

Gershon Greenberg lives in Washington, D.C. and is a Research Fellow for the Institute of Holocaust Research at Bar Ilan University.

MYTH AND CATASTROPHE IN SIMHA ELBERG'S RELIGIOUS THOUGHT*

Dedicated to Rebbetsin Pearl Silver ז"ל, whose sacrifice made *Va'ad Hatsala* possible.

Several Orthodox Jewish thinkers who deliberated about the *Khurbn*¹ during the catastrophe and immediately before and after have become known to us. Outstanding among them were R. Elhanan Wasserman of Baranowitch in 1938, R. Haim Ozer Grodzensky of Vilna in 1939, R. Kalonymous Kalman Spira of Warsaw from 1939 through 1942, R. Issakhar Taykhtahl of Budapest in 1943, R. Yitshak Danziger of Treblinka in 1943, R. Tsevi Hirsh Mayzels of Auschwitz in 1943, and R. Yosef Yitshak Schneersohn of Brooklyn from 1940 through 1945.² R. Simha Elberg's *Akedat Treblinka: Gedanken un refleksen*, a forty-six page Yiddish treatise completed in Shanghai in July 1946, does not have the scholarly depth or breadth of these other deliberations. But it deserves a place of its own because of the themes Elberg enunciated and the existential struggle and power behind them.³ The treatise is also important because it can be placed into the context of the author's theological development before, during and after the *Khurbn* and until the present. Elberg is one of the few Jews alive today outside the Land of Israel who responded theologically to the catastrophe.

A. FROM GROJEC TO PARIS: TORA IN HISTORY

Simha Elberg grew up in the town of Grojec, south of Warsaw.⁴ He was the son of Gittel, daughter of Grojec's *Av Bet Din* R. Eliahu Yehuda Lifshits, and of R. Aharon Shimon, whose father was R. Moshe Barukh Elberg of Radzymin. After early years of study with a Lithuanian

R. "Akiva," Elberg received formal training in rabbinic literature at Yeshiva Emek Halakha in Warsaw, 1926–1935. His teachers included Yeshiva Head R. Natan Spigelglas⁵ as well as R. Nahum Rozenfeld and R. Heshke Veynshtok, who had founded the Yeshiva along with Spigelglas.⁶ Elberg's proclivity to publish evidenced itself in the halakhic journal *Emek Halakha* which he co-edited with Yehuda Arye Ratenberg on an irregular basis over the nine year period.⁷ In the journal, he spoke of Tora as the spirit, soul and nerve center of the nation of Israel without which the nation could no more exist than the world without water. He bemoaned the closings of *Bate Midrash*. Tora was being relegated to hidden corners of Jewish society, even threatened with "*Khurbn*." The *Haskala*, which Elberg said was out to destroy everything holy to Judaism, was gaining ground along with other alien types of knowledge. The Jewish youth were becoming increasingly ignorant and vulgar. Meanwhile the ultra-Orthodox (*Haredim*) seemed oblivious. Elberg believed that by bringing halakhic issues to the public eye, the journal could help Tora regain ground. That is, as a Yeshiva student Elberg was committed to bringing Tora together with contemporary historical reality.⁸ During these Warsaw years, Elberg also studied privately with the renowned R. Menahem Zemba.⁹

By the beginning of 1935, as life in Warsaw became tragic and Tora-study became impeded, Elberg moved to Montreux, Switzerland. There, he said, he began to write poetry to ease the pain,¹⁰ while he resumed Tora-study in the Yeshiva of R. Eliezer Botshka.¹¹ In early spring 1935 Elberg compiled and published halakhic deliberations addressed to leading rabbis during his Yeshiva years.¹² He also, by the way, became enamored of Switzerland's mountainous beauty—which would later become marred by the spread of Nazi racial antisemitism among Swiss youth.¹³

From fall 1936 through summer 1939 Elberg lived in Paris and studied at the Sorbonne. He worked as a correspondent for *Dos Yudishe Togblat* (Warsaw) and *Heynt* (Riga), a job which involved travel to Switzerland and Poland. In his articles he enunciated an historical optimism, believing that the principles behind the French Revolution would overcome Hitler's Germany. He also expressed concern for the growing separation between Tora and polity in attitudes towards the Land of Israel.

