

Infanticide and Kiddush HaShem: An Historical Perspective

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Infanticide, the putting to death of one's child with the consent of the parent, family, or community, has existed throughout history and in all cultures. Likewise, all cultures have views concerning this practice. Historically, infanticide has been practiced in populations where the food supply is threatened, and female infanticide continues to be practiced in contemporary societies where boys are deemed more valuable than girls. Infanticide and *Kiddush HaShem* are not usually linked in Jewish thought; they appear to be contradictory, yet historical perspectives indicate otherwise.

The *Shoah*, as well as other events in earlier Jewish history, provides a number of examples of infanticide, most often a drastic step taken to avoid disavowal of Jewish faith and baptism, but also, in the case of the *Shoah*, to protect either the mother or other members of the community, usually from detection by the Nazis. Most often, such martyrdom has been interpreted as *Kiddush HaShem*: the ultimate sanctification of G-d's name; however, in rabbinic literature, the concept of *Kiddush HaShem* carries a far broader context and has been taken to mean sanctification through ethical behavior or prayer as well as martyrdom (Roth 1994). Rabbi Shraga Simmons (2002) takes the view that the notion of *Kiddush HaShem* stems from *Emor*, chapter 22, verse 32, which says: "You shall not desecrate My Holy Name, rather I should be sanctified among the Children of Israel. I am G-d Who makes you holy." This *mitzvah*, in his view, can be interpreted as the duty of all Jews to create a positive response to the Almighty in our daily lives through adherence to His laws. A universal Jewish practice that Simmons (2002) cites is the performance of *Brit Milah*, an act that sanctifies God's name and awakens in all Jews who are present to G-d in our lives.

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Rabbi Kalman Packouz (2001) extends this concept further with his explanation that since life is paramount and one should live by the commandment rather than die by it, one can therefore do anything possible to save a life, and that by doing so, one sanctifies the Almighty. Therefore, one can violate all the commandments to save a life with the exception of three acts. These are murder, illicit sexual relationships, and the worship of idols. The Rambam (Moses Maimonides) also elaborated on the concept of *Kiddush HaShem*. In his discourse, he explains that when one shows honour and concern for others and maintains honest business practices, the individual creates *Kiddush HaShem*, sanctifying the Almighty by showing how a Jew should live and conduct his or her everyday behaviour. Rebbetzin Feige Twerski (2002) comments that to live by *Kiddush HaShem* is a far greater achievement than dying in *Kiddush HaShem*. A lifetime devoted to the will of G-d is far greater than the once-in-a-lifetime, ultimate sacrifice of death as a martyr. Setting aside personal impulses, in her view, carries far more merit as one bends to G-d's will; the ultimate belief is that such behaviour is in a Jew's best interest.

This notion becomes problematic with reference to historical incidents and with the *Shoah* in particular. One view of the victims of the *Shoah* is that they all died in *Kiddush HaShem*, as martyrs that sanctified G-d's name. However, this notion does not examine the motives of those who felt they were forced to commit these acts, nor does it consider its significance in terms of the *Shoah* in historical context, particularly within Jewish belief and precedent. To appreciate that context, it is necessary to explore previous examples cited in Jewish literature and experience, beginning with the *Torah*.

Sources from the Torah

Despite the overall Jewish reverence for life, a number of sources relating to infanticide are found in the *Torah*, beginning with the *Akedah*, the binding of Isaac. In Genesis, Abraham is commanded by G-d to take his son and offer him as a sacrifice to the Almighty. While Isaac is traditionally believed to be an adult at this point in time, nevertheless, the sacrifice may still be considered infanticide in the sense that it is the willful killing of one's own

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offspring. The sacrifice is considered the tenth and final test of Abraham's faith in the Almighty, and, although he prepares to implement the order, G-d rewards his faith and orders him to stop and sacrifice a nearby ram in his son's place. While the traditional view is that this is a test of Abraham, it may also be construed as a test of Isaac, because, as an adult, he is clearly aware of what is to take place. The significance in this instance is that the Almighty orders the act and also prevents its implementation and acts to prevent the death of Isaac.

