Holy Land, and are called by the names that our ancestors called them. As our sages already said: "The synagogues and academies of Babylonia will in the future be established in the Land of Israel" (ibid., 488).[50]

50 The source cited at the end of the citation regarding the academies of Babylonia is taken from the Babylonian *Talmud, Megillah* 29a. S. Y. Agnon, the Nobel laureate Hebrew writer, chose this same quote as the conclusion of his outstanding novel *Ore'ah Nata la-Lun* (*A guest for the night*). The novel, which deals with the crisis faced by Polish Jewry as a result of World War I, was written after Agnon visited his hometown of Buczacz in 1930. It is somewhat ironic that the book was first published at the time of the outbreak of World War II. As demonstrated by Dan Laor, the biographer of Agnon, this led the critics to view the book as an elegy to the Jewish towns that were about to disappear. Indeed, although Agnon describes the collapse of the village, he mourns the loss of the world that it represented and its values. As stated, he chose to end the novel on an optimistic note and, one might say, a Zionist note as well: "I know that a person does not get excited about the key of our old house of study. But I said to myself, since in the near future our house of study will be re-established in the Land of Israel, it would be good for me to have the key in my possession" (Agnon 1968, 444). Indeed, there is no doubt that Agnon not only wanted to create an elegy for the destruction of European Jewry, but essentially saw himself as one who could, by virtue of the key he possessed, open up a clear window to the world of Polish Jewry before the destruction. In addition, he presents the rebuilding of the Land of Israel as the ideal place for establishing Jewish life. See also Laor 1995, 82–5.

The sense of restoration, reconstruction and continuity is clear, emanating from the words of the rabbi and all of the other speeches at the ceremony. The academies of Babylonia, and in this instance the academies of Lithuania, were being re-established in the Land of Israel. The continuity of the generations was restored and was moving forward. The image of the wells of Isaac in the comments of Rabbi Avramsky was not utilized by chance. The character of Isaac in the Book of Genesis was not that of a revolutionary. Rather, he was essentially involved in restoration, preservation and fortification of the revolution that was initiated by his father, Abraham.

The climax of the biography-hagiography of the Rabbi of Ponevitch is the description of an encounter that took place at the end of the 1960s, toward the end of his life, with a Holocaust survivor who had remained in Lithuania and just recently immigrated to Israel:

> Just a few days ago, he visited the graves of his ancestors in Ponevitch and took leave of his city, thinking that he would not return to see them forever. [...] The houses of study of Ponevitch were dormant and padlocked. [...] He walked deliberately to the porch leading to the hall of the *yeshivah*. His connection to the place increased. No, he was not a dreamer – his feet were standing once again on the site that bears the name Ponevitch. There too, in that distant village, the roof of the *yeshivah* was once elevated. [...] Here too, in Bnei Brak on the heights of the Ponevitch Yeshivah, the same landscape of old of houses of study is visible. Here too, the chant of the *gemara* wafts. A half century ago, the destroyer rose up against Ponevitch. But see what a wonder: the ruins have been restored anew. [...] He stood in the new Ponevitch – restored, flourishing, and spreading its ideology – and he began to cry. [...] And he concluded in a passionate Lithuanian Yiddish: "Ponevitch has been resurrected!" (ibid., 513–14).

"Ponevitch has been resurrected!" is a slogan that is heard regarding the establishment of *yeshivot* in Israel and in the United States. Each *yeshivah* is designed to be a monument to a world lost, a monument to one of the *yeshivot* that was destroyed in Europe. Rabbi Aaron Kutler, who was the head of the Klotsk Yeshivah before the war, immigrated to the United States and reestablished his *yeshivah* in the city of Lakewood, New Jersey. The Yeshivah of Chachmei Lublin was rebuilt in Bnei Brak by one of its students, Rabbi Shmuel Wozner. The Telshe Yeshivah was re-established in the United States in

Cleveland, Ohio, in the same format as it existed in Europe before it was destroyed.[51] There are, as well, many other, similar examples. The *yeshivot* are places of memory (Mendels 2004, chapter 1). They are the place that the world that was lost is remembered, and in addition, they declare a loyalty and dedication to that world.[52]

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, one of the most important Jewish legal authorities in the second half of the twentieth century, who moved from Lithuania to the United States, wrote a responsum entitled: "There is an obligation to place a monument on a grave, establishing a monument in memory of a mother and father whose burial place is unknown, and the reason why a set day of fasting was not established to memorialize the Holocaust" (Feinstein 1996, vol. IV: #57). With regard to erecting a monument in memory of victims of the Holocaust whose burial places are not known, he wrote:

51 In 1976, a volume entitled *Jubilee Volume of the Telshe Yeshiva: On the 100th Anniversary of the Founding of the Yeshiva, 1875–1975* was published (no author). The message of the book is clear, as indicated in the title, that the Telshe Yeshivah that was closed and destroyed in World War II was essentially not destroyed. It continues to exist in the United States. At the end of the book, the history of the *yeshivah* is recorded by Rabbi Avraham Shoshana. He describes the founding of the *yeshivah* in America at the end of the war by a number of refugees as follows: "They began to try feverishly to find a suitable framework in which they could restore the spirit of the *yeshivah*, a framework that would preserve the character of the *yeshivah* in Lithuania without an American influence. They did not want to create a new *yeshivah*, but to restore the old one, to revive in the United States the concept of Torah study in the manner that it was understood and realized in the great Lithuanian *yeshivot*."

