

## **Religion and the Holocaust**

Dr. David Deutsch

Email: [david.deutsch@yadvashem.org.il](mailto:david.deutsch@yadvashem.org.il)

### **Course Description:**

The course explores issues of Jewish observance and religion in relation to the Holocaust from different perspectives:

- (A) The impact of Nazi Rule on Jewish religious practice and community
- (B) The challenges and theological shifts during the Holocaust period
- (C) The post war era and the religious response to the Holocaust
- (D) The Christian world and the Holocaust

### **Course Requirements:**

1. Readings: Lectures are based on reading assignments of academic paper/s, book chapters and/or source material and will include an active discussion of the material. (30% of the final grade)
2. Response papers: Students are required to prepare two response papers based on the reading material (300 words). An oral presentation in class is acceptable. (30% of the final grade)
3. Final assignment: A paper based on primary and secondary resources from at least three sessions (approx. 5 pages). The paper will primarily address the discussions and issues raised in the course. Students must submit a brief research proposal for the final assignment before August 30th (one page). Only approved proposals will be graded. (40% of the final grade)

(Alternatively, for the final assignment, students can write a term paper- referat (10-15 pages) or a seminar paper (25-30 pages). As explained above, an initial research proposal is required by August 15th.)

In addition to the syllabus, students will be expected to read and analyze several important documents and short clips that were translated to English from Hebrew, Yiddish, and German.

## **Part 1 – The impact of Nazi Rule on Jewish religious practice and community**

### Session 1. Background and Introduction (13-7)

- Part A. Basic topics in modern Jewish studies: Traditional values and new ideologies  
Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998. (Introduction and Chapter 1) (\*)
- Israel Abrahams, *Judaism*, Iowa: 1st World Library, 2004, (Chapter 2) (\*)
- Jacob Katz, "Orthodoxy in historical perspective", *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, Vol. 2, 1986, pp. 3-17. (\*\*)

### Session 2. Religious Jews under Nazi rule: An historical overview (20-7)

- Dan Michman, "Research on the Problems and Conditions of Religious Jewry under the Nazi Regime", *The Historiography of the Holocaust Period*, (Y. Gutman and G. Greif eds.) Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1988 (1983) (\*)
- Jacob Borut, "Struggles for Spaces: Where Could Jews Spend Free Time in Nazi Germany?", *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, Vol. 56, No. 1, 2011, pp. 307–350. (\*)
- Dan Michman, "Jewish Religious Life under Nazi Domination: Nazi Attitudes and Jewish Problems", *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* Vol. 22, No. 2, 1993, pp. 147-166 (\*\*) also in: Dan Michman, *Holocaust Historiography: A Jewish Perspective: Conceptualizations, Terminology, Approaches, and Fundamental Issues*, London; Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003.
- Dan Michman, "Problems of Religious Life in the Netherlands during the Holocaust" *Dutch Jewish History*, Vol. 1, Jerusalem, 1984 (1982 Symposium), pp. 379-399 (\*\*)

### Session 3. Jewish Leadership under Nazi Rule in Poland (27-7)

- Havi Dreifuss, "The Work of My Hands is Drowning in the Sea, and You Would Offer Me Song?!": Orthodox Behavior and Leadership in Warsaw during the Holocaust, in *Warsaw, The Jewish Metropolis*, *Studies in Judaica*, Vol.15, 2015, pp. 467-495 (\*)

- Joseph Walk, “The Religious Leadership during the Holocaust”, Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Nazi Europe 1933-1945 (Y. Gutman Ed.), Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1979 (\*)
- Shimon Huberland: Kiddush Hashem: Jewish Religious and Cultural Life in Poland During the Holocaust, Hoboken, NJ: Ktav; New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1987. (Selected pages) (\*)
- Gillian Gould, "Religious Life in the Ghettos Warsaw and Lodz" Journal of Progressive Judaism, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1996, pp. 21-56 (\*\*)

## **Part 2 – The challenges and theological shifts during the Holocaust period**

### **Session 4. Hassidic thought and the Holocaust: Rabbi Kalonimus Shapiro- a case study (3-8)**

- Henry Abramson, The Esh kodesh of Rabbi Kalonimus Kalmish Shapiro: A Hasidic Treatise on Communal Trauma from the Holocaust, Transcultural Psychiatry, Vol. 37, No. 3, 2000, pp. 321-335 (\*)
- Avichai Zur, “‘The Lord Hides in Inner Chambers’: The Doctrine of Suffering in the Theosophy of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira of Piaseczno.” Dapim, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2011, pp. 183–237. (\*)
- Don Seeman, “Ritual Efficacy, Hasidic Mysticism and ‘Useless Suffering’ in the Warsaw Ghetto.” Harvard Theological Review, Vol. 101, No. 3–4, 2008 pp. 465–505. (\*\*)