A different set of circumstances is detailed in the opening passages of Exodus in which Shifrah and Puah, two midwives, are ordered by the Pharaoh to murder all Hebrew male infants. Shifrah and Puah, however, make a conscious decision to disobey the order despite the implicit threat of death to them. They not only disobey, but also proceed to aid the Hebrew women in giving birth, informing the Pharaoh that they were unable to carry out the order, as the women give birth quickly and without aid. For this act of disobedience, G-d rewards them by giving them houses of their own. There is a distinct difference that is apparent in this situation; clearly, while the Almighty's orders are to be obeyed with complete faith, those directed by human beings can be disobeyed.

However, allusions to infanticide continue in the *Torah*. In chapter 26, verse 27, a prophecy is made that states, "you shall eat the flesh of your sons and daughters." The prophecy is repeated in Deuteronomy, chapter 28, verse 53, and the theme is continued in Prophets.

Prophets

The various prophets make reference not only to infanticide, but also to cannibalism of children. In 2 Kings 6:27–29, Elisha makes reference to the siege of Shromron, in which the statement made by Ben Haddad, "Give your son that we may eat him," is all too clear in meaning. "And the king said unto her: 'What aileth thee?' And she answered: 'This woman said unto me: Give thy son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.' So we boiled my son, and did eat him; and I said unto her on the next day: 'Give thy son,

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that we may eat him;' and she hath hid her son." Jeremiah, in Lamentations, carries this theme forward in the description of the siege of Jerusalem. In 2:14, there is explicit reference to boiling the children, while Ezekiel 5:10 also refers to this practice: "Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter unto all the winds."

In Judges 11, different circumstances prevail. "Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said: 'If Thou wilt indeed deliver the children of Ammon into my hand, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, it shall be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering.'" Jephthah ultimately was successful in his war. Upon his return, however, the first person to greet him was his daughter, his only child.

And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said: "Alas, my daughter! Thou has brought me very low, and thou art become my troubler; for I have opened my mouth unto the L-rd, and I cannot go back." And she said unto him: "My father, thou hast opened thy mouth unto the L-rd; do unto me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the L-rd hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon.

In this tragic story, it is not clear that the murder does take place. There are several commentaries on Jephthah, but at least one takes the view that it ultimately results in the infanticide of his daughter.

Later accounts of the Roman occupation are recorded by Josephus. His account of the siege of Jerusalem during the Roman war also recounts an episode in which a mother is found cooking the flesh of her child due to the terrible hunger in the city.

"In war, famine, and civil strife why should I keep you alive? With the Romans, there is only slavery, even if we are alive when they come; but famine is forestalling slavery, and the partisans are crueller than either. Come, you must be food for me, to the partisans an avenging spirit and to the world

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a tale, the only thing left to fill up the measure of Jewish misery." As she spoke she killed her son, then roasted him and ate one half, concealing and saving up the rest (Williamson 1959:319).

Although one can be doubtful of Josephus and his perspective on the Jewish war, in light of the terrible starvation and suffering that the residents of Jerusalem faced, it would appear likely that this story is truthful. Clearly, while abhorrent, the practice of infanticide existed within the Jewish culture under very limited circumstances, and, in fact, the sacrifice of children was common in the Middle East.

Other Historical Contexts: Masada, York, and the Crusades

The story of the siege of Masada is well known, and the traditional understanding of the events at the conclusion of the three-year siege ends with the mass suicide or murder of the Jews who were trapped on the mountain fortress where they had sought refuge. The description of events included the casting of lots to determine which of the men would perform these acts, so that ultimately almost the entire population of men, women, and children were killed rather than surrendering to the Romans, retaining their faith in the Almighty (Yadin 1996:124).

This theme was carried forward in the Middle Ages, and in 1096, the first Crusaders passed through Germany on their way to Jerusalem. During that time, they murdered thousands of Jews in the larger cities. In May 1096, a group of about seven hundred, who had taken refuge in the archiepiscopal palace in Mainz, understood that they would have no chance of escape. They therefore decided that they would "hasten and offer ourselves as a sacrifice to the L-rd." Furthermore, they carefully examined their knives to be sure that they were ritually acceptable; that is, without any nicks apparent. This leads one to conclude that this was no simple act of suicide, but intentionally performed in a manner that would seem ritually linked, as the knives were clearly examined with reference to the kosher slaughter of animals. The account of Solomon Bar Samson from that incident relates that the women slew their sons and daughters, and

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then committed suicide, as did the men. Av HaRachamin, recited every *Shabbos* in most Ashkenazi communities after reading the *Torah*, contains early references to *Kiddush HaShem* and was inspired by the massacres of the First Crusade in 1096 (Berman 1999:80).