52 Rabbi Shlomo Volbe (1914–2004), one of the well-known spiritual counselors of the Israeli *yeshivah* world, himself a Holocaust survivor, published a book after the Yom Kippur War entitled: *Bein Sheshet le-Asor – Hartsa'ot u-Ma'amarim Bein Shtei ha-Milhamot* (*Between the Six and the Tenth: Lectures and Articles between the Two Wars* (the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War)). In the book, he discusses the essence of Judaism in contemporary times, and the responsibility placed upon "faithful" Judaism. One of the chapters in the book entitled "The [Contemporary] Period" is divided into four sections. The second section is entitled "The Depths of the Holocaust" and the third section is entitled "The Yeshivah". The *yeshivah* is presented as the response to the Holocaust.

> With regard to those who were killed in Europe during the Holocaust and their place of burial is unknown, [...] should their children set up a monument here [...] in America where the children live? As far as I know, we do not find this idea in the *Gemara* or the Jewish legal codes, nor is it mentioned in passing in other literature. We have also not heard of Gaonim who instructed to do this (ibid.).

The brevity of his words is designed to berate the very idea. We have not found this idea anywhere in halakhic literature, and this apparently ends the discussion. However, immediately following, Rabbi Feinstein begins a lengthy discussion on the nature of the monument of Avshalom, the son of David, as described in the Book of Samuel – that he established as a monument for himself, a monument of stone. Avshalom's actions must be understood from a Jewish legal perspective. How can they be reconciled with Rabbi Feinstein's contention that there is no precedent in the tradition for a monument that is not on a grave?[53] From among the various biblical commentators, he chose to adopt the interpretation of Rashi, who explains the biblical verse "In order to memorialize my name, I will establish for myself a monument of stone" as follows: "It was an important building."[54] On the basis of this interpretation, Rabbi Feinstein concludes:

> It is certainly appropriate to create a memorial to honor his mother and father. [...] The building constructed to honor the deceased should be an important building. It is certainly not important if it is an empty building, but that it be for a specifically beneficial purpose such as Torah study or for charity. This is clearly a very important memorial and monument (ibid.).

In the continuation of his response, Rabbi Feinstein led the questioner, who wanted to build a monument to the memory of his parents who perished in the Holocaust, to the conclusion that only the

53 At the beginning of his comments, Rabbi Feinstein also relates to the monument that Jacob placed on the grave of his wife Rachel, as described in Genesis 35:20. For the "organic" rabbinic reading of biblical texts – i.e. understanding the text in light of Jewish law as they knew it in their time and place – see Heinmann 1974, 8–13.

54 The commentary of Rashi on 2 Samuel 18:18. He could have said that Avshalom intended to be buried there and that it was therefore a monument on a grave.

building of a *yeshivah* could be considered, and that the *yeshivah* constitutes "a very important memorial."

In another place, Rabbi Feinstein was asked about the building of a *yeshivah* high school that would include general studies in its curriculum, in a particular city in the United States. His response included the following remarks:

> We must internalize in our hearts that the great destruction of Torah perpetrated in the world places a huge obligation on Torah students to try to become *gedolei Torah* (Torah giants) and *yirei shamaim* (fearers of heaven) in their stead. This matter is a requirement for all Jews (Feinstein 1996, vol. III: #82).

The staunch opposition of Rabbi Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz, the Hazon Ish, to any type of Holocaust memorial program was mentioned above. It seems to me that that the question regarding his opposition cannot be detached from the fact that the Hazon Ish was the "father of the *yeshivot*," as demonstrated by his absolute determination in the years following the Holocaust to establish *yeshivot* in Israel (Brown 2002, 390–400; Cohen 1966, 217–69). This connection can be clearly seen in the following letter, which the Hazon Ish wrote to the head of the Slonim Yeshivah, when he embarked on a fundraising campaign for a new *yeshivah* building:

> Behold, it is a labor of great value that the one who increases the honor of our Torah, may he be granted long life, is participating in building the academies of Babylonia in the Holy Land. [...] It is special to us to call the *yeshivah* the Slonim Yeshivah, for the name reminds us of the powerful drive and the strong valor dedicated to maintaining the tablets of the Torah in the bitter and violent exile that we experienced. And we have returned it to its place from where it came, to a place of rest and inheritance, in its beauty and wonderful brilliance, that all of the clouds of the exile could not dim its light or weaken its flavor. [...] I wish you luck on your journey to the United States in order to give our brothers there the merit to participate in this great commandment – to give a lasting memorial to the Slonim Yeshivah (Cohen 1966, 218–20).[55]

The concept of the continuity of the Torah discussed above finds clear expression in these comments of the Hazon Ish. At the conclusion of the letter, the Hazon Ish blesses the head of the *yeshivah* for

55 For an additional discussion of other parts of this letter, see p. 83.

going out to raise funds in order "to provide a memorial for the sheltering walls of the Slonim Yeshivah." Furthermore, even though at the beginning of the letter the Hazon Ish speaks specifically about the fact that in the wanderings of the Jewish people from exile to exile, the names of *yeshivot* were changed, he praises and strongly encourages the preservation of the names of *yeshivot* from Eastern Europe in their transfer to Israel. "It is special to us to call the *yeshivah* the Slonim Yeshivah." The reason for this preference is very important: "For the name reminds us of the powerful drive and the strong valor dedicated to maintaining the tablets of the Torah in the bitter and violent exile that we experienced." In other words, the preservation of the name of the *yeshivah* as the name of a city in White Russia is designed to remind us of the drive for Torah study in Eastern Europe. The purpose of Holocaust remembrance is clearly to restore and revive that world.