Specifically, he was impressed at how principles of the French Revolution had been implemented in France—although the principle of equality was compromised by instances of shocking poverty.¹⁴ He felt proud about the Sorbonne's scientific and cultural advances, and the fact that it was open to both Jews and Judaism.¹⁵ Elberg found no restrictions against Jews until the end of 1938—although the Jews by themselves managed to diminish their own religious integrity¹⁶—when the French government called for expulsion or imprisonment of illegal residents. This

impacted worst of all on poor Polish Jews, because Poland had simultaneously revoked the citizenship of all Poles who had been away for five years or more.¹⁷ The French way would, he believed, outlive the German. When Elberg visited the German pavilion at the 1937 Paris world's fair, he thought of German racism and concentration camps, about the Polish writer Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski's remark that "In spiritual terms, there was no greater disgrace than Nuremberg" and about how all the good poets and musicians had been driven out of the country. The model highways at the exhibit made Elberg think only of how easily German troops could be transported from one military front to the other. The book display, Elberg observed, showed Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1859–1885) but not the works of Goethe.¹⁸ But he was consoled by the belief that the French Revolution's principles of liberty, equality and fraternity would "be stronger than those [i.e., the Germans] who threaten freedom." The same moral power behind the French victory over Prussia at the 1792 Valmy battle would overcome the power of Hitler's Munich. Proud of the fact that the people of Israel were bound to the Revolution, and flattered by Alfred Rosenberg's accusation that Jews were behind it, Elberg was confident: "We agree that we were the first to open the doors to the Revolution. And we do not want to stay in the background as the walls of Germany collapse."¹⁹ Elberg was sure that once Hitler confronted any real power he would have to submit.²⁰

Elberg's commitment to Tora and its role in history was reflected in his thoughts upon visiting the Land of Israel pavilion. He admired the material accomplishments it evidenced, and how they discredited the antisemitic claim that Jews could only be parasites in other lands: "The pavilion is our spit in the face of our enemies and antisemites." But he was disappointed about the de-emphasis of Tora-Judaism. Religious books were comparatively few at the exhibit, accurately reflecting the situation in the Land.²¹ After he attended the 1937 Mizrahi congress in Zurich, he thought that Mizrahi religious Zionists had failed to properly counter the developing dichotomy between Zionism and religion. It was true that Honorary Mizrahi President R. Moshe Avigdor Amiel of Tel Aviv recognized the critical situation in Palestine and related how teachers in the Land were resigned to a new generation that was wild and materialistic, uninterested in Tora. But Mizrahi World Center head Wolf Gold's *Shuva Israel* pamphlet distributed at the congress did not adequately attack the World Zionist Organization for trampling on Judaism's holiness and tradition for the sake of "national assimilation." If Gold's heart bled over the "*Khurbn*" of Tora in the Land, Elberg observed, if he believed like the medieval philosopher Saadia Gaon that Israel was a nation only through Tora, he should have slammed the door on the WZO and allied himself with the Agudat Israel.²² The Mizrahi sessions themselves countenanced hypocritical invocations about the messiah. WZO

President Haim Weizmann compared Lord Balfour to Isaiah and spoke of the messianic end of days, while David ben Gurion talked about the onset of redemption (*Asshalta deGeula*). No congress, Elberg pointed out, let alone such a leftist one, ever invoked the messiah's name so often and so inauthentically.²³

B. FROM WARSAW TO SHANGHAI: STIRRINGS OF THE APOCALYPTIC

In August 1939 Elberg returned to Warsaw for his sister Rahel's wedding. He resumed study with R. Spigelglas who, he later recalled, was able to rescue students from Warsaw's atmosphere of fear and death and bring them into the realm of rabbinic study. The Nazis invaded Poland on 1 September 1939. Elberg escaped shortly thereafter when R. Spigelglas woke him one night, urged him to flee and provided money, his own *tefillin* and gold watch, and a letter of recommendation to R. Grodzensky in Vilna.²⁴

In the days before the escape, R. Spigelglas had spoken of the impending catastrophe. He believed that Jews had sinned and were facing a day of reckoning. Unless they studied and prayed directly to the divine throne of glory so as to restore the universe (*di velt muz hoben a tikkun*), the world would revert to pre-creative chaos (*Tohu vaVohu*).²⁵ As Rosh Hashana 5700 approached in that fall 1939 R. Spigelglas spoke of pre-messianic sufferings (*Hevle Moshiah*), martyrdom in sanctification of God's name (*Kiddush Hashem*) and resurrection of the dead (*Tehiat haMetim*) in the context of the imminent disaster. In a discussion with the Hassidic scholar R. Reuven Sehman of Otvotzk, who would be killed in the *Khurbn*, about why the first bombs, in summer 1937, had fallen upon the Otvotzk Jewish orphanage. R. Spigelglas consulted a book of *Kabbala*. It explained that the number 5700 had cosmic ramifications—for the sun and moon, heaven and earth, day and night. Specifically, its alphabetic equivalent *TaSh* indicated “weakening” (*tash koho*) and, numerically, chaos (*Tohu vaVohu*), depths (*Tehom*) and a poisonous reign (*Sam vet kinigen*). Spigelglas believed that Ezekiel's terrible warning (“As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you,” *Ezekiel* 20:33) was being carried out. The fury poured out specifically in Poland and Poland was the first to ascend the *Akeda* (binding of Isaac in preparation for sacrifice), because God's name was always sanctified by those closest to Him (“Through those near to Me I shall make Myself holy,” *Leviticus* 10:3) and Polish Jews, especially those of Otvotzk, had been sanctified for generations by its pious and learned ones. The holiest Jews, those of Otvotzk, had been chosen as the first sacrifice (*korban*) for