In York in 1190, a fire broke out in the city center. Some sources indicate that it was deliberately set as a pretext to the looting that followed. The home of Benedict, a wealthy member of the community, was broken into and set on fire, and Benedict's wife and others in the building were killed and the house looted of valuables, while other Jews caught in the city were forcibly baptised. Other buildings that belonged to Jews were then torched, and the remaining Jews sought refuge in the royal castle under the protection of the constable. Rioting and looting continued, and the Jews who had sought refuge feared the mob and had little trust in the constable. When the constable left the castle, they refused to readmit him. The Sheriff of York was called upon; he decided that the Jews must be driven from the castle, and the mobs interpreted this decision to mean that their attacks had royal sanction. After holding out for several days, by Friday, March 16, those inside were exhorted by their rabbi to commit mass suicide. Surrounded by a mob that had been whipped into a frenzy by the clergy and Crusaders, the Jews were left with little doubt as to what would occur. They were offered baptism or death, but instead chose to offer themselves as sacrifices, men, women and children, a sacrifice invoked with rabbinical sanction, clearly an act of *Kiddush HaShem* (*The Jews of Medieval York* 1998:11–12). Sixty did so, having first killed wives and children; the men were killed by their rabbi, who then killed himself. The survivors were killed by the mob that broke through on *Shabbat Ha-Gadol* (the *Shabbat* immediately preceding *Pesach*).

There can be little doubt of the intent of those who participated in the mass suicides of Masada, York, and Mainz. The accounts clearly state that the Jews who were trapped in all three of these places considered that they were about to enact *Kiddush HaShem*, a sacrifice that would sanctify the L-rd, not merely the act of mass suicide. It is perhaps from these incidents that the general

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understanding of *Kiddush HaShem* was derived as it is often interpreted today and has become understood to be martyrdom, while any other act of sanctification, the general rabbinical interpretation, became less well known to the majority of Jews throughout the world.

The Shoah

The practice of infanticide occurred during the *Shoah*, and a number of instances from eyewitness accounts provide details of these events and why they took place. In her memoirs of life as a physician in the Warsaw Ghetto, Adina Blady Szwajger recalled the mass round-ups of the ghetto's Jews in 1942. At that time, she was working as a physician in the children's hospital. She and a colleague began by injecting lethal doses of morphine into adults, and continued to the infants' room. While they were medicating the infants, they could hear screaming from the Germans downstairs, who were already taking the sick to the cattle cars. They went on to the rooms of the older children, who were told that the medicine would make their pain disappear. The children were instructed to drink the medicine and to undress and get into bed. By the time Szwajger entered the room, they were asleep.

In his review of epidemics in the Warsaw Ghetto, Isaac Trunk discussed the terrible starvation that was inflicted upon the residents. So horrible was the hunger that two known cases of cannibalism were documented by the Jewish Historical Institute Archives (file IV/2), whose files contain two references to mothers who ate portions of their dead children. One of these incidents occurred on 15 December 1941; the other is undated.

Other recollections of infanticide in ghettos include an instance on 8 May 1942, in Radun, located in White Russia. On that day, when the ghetto had been sealed, among those trapped were families who had escaped from Lithuania for the comparative safety of White Russia. Moshe Sorenson, who had been hiding with his two children, including one infant, remembered that as the Germans began shouting for Jews to come out, his infant began to cry. Fifteen

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Jews were hidden upstairs at the time. Terrified that they would all be caught, an old man suffocated the child with a coat (Gilbert 1986:336).