It is very interesting that this letter was written by the Hazon Ish on the eleventh of Tevet 5709,[56] the day after the first observance of the tenth of Tevet as a Holocaust memorial day as dictated by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. It is difficult to be certain of the connection, but it is also difficult to ignore the significance of the timing. It is reasonable to suspect that perhaps the Hazon Ish saw this letter and the ideas expressed in it as a response to the idea fostered by the Chief Rabbinate – the establishment of a day of mourning and memorial, an idea that he strongly opposed.

b Jewish Religious Literature on Alternative Methods of Remembering

The issues discussed above came to expression as well in the realm of literature. In the years immediately following the Holocaust, the primary focus of *haredi* literature throughout the community was the publication of the Torah insights of notable rabbis who perished. The following example is characteristic, in my opinion, and explains the significance that was attributed to this process. Rabbi Avraham Borenstein (1839–1910), the founder of the Sokachov hassidic

56 A photocopy of the original letter can be seen in Cohen 1966, 221.

dynasty, and author of *Aglei Tal* and *Avnei Nezer*, died decades before the Holocaust. His Hassidic insights on the Torah were preserved orally by his followers. After the war, the Borenstein family decided to publish these insights. In the introduction to the book, his grandson, the publisher, raises the dilemma of publishing writings that the author himself chose not to publish so that they would remain an oral tradition:

> Words from the hidden realm, words transmitted from mouth to ear, with a tumultuous heart and fear of the holy, at a propitious moment (Borenstein 1976, 7).

The strength of oral tradition is that the words are transmitted with the emotion and atmosphere that accompanied them originally, an element that is lost in the written word. Nevertheless, he explains why, in spite of this, it was decided to publish them:

> The aversion of our fathers [...] was justified at its time [...] before, as a result of our sins, Polish Jewry, and the Hassidic centers that were there, were destroyed, [...] when Hassidic life was still in place and the bearers of the banner stood at their head and continued to actively guide those who yearned for the word of G-d [...] Then there was not a great need for books [...] However, now, in our impoverished generation, after the holocaust came upon us with Divine fury [...] and the Torah may conceivably be forgotten among the Jews, G-d forbid, the publication of the remnants that remain as a vestige is like saving something from the fire that G-d ignited in his wrath. It is better that the words of Torah should be collected, even if not with the comprehensiveness and depth required, than to be forgotten completely. Between the two choices, insolence or the sinking of the words into the depths of oblivion, we prefer the former (ibid., 8–9).

The writer recognizes the fact that the Rebbe's decision not to publish his writings was a principled decision, based on his view that Hassidic Torah is a living tradition that loses its uniqueness and perfection when committed to writing and detached from the context in which it was delivered. Nevertheless, the expropriation of these works from the original aspirations of their author, was a calculated decision based on a recognition of the tremendous change that had taken place as a result of the Holocaust. The essence of the change was the disruption of the living and vibrant tradition, the cessation of

the possibility for an active and natural continuity. Committing the words to writing out of responsibility and fear that they would be lost, apparently reflects a concern for an impending severance of the chain, for "the sinking of the words into the depths of oblivion." In my opinion, however, it also, and perhaps primarily, reflects a sense of beginning – not a feeling of despair, but an unbelievable revival of creativity. The book that was published was designed to be the cornerstone for a new building, for the restoration of the courtyard that had to be built on the pillars of the one that had been destroyed (Meisels 1954).

The Jewish bookshelf is graced by additional literary genres that essentially constitute "memorial literature" in the sense that we are discussing (Baumel 1995) – books that try to return to "the moment before" and to etch it into our memory so that it will be possible "to grasp onto it" and to reconnect the chain, as in the metaphor of the Rebbe of Slonim. A number of examples are as follows: literature on customs, a genre that was not well-known before, particularly in the Hassidic world; books of lectures that recreate the academic approaches of the *yeshivot*; and new editions of books by the heads of the *yeshivot* of previous generations who perished in the Holocaust or who died in decades preceding the Holocaust. These types of works reflect the sense that the Jewish life of Poland and Lithuania must be remembered and bequeathed to future generations.[57]

A particularly characteristic and interesting example of this phenomenon is a book published by the *Hevrat Shas de-Kehillat Yere'im* community in Budapest, Hungary. The jubilee anniversary of this community fell in 1944. Obviously, the celebration of this event did not take place as planned. Nevertheless, after the war, the remnant of the community gathered to belatedly "celebrate" the founding of the destroyed community. Not surprisingly, the event was marked by the publication of a book entitled: *The Inheritance of the Refugee: A Collection of Responsa from the Great Scholars of Hungary, Most of*

57 For a survey of halakhic literature see Piekaz 1972, 485. Similarly, an important literary genre is one that studies the biographies of great rabbis who perished in the Holocaust. See for example: Levin 1956–72; Unger 1969; Zeidmann 1970; Mirsky 1955.

Whom Died as Martyrs for Kiddush Hashem during the Edicts of 1944, May God Avenge Their Blood. In the introduction to the book, the editors survey the history of the community, describe the rabbis who led it and recount what happened to it during the Holocaust. The motivation to publish the book is explained as follows:

> The holy responsibility now falls upon us – the surviving remnant that remained, a small minority of the many – to save for the coffers of Israel the strewn pearls that were cast into the ashes of the hearth. Is this book not a brand snatched from the burning fire? It seems that it would not be possible to celebrate this belated jubilee in a more appropriate and pleasing manner than to publish the Torah insights of the greatest scholars of the country, almost all of whom died as martyrs for *Kiddush Hashem*, may God avenge their blood, and to establish for them an eternal memorial within Torah Judaism. [...] And now, behold this book of ours is a remembrance of a period that began in ascent and ended in decline. [...] And our prayer rises to the heights, that just as we merited to conclude this period, we will merit to begin a new period of everlasting ascent (Yerushat ha-Pleitah 1946, Introduction).

