

K-491 the Holocaust in Historical Perspective

by Art Katz

The Holocaust was a devastating event that raised fundamental questions about the nature of God and his relationship to the world, leading to a crisis of faith and a need for a new understanding of God.

Duration: 46:26

Scripture: Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 6:19, Matthew 24:21, Matthew 27:32, Mark 11:22, Romans 9:33

Topics: "Holocaust"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the significance of being a German Jew and the belief that German civilization represented the highest moral and ethical standards. However, the speaker also acknowledges that this belief was shattered when the horrors of the Holocaust were revealed. Despite God's patience and attempts to redirect mankind, they were determined to create their own paradise independent of Him. The devastating events of the Holocaust were tragically interpreted by some as evidence that there is no God. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the importance of recognizing the consequences of turning away from God and the need for repentance.

Transcript

So precious God, Lord Jesus, you were not only the witness, my God, to that remarkable time, it was by every understanding that we have in perfect keeping with your will, and it staggers, the understanding, my God, of the most devout, that you could be God and be righteous and preside, my God, over such a devastation. And if that were not enough to consider that there's yet a future devastation that eclipses the last. So Lord, we're asking such a grace, my God, an anointing, such a flow from out of your great heart.

Show us how to proceed, my God, and draw out, each time that we meet, what you will, and stir what you will, my God, and bring it into connection with other aspects of the faith, even faith itself, that we might understand what it is that will be in sparse supply when you appear, that will there be faith in the earth of a kind that blesses you and of which you approve. Bring us, my God, into depths of faith that would not have been ours if we had not turned aside to see and to look into this fiery thing. We bless you, Lord.

We thank you for our privilege. Complete the circle as you will. Bless the tape recorder, my God.

Put on it what you will. And we just thank you again for the precious privilege of being encircled together, Lord, with such a subject to consider. Grant that we be changed by it for the good.

We thank you and give you the praise in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I thought this afternoon I should not presume upon anybody's understanding.

And if I were to ask for a definition of the Holocaust, do you think that we could give it around this table? I can tell you that the young people of this generation are completely non-compassionate. It means nothing to them. They may not even have heard the word.

And if they have, it has only the faintest association of something somber that they don't know. It's less than half a century or about a half century, and it's becoming quickly dissolved in the memory and the consciousness of men. Only the Jewish community, especially, seeks to keep the memory of it alive because of their fear of a reoccurrence of the phenomenon out of the ignorance of a Gentile mankind that should learn from the tragedy of the recent past.

But even the way in which they want to keep the memory alive does not open it for the kinds of things for which the Holocaust was itself given. Namely, to bring a people to an awareness of God and his controversy with Israel, the issues of sin and of judgment, of causation in history, that is completely outside the consciousness even of religious people, not just the ungodly. Because somewhere in the course of this, I say that even the Church today has a Time Magazine Newsweek sense of cause and effect, that the natural disposition of men is to look for explanation naturally, particularly when the circumstances are hard to be understood, like a convulsive earthquake, a social calamity, an upheaval, a revolution, a plague.

Even now, it would take an extraordinary courage to suggest that AIDS is the consequence of sin as forewarned and promised by God. So, we need to understand the depth of the secular mind and its enmity to God and how in its very impulse and its way of thinking and considering it does not seek for explanation in God. Even the Jewish community, the victim of the Holocaust, the most dread, devastating event for world Jewry since the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD and the expulsion from Israel in 135 AD, the whole diaspora being cast into exile, even for the Jewish people, there is not a proper recognition.

And the whole object of the recent weekend in Cleveland was to bring something of this to Jewish consideration. But unhappily, it was either boycotted or ignored. So, it's a remarkable task that's before us.

You cannot imagine the indignation that would well up instantly on the part of any Jewish hearer to suggest that the Holocaust is the consequence of Jewish sin. They cannot imagine what our sins could be that would warrant or justify a calamity of such proportion. It devastates all their categories.