Israel's sins. R. Spigelglas believed that if the poisonous sins were not expelled, there would be a *Khurbn* where "Jewish blood would flow from the east to the west." Other sanctified individuals (*Yehidim kiddushe elyon*), Elberg recalled, cited passages from Talmud, *Hekhalot* literature and *Zohar* and spoke of how the earth was burning under their feet, how the mouth of the depths before creation was opening to swallow some of the created world, and the fires of the day of reckoning were beginning to blaze.²⁶

If Elberg's sojourn in Paris had stimulated historical optimism, his return to Warsaw in August–September 1939 ended it. It was replaced with metahistorical and apocalyptic elements which would stay with him permanently: world catastrophe, cosmic return to *Tohu vaVohu*, sacrifice of the holiest of Israel to atone for the sins of others, study and prayer as desperate efforts of *Tikkun*. These elements would become means for Elberg's religious survival in the years of shock ahead. He welded his identity to them—perhaps because they came from R. Spigelglas at the point when the world began to reverse itself—such that even after he found security in America they would remain his absolute points of reference.

In the next two years Elberg journeyed through Ostrova and Bialystok to Vilna and then Slobodka. From there he travelled through Moscow and Vladivostok to Tsuruga and Kobe in Japan, and then on to Shanghai. While in Slobodka he attended the Yeshiva and also published *Aleyn . . . Lider* in nearby Kovno (1940). The poems reflected Elberg's reaction to European chaos and death. He wrote about how Europe's last limb was being amputated, how its grave, tombstone and death shrouds were being readied, how no one was even left to say *kaddish*.²⁷ Europe had become a Sodom aflame, a "prostitute" without "clients," a place where every step was over a Jewish grave.²⁸ The refugees—like Elberg himself—were "pages torn out of old books drenched in tears."²⁹

Elberg was able to travel with the Mir Yeshiva group through Russia to Japan, on a Japanese transit visum and an end visum for Curacao. He recalled how on the nine day train ride from Moscow to Vladivostok he felt like a dead object, seen by others but invisible to himself. He seemed to find brief respite when he reached the beautiful Japanese port city of Tsuruga, where he even sensed an ancient tie between the natives and the people of Israel. Elberg sought meaning to Jewish life, which had become an empty castoff from dying Europe, and he found it in terms of the metahistorical category of "wandering." "Wandering" was the essence of the people of Israel in their historical development, and it would end only upon the arrival of the messiah at the end of time (*Aharit haYamim*). In the meantime, all the Jew could do was to find a temporary refuge.³⁰

Elberg arrived in Shanghai by September 1941. For him it was another "Sodom,"³¹ dominated by loneliness, death and "Job-like" tidings about the *Khurbn* and the "fire of *Gehinnom*"—his parents, brother

Eliezer Mordekhai, sisters Rahel and Yuta and R. Spigelglas would all be killed in Treblinka and Auschwitz while Elberg was in Shanghai.³² In his poetry he expressed the sense that the world of time and space known until then had died. There was, however, a life beyond. In *Vander-Veg. Lider* (Shanghai 1942) Elberg said he felt like a corpse spit forth by the stormy seas of Poland, Lithuania and Japan,³³ abandoned by the world and God alike. The “rooms” of the world were closed to him and it “rained” outside. God left him, extinguished His divine light. Every other creature had a place but God left none for the refugee: “While the mite gnaws away at the book’s spine until it is satisfied and the worm sleeps quietly in its earthly bed, You [God] have made the street my friend where all is dark and wet.” In Scripture it was written “Heaven is for God. The earth is for man” (*Psalms* 115:16), yet Elberg was abandoned.³⁴ However, beyond God’s absence from the world, Elberg knew that He remained above and that man could pray to Him—if only with the prayer which began at the world’s boundary; not a cry or speech but the quiet and still expression of the dying man; the prayer not written down but “born during a black night [and] carried through a storm wind.”³⁵ Later in America, Elberg would also speak of how he was able to reach God through Tora into and through his Shanghai years. Despite the world’s terror, Tora gave him life. As German planes dropped bombs on Warsaw he studied Tractate *Yoma* in the “rabbinical cellar” in R. Spigelglas’ home—and he swore then to be engaged in Tora all his life. He “remained in the tent of wandering Tora” as he travelled from Lithuania to Japan and Shanghai. “Tora deliberations did not stop for a moment, even when bombs were dropping over our heads.” But this Tora, like prayer, was a matter between man and God above—and not for the contemporary empirical world.³⁶