This was not an isolated practice. In Opoczno in Poland in 1943, five hundred Jews with relatives in Palestine were registered for exchange. The offer was a ruse, and the volunteers were instead sent to Treblinka, a fact that the deportees recognized when the train was shunted eastwards. As dread spread through the carriage, one woman strangled her baby, shouting that she wanted him "to die a holy death." Before the others could stop her, the child was dead (Gilbert 1986:512). A similar incident was recalled in the Warsaw Ghetto. In January of 1943, when the vast majority of the Warsaw Jews had already been deported and no illusions were left, a number of the residents had gone into hiding. On January 19, David Wdowinski recalled, they had entered their shelters, listening to the approaching Germans pounding on doors, well aware that they were nearby. When a child began to cry, the mother covered its mouth with her hand and the crying stopped. Eventually, the Germans left, but the child had died at the hands of its mother (Gilbert 1986:524). A similar instance in Bialystock was recalled by Samuel Pissar, hidden in an underground bunker along with his mother. Approximately thirty people were hidden there, and Pissar described the scene in which his former teacher, Professor Bergman, was rocking his infant son in an attempt to stop his coughing. As the Germans approached their hiding place, everyone fell silent, but the baby continued to cough, and another man crawled over and covered the baby's mouth with his hand. The coughing ceased, and the baby died. Pissar remembered his teacher's anguished expression, as if he had been trying to weigh the value of one life against thirty others, even though the one life was his own son's (Gilbert 1986:602).

Irving Greenberg cites the testimony of another mother who succeeded in hiding her pregnancy in Auschwitz, but when Dr Mengele discovered that he had failed to detect the pregnancy, he insisted that she give birth. Once the child was born, however, he refused to allow the child any nourishment in order to see how long it would take a baby to die without food. Finally, a nurse stole some

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morphine and told the mother to end the child's misery. The mother finally acted, unable to bear her own infant's suffering, and subsequently killed her own child (Greenberg 1988:317).

These practices were not limited to the ghettos. Rabbi Simmons (2002) cites a story in which a selection had been made in a forced labour camp. On that day, the selection had been made of infants to be sent to death. In stunned sadness, the prisoners heard the voice of a mother demanding a knife. The other prisoners believed she wanted to commit suicide. The woman was handed a pocketknife by a German soldier watching the scene, but the mother had no intention of committing suicide. Instead, she unwrapped an infant bundled in rags, made a blessing, and circumcised the child, stating that she was returning to the Almighty a worthy Jew.

In Auschwitz, Lucie Adelsberger (1995), a physician, was faced with the dilemma of caring for several Jewish women inmates who had succeeded in hiding their pregnancies and gave birth in the camp. Those women who were discovered to be pregnant were sent immediately to the gas chambers; or, if they managed to hide the pregnancy and gave birth in the camp, both mother and infant were sent to the gas chamber.

Adelsberger (1995) commented in her memoirs that medical ethics prescribe that when both mother and baby are in danger, the priority of the mother's life must be the overriding factor in deciding which to save. She and other prisoner physicians behaved according to this principle, consequently killing the infants, usually by poison, but in some instances, there was insufficient medication available. Adelsberger recalled one incident in which the mother strangled her own child in order to live, because she had three other children in hiding. Dr Adelsberger also commented that many of these mothers never forgave her for killing their babies; however, she made no remark concerning her own feelings.

This account is congruent with the recollections of Dr Alina Brewda, chief physician in Block 10, the site of the SS medical experiments. Like Adelsberger, she performed late abortions and

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considered her actions justified to save the mother's life in each case (Romney 2001).

Dr Gisella Perl also performed abortions in Auschwitz, sacrificing the life of the unborn child to save the mother. She also practiced infanticide, along with other doctors and nurses, in an effort to save the lives of the mothers. She recalled that they pinched shut the noses of the infants, and, when they tried to breath through the mouth, the infants were given a lethal dose of medication, so that the birth would be considered a stillbirth (Romney 2001).

Abortions, in this context, may be considered to be infanticide in the Jewish view, based on *halachic* rulings on abortion. *Halacha*, or Jewish law, defines the time when a fetus becomes a person as the time when the head emerges from the womb. Although the fetus has great value as a potential human life, it gains full status as a human being only at birth. The Babylonian *Talmud Yevamot* 69b makes reference to the embryo as "mere water" until the fortieth day after conception; however, other sources indicate that the belief that the fetus becomes a person only after it emerges from the birth canal is supported by the commentary that it may be necessary to sacrifice a potential life in order to save another human being. This is generally interpreted to mean the mother in labour (Zwerin and Shapiro 2002). However, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, who was one of the great rabbinical thinkers of the twentieth century, considered abortion tantamount to murder, and this stance was supported by Rabbi Hersch Ginsberg, who stated that from conception, all human life is sacred and must be protected (Feinstein 2001). Consequently, there are some rabbinic views that abortion and, particularly, third-trimester abortion would be analogous to infanticide.