And one of my premises is that that's God's very intention. We need to have our categories devastated, even as Christians. And it takes something like the brutal shock that comes in God's events in history to shake us.

So, there's not even been an adequate Christian interpretation. And most Christian interpreters have simply subscribed to the Jewish view, which is what? That the Holocaust is the statement of the bankruptcy and failure of Christianity. That anti-Semitism has its origin and its seed and its root in negative aspersions in the New Testament toward Jews.

And that this has circulated now for two millennia. And that this is the root of the hatred against Jews that finally had erupted as the Holocaust. And so that the answer for future threats to the Jewish community is some alteration in the New Testament itself.

Or in the Christian faith. So, when something of this proportion takes place, the interpretation of it, or the lack of an interpretation, is enormously consequential. And I hope to develop some of these thoughts as we go.

But the thought that I have today is that a great measure of this will be lost to us if we ourselves have lost or have never understood the magnitude of the Holocaust. We need somehow to have our remembrance stirred by something of the dimensions of that brought to our attention where we will not follow this through. And seeing that I'm going through house cleaning and spring cleaning in my study, and new bookcases, and re-sorting my books, I stumbled upon this classic by Elie Wiesel, Nobel Peace Prize winner, and the outstanding recognized authority on the Holocaust, who was himself the sole survivor of Auschwitz.

Everybody know the word Auschwitz? That place of extermination in Poland that has become a synonym or a symbol of all of the method of annihilation performed by the Nazis in the Hitler time. So this is a remarkable and stunning book and I was just looking through it wondering what to read from it to give you a sense of that calamity. Because merely to say that six million Jews were systematically annihilated does not do it.

In fact, something has been loosed in present life for the failure of mankind to be rightly affected by the devastations of the past. There's a hardness, an incapacity to be shocked. We've long ago lost the capacity to blush, but now we can't even be moved to be shocked.

And that has opened the door to a series of evils that mankind becomes increasingly capable of bearing and performing. We could see, as God sees, there's probably a direct linkage between the explosion in Oklahoma and the Holocaust in reddening the sensibilities of men and their consciences to bring them to a place where they could perform devastations of their own in their own generation. So once something comes into history, the weight and the consequence of it is indescribable.

And the most tragic thing is that the event itself should not be properly understood as God intended, and that's what we're going to attempt to pursue. The book is called *Night*. It's the first book, I think, that Elie Wiesel published.

It came out first in French, and it's the story of his own experience, of how his own family passed through Auschwitz, as I said, he himself being the only survivor, and he describes himself as being an extremely religious youth. I think he was about 15 when that tragedy came to them, and he was highly orthodox, the kind of young man that puts on the phylacteries every day, winds the leather things around his arm, and prays the appropriate prayers, was studying mysticism, Kabbalism, forms of Judaism that are unusual for an adult, let alone for youth. And his love of God was the profound distinctive of his life until his experience in the Holocaust.

So as we hear something of this, we need to consider him as a kind of prototype of what happens to sensitive Jewry because of the tragedy itself. For many, there's been a total forfeiture of faith, even inadequate Judaistic faith, that they can no longer consider a God who is righteous, all-powerful, and all-knowing in the light of their own tragic experience. So there's been a real rejection of traditional faith, and I don't know where he himself is, but he talks about God dying for him.

The book opens with a foreword by François Mauriac. I hope I'm pronouncing that name correctly. I believe he was a Catholic, and he was involved in the liberation movement in France during the Nazi time.

And he talks about a visit that may have been Elie Wiesel himself who came to him and how he was affected by a description given by his wife who saw a trainload of Jewish children standing at a station. My wife described them to me, her voice still filled with horror. At that time, we knew nothing of Nazi methods of extermination, and who could have imagined them? Yet the way these lambs have been torn from their mothers in itself exceeded anything we had so far thought possible.

I believe that on that day I touched for the first time upon the mystery of iniquity whose revelation was to mark the end of one era and the beginning of another. Isn't that an interesting statement? The Holocaust is not just some historic event. It's something time, and it ushers in last day's evil of a final and ultimate kind, even the mystery of iniquity itself.