C. AKEDAT TREBLINKA. SHANGHAI 1946

Elberg’s major exposition about the *Khurbn, Akedat Treblinka*, was written after the liberation and after the dimensions of the catastrophe had become known. The treatise began with the assertion that the world of empirical reality and history had been destroyed. In its place was the pre-creative *Tohu vaVohu*. With his satanic power, Hitler had obliterated the world which God created. The world, the author said, had descended into the deepest *Tehom*, into the *Tohu vaVohu* of mass murder. No *Tikkun* could wash away Hitler’s murderous sin against creation. Only a new creation (*Yetsira*), a new beginning (*Bereshit*) altogether, could bring God’s world back. This, in turn, was possible only after the Tora became light for the nations, when “many nations shall walk by Your light” (*Isaiah* 60:3).³⁷

But how could Torah become this light? Indeed, how was it possible to even begin to understand the *Khurbn*, let alone reverse the chaos, if the

universe had collapsed into the abyss? Elberg's comprehension was paralyzed. A single hour of Treblinka could not be compared, he said, even with a total life of individual suffering before it. Not even an angered Biblical prophet could relate to it. Cain had established murder as a possibility in the created world, but it could not be related to Hitler's mass murder which polluted creation in an unprecedented, trans-natural way. There were no words in the human language to express the *Khurbn*, indeed to use any would be "the greatest profanation of the tragedy"; any kind of name applied to it would desecrate its holiness (*hillul ha-kodesh fun der heyntiker tragedie*).³⁸ Not even tears could touch Treblinka. All the tears already were dried up and none were left for consolation. Ezekiel had warned about punishment that was so immense that one could not even cry over misfortune: "I am about to take away the delight of your eyes from you through pestilence, but you shall not lament or weep or let your tears flow" (*Ezekiel 24:15*).³⁹

The author of *Akedat Treblinka*, however, struggled to shatter the barrier to language. He thrashed around in confusion between what was and what should be, trying to find meaning beyond the chaos. He enunciated the contradictions: The *Khurbn* was the ultimate battle between satan and holiness, yet Israel could be expected to sacrifice itself in atonement for sins. Hitler was absolute evil, yet he was also an instrument for educating Jews. Treblinka was without comparison, yet its *Akeda*-character described all Jewish history. There were precedents for Hitler, notably Amalek, yet Hitler was unique. Germany could never be forgiven for its sins, yet because Jews once had a home there it could be. The believer had to concentrate on "old source books" and eternal themes such as the binding of Isaac (*Akedat Yitshak, Genesis 22*), God's overflowing fury (*Ezekiel 20:33*) and His "through those near to Me I show Myself holy" (*Leviticus 10:3*). Yet the author paid attention to the atom bomb, Nuremberg war-crimes trials, American postwar commissions, Fichte, Nietzsche and Pastor Martin Niemöller.

Thus, Elberg defied the impossibility of finding meaning to the catastrophe. He forced his way into the chaos and from within it he enunciated its ambiguities. Through this existential struggle and expression, the chaos began to assume form and context for possible meaning. They began with an "eternally new"⁴⁰ question drawn from the Jewish tradition, one posed from Moses through Job: Why do the righteous suffer and the evil ones prosper? How can six million Jews die, when God Himself promised not to end Israel (*Jeremiah 5:18*)?

1. Jewish existence is Akeda

For the author of *Akedat Treblinka*, one answer lay in the fact that sacrifice was an intrinsic, sanctified trait of Judaism and Jewry. "Treblinka,"

for Elberg, the symbol of *Khurbn*, described Jewish history as it began with Abraham in Ur-Kasdim and continued through 1946.⁴¹ Isaac, the eternal Jew, was never really taken down from the *Akeda*. “Mt. Moriah [has been] carried forever from one land to another, from Spain to France, from France to Germany, to Poland.” The continuity has, indeed, sanctified Jewish history: “*Akedat Yitshak* and *Akedat Treblinka*, the first for the individual and the second for nation, and both have sanctified (*geheylikt*) our history, our existence.”⁴² There were enormous differences between Isaac and Treblinka. Isaac was finally removed from the altar, unlike the victims of Treblinka. There was an angel of mercy at Mt. Moriah who stopped the murder, but not at Treblinka. Isaac was but briefly on the altar, while Treblinka Jews were burned for years. Isaac was led by Abraham, while Treblinka Jews were led by cannibals. Israel’s patriarch Abraham wanted no Jews killed, while Treblinka’s evil messengers wanted all Jews killed. Abraham’s merciful voice alleviated the pain, while Hitler’s voice worsened it. Nevertheless, sacrifice remained the underlying norm of Jewish history throughout. Why, then, did the righteous suffer? First of all, because for Elberg sacrifice and the suffering it meant were part of the very nature of Jewish historical existence.