Multiple accounts relate the murder of inmates by other prisoner physicians in camps through a variety of means, including phenol injections and overdoses of insulin (Romney 2001:330); however, others resisted and testified that it was possible to resist carrying out orders. Claude Romney concluded that some degree of collaboration by all prisoner medical staff, or at least the pretense of collaboration, was necessary for prisoner doctors to survive. Some were able to feign research results so that they could not be utilised by the Nazis.

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Irrespective of the physicians' involvement in the murder of fellow inmates, or of the women physicians who admitted to the murder of babies to save mothers' lives, it is clear that they faced ethical dilemmas to which they could find no moral solution. As a result, many have suffered tremendous guilt over their actions. It is not necessarily within the realm of historians, who have the comfort of hindsight to pass judgment on their actions; each made moral decisions based on their circumstances, hoping that they had made the correct choice. Medical ethics, as stated by Lucie Adelsberger (1995), formed the basis of her decision; it is likely that others too used that framework as a basis for their decisions.

While the *Shoah* included many victims, such as gypsies, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, resistance workers, and others, it cannot be disputed that it still must be considered one of the worst, if not the worst tragedy for the Jewish people in Europe, standing alongside the murder of thousands by the Crusaders and the Spanish Inquisition. The *Shoah* may be ultimately a Jewish tragedy, but it was also a complete failure of human civilization. However, one cannot dispute that the vast majority of the victims in camps and ghettos were Jews and, other than gypsies, the only group to be hunted down and murdered for no reason other than their religious-ethnic background. This being the case, rabbinic sources may shed some light in interpreting the actions of those who, on the surface, committed one of humanity's most taboo crimes: the murder of infants.

Among the members of the well-known historical circle of the Warsaw Ghetto, the *Oneg Shabbat*, was a young rabbi, Shimon Huberband. He conducted a number of studies of religious life including *Kiddush HaShem* from information gathered from a number of towns, including Vilna and Bialystock. On 19 September 1942, Rabbi Huberband was taken away in a roundup to Treblinka, where he died. In his documents, Huberband recalled a number of incidents in which rabbis were arrested and subsequently murdered in front of their communities. One rabbi proclaimed that his fellow Jews should not display sorrow, that he was proud to be sacrificed for all Israel (Kermish 1986:422). In another incident in Dwahrt, Rabbi Eli Laskowsky was ordered to deliver ten Jews to be hanged on Purim

in 1942. Jewish law, he stated, requires every Jew to refrain from delivering another into death, and he therefore refused the order. As a consequence, he was taken with his son, along with others to be hanged, calling out the benediction “who has sanctified us with *Kiddush HaShem*” (Kermish 1986:423). Clearly the notion of *Kiddush HaShem* was uppermost in the minds of these rabbis and others cited in Huberband’s documents. The notion of dying to sanctify the Almighty was an unshakeable conviction, although they make no reference to the sacrifice of others. Their words, however, shed some light on this puzzling and heartbreaking facet of the *Shoah*.

Kiddush HaShem

Several rabbis during the *Shoah* interpreted *Kiddush HaShem* in both its meanings. In the Warsaw Ghetto, Rabbi Yitzchak Nissembaum wrote: “This is the hour of *Kiddush HaHayim* (life) and not *Kiddush HaShem* by death” (Schindler 1990:799). Consequently, belief, faith, and the continuation of Jewish practices were viewed as paramount and the essence of *Kiddush HaShem* and a response to the Nazi objectives of destroying Jews as well as Judaism. Conversely, a Jew who consciously chose to offer his own life for the sake of his faith was considered a martyr and a *kadosh* (holy person), linking the notion to earlier European Jewish history. The *Shoah* eliminated that choice for many of the victims. The previously mentioned Rabbi Huberband considered that any Jew who was murdered by non-Jews for any reason can be considered a *kadosh*. Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman of Lithuania exhorted others as he faced death, reminding his fellow Jews that they were about to enact *Kiddush HaShem* and that the fire that would consume their bodies would, in turn, ignite the renewal of the Jewish people (Schindler 1990:800).