In fact, other writers have talked about the radical evil. New conceptual things have come into existence with this phenomenon. And this woman who wrote a book on Eichmann coined the phrase the banality of evil.

You know what it means when something is banal? It has become so ordinary so that people don't even lift their eyebrows. It's something that no longer causes you even a stir. When evil becomes banal, you know that something has come into human experience and into the world that is like a death knell, like the bell is tolling toward the end.

In fact, the last days speak about a generation being raised up without conscience, without pity, without natural affection, capable of brutality. And so there's no way even to begin to estimate what has been entered into history because of this event. And he was set to think on that just by the issue of children on a train station being loaded up in cattle cars.

The dream which Western man conceived in the 18th century, whose dawn he thought he saw in 1789, and which until August 2, 1914 had grown stronger with the progress of enlightenment and the discoveries of science. This dream vanished finally for me before those trainloads of little children. And yet I was still thousands of miles away from thinking that they were to be fuel for the gas chamber and the crematory.

What happened in 1789 and in 1918 that were steps along the way toward the Holocaust. Significant dates in history. French Revolution.

1789, French Revolution coming out of the Enlightenment and a revolution predicated on humanistic principles setting in motion things that were just the opposite. And what happened on August 2, 1914 to set in motion things that would bring to death the hopes for a 20th century as being the age of progress and mankind's reconciliation, peace, and all the kinds of things that men hoped for. August 2, 1914 is the beginning of World War I. So I love this because here's a man who has a breadth of history and recognizes that when the Holocaust came or when the understanding of what the Holocaust was, it was a shock against every thought for the 20th century being an age of progress and human betterment and every kind of thing for which men had hope.

All the more as the architects of the Holocaust were the most enlightened nation on Earth. This is the thing that twists the knife right up to the hilt. That if it had been perpetrated by any other dark backward nation we could more readily understand it.

But when it's perpetrated by Germany and the depth of that culture and civilization then we're faced with an ultimate conundrum, a contradiction, and it's in peering into that contradiction that the greatest depths

of revelation are reserved about the human condition, about man, about God. The fate of the Jews of the little Transylvanian town, their blindness in the face of a destiny from which they would still have had time to flee, the inconceivable passivity with which they gave themselves up to it, deaf to the warnings and pleas, P-L-E-A-S, of a witness who had himself escaped the massacre and who brought them news of what he had seen with his own eyes, their refusal to believe him, taking him for a madman. These circumstances, it seems to me, would in themselves be sufficient to inspire a book to which no other could be compared.

He's describing the content of this book. This little community in Transylvania, today's Romania, was relatively untouched by World War II until the very last stages and fought with that kind of depth of optimism that Jews especially are characterized by, that it would not come upon them. This shall not come upon us.

And the tragic thing was that it did. In the final last stages of the war, they were found out. And that opens up a whole realm of things that still mystify the historians of World War II.

Why the Germans, with their last ounce of strength, energy, manpower, and material, saw to the extermination to the very last days of the war. Why didn't they divert their energy, their material, and things for their own defense? My answer is that though that cannot be explained rationally or militarily, it can be explained if you view this as the judgment of God. That God's judgment was not to be deterred, and that it had its full consequence, even for this little band of souls in a remote village in the Carpathian Mountains in today's Romania.

So it's really melancholy to see how deep is the instinct for hope of a false kind, and that this shall not come upon us. And even day by day, as the noose was tightening, they thought that somehow the war would end, they would be saved out of it, or they would just be momentarily inconvenienced. But in the end, few survived.

He's the only one of his own family. Have we ever thought about the consequences of a horror that though less apparent, less striking than the other outrages, is yet the worst of all to those of us who have faith? The death of God in the soul of a child who suddenly discovers absolute evil. He's describing the author.

