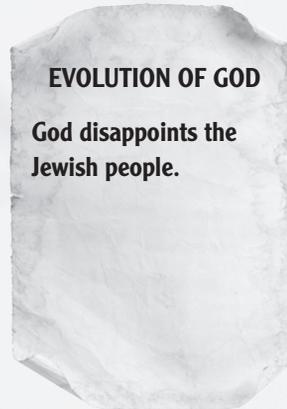


GOD AND THE HOLOCAUST

“I believe in the sun when it is not shining.
I believe in love even when feeling it not.
I believe in God even when He is silent.”

– [ANONYMOUS INSCRIPTION ON A CELLAR WALL WHERE
SEVERAL JEWS WERE HIDING DURING THE HOLOCAUST]



Did God die at Auschwitz? Where was He when millions of Jews were burned alive by the Nazis? Failing to answer these poignant questions, many Jews lost faith in an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God after the Holocaust. This disillusion gave rise to Holocaust Theology, which refers to a body of literature and an intense debate about the role of God and the problem of evil, manifested in gigantic proportions in the genocide of six million Jews by the Nazis during the 1930s and 1940s. A few postings on the *Wall of Mortals* are provided below, not in chronological order because order is irrelevant for wounded hearts.

“Behind me, I heard the same man asking: “Where is God now?” And I heard a voice within me answer him: “Where is He? Here He is—He is hanging here on this gallows.”

– ELIE WIESEL (1928-)

[Passage from Night, Elie Wiesel’s autobiographical depiction of his harrowing experience at the Auschwitz concentration camp when he was forced to watch the death by hanging of a Jewish child. Many readers concluded that God died at the Auschwitz gallows with this child.]

“Auschwitz casts a black pall upon the civilized world. Not only is man’s humanity put under a question mark, but God himself stands accused. Jews are asking insistently: Where was God when our brothers and sisters were dragged to the gas ovens?”

– JAKOB JOCZ (1906-1983)

[Lithuanian-born Canadian professor of theology and influential writer]

“Of one thing I am convinced: more than the bodies of my people went up in smoke at Auschwitz. The God of the covenant died there.”

– RICHARD RUBINSTEIN (1924-)

[American rabbi, theologian, and professor, credited for Holocaust Theology]

“No man can really say that God is dead. How can we know that? Nevertheless, I am compelled to say that we live in the time of the ‘death-of-God’. . . . When I say we live in the time of the death of God, I mean that the thread uniting God and man, heaven and earth, has been broken. We stand in a cold, silent, unfeeling cosmos, unaided by any purposeful power beyond our own resources. After Auschwitz, what else can a Jew say about God?”

– RICHARD RUBINSTEIN (1924-)

Milton Teichman and Sharon Leder’s anthology *Truth and Lamentations: Stories and Poems on the Holocaust* (1993) “reveals the human faces hidden behind the all-too-