One who reads these words is amazed that a Jew could stand in Budapest in August 1946 and declare: "we merited to conclude this period." It is important to realize that the intent of the comment was that "we merited" to publish a book of Torah insights from scholars of the previous generation, and as such to conclude the period by saving it from oblivion. The writer is very aware that he stands at the end of one period and the dawn of a new one. He wants to "save for the coffers of Israel" the legacy of the previous generation, their Torah insights, so they might be "an eternal memorial" for the people of the generation, and so they might serve as a cornerstone for those who come "to begin a new period."

4 Competing Memories: Jewish Memory and Israeli Memory

I will now examine the *haredi* format for remembering the Holocaust within two comparative contexts: one in relation to the format and content of Jewish remembrance as reflected in Jewish culture and tradition, and the second against the backdrop of changes and developments in the Jewish world in the age of modernity. Within these two contexts, I will try to explain the *haredi* approach to remembrance that developed in Israel, and the tension between it and the Zionist approach to remembrance, as functions of adherence to and rejection of traditional Jewish models of remembrance. I will also discuss the divergence of *haredi* Holocaust memorial from traditional models of remembrance as a function of the tension between late nineteenth-century orthodoxy and the secularized Jewish world. In conclusion, I will do a comparative survey of Israeli and *haredi* approaches to Holocaust memorial, with a focus on the deep significance of these competing memories.

a The Prototype of Jewish Remembrance: Zekher Le-Hurban *(Remembrance of the destruction) and* Zekher Le-Mikdash *(Remembrance of the Temple)*

One understanding of the connection between *haredi* forms of remembrance in Israel and traditional forms of Jewish remembrance relates to the prototypes for remembering the destruction of the Temple in rabbinic literature. The two concepts that are well known to us from rabbinic literature regarding the memory of the Temple are *Zekher Le-Hurban* (Remembrance of the destruction) and *Zekher Le-Mikdash* (Remembrance of the Temple). In the generation immediately following the destruction of the second Temple, the rabbis dealt with remembrance in an intensive manner. Mourning for the Temple and the events of destruction were not themselves the focus of the remembrance. With regard to the destruction, they said:

> It is impossible to mourn too much, and it is also impossible not to mourn. Rather, this is what the Rabbis said: "A person should paint his house with whitewash, and leave a small place [unpainted] as a remembrance of Jerusalem."[58]

The main focus of the rabbis was to remember the Temple in its glory. Toward that end, they initiated two processes that were different, and perhaps even in conflict with each other. On the one hand, they tried to preserve the memory of the Temple and its ritual service. At the same time, they created ritual substitutes for the Temple rituals. The daily prayer service, the Sabbath prayer service, all of the holidays and even Yom Kippur were fashioned anew into a format that constitutes *zekher le-mikdash* (Alon 1970, 1:163–6; Aderet 1990, especially 28–30).[59] Even as they continued to pray and beg for the rebuilding of the Temple, it was paradoxically not the destruction of the temple that stood at the center of the religious discourse, but rather its existence. The rabbis dealt with filling in the gap, with creating a presence of the Temple in the present. The worship of God that was centered in the Temple was lost in its destruction, and the rabbis toiled to create alternate methods for serving God, and to convince their followers that these substitutions were valid because of their similarity to the worship service in the Temple. These substitutes were the cornerstone for the building of a new world, for the building of a new Judaism based in the synagogue and the house of study where the worship of God was expressed through prayer and Torah study (Elbogen 1971, 189–90; Safrai 1994, 133–53; Gutman 1980).

The Rebbe of Slonim, whose insights into memorializing the Holocaust were discussed above, was certainly aware of this distinction, and even related to it explicitly:

> This remembrance [of the martyrs of the Holocaust] is an important foundation for the spiritual standing of the coming generations. It is similar to the remembrance of the destruction of Jerusalem, the memory of the source of our holiness

58 *Tosefta Sotah* 9:12, (Leiberman edition, 244). See also Babylonian *Talmud, Baba Batra* 60b.

59 On pages 37–158 the writer discusses ways of *Teshuva* and repentance, as developed after the destruction. See also Aderet 1993; Mor 2003; in the matter of prayer see Fleischer 1989 and more recently Knohl 2005.

> that we had previously in this world through the revelation of God's presence in the Temple. Even after its destruction, our emotional bond to it was not severed by virtue of the continuous memory of it that a Jew mentions countless times each day in his prayers, his meals, and above all his joyous occasions. [...] The special significance of the memory of the holy martyrs is similar to that (Brazovsky 1987, 17).

The Rebbe explains that the great amount of attention to the memory of the Temple in Jewish tradition is designed to preserve the Temple itself as a living entity in the consciousness and daily experience of the Jew: "Our emotional bond to it was not severed by virtue of the continuous memory of it." The remembrance of the Temple, from the Rebbe's perspective, tries to create an existential reality, to continue the existence of the Temple itself in the present. This remembrance tries to transfer the sense of belonging to the Temple of the past to a current sense of belonging.