2. *Khurbn as ontological battle*

For the author, a second answer had to do with the ontic character to the suffering sacrifice of Treblinka. The *Khurbn*, according to Elberg, was a struggle between evil being/satan and good being/holiness, between the German mind obsessed with hatred and murder, suffering and pain, and the Jewish mind filled with love and mercy for the world. Hitler built gas chambers and slaughtered Jews, and the Jew struggled for holiness. Hitler was out to show that by killing the Jews, their Jewish exile-history would disappear (*oys Yiddish folk un memela oys zeyn galut-geshikhte*), while the Jewish people created history and their exile-history had the strength to survive.⁴³ In this ontic struggle, there was no room left in the world for neutrality. Accordingly, for Elberg, those nations which stood by passively during the struggle, including the democratic world with its sentimental tie to the “noble” German people, remained on the satanic side: “How much murder is hidden in their pity.”⁴⁴ Had American and English “friends” of Jewry reacted against the gas chambers, the author contended, Germany would have been obliged to change tactics. Instead, even in 1946 England locked the gates of the Land of Israel to “those Jews resurrected from the chambers of death” (*di tekhiat hametim-Yidn fun di toyt-kamern*).⁴⁵

Israel would be victorious in the ontological battle. “The eternal nation (*am olam*) is even stronger, it is, in the [larger] historical sense, the victor.”⁴⁶ The author observed that while the single personality of Hitler

could and did embody evil, there would also be one person (*mentsh*) to embody good. Until the *Khurbn*, it was not known that any one individual could personify total evil and murderous malice, could become a satanic power able to poison the human feelings of millions. By the very fact of the satanic reality, Elberg appeared to deduce, “all positive, effective elements can be embodied in one single person, one who will rebuild the world from destruction. And perhaps that person is standing behind our backs, with the word of redemption in his mouth.” And ultimately, “as hypnotizing as the power of *evil* is, the influence of *good* is even stronger.”⁴⁷ The author spoke of the ultimate victory of holiness, specifically with regard to dead Jews. In the past, attacks upon Jews had ended with their death, but Hitler desecrated the dead as well. Hitler, as the “other side” (*sitra ahra*), had to fight the dead Jew because, as the *Kabbala* said, the dead Jew was like Holy Scripture. But Hitler would ultimately have to forfeit his battle.⁴⁸ Elberg provided a graphic metaphor:

The German pigs washed their mangy, polluted bodies with our souls. With how much filth [*sic*] must Hitler have dirtied [*sic*] the German people forever. [But in fact], soap produced from weak and little bones of children does not clean away physical dirt. No, it poisons and sullies [*sic*] the bodies. Hitler made wallets from the tender skin of [Jewish] women and the Germans used them. Obviously, the entire German nation was too decadent to protest and to stop the bloody production. [However,] the chemical stuff manufactured from Jewish bones and skin contains more power than does the atom bomb. In each little piece of soap there are a hundred Jews of sorrow. Someday the pieces will explode and rip apart the world. Against such a metaphysical power there is no protection.⁴⁹

Elberg believed that Jews would not forever hate the Germans because it was incompatible with their holy identity. He did refer to Pastor Martin Niemoeller’s thought that if the German people regretted their deeds, the Jews should forgive them. Elberg refused in the name of the victims:

No, and a thousand times no, Pastor Niemoeller. The pardon does not lie in our hand. Hitler stuck his claws into our race (*fartshepet undzer shtam*), our parents and *ur*-parents. No one had any right to carry out experiments with holy, thousand-year old bodies in graves. Not I, not the Tora, will forgive the Germans for the desecrated graves. No, Pastor Niemoeller. You will not get our forgiveness at any price. We will bear an eternal fiery hatred and vengeance in our hearts towards you, exactly as towards Amalek.⁵⁰

Each mother whose child was sadistically murdered, whose “seven sons” (Cf. Hannah’s seven sons, 2 *Maccabees* 7) were buried alive; all the abandoned orphans—including the author—were ready to swear that their hearts would burn forever with a fire of hatred towards Germany that a thousand years of rehabilitation could not extinguish. But upon reflection,

Elberg acknowledged the possibility that this “forever” would have an end because of the immortal sanctity of Judaism. “. . . I do doubt that we Jews are psychologically capable of ingraining the seed of hatred into ourselves forever. Our inborn mentality of compassion, our deep human instinct, will [ultimately] interrupt the growth of the germ of hatred.” Pharaoh, the prototype of Jewish oppressors, who should have been hated in a bestial way forever, was not: “Thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian, because thou wast a stranger in his land” (*Deuteronomy* 23:8). The Jews were able to reside with Egyptians in their hour of need (see *Pesikta Rabbati* 47b), and this meant a great deal to them. It was similar with Germany—which, indeed, had once provided Jews with much right and freedom.⁵¹

