

**Forged Anew**  
**By Raphael Hoult**

Why is the Holocaust, and the study thereof, relevant today?

The study of the Holocaust by the youth of today, as well as the comprehension and *understanding* of the Holocaust by the youth of today, is vitally important, and highly relevant to the Jewish community of Winnipeg, Canada, and the World. In order to understand why, however, one must look back upon the impact the Holocaust had upon Jewish culture.

At the end of the Holocaust, there was a mass exodus of Jews from Europe, as those who had lived could, for the most part, not bear to live with the ghosts of the dead. So they left; for Australia, for Argentina, for Israel, for America, and for Canada. They arrived in these new places, these new worlds, and they began to build new lives.

Some left Judaism, some remained. Yet, in either case, in time, they had children. Those children grew up in an age of rebellion; the hippies, femlib, the sexual revolution. With a culture of rebellion comes familial dissent, and with dissent comes revolt. There were many exceptions to this, but many children of the survivors who remained with Judaism turned away. So, a generation broke away from mainstream Judaism, all three major movements suffering almost equally.

Some found their way back in later years. Many did not. And when they became old enough, these children, these baby boomers, also had children. It was either Generations X or Y, depending on how long the children of survivors waited to have children. These children would have only one connection to Judaism; their grandparents, who maintained their religion.

When they are gone, who will remain?

In the Chumash, there is a section about four children; the wise child, the contrary child, the simple child, and the child who does not even know how to ask. In an analogy that was first pointed out by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, the four children correspond to the four generations of Jews in North America.

The wise child is the survivor, coming across from Europe; war-torn, bedraggled, half-dead, but so very, very alive. The wise child is fully connected to Judaism, fully Jewish, with all the burden and joy that comes with that identity. The survivor is the first generation.

The contrary child is the rebellious teenager that casts away Judaism for a life of secularism, leaving the trappings of their parents' religion behind as though it were dust in the wind. They will have nothing to do with Judaism; it is the 'opiate of the masses', and so is not worth their time. The rebel is the second generation.

And then the third generation is the Simple Child. Their connection to the religion of their forefathers is all but severed. All but one single, golden thread has been cut by their parents. The only thing they know is that they *are* Jewish, but they do not know what that means. All they know of Judaism is what they learned from their grandparents when they were small. They have no sense of tradition, but only a faint sense of something missing. They go to synagogue on the high holidays, but they're not sure why. This is the third generation.

This is not our future.

This is our past.

North American Jewry is at a critical transition point. The Simple child, the lost generation, are having children now, and it is vital that the chain be forged anew, before it grows so weak that it breaks. The fourth generation will have no grandparents to show them what Jewish Culture, or the religion, is. In fact, they will be so far removed from Judaism that they will not even know how to ask a question. In essence, they are the fourth and final child.

This should be prevented, or at least, limited, at all costs, as it spells the death of Judaism in North America, and, eventually, the destruction of a people. The phrase "killing us softly" has never been more true than it is today. There is only one thing that can re-forge the chain that tethers these individuals to Judaism.

They must *learn* what it means to be Jewish.

In any fight against ignorance, or against racism, or against conversion, or against assimilation, the primary line of defence is education. In order to stop them being ignorant of their religion, and eventually assimilating into the masses, the fourth child must be taught. They must learn what their parents and grandparents never taught them, what they refused or were incapable of teaching. They must become Jewish once more.

The primary link they have to this far off dream is their great-grandparents, who are either very old, or dead. Either way, the chance for the communication of information is likely minimal or non-existent. Dead men, or women, tell no tales. Thus, these grandchildren are forced to learn from their great-grandparents through their experiences, their lives. If they are going to learn how their ancestors lived, they must learn what they lived through.

This is the only way that the fourth generation can reconnect with the first. They must learn about the lives they led, and what happened in their lives. And for the vast majority of those ancestors, the defining event of their life was the Holocaust. It shaped the rest of their lives, and led to them deciding whether to convert, become atheist, become non-religious, or become even more religious. If one is studying the life of a person with

the goal of living the way they did, studying the event, or series of events, that shaped their life is an important facet of the research.

This brings the topic around to the primary point: is the Holocaust, and the studying thereof relevant in the modern day and age, more than sixty years after the Holocaust ended? Is it still necessary for people to study closely the events of the past when they are, from the modern perspective, a long way away, buried in the pages of history?

The answer is a resounding yes.

The study of the Holocaust is needed because it connects the youth of today, many of whom only have a dim concept at best of what "Judaism" is, to the lives and ways of their ancestors. It connects them to a particular heritage, a heritage of which they can be proud, a people to whom they can point and say, "I am a Jew".

They must learn of the triumphs of our people, and they must learn of the years when we were nearly destroyed. If we are to preserve our future, we must look to our past. Our children are our future, and to preserve the Jew left in them, they must look to their Jewish history.

Another reason that the fourth generation must study the Holocaust is because of the causes behind it; the subtle eddy and sway of hatred, the oily black tar of destruction. If they are seen as Jewish, there will be people, a disproportionate number of people, who will despise them simply for that fact. If someone is hated for something they cannot control, they will either break down, or hold strong.

It is difficult to hold strong when you lack the bedrock of your forefathers before you, the bedrock upon which they stood upon and attached themselves in order to weather the storm that threatened to tear them away into the void. If that same typhoon were to start again, those without that bedrock, that knowledge and faith in a Jewish nation, would be swept away by that shadowy wind.

So it is necessary that, if our children are to return, in truth, to Judaism, they must understand where they come from, who they come from, and what became of the proud tradition that was and is B'nai Yisrael. They must understand why there are those that hate us, why there are those who seek to murder us, and why there are those who would like nothing better to see the Jewish people wiped from the pages of history, gone like ash in the wind.

The Holocaust is a connection, and a vital one at that, to the Judaism of the past. As time progresses, those connections grow weaker, and the bonds fray, and fray, and fray, until finally, one day, they will snap. As survivors grow old and world-weary, they will die, and then there will be no one left to tell the fourth generation of what there used to be.

There is not little time. There is no time. Survivors are becoming few and far between. Within the next few decades, the number of survivors will dwindle to numbers similar to that of World War I veterans now. In time, they will be gone. There will be no one to stand up at Holocaust deniers' conferences and say, "I was there". No one to struggle with memories at a memorial service. No one to whom it is not just words.

No one to teach a new generation what it means to live. No one to teach a lost child that she is part of a proud, five-thousand year old tradition that stretches back to unrecorded times. No one to reach out and forge a new chain from the wretched remains of the tarnished steel of the past. No one to pass on the flame. No one left to teach.

And when there is no one left to teach, there will be no one left to learn.