That the worst thing of all, the worst consequence, is the loss of faith by someone who was studying Talmud, Kabbalah, Jewish mysticism, loved God, and things perished for him as he passed through this experience. Let us try to imagine what passed within him while his eyes watched the coils of black smoke unfurling in the sky from the oven where his little sister and his mother were going to be thrown with thousands of others. And then he quotes him, Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which had turned my life into one long night, but seven times cursed and seven times sealed.

Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky. Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever.

Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me for all eternity of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God himself.

Never. Where is God? Where is he? Where can he be now? There's an episode in the book where a child is hung and someone nudged him and said, And where is God now? As they're watching, a boy, he describes him with an angelic face, jerking and twitching to his death in the gallows. And his answer was, God is being exterminated.

So we need to just be reminded of how devastated the Jewish community was. In fact, so much so that there's been no real literature on the Holocaust, let alone any study until the last 15 or so years, that the first generation, virtually, after the Holocaust was so stunned and traumatized that there was no serious writing and only after a certain season could they begin to bring themselves to the place to go back and to examine. Some of them have said that it's an event that cannot be critiqued.

It cannot be understood. It lies beyond man's capacity to understand. It's one of those events, defies any attempt at understanding.

If that's true, that is yet more tragic because on the first page of my paper, I'm quoting from a book by a Jewish believer called A Theology of Auschwitz, in which he says, our humanity depends on the assurance of the meaningfulness of the meaningless. Can you follow me on that? If something can take place in history that mankind concludes cannot be interpreted or understood and just has to be rendered meaningless, that allowance allows something to come in into mankind and into the world that itself is devastating, that robs men of sanity, of value, and prevents, in fact, everything that we've been seeing. The increasing scandal of an amoral, not amoral, amoral society, beyond morality, capable of any kind of violence, kids blowing the brains of their parents out at bed at night because they couldn't get the keys to the car.

I mean, things that were totally inconceivable in an earlier generation take place when mankind intuits that there's no meaning and that the greatest tragedies that have taken place in its recent history cannot be understood. That makes of life a chaos. It's anarchic, from the word anarchy.

It's just, there's no order, there's no meaning, there's no purpose, anything goes and there's no consequence for its going. You do not suffer anything because there's not a God to bring judgment, let alone a mankind. And so that opens the door to the kinds of increasing horror that we're seeing in our own generation and will characterize the world right to the Lord's own coming.

And here's Elie Wiesel speaking about the loss of his own faith. On the last day of the Jewish year, the child was present at the solemn ceremony of Rosh Hashanah. He heard thousands of these slaves cry with one voice, Blessed be the name of the Eternal.

Not so long before he too would have prostrated himself with such adoration and such love. But on this day he did not kneel. The human creature, outraged and humiliated beyond all that heart and spirit can conceive, defied a divinity who was blind and deaf.

Where is God to allow that boy to be hung whose face was angelic or to see the systematic annihilation of millions? Of the six million, a million and a half were children and infants. So where was God is the great question. And for Elie Wiesel, he was not.

I ceased to plead. I was no longer capable of lamentation. On the contrary, I felt very strong.

I was the accuser and God the accused. My eyes were open and I was alone, terribly alone in a world without God and without man. A world without God is perilous.

Even God in a minimum form, even a God that occasioned some minimal respect and some reserve on the part of mankind from indulging its own human nature. A world without God at all is fearful to contemplate. And God, the concept of God and the trust and the faith and the belief was dealt such a death blow in the Holocaust that I don't think that that generation has recovered and the world has not recovered.

It's either that there was no God. Here's the paradox. Or God was so profoundly present that to understand the contradiction and to burrow into, to learn it, is to end up with a revelation of God beyond the way in which he was previously understood.

One or the other. Either God is going to be rejected because he cannot be understood as men had held him until that day or men are going to probe and come into a perception of God that eclipses anything that had previously been known as God. One or the other.

The great loss of faith of a traditional kind or the prospect of a depth of faith that had it existed there likely would not have been a Holocaust and which God is still seeking. There's something about God in judgment that reveals God as he's not to be seen in any other way. And that's the one aspect of traits of God.