### **Session 5. Part 1: Responsa literature and the Holocaust: Rabbinical dilemmas (10-8)**

- Melech Westreich, “One Life for Another in the Holocaust: A Singularity in Jewish Law?” Theoretical Inquiries in Law, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2000, pp. 341–367. (\*)
- Michael A. Grodin, Johnathan I. Kelly, Erin L. Miller, Robert Kirschner, Joseph Polak, "Rabbinic Responsa and Spiritual Resistance during the Holocaust: The Life-for-Life Problem", Modern Judaism, Vol. 39, No. 3, 2019, pp. 296-325 (\*\*)

### **Session 5. Part 2: A Case Study: The Rulings of Rabbi Oshry**

- Nehemia Stern “To sanctify the name of God: ritual precision and martyrdom in Rabbi Ephraim Oshry’s Holocaust Responsa,” Holocaust Studies, Vol. 22, No. 1, 2016, pp. 100–24. (\*)

- Ephraim Oshry, Responsa from the Holocaust, (introduction by A. Goldberg)  
“Oshry, Ephraim,” YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, 2018. (\*\*)

### **Session 6 – Part 1: The “Informal” Jewish observance under Nazi rule (17-8)**

- David Deutsch, Religious and Halakhic Observance in View of Deconstruction Processes in the Holocaust, YV Studies, Vol, 47, No. 1, 2019, pp. 1-38 (\*)
- Michal Shaul “Testimonies of Ultra-Orthodox Holocaust Survivors Between 'public Memory' and 'Private Memory'”, Yad Vashem Studies, Vol. 35, No. 2, 2007, pp. 143-185

### **Session 6: Part 2: A case study of religious women and Jewish observance**

- Hadassa Levin, Bat Ami, Bat Ami Publications, Israel, 1996 (translated extracts); Tels Book, Yizkor Book Collection (translated extracts) (\*)
- Rochelle L. Millen, “Women and Kaddish: Reflections on Responsa.” Modern Judaism, Vol. 10, No. 2 1990, pp. 191–203. (\*\*)

### **Part 3: The post war era and the religious response to the Holocaust**

#### **Session 7: The Rabbinical responses to the Holocaust (24-8)**

- Tehila Darmon Malka, “Our Unfortunate Sisters, the Daughters of Israel”: Holocaust-Survivor Rabbis Confront the Problem of Post-Holocaust Agunot, Yad Vashem Studies, Vol. 47, No.1, 2019, pp. 143-174
- David Deutsch, "Exhumations in Post War Responsas," Human Remains and Mass Violence, J.M. Dreyfus ed., Manchester University Press, 2016. (\*)
- Esther Farbstein, Hidden in Thunder: Perspectives on Faith, Halakhah and Leadership during the Holocaust, Jerusalem: Rav Kook Institute, 2007 (2002) (Introduction) (\*\*)

#### **Session 8: Jewish theology after Auschwitz (31-8)**

- Dan Michman, "The Impact of the Holocaust on Religious Jewry", Major Changes within the Jewish People in the Wake of the Holocaust, I Gutman ed., YV, Jerusalem, 1993, pp. 659-708 (\*)

- Shlomo Biderman, Gershon Greenberg, & Steven Katz, *Wrestling with God: Jewish theological responses during and after the Holocaust*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. (Introduction) (\*)
- Arthur, A. Cohen, *Thinking the Tremendum: A Theological Interpretation of the Holocaust*, NY: Crossroad Publications, 1981 (\*\*)
- Gershon Greenberg, "Jewish Mysticism and Kabbalah Thorough the Holocaust", *Back to the Sources: Re-examining perpetrators, victims and bystanders*, Northwestern University Press, 2012, pp. 37-63 (\*\*)

#### **Part 4: The Christian world and the Holocaust**

##### **Session 9: (Optional)**

###### **An overview**

- Steven R. Haynes, "Christian Holocaust Theology: A Critical Reassessment." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 62, No. 2, 1994, pp. 553–585. (\*)
- Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, Augsburg Fortress: Minneapolis, 1993 (preface) (\*\*)

###### **Comparative**

- Irving Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity and Modernity after the Holocaust." *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era: Reflections on the Holocaust*, (ed. Eva Fleischner) New York: Ktav, 1977, pp. 7–55. (\*)

###### **Catholic**

- John Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933–1965*, Harvard, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012 (selected pages) (\*)
- Elias H. Fullenbach, "Shock, Renewal, Crisis: Catholic Reflections on the Shoah", *Antisemitism, Christian Ambivalence and the Holocaust*, (Kevin P. Spicer ed.) Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2007, pp. 201-237 (\*\*)

### **Protestant**

- Matthew D. Hockenos, "The German Protestant Church and its Judenmission 1945-1950", *Antisemitism, Christian Ambivalence and the Holocaust*, (K. P. Spicer ed.) Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2007, pp. 173-201 (\*\*)

### **Contemporary responses**

- Sarah K. Pinnock, "Atrocity and Ambiguity: Recent Developments in Christian Holocaust Responses." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 75, No. 3, 2007, pp. 499–523 (\*\*)