There is a dialectic tension concealed in his comments – that even though the rituals created by the rabbis certainly represent a new and different prototype for the worship of God, they also create a direct and vibrant continuity through the medium of memory. Through the use of motifs and symbols taken from the Temple, the tremendous calamity is slightly blurred, and the new service of God is fashioned as continuity and stability. It seems to me from his comments that the Rebbe was cognizant of this tension. He saw remembrance as the spiritual foundation of the coming generations because it contains the basis for the continuation of the past generations.

b "Remembrance of the Torah": The Content of Jewish Remembrance

There is, I believe, another similarity between traditional Jewish remembrance and *haredi* remembrance of Holocaust. Many scholars have taken note of the fact that in the postbiblical period, historiography almost disappeared completely from the cultural and spiritual world of the Jews. In spite of the importance and centrality of remembrance in the Bible and in the normative Jewish legal system, historical events were generally not recorded in the postbiblical period

(Yerushalmi 1982; Herr 1977). Nevertheless, it is important to note that even though they did not record historical events, the Jews were very committed to recording their spiritual creativity. Torah insights were recorded and were passed on to future generations. Yerushalmi discussed the fact that the rabbis

> salvaged what they felt to be relevant to them, and that meant, in effect, what was relevant to the ongoing religious and communal (hence also "the national") life of the Jewish people. They did not preserve the political history of the Hasmoneans, but took note of the conflict between the Pharisees and Alexander Jannaeus (Yerushalmi 1982, 25).

These comments must be understood in a broader context. "The advancement of religious life," according to the rabbis, was not manifested in the preservation of practical *halakhah*, but rather in the preservation and transmission of their Torah learning. They perceived the advancement of religious life as their Torah study, and its growth, development, preservation and transmission to future generations.

Babylonian Jewry bequeathed to us the most monumental work in the history of Jewish communal life, the Babylonian *Talmud*, which served as the foundation for all subsequent Jewish spiritual creativity. Nevertheless, one who might wish to write a book on the centuries of Babylonian Jewish history would find himself practically without sources. It is a fact that, in spite of its tremendous scope, the Babylonian *Talmud* preserved only the Torah insights of its sages. It recorded in an obsessive manner their teachings, interpretations and development of Jewish law, and their deliberations regarding faith and ethics. These were meticulously arranged and edited, and passed from generation to generation. When the *Talmud* arrived in Europe, it became the cornerstone for the scholarship of Sefardi (Spanish and North African) and Ashkenazi (Western and Eastern European) Jewry during the Middle Ages. Although we are aware of the martyrdom for *Kiddush Hashem* during the crusades from the writings of the scholars of Ashkenaz, and even that these events were etched into the collective memory of Ashkenazi Jewry, a chronicle of the events of the crusades was never written by a Jewish scholar. What was essentially preserved in the memory and collective consciousness of the Jewish community was the spiritual creativity of that period. For example, the

works of the Tosafists was well preserved and became an invaluable asset for Torah learning in subsequent generations. In this type of remembrance, there is a clear hidden message that the truly significant events that took place of the banks of the Rhine River during the eleventh to thirteenth centuries were the writing of Rashi's commentaries on the Bible and the *Talmud*, and the commentaries of his followers, the Tosafists. The same is true for Sefardi Jewry as well. The monumental work of Rabbi Yosef Caro, the *Shulhan Arukh* that was published in the generation after the Spanish expulsion, became an invaluable asset in Sefardi Torah study and jurisprudence. In practical terms, the *Shulhan Arukh* represents a summary and codification of Torah learning and halakhic rulings written in the previous five centuries in Spain. It is a fact that with the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and the final severance of the continuity of the vibrant and creative tradition of Sefardi Torah interpretation, Rabbi Yosef Caro collected and edited this tradition, thus eternalizing it and enabling it to serve as the cornerstone for continued creativity in future generations. It is beyond the scope of this paper to deal with the question of why the Jews did not record the history of their years in exile. It seems to me, however, that the vast preservation and transmission of Torah learning communicates clearly the message that Torah learning was the primary accomplishment of the Jewish community during the exile that was worthy of being remembered. It should be noted that this prototype of Jewish remembrance contains within it a comforting and supportive message for a wandering people that was not able to find a resting place. Even in the absence of political power, territory, and a structured national life, the national culture was alive and vibrant, and served as the heart of the existence of the Jewish people. The intellectual enterprise associated with Torah learning constituted the most important event, and one might say the only event, worthy of preservation.

The *haredi* leadership in Israel after the Holocaust tried to function within this model of remembrance and to continue it. It is important to note that this model was strongly challenged from the beginning of the Enlightenment. That challenge grew significantly with the growth and success of the Zionist movement that wanted to create a new collective Jewish memory. It tried to revive lost mem-

ories of the homeland and of Jewish political autonomy, with all of their implications, and to obliterate memories of life in exile that were still in force. The Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel increased the challenge that faced the *haredi* leadership. It appeared that the focus of their memory had lost its validity. They therefore dedicated their efforts to its restoration, and forcefully negated anything that could draw attention away from it or that reflected any identification with the opposition. As both the content and format of Holocaust memorial were nationalized, the *haredi* leadership opposed any form of remembrance that was adopted by the other side, even if its source was in Jewish tradition, such as reciting elegies on the ninth of Av or the establishment of a day of mourning on the tenth of Tevet.

Although the *haredi* approach to Holocaust memorial is similar in some ways to traditional forms of remembrance, as we have seen, I believe that there is another important dimension to *haredi* remembrance that distinguishes it from traditional forms of remembrance. This dimension will add to our understanding of the *haredi* opposition to the application of some traditional forms of remembrance to Holocaust memorial.

c *Rejection of the Dimension of Time: The Distinction between Jewish Remembrance and* Haredi *Remembrance in Israel*

In an effort to create the presence of the Temple and its service in daily religious life after the destruction, the Rabbis enacted numerous laws that were "*zekher le-Mikdash*." Yet, it was clearly impossible to create an identical world to the world that existed before the destruction. The rabbis wished to create continuity, not by creating an identical world but by creating a new world that reflected the old world that was destroyed and its values. This approach was evident also in the study of Torah and its transmission, where the rabbis were careful to distinguish between the historical layers in the text. Thus the traditional page of the *Talmud* is structured as an intergenerational dialogue – the *amoraim* interpret the tannaitic material, and Rashi and the Tosafists interpret the Talmud. There is continuity in the ongoing

study, but the boundaries between the various levels are clear. It seems that this perspective did not exist in the *haredi* world after the Holocaust. In the previously mentioned letter that the Hazon Ish sent to the head of the Slonim Yeshivah, he wrote:

> And behold, during the centuries that the Babylonian *yeshivot* wandered, paving the way for their return to the land from which they were exiled, the ruins of the *yeshivot* that were destroyed in Babylonia were rebuilt in foreign countries – Spain, France, and Germany. Their names were changed, but not their spirit. This is the Torah that was driven into ten exiles, and built its home in the land of Shinar, and was then exiled from Babylonia to western countries. This is the Torah that now returns from the destroyed plains of the west to the "Land of the Deer," the Holy Land that was given to our forefathers as an everlasting inheritance, which was its residence when it came from Sinai to appear with its rays of light in the midst of Israel.[60]

"The Torah that was driven into ten exiles [...] that now returns." The academies of Babylonia, where the Babylonian *Talmud* was created, are the ones that wandered throughout all of the exiles, changing their names but not their spirit. From an existential standpoint, the Hazon Ish describes an absolute identification between these institutions and the Torah that was studied within their walls. The identification is preserved with their return to Israel. The very same Torah went into exile two thousand years ago, and it returns "to the 'Land of the Deer,' the Holy Land that was given to our forefathers as an everlasting inheritance."[61] This constitutes a clear attempt to blot out any possibility for change and development.

Even Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, the central personality of modern Orthodoxy in the United States, strikes a similar chord. One of his followers committed to writing some comments that he heard from Rabbi Soloveitchik during the recitation of elegies on the ninth

60 See p. 72.

61 It is worthwhile to note that the Hazon Ish does not view the building of *yeshivot* in Israel as another station in their wanderings, but as a return to the inheritance. Similarly, it is important to note that the wanderings of the people throughout the generations is described as the wanderings of the Torah and the *yeshivot*. The thing that wanders is the Torah, the essence and central aspect of the people's existence.

of Av. Rabbi Solovetchik opposed the writing of elegies for the Holocaust on the grounds that we are not authorized to introduce innovations in our times, certainly not in the prayer service. The essence of the argument is concealed in his claim that there is no need for new elegies since remembrance of the Holocaust is contained within the existing elegies relating to previous tragedies. The model of the destruction of the Temple repeats itself. In other words, the Holocaust is another catastrophe in a long line of catastrophes that the Jewish people experienced in exile. When speaking about the elegy for the destruction of the communities of Worms, Meinz and Spire,[62] Rabbi Soloveitchik said:

> When I read the *kinnot* (elegies) on the destruction and martyrs of Spire, the destruction of the community of Meinz, and cries of the shattering of glorious Worms, I think of Warsaw, Vilna, and Kovno. Tisha B'Av is a memorial day for all of the tragedies of Israel. There is no need to need to create a special day for them or to write new *kinnot* (Arazi 1972, 324).[63]

A close reading of Rabbi Soloveitchik's comments reveals that his argument is much deeper than that the various destructions are similar. Rather, he claims that the destructions are identical, and even that the communities that were destroyed are identical, as well. Warsaw is Spire, Vilna is Worms, and Kovno is the glorious Meinz. Without even mentioning the communities of Warsaw, Vilna, and Spire, they are memorialized significantly in this elegy. They are remembered by us in the image of Spire and Meinz. What is important to remember is that the communities that were destroyed in the Holocaust were identical to Jewish communities throughout the generations. They represented a link in the chain of tradition. The practical message in Rabbi Soloveitchik's words is that this identification must continue, that it is an ongoing process in our time. The destroyed community of Meinz was rebuilt in Kovno, and the destroyed com-

62 These were celebrated Torah centers in Germany that were destroyed during the Crusades.

63 Compare the opposite position expressed by Rabbi Kasher and Rabbi Amital in note 9, above. For the same concept in Rabbinic Thought see Yerushalmi 1982, 21–2.

munity of Kovno is being rebuilt in New York, Boston, Jerusalem and Bnei Brak.

In reality, the replication of destroyed communities is not a realizable goal. The Holocaust was so powerful that the world that is rebuilt in its wake must in any case be a different world than that which preceded it. Nevertheless, it is precisely against this fact that the *haredi* remembrance of the Holocaust acted. It tried to blur and minimize the catastrophe that took place. *Haredi* remembrance not only focused on the world that was, but, in an attempt to create continuity, it focused only on a particular aspect of that world – the world of Torah. It claimed that it was restoring the exact world that was destroyed, a point that differentiates it from the traditional model of remembrance. "Ponevitch is resurrected."[64] This phenomenon can be explained by understanding the essence of Orthodoxy and its struggle against modernity.