3. *Akeda in Treblinka*

Third, the suffering, ontological, sacrifice of Treblinka had special religious qualities. It brought the test of faith of Mt. Moriah into the present, carrying it forward in a permanent way (*permanente fortzetsung*). And the result of the test? “The *Akedat Yitshak* nation has endured the test. The sobbing of millions broke forth from the red flames. A voice split the heavens, declaring ‘Hear O Israel.’ Never before did the heavens see so many *Kiddush Hashem* Jews.”⁵² The *Akeda* was also a means of bringing Israel’s guilt to consciousness. The exile, Elberg said, was a tragedy consequent to sin. Instead of coming to terms with the sin in exchange for some autonomy and freedom of speech, Jews made peace with exile and thereby deepened the sin. The *Khurbn* forced the Jew to come to terms with the guilt of the generations (*dorotdika zind*). Hitler brought exile to consciousness; he was the “deep translation of exile” (*Hitler iz der tifer opteytsh fun galut*).⁵³ “We did not want to learn [about exile] in our own terms, when we had a holy congregation of six million. So we had to learn about it from the *Tohu vaVohu*.”⁵⁴ Beyond Israel itself, the *Akeda* of Treblinka atoned for the sins of mankind. The Jews who endured it “were purified, sanctified through agony, suffering and pain, and they made real the principle that ‘agonies wash away all the sins of man’ (*Berakhot* 5a).”⁵⁵

Elberg believed that divine wrath was necessarily part of the apocalyptic redemption, and that the *Akeda* of Treblinka fulfilled this requirement as well. The “overflowing fury” of Ezekiel (*Ezekiel* 20:33, 34) implicit to the “I shall reign over you with a strong hand” (*Ezekiel* 20:33) had taken place, and “the hour of divine revelation for all mankind should come soon. And that is indeed our special mission, [namely] to redeem the world with our blood (*oystsuleyzn di velt mit undzer blut*).”⁵⁶

Because the *Akeda* tested faith, brought sin to consciousness, atoned for the sins of mankind, and fulfilled the apocalyptic requirement of

divine wrath, only the holiest of Israel, for Elberg the collective “Isaac,” could serve as *Khurbn Akeda*. The Jews of Poland and Lithuania were the holiest of all. They were the holy emanation (*atsilut*) of God, those able to argue with God on behalf of all Israel and those who prayed to God in a unique and potent way. The deep meaning of *Khurbn*-Poland, Elberg said, could be found in “Through those near to Me I shall make Myself holy” (*Leviticus* 10:3). It meant, “Through the death of those close to Me, I will become sanctified.”⁵⁷

As a sanctification of the divine name (*Kiddush Hashem*), Elberg added, the suffering contained an inner spiritual contentment, even a radiant hope. Beyond this, the sufferer had a God-given special strength to endure. On Mt. Moriah Abraham felt pain, but Isaac received a spiritual power to stretch forth his neck in an act of love for the divine presence (*Shekhina*). In the *Akeda* of Treblinka, the innocent victim (*korban*) mother who entered the gas chamber did not suffer the pains of *Gehinnom*, for “she was living in another, heavenly atmosphere which sweetened her suffering (*vos hot ire leydn farzist*).” It was when she was sentenced to observe her child’s death that she became convulsed. When the father was buried alive he did not suffer the travails of Job, because a new nourishing power was born in him which gave him strength to bear the pain. He hurt when he watched as his child or wife struggled.⁵⁸

4. Divine direction

Fourthly, as Elberg retrieved meaning from chaos by constructing a Jewish metahistory of *Akeda* and ontic struggle between evil and holiness, he was assuming divine *aegis*. “Exactly as Isaac’s being led to the *Akeda* was solely God’s command, so also God’s will was effective at the *Akeda* of Treblinka.”⁵⁹ It followed unavoidably that Hitler was an instrument of God, like Amalek and Haman. These instruments, however, were very different. Hitler pulverized Jews and attacked dead Jews. He not only was unaware that he was God’s instrument, but perverted God into Hitler’s instrument by deifying his own actions. Hitler thought that by slaughtering Jews he was doing a *Mitsva* (divine command).⁶⁰ “The ancient Amalek wanted to kill Jews only because they believed in God, against whom Amalek went to ‘war.’ The new Amalek [Hitler] built even gas chambers in God’s name. . . . Amalekism [before Hitler can] no longer be [thought of as] synonymous with badness. Hitler contains a much stronger power of evil.”⁶¹ While Haman, according to the Sages, was protested against daily, in *Khurbn*-Treblinka “Hitler slaughtered on Sunday, burned on Monday, buried alive on Tuesday—*sha shtil* [i.e., I cannot even talk about it]. All of nature approved. No one thought it worthwhile to protest. It was as if everything was natural.”⁶²

