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## **We Must Not Desecrate Our Martyrs** **(The painful facts regarding the comporment of certain Jews in the Nazi concentration camps.)**

In the chronicles of the Jewish horrors during Hitler's years, which are so profusely printed in our press nowadays, one horrifying fact is often cast aside - and this is the traitorous behaviour of a few of the individual Jews, themselves, within the ghettos and death camps. The emissary from Bergen-Belsen, Rozenzaft, has also told us about this. This painful fact has also been underline, on numerous occasions, in the chronicle by Aron Twerski that was published in *Tog* [Yid., Day].

It is understandable to me why Rozenzaft and Twerski would stress this – but I cannot comprehend when our local writers from here do so.

Rozenzaft and Twerski have the right to do this - they were there themselves, as Twerski correctly notes, personally the victims and the witnesses. They, themselves, were in those horrors and personally stood, more than once, at the threshold of the gas oven. They did not only personally experience all the physical tortures, but also the psychological torments – all the tests and dilemmas that a victim goes through, while his body is still twitching and his last hope has not yet been extinguished.

Woe to those kinds of hopes that could still come up in the heart of one entering the gas oven! And even more so, to the hopes and deliverances to which weak or depraved natures could cling in the ghettos and death camps.

We are particularly shocked to read of the villainous deeds perpetrated by certain Jews in the ghettos and camps, wildly seized by the illusion that, if they became accomplices to the Nazi hangmen, they would thus save themselves and their families from death.

We read about this and are horrified - it is against our dignity. We would have preferred the picture of the Jewish sanctification of the Name [of God] to remain whole, unblemished. We would have liked it to emerge, that there was not even a single instance of national pusillanimity, not even a single instance of national cowardliness - not to mention open treachery, in taking on the roles of hangmen, torturers and kindlers of the ovens. Our brains are utterly unable to allow the thought that Jews, dressed in Nazi uniforms and armed with whips and revolvers, were capable of dragging their own brothers out from their hiding places and driving them into the fire, doing with them just as the Nazi hangmen would do. Our brains, not only hearts, will not allow this thought.

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<sup>1</sup> [TN: Pseudonym of Yiddish writer, poet and playwright Leivick Halpern (1888-1962). As this article was published more than three decades after the author's death, it is obvious that it was originally printed in an earlier publication; as of yet, we have not been able to establish this source.]

And, as neither the heart nor the brain will allow this, we must register these facts that are brought to light by the victims/witnesses, themselves, in a separate corner of our fearful national diary. [We must] register them and leave them in [that] corner, fence it off with a distinct rope, and isolate it from all the other main material – and, for God’s sake, not mix it together with the big picture of Jewish martyrdom and sanctification of the Name [of God].

And for God’s sake, [we should] not become sadists against our ourselves, as a large part of the Gentile world would have liked [us to do] - that, because of a few individual acts of debasement and betrayal on part of Jews, we should desecrate the Jewish martyrdom as a whole, and trivialise all the Jewish heritage and all the Jewish heroism that accompanied the millions of Jewish victims to their deaths.

Yes, a large part of the Gentile world would have liked to infect us with dismissiveness towards Jewish exclusivity. They, the world, would have liked us to tell ourselves,

*“See, there is no sanctity in the deaths of the millions of Jews. The millions of annihilated Jews were no better than others. Do not make a fuss about some special Jewish tragedy or some special Jewish destruction. They, the Jews, were just as cowardly as everyone else - and perhaps even worse. See, a few - and maybe a great many - Jews in Hitler’s ghettos comported themselves villainously, gorging themselves, carousing and having orgies, while most of the Jews around them were dying in hunger, filth, pain and gas fires, perishing before their own eyes. See, a few - and maybe a great many - Jews took upon themselves the roles of watchmen, whippers, diggers and buriers...”*

Yes, indeed, a large part of the Gentile world would have very much liked Jews to think thus of Jews. This would have made it easier for the Gentile world to water down the little bit of conscience, that sometimes still beats in its heart. This would have helped it wash its hands and allow it to forget. as soon as possible, about all these uncomfortable “little episodes” of the World War - those same little episodes such as, for example, the massacre of a mere six million Jews, and also other “nuisances”.

Must we grant this wish of the world, and help it to decrease, even further, the image of the Jewish sanctification of the Name [of God]?

I, therefore, fail to comprehend when some writers among us - those who were personally not in the gas chambers and concentration camps - fall into a sort of self-flagellation when they discover, or even when they see with their own eyes, the atrocities which certain Jews perpetrated in the days of the great misfortune and the great death march. [It is] as if they desired to castigate themselves with a kind of revenge upon themselves, or with some sort of protest against what they deem the victims are constantly holding us accountable for - [those who] did not perish [and were] not murdered.

Do not misunderstand me. I do not mean to say that we must hide, from ourselves, the heinous deeds that certain Jews perpetrated in the concentration camps and ghettos, and that we must adorn our tragedy with false, little sanctity bells, to make it turn out that all the

Jews, to the very last one, stood at the pinnacle of Jewishness in the hours of perils and death – I definitely do not mean that.

We must not deny a single one of the truths that are yet to be revealed. We need to know about them. We need to know everything that happened there, when the Jewish march of death was in motion and when the Jewish soul was wrangling with mortal fear. We need to know about all the highs, and we also need to know about all the lows. And, although a Jewish low is agonising to us as Jews, it by no means constitutes a happy excuse for the real culprits - which are the non-Jewish murderers, bringers of war and perpetrators of pogroms. And it is also they who are to blame for the villainous deeds of the Jewish evildoers during this current Treblinka epoch<sup>2</sup>!

All the ugly things that were done by Jewish policemen in the ghettos, and all the cruelties that the Jews, in positions of power, displayed in the camps towards their own brethren – fall upon the heads of the Nazis, upon the head of Germany, Land of Blood, as a whole, and upon the head of the entire ignoble globe.

Therefore, be cautious, brothers, when you touch this particular wound on the aching Jewish body. Do not allow yourselves to be caught in the net of those whose sole purpose is to prove that the Jews are no better. Do record all the Jewish transgressions and all the Jewish betrayals - but do not roll them into one ball of yarn together with all that the world has done to our people. Fence them off in a separate corner, and let them be closed off until much later, until we sense that the time has come to take them out of their isolation – we, the victims, and not they, the victimisers.

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<sup>2</sup> [TN: It would seem from this phrase that this article was written whilst the Holocaust was still ongoing.]