There is a well-known slogan of Orthodoxy in the modern era that was coined by the Hatam Sofer: "Innovation is prohibited by the Torah." On the surface, this slogan apparently reflects a strategy against the innovations introduced by the Reform movement and other more moderate modern Jewish movements. However, this slogan actually has a deeper and more significant meaning. It actually reflects a reaction to the serious and real challenge that modernity and enlightenment presented to traditional Judaism – the introduction of the dimension of time to the study of sacred texts. Historical thought represented a break with traditional Jewish thought. It sought to describe the development of Jewish religious literature and Jewish history as dynamic processes that instituted changes in accordance with the circumstances of time and place. Rabbi Nachman Krochmal's book, which was the first Orthodox attempt to deal with this challenge, tried to release text study from the restrictions of dogma, and to understand each text in its historical context. The title that he chose for the book – *The Guide for the Perplexed of the Time* – emphasizes the fact that the confusion experienced by the religious community in the modern period is the result of the introduction of time to Jewish consciousness (Schorsch 1994, 178–9; Rawidowicz

64 See above, p. 69.

1961). In the premodern period, scholars could preserve their traditions within a context of historical layers without feeling threatened. New interpretations were never viewed as products of the time, but rather as the products of pure investigation of the text. The development of commentaries was perceived as the result of an ongoing process of Torah study. The contemporary reader in each generation became completely engaged with the text, and approached it from a subjective, rather than an objective, perspective (Heinemann 1974, 2–14). The Babylonian *Talmud* opens its discussion of every law in the *Mishnah* with the following question: "From where do we know this?" – or in other words, what is the source of this law? The answer always relates to extrapolation from a biblical verse. The new law is viewed as a natural outgrowth of an older source, derived through a natural and coherent process of study and interpretation. In contrast to the desire to criticize the past and to implement change that characterizes modern society, traditional society is characterized by a rejection of innovation. Rather, change is always viewed as a function of the past and innovation is always presented as a natural outgrowth of an older source. Modern scholars seek a different answer to the Talmudic question: "From where do we know this?" They seek an answer that is rooted in the dimension of time.[65] While traditional commentators in the premodern period were not bothered by historical layers and did not entertain the possibility of external influences, modern scholars try to uncover the impact of historical influences on Jewish law. The modern approach not only challenges the authority of the Jewish legal codes, it also limits the ability to claim that new innovations are actually rooted in older sources.

I believe that this distinction helps us understand the difference between traditional and modern Jewish models of remembrance, and the opposition of the *haredi* leadership to the use of traditional forms of remembrance, such as elegies, to memorialize the Holocaust. Focusing on the horrors of the Holocaust supports the fact that the world that was destroyed will never return, that the new society being created is really not a continuation of the old society. The perspectives of modern society forced the *haredi* leadership to fight even against

65 For further elaboration see Harris 1995.

the traditional model of remembrance. The rabbinic leadership wanted to resurrect the world that existed before the Holocaust, to preserve the image of the old world in the here and now.

d Competing Memories

Every memory chooses what it wants to save from being forgotten. In our case, is it the memory of a smitten community torn to pieces without hope of salvation, or alternatively, an active and vibrant culture that was destroyed? Each of these pictures particularizes its pain and is fashioned as well by what it chooses to forget. Each remembrance also serves the immediate needs of its group. One emphasizes the catastrophic nature of the Holocaust in order to differentiate the new period from the period before the Holocaust, and to use it to establish a moral justification and historical imperative for the building of a new world. The other tries to achieve the opposite – to know and understand the world that was destroyed in order to build the new world in its image, as an authentic continuation of the old world. The struggle between various groups in Israeli society regarding the content and format of Holocaust memorial is a good example of the use of collective memory as a social force that can be controlled and transmitted in a calculated fashion by leaders or a social elite to achieve particular goals and objectives.[66]

Collective Jewish memory occupied a central role in Zionist thought. Zionism wished to forge a new Jewish identity. Toward that end, it had to establish anew the collective memory of the Jewish people, to determine what should be remembered and what should be forgotten. Some current memories were obliterated, while other long forgotten memories were retrieved from the abyss of oblivion (Zerubavel 1995; Luz 2003, 37–41). This fact, along with the proximity between the Holocaust and the birth of the State of Israel, gave

66 This is similar to the argument of Maurice Halbwachs, an influential researcher on the topic of remembrance. On the importance of his work with regard to Jewish remembrance see Yerushalmi 1982, 5–6; Zerubavel 1995, 3–12; Goldberg 1998.

Holocaust memorial a central place, both implicitly and explicitly, in the public discussion regarding the essence of the Jewish state, its goals and objectives (Gorny 2003). The focus on the destruction of European Jewry at the expense of the memory of the culture and values of the world that was destroyed served the Zionist agenda and its goals for the state. First, it sharpened and strengthened the Zionist argument negating the viability of Jewish life in exile, and the culture and values inherent in the old world mentality. Second, it projected the State of Israel as an alternative model of Jewish existence – a Jewish world based on nationalistic values that are fundamentally different than the religious values that prevailed in the exile. Third, it projected the value of normalized sovereignty as a deterrent to such catastrophes that were the result of life in exile.

In contrast, the *haredi* community wished to preserve an alternative collective memory. The *haredi* leadership sought to remember the world that was destroyed and to emphasize its vitality. It distanced itself from the ideas inherent in the Israeli model of remembrance, and could certainly not accept the negation of the culture that developed in the exile. As we have seen, they viewed the Holocaust as part of a continuum of catastrophes that have occurred to the Jewish people throughout the exile, and perhaps more importantly, they projected the new society that they were building as a continuation of the world that existed before the Holocaust. As in all remembrance, this remembrance also included forgetting, at times consciously and deliberately. Any aspect of that society that was not connected to Torah was erased from their consciousness. The elements of the society that did not enter the halls of the *yeshivah* or the courtyards of the *Hassidim* were completely forgotten (Caplan 2002, 147).[67] Also, the image of the

67 Caplan cites the criticism of Schwartz (1986) regarding this phenomenon: "While previous generations did not hesitate to proclaim 'because of our sins we were driven from our land,' 'our fathers sinned and are no longer alive,' and 'we and our fathers have sinned,' our generation has idealized the generation of the Holocaust as a generation in which everyone was holy, pure, and without sin" (147). Schwartz is critical of this phenomenon and calls for change, but he accurately describes the phenomenon. It seems to me that one of the most interesting examples in this context is the perpetuation of the names of cities and villages in Eastern Europe in the names of *haredi* cities, neighborhoods streets

helpless Jew in exile was omitted from the picture because it would arouse sympathy for the claims of the opposite paradigm of Holocaust memorial. On the contrary, the place of the martyr who sacrificed himself for *Kiddush Hashem*, the true Jewish hero, was emphasized. In addition, the destruction itself did not occupy an important place in the remembrance, unless it served to enhance the understanding of Jewish values before the Holocaust. The *haredi* leaders projected the old world as a perfect world of Torah and *Hassidut*, to the exclusion of other elements that characterized Jewish life immediately before the Holocaust. Ironically, they sought to create in their own communities, and in Israeli society in general, the memory of the world that was destroyed in the image of the one they were now building.