What's another word for that? Attributes. Attributes of God that we instinctively shrink from. There's something about men, even spiritual men, that shrinks from considering that attribute of God that pertains to his judgments.

We cannot reconcile the God who is love and mercy and justice and righteousness with the God who would be a judge to bring affliction of this magnitude on mankind. And it's in that contradiction that we will see it through that I feel that the deepest revelation of God is to be found. And I don't think that Elie Wiesel has made that journey.

Imagine someone trying to suggest it to him. And here's this French, François Mauriac, speaking for himself. And I who believe that God is love, what answer could I give my young questioner whose dark eyes still held a reflection of that angelic sadness which appeared one day upon the face of the hanged child? What did I say to him? Did I speak of that other Jew, his brother, who may have resembled him, the crucified one, whose cross has conquered the world? Did I affirm that the stumbling block to his faith was the cornerstone of mine? Remarkable.

Here's a sensitive Christian feeling for something, that the very thing that is the root of offense to the Jew is the thing which is at the heart of his deepest faith. Because he has a paradigm, he has a perspective given in the sufferings of the crucified one that enables him somehow to grasp that in suffering and in uttermost calamity is perhaps a key to the deepest revelation of God. But he couldn't communicate that.

So here's this little community. Now I'm into the book itself. And knowing that the war is coming to its latter stages, the Russian front had opened, and they're hoping that they would get through before it could get to them.

He talks about what happened in Hungary. I think Hungary then had some control over present Romania, that the fascists, themselves Hungarians, had come to power during the wartime and now were enacting things against Jews in Hungary and in Romania. The news spread like wildfire.

Soon it was on everyone's lips, but not for long. Optimism soon revived. The Germans won't get as far as this.

They'll stay in Budapest. There are strategic and political reasons. Before three days had passed, German army cars had appeared in our streets.

Anguished, German soldiers with their steel helmets and their emblems to death's head. And so he describes how they still believed that they would make it, and they were forced to live in a ghetto, that they would somehow survive the war in the ghetto, and then finally they had to give up their possessions, their synagogue attendants, six o'clock curfews at night, a continual contraction of their liberties, and then finally the announcement that they had to be prepared for deportation. And it took a series of days, and his family was among the last to be deported.

And even then, the father was hoping that some event would take place, that even though a number of the Jewish community had already gone off, and they were not sure where, that somehow they would be safe from it. But they were not. There's a character in the book, a remarkable character, who had been in German confinement and escaped, enough to glimpse what was happening, that the system of annihilation was already at work, and came back to that community to give warning.

And they refused to hear him. They shocked him off as a madman. It could not be received.

It was too devastating to be considered. And so this book, though it deals with a little village, is full of remarkably significant things that are portent for the last days, and something about the nature of men that refuse to receive warning, even when it comes to them in a graphic way. And I don't know if I'll get a chance to read it, but even when they were put into the final catacombs, and in the car, 80 people to a car, and one put in charge, if there's so much as one escaped, everyone in that car would be killed.

And a certain limited amount of water, and there were days in that with suffocation and heat and thirst, people becoming deranged, a woman crying out, fire, that she saw fire, and they couldn't bear to hear her shrieking, and they tried to silence her and gag her and bind her. But somehow in the middle of the night, just when they're getting some moment's rest standing, there's not even a place they'd be prone, although it says some of the younger people were fornicating. This woman would begin to give shrieks again, fire, fire, and they could not bear to hear it, and they would punch her into submission and beat her.

And finally, when they arrived at Auschwitz, one of the first things they saw was the flames pouring out of the smokestacks, and then the troughs of burning gasoline where the children were thrown alive. Here the father runs to the Jewish council. They set up their own form of government within the ghetto after they had learned that the deportation was to take place, and he went to see if the edict had been revoked in the meantime.

There's something so deep about human unwillingness to consider a dread thing that somehow there's a way out. To the very last moment, a germ of hope stayed alive in our hearts. But when the thing came, it came suddenly.