5. The Land of Israel

The *Akedat Treblinka* text included Elberg's views of the Land of Israel. He thought that return to the Land constituted a step in breaking the chains of exile, but not the final one. Exile was punishment ("Yet even among the nations you shall find no peace," *Deuteronomy* 28:65).⁶³ Democracy and socialist freedom could liberate the Jew from the ghetto in a physical sense, but the Jew would not be liberated psychically until he was free "to carry the name Jew within its greater historical-national significance." The Jew would be a child of the ghetto, "as long as he does not get back his firm ground under his feet" (*kol zman der Yid vet nisht tsurik bakumen zeyn festn bodn unter di fis*).⁶⁴ But return to the Land did not end exile conclusively, and residence in the Land did not in itself mean redemption. Exile would end and redemption would arrive only after internal changes in terms of piety were made. The author hoped that this would take place soon. "We have been living testimonies to the 'for a little while I forsook you.' Perhaps we will have the good fortune to experience the moment of 'with vast love I will bring you back' [*Isaiah* 54:7]." ⁶⁵

By 1946 Elberg's empirically religious world had been destroyed. God and Tora remained beyond, but he needed to find a way of life, a system of belief, a religious world-structure. As he thrashed around he found a beginning in a question drawn from Jewish tradition about why the righteous suffered. The question made answers possible, and the answers structured belief: The holy *Akeda* of the people of Israel; the binding/sacrifice as the power of holiness in ontic battle against satanic evil; the effectivity of *Korban* and expiation of sin; the holiness of the Land of Israel; Hitler as God's instrument; the removal of the victims' suffering. Finally, there was a hint of return to the Land and of redemption—of Tora's light upon the nations, of the new creation of the universe. Elberg had a new religious universe, one which began where the universe of history he knew before ended. The sparks of R. Spigelglas—*Akeda*, *Tikkun*, *Hevle Moshiah*, overflowing divine fury, God's sanctification by those nearest to Him, and *Tehiat haMetim*—provided light within the chaos and the possibility of a new and different world.

6. Shanghai Yeshiva

At the beginning of 1946 Elberg found an important start to the turn to Tora, when he observed how Yeshiva life was being restored in Shanghai. Situated physically within historical time and space, Elberg's Yeshiva reflected metahistorical reality: It was more a heavenly institution (*yeshiva le'maala*), he would say, than an earthly one. It transcended time, and connected past with future. Thus, the ancient Tannaim and Geonim were still alive within it. The Yeshivas of Yavne, Pumbeditha and

Nehardea were continued in 1946. The same Tora and R. Abayye of Babylon were there in Shanghai. Every Yeshiva that the Jews had was a part of Mt. Sinai, receiving a new Tora every day, no matter where and when it was.

The institution involved an organic spiritual community, “a tremendous dynamic-spiritual power.” It was not a place where separate individuals met around a single table, each searching for the solution to a Tora problem by himself. Rather all participants coalesced into a single body, they all shared in a common center which in turn influenced the individual. Each worked both by the strength of separate understanding and the strength of spiritual energy drawn from the center. The individual/center dynamic operated not only horizontally, at any given moment, but vertically over the course of time. Each individual spent exhausting years within the Yeshiva, absorbing the spiritual legacy of past generations. When he left, he left a drop of spirituality, a spark of energy, his spiritual essence, for his followers.

The plight of Jewry after the *Khurbn* of Polish-Jewry was more serious than before. When the Temple was destroyed—Elberg presumably meant both in 586 B.C.E. and in 70 C.E.—the Jewish nation remained intact and the Temple could therefore be rebuilt when the time came. In 70 C.E. Yavne was saved. In the Spanish Inquisition, there were no more than 40,000 victims—less than the number of a single Polish city’s destroyed Jewish population. Now, one could not even “cry in words” (*livkot bi-devarim*):

Does not our entire being tremble as we recite the decrees and accounting of the concentration camps, recount the terrible sufferings and horrible pains which the holy ones endured before death? We do not sob so much over the death as we sob over their days and hours before their deaths. My God! In what a tragic way our fathers died—[their] death of holy ones.

Only a new Jeremiah could lament, with burning fury, such tragedy.

In the Nazi *Khurbn*, Yavne was the first to be destroyed. The first to be judged holy ones in life and death were the Yeshiva-rabbis. How could Polish-Lithuanian Jewry ever rise anew? Would it not take a thousand years of struggle, with a new Baal Shem Tov and Vilna Gaon? There was a spark of hope in the Yeshiva, saved miraculously. The voice of Tora was heard in Shanghai, among 400 students in such Yeshivas as those of Mir, Kletzk, Kamenetz, Lublin and Lubavitch. From the beginning their situation was terrible—even while the Jews of Shanghai thrived. Then they were thrust into the Hong Kew ghetto. But spiritual life continued despite material adversity, until help arrived from America.

The circles of Tora-disciples will remember forever, with deep appreciation, the great heart of America when the world was filled with cruelty and murder. America responded to the rabbis’ calls. It is therefore to be hoped that America will have the

understanding in the future to allow all the scattered Yeshivas to immigrate—as a memorial to the millions of holy ones.⁶⁶

Thus, between Warsaw/Paris and Shanghai, Elberg's religious mind changed. At first Tora was for this world, and Elberg confronted assimilation in Poland and secularization in Palestine. He opened himself to French culture and was convinced that Hitler would be defeated by the power of French Revolutionary ideology. But by the time he left Europe, Europe had died for him and he looked to a Tora above. By 1946 in Shanghai, Elberg's Tora belonged to R. Spigelglas' apocalyptic drama—albeit with the spark of hope within the *yeshiva le'maala*.

