

**PRAYER FOR HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY  
SCDC'S 81ST ANNUAL DISTRICT COUNCIL  
COVINA, CA**

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By Bill Bjoraker

**INTRODUCTION:**

Today is "Holocaust Remembrance Day." The first of the new century and millennium. The twentieth century, the bloodiest in human history, is behind us. Or is it?

In our contemporary world, the Holocaust is the one culturally available icon of absolute evil. It is the one thing on which almost everyone agrees. Unlike Mao and Stalin, Hitler has no apologists in respectable circles.

The Holocaust is the shoal upon which the humanistic modern Myth of Progress finally crashed. In its wake it was not long until the postmodern era set in.

Some of you may have heard me at this years' sectional councils, ask the somewhat trick question, "How many of you have talked to a Jewish person today? " When I saw the few hands that went up, I said, "All of you have talked to the Jewish person today. We just prayed. " Then when I asked, "How many of you have read a book by a Jewish author lately? most of you had caught on. Our Savior and our Bible are Jewish. We as Christians are intimately related to the Jewish people. In the Apostle Paul's great metaphor, the Jewish people are the roots and trunk of the olive tree, which is God's people, Yes, many natural branches were broken off due to unbelief. But, we gentiles are wild olive branches grafted into that tree. Our roots are the Jewish people.

This truth serves to bring into sharp relief, another truth that is this: The biggest, most ugly, and therefore the most repressed and denied ".skeleton" in the historic Christian church's collective closet is the reality of Christian anti-Semitism—a force that culminated in the Nazi "Final Solution" to the Jewish problem: the Holocaust of 1939-45 in Europe.

Wait a second, you say, "The Nazis were not Christians!" Right. But the perception of most Jewish people is that they were. Germany was a Christian country the land of Martin Luther. Hitler was baptized as a Roman Catholic. The very real anti-Semitism of European Christianity was the seedbed upon which the Nazi's fed. Hitler quoted Luther in Mein Kampf, "Those who fight against the Jews are doing the work of the Lord.

Here is the tragic progression, known as such by many Jewish people, but by few Christian leaders:

**Three Stages of Christian anti-Semitism in Europe:**

- Exclusion ("You cannot live among us as Jews")
- Expulsion ("You cannot live among us")
- Extermination ("You cannot live")

The Pope's visit to Israel this spring was significant. You will see on the OH a quote by Prime Minister Ehud Barak on the occasion of Pope John Paul II's visit to Yad v'Shem Holocaust Memorial, Jerusalem. March 23, 2000:

*"Here, right now, time itself has come to a standstill. This very moment holds within it 2000 years of history. And their weight is almost too much to bear".*

(Prime Minister of Israel Ehud Barak on the occasion of Pope John Paul II's visit to Yad v'Shem Holocaust Memorial, Jerusalem. March 23, 2000).

This statement by Israel's Prime Minister shows us two things:

- 1) For most Jewish people, whether or not it is true, the Pope is the leader and representative of Christianity. His visit symbolized for the leaders of Israel the visiting of all Christendom.
- 2) "The past is not dead; it is not even past". The 20th century is not behind us.

You can take this saying to the bank: To the peoples of the Middle East, the past is not dead; it is not even past.

The Holocaust remains a live issue for all our Jewish friends, It is not dead. It is not even past. I say these things not to bring condemnation and guilt (unless the Holy Spirit uses it to bring conviction of true guilt to any of us who harbor or justify anti-Semitism).

I say this to sensitize us the great barriers we the church have yet to overcome to fulfill our mandate to the Jewish people - to "provoke them to jealousy" by what we have in Messiah and to win them to faith in Him. One small way we can be sensitized is to take a few minutes on this Holocaust Remembrance Day, and remember the six million Holocaust victims, and to pray for the 14 million surviving Jewish people worldwide. (There were 18 million before the Holocaust; and 12 million afterward). Then I would like us to recognize and remember the six million as the Jewish people themselves do we will have a minute of silence. In Israel, the siren wails for one minute while everyone and I mean everyone, stops what he or she is doing and stands silently, remembering.

- 1) Pastor Rick Kurnow will blow the shofar
- 2) We will observe one minute of silence standing in remembrance of the six million
- 3) I will lead us in a group prayer to conclude.

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father as we pray for the Jewish people today, words cannot begin to do justice to enormity of this event. Only utter silence seems appropriate. We would, like Job's friends, sit down with Job in his agony on the ground around him for seven days and seven nights. Yet, even as King David cried, "Out of the depths we cry to you, Lord. If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" so we cry today.

Father, we pray first for all the Jewish people, the 14 million worldwide. We pray your grace, mercy and love to be poured out upon them in full measure. We pray especially for the Holocaust survivors, their children and grandchildren. Will you comfort them? Will you heal them? Will you take them to your bosom in covenant mercy? Will you draw them to yourself? We pray for the 450,000 Jewish people here in

the Southland. As they today reflect on the Holocaust, lead them to see something of your heart for them. Send messengers to them with the passion and love of Jesus that will reach them where they are.

Lord, as I prepared to lead this prayer, I was reminded of this story told by several Holocaust survivors, and I expect it happened. In a Nazi concentration camp, there was an escape attempt. The guards picked out 12 young men to hang as an act of punishment and as a warning to the others. The whole camp was forced to assemble around the gallows to watch the event. There was a deathly silence as the men were hanged, until a voice came from somewhere in the crowd, "Vo ist Gott?" (Where now is your God?). A pause and then a voice answering, "There, there on the gallows! There is our God!"

To many Jewish people then and since this meant that indeed God died at Auschwitz, the Covenant went up in the smoke of its ovens. God is dead, or He would not have allowed this to happen to His chosen people. For all those Jewish people today, Lord, who have lost their faith in God, because of the Holocaust, we pray. We pray that you will mercifully undertake to restore them to faith in yourself through Messiah.

And to some other Jewish people this has meant that- indeed, there on the gallows (read cross) is our God. There on the cross is our God! Before any Jewish people in the Holocaust ever cried the equivalent of "My God! My God? Why have you forsaken me? " Jesus the Jew, the Jewish Messiah cried, "My God! My God? Why have you forsaken me? " from the depths, from the cross of Golgotha.

So here, Father, the great mystery/wonder -that where the worst possible happened-Golgotha- is where the greatest and best possible happened-eternal salvation for all who trust in you. May it be also that many Jewish people will yet discover that where the Holocaust is to them the worst possible that could happen, that they will discover that Yeshua the Messiah went before them to the gallows, was there with them in the worst depths, and there vanquished even the worst that happened in the Holocaust. May many Jewish people come to know, now speedily in our days, that Jesus is the Answer for which the Holocaust is the Question.

Help us, Lord, as Christian leaders, to be among those that hear Your Voice and feel Your Heart for the Jewish people in these last days. Awaken us to, and impart within us, that which was the heart's desire of the great Apostle— that they, his Jewish people, might be saved. May we heed the Apostle Paul's injunction that the Gospel is "to the Jew first." May we be those who reverse the trend of the centuries, which has been to go to the Jew last, if at all. Align our hearts, Lord Jesus, with your heart for the Jewish people. Help us lead our churches to your heart for them.

In the Name of Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, Amen.