It is clear that these rabbis had no qualms about sacrificing themselves and, as a result, gave themselves up in the practice of *Kiddush HaShem*. Rabbi Laskowsky extended the conceptual knowledge in his position that he would not be a party in the delivery of others to death. He clearly refused to be a party to the murder of others, adhering to the concept cited earlier that one must not commit murder to save a life, in this case, his own. If this concept is

examined against the many incidents of infanticide previously cited, can the perpetrator be excused on the basis of *Kiddush HaShem* and a genuine attempt to save the lives of others? It would seem that the problem exists in the deliberate murder of an infant to save the life of the mother. While there was no apparent dilemma for the Nazis, the Jewish perpetrators clearly agonised in their decisions and suffered as well, according to accounts such as Lucie Adelsberger's (1995). One life, in Jewish law, is not to be measured against another; it is impossible to quantify the value of a human being. In this context, then, the infants, who were tragically murdered, were killed to protect others based on a quantitative idea, that is, the good of the collective, rather than the individual; or, as several of the doctors claimed, their decisions were based solely on medical ethics or to prevent further suffering, as was the case of the children euthanised in the Warsaw Ghetto hospital.

Biblical sources regarding commandments are found in Leviticus 18:5 which states: "And you should live by them." However, this is followed by an apparently contradictory verse, 32:2: "And you should not defame my holy name." This seeming contradiction is resolved by the Talmud, supporting Rebbetzin Twerski's viewpoint, which asserts that Jews are meant to live by commandments, not die by them; however, in those instances in which G-d's name could be defiled, then it may be preferable to die. The medieval practice of mass murder/suicide is then understandable in this context, despite the clear idea in Judaism that suicide is prohibited and is, in essence, a sin. Committing suicide is a show of disrespect, if human beings are created in the image of G-d. The precedent for medieval suicide and its link with *Kiddush HaShem* in all likelihood stem from the *Gemara* (*Pesachim* 53b). In this parallel, Hannaniah, Mishael, and Azariah jump into a fiery pit rather than bow down to an image of Nebuchadnezzar, an image of a man built to honor a man. The willingness to die is what links their actions with *Kiddush HaShem*. Their options may have included escape, but they stayed to prove their faith in the Almighty. Nevertheless, there is rabbinic argument as to whether this constitutes *Kiddush HaShem* or suicide, and it sheds no further light on the murder of infants. Medieval sources may also have taken direction from the *Akedah*, the binding of Isaac. Preventing their children from being converted to Christianity may well have been interpreted as obeying the word of G-d, refusing to

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worship idols, as did Abraham. During the Crusades, some parents who murdered their children recited a blessing before performing the act. This may well have been done to provide the parent with a sense of legitimacy and religious meaning, and this notion of reciting a blessing was apparent in the recollections of Huberland's research on those rabbis who also did this prior to their murder.

One view may be that *Kiddush HaShem* enabled the powerless Jews of the medieval period to provide the ultimate example of their spiritual worth to the Christian society that threatened them, as may well have been uppermost in the minds of the rabbis previously cited. There appear to be several references to this view, which have been previously discussed. These same beliefs were cited by several of the parents in the accounts from the *Shoah* in which reference was made to "holy death." Conversely, it was never cited in the incidents in the various ghettos and concentration camps, although there is little doubt that each event was heartrending to all who were part of it.

As the full extent of the *Shoah* revealed itself at the war's end, the very notion of martyrdom for the sake of G-d was placed in a position of potentially losing its significance. While the Jews of the Middle Ages had the choice of accepting conversion to save their lives or choosing to offer their lives rather than abandon G-d and *Torah*, which was often a public act, the Nazis gave no choice. All Jews, whether converts, observant, or assimilated, were killed. This problem was addressed by a number of rabbis who understood that any Jew who was killed because he or she was Jewish died in *Kiddush HaShem*, irrespective of religious commitment or behavior. As long as one Jew is alive, all associations and traditions with Judaism continue (Greenberg 1988:338).