The time's come now. You've got to leave all this. The Hungarian police struck out with truncheons and rifle butts to the right and left without reason, indiscriminately, their blows falling upon old men and women, children and invalids alike.

One by one, the houses emptied. The streets filled with people in bundles. By 10 o'clock, all the condemned were outside.

They had been up all night trying to bury their family heirlooms in the cellar. What is that to speak? That somehow they're going to come back and still get their treasures. And so they were, you can imagine the kind of condition that they were in, sleepless, full of fear, and then the suddenness of their eviction.

And then they stand outside in the summer heat and roll calls are taken again and again and again. The police took a roll call once, twice, 20 times. The heat was intense.

Sweat streamed from faces and bodies. Children cried for water. Water, there was plenty, close at hand, in the houses, in the yards, but they were forbidden to break ranks.

Water, mummy, water. The Jewish police from the ghetto were able to go and fill a few jugs secretly. The street was like a marketplace that had suddenly been abandoned.

Everything could be found there, suitcases, portfolios, briefcases, knives, plates, banknotes, papers, faded portraits, all those things that people had thought of taking with them and which in the end they had left behind. They had lost all value. If you go to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, either photographs or actual exhibits of tons of shoes, tons of eyeglasses, suitcases, all the kinds of things that the last physical aspects of life that people still collected, although they would continually search them for any kind of a watch or jewelry or things like that, they had lost all value.

We need to read this and hear this not only a sense of the description of the past, but an anticipation of the future. Because when the same phenomenon strikes again at the end by the same Antichrist spirit, we're going to see a reenactment of this, the suddenness of it, the demoralizing thing of having to leave everything behind. Everything losing its value.

There you are with what you have on your back. When is our turn coming, I asked my father. The day after tomorrow.

At least unless things turn out differently, a miracle perhaps. Where were the people being taken to? Didn't anyone know yet? No, the secret was well kept. Night had fallen.

My father wept. Forward march. This is now when they themselves are being forced out and into the cattle cars.

Standing, counting off, sitting down, standing up again on the ground once more endlessly. We're waiting impatiently to be fetched. Forward march.

My father wept. It was the first time I had ever seen him weep. I had never imagined that he could.

As for my mother, she walked with a sad expression on her face without a word, deep in thought. I looked at my little sister, her fair hair well combed, the red coat over her arm, a little girl of seven. The bundle on her back was too heavy for her.

She gritted her teeth. She knew by now that it would be useless to complain. The police were striking out with their truncheons.

Faster. I had no strength left. The journey had only just begun and I felt so weak.

Faster, faster, get on with you lazy swine, yelled the Hungarian police. It was from that moment that I began to hate them, and my hate is still the only link between us today. It's a really significant statement of the inability of people not only to forget, but to forgive.

And the only thing that remains half a century after is the hatred against their persecutors that is still alive. They were our first oppressors. They were the first faces of hell and of death.

Books were littered about on the floor. Perhaps my uncle had dreams of taking them with him. The people's morale was not too bad.

We were beginning to get used to the situation in the street. They even went so far as to have optimistic conversations. The Bosch would not have time to expel us, they were saying, as far as those who had already been deported.

It was too bad no more could be done, but they would perhaps probably allow us to live out our wretched little lives here until the end of the world. But they suffered just what everyone else did. Who knows, but we're even being deported for our own good.

The front isn't very far off. We shall soon be able to hear the guns and then the civilian population would be evacuated anyway. Perhaps they were afraid we might help the guerrillas.

If you ask me, the whole business of deportation is just a farce. Oh yes, don't laugh. The Germans just want to steal our jewelry.

They know we've buried everything and they'll have to hunt for it. It's easy when the owners are unholy. I can't get over the depth.

What's the word for that? Stubborn, immovable, hope and confidence that somehow there's going to be a way out. It's the expression of something that has been a lifelong disposition. Jews are perennial optimists.

A hope and expectation based on God and his faithfulness. In the end, you'll die with it. You know, we don't understand that we don't understand.