The content of remembrance certainly influences the format as well. *Haredi* remembrance saw itself as a defensive remembrance. Israeli remembrance of the Holocaust sought to excise the religious element of the picture by eliminating any memory of *Kiddush Hashem* in the Holocaust or the fact that the Jewish world that existed before the Holocaust was essentially a vibrant and creative religious world from a spiritual and intellectual standpoint. As such, the *haredi* remembrance could not adopt the official Israeli model of Holocaust memorial. In those years, a conflict with the dominant sector of society over the format of public Holocaust memorial, utilizing the very same instruments – ceremonies, assemblies and texts – was doomed to failure. They therefore turned to completely different formats, to models that have deep roots in Jewish tradition. The *yeshivot* became the place of remembrance, and books recording the insights of Torah scholars from the period just before the Holocaust took the place of elegies or other texts that were used at public memorial gatherings.

The battle over the memory of the past provides a window through which to observe the values conflict between the *haredi* and

and institutions in Israel. It is clear why a street would be named after the Rebbe of Gur; but it is not clear why Matersdorf, a village in Hungary, should have its name perpetuated in the name of a *haredi* neighborhood in Jerusalem. The answer lies in the disregarding of any element of the society that is not connected to Torah. Matersdorf is remembered because, in the minds of the *haredim*, it was a village that was totally dedicated to Torah.

Zionist segments of contemporary Israeli society. At the same time, in spite of the fundamental differences between these communities and the goals that they are trying to advance through remembrance of the past, there is an important common denominator between their models of remembrance. Both express a strong concern for the vitality of the Jewish collective, and both express a dedication to the continuity of Jewish existence and Jewish history. Also, the common goal of both groups is the building of a new Jewish world. In this regard, there is an additional element of commonality that lies beneath the surface. The *haredi* claim that it is rebuilding a world that is identical to the Jewish world before the Holocaust must in reality be understood in a more limited sense. A close look at the texts reveals a realization that while it is possible to create continuity with previous generations, replication is in actuality not possible. The surprising and most stirring expression of this reality is found in the writings of the Hazon Ish. He stated that the *yeshivot* that were established in Europe were the *yeshivot* of Babylonia that had wandered for centuries – "their names were changed, but not their spirit."[68] Yet, he did not view the establishment of the *yeshivot* in Israel after the Holocaust as just another station in the wanderings of the Torah. Rather, this anti-Zionist leader expressed the phenomenon as follows: "This is the Torah that now returns from the destroyed plains of the west to the 'Land of the Deer,' the Holy Land that was given to our forefathers as an everlasting inheritance." The Torah is no longer wandering, it has returned to its home. Thus these two competing memories share not only a concern for the Jewish collective but also an appreciation of the significance of the return to the Land of Israel. Yet this commonality cannot obscure the unbridgeable gap between the two visions of what must be built – a new and different Jewish world or a restoration and reconstruction of the Jewish world that was lost.[69]

68 See above pp. 55–6.

69 A number of years ago, there was a heated scholarly debate over the position of David Ben-Gurion regarding Holocaust memorial. In spite of some different nuances, the disagreement was not over the facts but rather over their interpretation. It is clear that Ben-Gurion was not excited about the establishment of Yad Vashem, and throughout the 1950s, he never participated in Holocaust memorial programs or visited memorial sites. Eliezer Don-Yehiya claims that

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Ben-Gurion's approach was driven by his vision of Jewish sovereignty. According to this approach, he wished to develop a "Land of Israel ethos" that would project the important place of the state in contemporary Jewish history, and primarily the development of a national culture, without dealing with the values of the exile. Accordingly, Ben-Gurion believed that it was necessary to focus the national memory on events that could contribute to the unification of the Jewish people and could motivate them toward the goals of the Zionist enterprise and the formation of the state (see Don-Yehiya 2000; Don-Yehiya 1993; Stauber 2000, 64, 266). In contrast, Anita Shapira claims that Ben-Gurion, as all of the leaders of state at that time, was involved in acting on immediate needs: "We are talking about the early years of the state. On the agenda of the government and the Knesset were important questions such as the law of public education, the law of military service and security, the establishment of a legal system, in addition to the absorption of large waves of immigration, securing living quarters, work and education within systems that were exploding from overload. [...] The establishment of Yad Vashem as well as other spiritual and symbolic issues were important, but there were other things that were more important" (Shapira 1999, p. 43). In spite of the fundamental differences between these two interpretations, they do share some perspective. Whether based on principle, as Don-Yehiya claims, or on practicality, as Shapiro claims, Ben-Gurion wished to focus on building the state from a "forward looking perspective." It turns out, ironically, that there is some similarity between the *haredi* opposition to Holocaust memorial programs and Ben-Gurion's absence from them. Both wished to focus on building the Jewish future, and viewed that as the essential focus of remembrance.

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