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תנ"צ'ב'ה'  
נדפס ע"י בנו  
הרה"ת השליח ר' יוסף יצחק  
וזוגתו מרת ביילא רחל ומשפחתם שיחיו  
ביסטאן



# Rage about the Holocaust

*In the following letter, the Rebbe offers fascinating insight into the proper understanding (or lack thereof) of the Holocaust and the conclusions we must draw today from this horrific occurrence.*

By the grace of God  
5733  
Dr. ...  
Cambridge, Mass.

Greetings and blessings.

I duly received your letter of ... in which you write that you feel rage, etc. as a result of the Holocaust.

There is a prevalent misconception about the Holocaust that it was something new and unprecedented, and therefore requires an explanation which has never before been thought of. In truth, however, the only thing that is new about it is that it happened in the 20th Century, in a country which was one of the foremost in philosophy and science, with the rest of the world looking on with complete indifference. It only points out the glaring bankruptcy of the world's so-called "civilization."

The fact is—and in view of your academic background (Ph.D.) you must surely know—that the Jewish people had suffered Holocausts before, and—relatively speaking—even worse [than the Nazi Holocaust]. There was the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash at the hands of the Babylonians, and the destruction of the second Beis Hamikdash by the Romans. In both cases more than one third of our people—men, women and children—were brutally slain, and most of the remainder uprooted and exiled, or sold into slavery. This in addition to the loss of the spiritual center in Jerusalem, loss of the country, and independence, etc. There were the Crusades in the Middle Ages, with the loss of countless Jewish communities and Jewish lives, and more. So why single out the recent—and let us hope last—Holocaust?

Furthermore, from the viewpoint of the question, "Shall the judge of all the earth not do justice?" (a question, incidentally, asked by our patriarch Abraham); in other words, from the viewpoint of Divine justice, which is clearly the basis of your rage, etc., as you state in your letter, surely there is no difference in principle between the Holocaust and seeing a child afflicted with disease (as you also mention), for the child's suffering cannot be justified as punishment.

A further point: has it not occurred to you that throughout the ages there were faithful and God-fearing Jews, among them profound thinkers, who contemplated these and other problems, dedicating a lifetime to study and research, and whose works have become the Guide for the Perplexed (the actual title of the celebrated classic by the Rambam)? Do you think that all these great minds simply ignored a problem such as the Holocaust?



Finally—and this is perhaps the most essential point—what would you say of a person, even a superhuman being, who declared that were it not for the Holocaust he would walk humbly before God and obey all His mitzvos, yet because of the Holocaust he is impelled to conclude that God is limited in his intellect, like me and you— and indeed more so, for you and I would not tolerate such a thing?

In summary, the question about the Holocaust is as old as the age-old question: Why do the wicked prosper? It has been dealt with at great length and with profundity by great minds and in great books throughout the ages. We have not only learned to live with it, but it has not shaken the belief of the believer, for the simple reason that the human mind, even the greatest, is woefully limited and inadequate to question the Divine intellect.

The main point I wish to bring out here is that those who say that they cannot obey and fulfill the Divine mitzvos because of the Holocaust are only looking for an excuse, and it is a feeble attempt at self-justification in the face of a troubling conscience.

Moreover, to evoke the memory of the sacred martyrs—who lost their lives in the Holocaust for no other reason but that they are Jews—does not reflect, in my opinion, an honest concern for them, if their sacred memory is used as an excuse to lessen one's commitment to our people and our sacred heritage.

I trust you will forgive me if I feel impelled because of what is at stake to add that the last remark is an understatement.

I noted that you wanted to see me personally in regard to the subject matter of your letter, but there is really no need for it, since there is surely no need to add more to what has been said above. Besides, the schedule of appointments is fully booked for a long time ahead. So why wait?

With blessing,