Or we don't know as we ought to know. We think we know. Probably a factor in my own conversion took place in 1953, ten years before my actual conversion.

That set things in motion that resulted in it was the visit to Dachau, the concentration camp in Germany just outside of Munich with the great concert halls and opera houses and all of the paraphernalia of culture and art. Dachau is like a beep next to Auschwitz. It's nothing next to the great factories of extermination.

But it was still so devastating for me to walk through it at that time. Because if you visit it today, which I did in my last visit, it's not the same place. Every barrack has been torn down.

The grounds have been landscaped with crushed rock. One barrack has been reproduced according to the original specifications. But the sense of horror that was there at the first, the stink of death, the actual bones and ashes in the ovens, still there, have all been tidied up and cleaned up, so it's become antiseptic.

But when I was there in the early 1950s, it had been a prisoner of war camp right after being a concentration camp, and they had not tidied up. And so you got something of the grim reality of whipping posts, of electric barbed wire. And it was such a horror.

I remember, I used to give this in my early testimonies, I went outside and I put my hand on the smokestack, and something freaked out on me, something blew. My fuses went. I couldn't handle it.

In a word, I was being exposed to the grit of the reality beyond my conceptual ability to consider it. And I had thought that I understood it, because I was always deeply concerned about the Holocaust, aware that somehow in it were the issues of life, that the issue of the human condition, which had always been for me an enigma, what is the meaning of life, what are its purposes, this whole purposelessness of our life in the 20th century, annihilation, devastation, that somehow a key to an understanding was to be found in the Holocaust. And now that I was actually touching that ground and on that ground, something blew.

So when I saw the Schindler's List film and the scene of the deportation out of the ghetto of Krakow in Poland, and the suddenness, the dogs and the black uniformed SS men coming in and the shouts and screams and cries and get out, and the suddenness and the suitcases being thrown out of windows, and people trying to hide in an attic or under a bed, it was hopeless and futile, but the terror, the stark terror of the suddenness of something when it falls. I used to show time of, one of these films, Time Marches On, when I was a history teacher, of this period, and it showed the ghetto in Warsaw, and a woman deranged with her hair hanging down, a slim woman, that you would think that under other circumstances she might have maids and servants. She was holding her dead child, and the kid was dangling, and she was on the sidewalk and into the curb, on the sidewalk and down into the curb, like a caged animal without a cage.

She had gone mad in what she had to experience and the suddenness of it, posing that God had been biting his lips and keeping silent through the French Revolution, through the rise of the Industrial Revolution, the Age of Enlightenment and Progress, the democratic political forms, all of the hopes of mankind that were not predicated upon God, that he had to observe through modern times and into the 20th century, and waiting for a moment in which he would blow the whistle and show how fatuous, F-A-T-U-O-U-S, empty were such hopes predicated on man. What would he do to finally bring this whole weight of deception predicated on science and learning and man and his innate goodness to an abrupt end? And when he would bring it, would he not bring it with a great and devastating suddenness? And would he not bring it through the people who were the arch personification of that Age of Progress, namely the German nation itself, that had for Jews become so admirable that German civilization was postulated as being the messianic fulfillment. To be a German Jew was the highest dignity that a Jew could hope for, and German civilization was the ultimate in ethical and moral civilization and was in fact the messianic age.

So I mean, that God would allow something so devious to reach its ultimate bankruptcy and finally be revealed in a horror that controverts, here's that word again, everything in which men had hoped, and that suddenly, with a fury, poured out. It's as if God's patience had waited, waited, waited, and men would not learn, would not be deterred, they could not be redirected, they were hell-bent on making the world that's their own paradise independent of Him and His own statements about what man's condition is. And then finally, when the boom is lowered, it's lowered with such shock that the ironic thing is, instead of revealing God as judgment, mankind in His same sinful propensity takes the devastation as the evidence that there is no God.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/23/SID23073.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/art-katz/k-491-the-holocaust-in-historical-perspective/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net