While it is clear that many of the Nazis perpetrated infanticide in pursuit of their goal of complete extermination of European Jewry, they neither agonised nor considered the moral consequences of their acts. Their Jewish counterparts, however, were left in a far different quandary, facing an agonising dilemma. Hindsight affords one the luxury of looking back, examining, analysing, and coming to some conclusion. While there is clearly no evidence that the Jewish

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perpetrators of infanticide during the *Shoah* linked their actions with *Kiddush HaShem*, nevertheless one can take the broad view that all the victims of the Final Solution, irrespective of their religious observance and practices, died in *Kiddush HaShem* as martyrs in the ultimate sacrifice.

The problem of grief and mourning of the victims of the *Shoah*, too, continues to be problematic, particularly for the observant Jew, because survivors often had no idea of the date of death of loved ones and, consequently, no idea when to recite memorial prayers. As a result, a national date was set by the Israeli rabbinate for the explicit purpose of remembrance, distinctly different from *Yom HaShoah*. Remembrance has slowly crept into the liturgy with prayers inserted into New Year season *slichot* prayers as well as in the traditional *Yzkor* service. Composing liturgy often takes a lengthy period of time following tragic events, but it often does take place. One example is the *Av HaRachamin* prayer recited each *Shabbos* after returning the *Torah* scrolls to the Ark. This prayer relates directly to the massacres that took place during the Crusades. The notion of *Kiddush HaShem* was clearly uppermost in the minds of the rabbis who met in 1984 at the Agudat Israel general assembly, where the agenda was devoted to *Shoah* issues. At that time, it was decided to insert additions to the traditional *Aveinu Malkeinu* prayer to include specific reference to the *Shoah*. Two of these lines included:

Our Father, our King, act for the sake of those who were
murdered for Your Holy Name.
Our Father, our King, act for the sake of those who went
through fire and water for the sanctification of Your Name
(Michman 1996:678).

These lines clearly make specific reference to the notion of *Kiddush HaShem*, and it is likely that, over time, when the memory of the *Shoah* is not as raw and the last of the survivors are no longer alive, the liturgy will continue to evolve to include more explicit prayers.

Conclusion

What can be derived from these tragic stories and how can they be understood in Jewish thought and terms? While no one can fully comprehend the workings of the Almighty, some clues appear in the double reading of Chukas and Balak. Several significant incidents take place in these readings, but a fundamental message is that out of the greatest of tragedies, where one may least expect aid, salvation arrives. In Chukas, fiery serpents are sent to bite the recalcitrant children of Israel, but they are healed by the construction of another serpent by Moses according to the Almighty's instructions. Those who stare at the construction, in essence, the cause of their pain and suffering, are ultimately healed. Balak, the king of Moab, filled with rage and hatred of Israel, sends Balaam to curse Israel, but G-d thwarts the plan, and Balak's futile attempts result in blessing Israel. The significance of both events is that salvation arrives from the source of the sorrow; both events derive from the wicked and from sources of suffering, and therefore the redemption that follows, originating from the same source, is all the more significant. That is, in the face of tragedy and disaster, the moment when one least expects redemption from suffering is the moment it arrives from the most unlikely source—an idea similar to that expressed by Rabbi Wasserman.

In recent memory, it would be difficult to recall any event more filled with suffering and tragedy than the *Shoah*, and one of the least discussed aspects is the infanticide, or murder of children by their parents or fellow Jews. If we understand the messages from these readings from the *Tanach* and later Jewish history, such events are not only well represented in Jewish history and must be understood in that context, but, more significantly, as heartrending as they are, perhaps they form a chain in the ultimate redemption of all Israel. That is no comfort to the heartbroken and guilty, but it does perhaps provide some sense of meaning to seemingly meaningless loss and grief. Throughout history, Jews have been persecuted and have suffered for maintaining their faith in the Almighty. The incidents cited in this paper are some of the extreme examples of *Kiddush HaShem*. At the time of this writing, many Jews are suffering from the

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relentless suicide murders in Israel and increased attacks on Jews and Jewish institutions throughout the world. We are fortunate in Australia to live in relative comfort and safety, not having to face the heartrending decision made by our ancestors in taking the road to *Kiddush HaShem* through martyrdom. An easier path is open to us, to live our lives by the commandments and sanctify G-d in our daily lives, creating *Kiddush HaHayim*, living rather than dying in *Kiddush HaShem*.

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