D. INTERLUDE: HOLINESS OF NATURE

During the first half of January 1947 Elberg journeyed by sea from Shanghai to America. When he left Shanghai he believed that beyond the chaos of the universe, God and Tora remained; that the Yeshiva provided a spark of hope that the world would return to Tora. As he reflected during the voyage, he felt the presence of God's holiness in the waters around him. The *Khurbn*, he believed, had not intruded upon them. The sea became an additional source of security in Elberg's religious cosmos.

In his written reflections he recalled his seven years of *Vander-Veg* when the doors of the world were closed, and his miraculous flight from Poland to Russia to Shanghai. He felt bitter about the "five *galut*-years" in Shanghai, compared to Kovno, which had a community of Lithuanian Jews whom he felt sorry to leave. There were 300 Shanghai refugees aboard—Elberg mentioned the Amshinover R. Shimon Shalom Kalish, R. Haim Mileykovsky of the Mir Yeshiva, R. Yitshak Krakover—and for them the city was no more than a transit point. Had it been up to the local wealthy Jews, they would have died off from hunger and sickness. Elberg remembered the pathetic situation where the King of Sweden issued 500 visas to the Yeshiva population. The reaction was a mixture of fantasy and desperation, and ended with the disappointment which came from the realization that it was impossible at the time to cross over China and Russia. Finally, the Va'ad Hatsala provided the means to come to America.

Elberg felt despair at the loss of his religious world. Would he have saved himself to begin with, had he known that it meant separation from his past and his loved ones? When he was on the little boat from Vladivostok to Kobe in 1940, he had shared in the suffering of his people. But now, the anonymous holy ones were separated by time from those who were rescued. How could all the sufferings on the path from Warsaw to Shanghai be compared to a minute of pain for a Treblinka Jew? When he arrived in Kobe, he could still expect word from his mother and father.

As he passed the Golden Gate into San Francisco, "the emptiness of my heart and its pain is much greater than the sea." The world of the past was enveloped in fire. "Deep signs of *Khurbn* cover creation. The world-panorama is wounded and bloodied. Sick bodies cover the world. The *Tohu vaVohu* reigns now over city and country. The air itself reeks of *Khurbn* . . . the entire cosmos is paralyzed."

But there was also solace for the bitter memories and sense of deep loss. What happened on earth, Elberg said, the destruction implicit to what was built in time and space by man, did not happen at sea. The waters had their own universe ("Every creature that is on the dry land is also to be found in the sea," *Hullin* 127a) and Elberg longed to probe its secrets: "Why, God, do you show us only your broken, destroyed world while your beautiful, great sea world lies in deep abysses, deeply hidden not only from our eyes but from our understanding?" He began to understand it as he noticed the changes taking place among the passengers as the days passed. They became more sensitive, contemplative; the sea brought out their perfection. It became a new creation: "The sea is a six days of creation." And it carried the eternal holiness of the creation of God. Amidst the waters, man could liberate himself from the earth's profane dust and be reborn. They embraced man with "holy ecstasy." In but a moment the earth was able to cast off its original holiness and become filthy (*tum'a*), but the sea was not *tum'a*. Even with all the dead it swallowed, even as Elberg envisioned human blood crying out "Yes it is me. Yes, I have lost my life" when the sundown produced a red reflection in the waters, the sea remained pure; so Tora law taught. The sea's eternal holiness provided it with an enchanting quality, a suggestive influence. The power of every creation depended upon how much holiness it contained. The sea carried its original garment of holiness, and thus its influence was strong.⁶⁷

E. NEW YORK: 1947–PRESENT

Elberg arrived in San Francisco on 17 January 1947 and in New York in March.⁶⁸ The *Khurbn* remained with him. Years later he would say that it was present everywhere, that he was blinded by it every minute, that he breathed and lived the *Khurbn*.⁶⁹ He thought of it as having trans-natural powers which influenced every Jew, as removing a part of each one's divine image. He said that each Jew "realized" some portion of it (*hu atzmo mehave hativo shel Khurbn*), that a third of each surviving Jew's essence had been destroyed, a portion of each soul and spirit.⁷⁰ Elberg's theological encounter persisted as well. Namely, the mythic means of religious survival which emerged between Warsaw and Shanghai would become permanent.

Thus, he spoke in 1951 of the incomprehensibility of the *Khurbn*: “The more we are perplexed about the holiness (*kedushat*) of that mystery event called the destruction of six million Jews, the more we recognize the limitations of the power of our comprehension and intellect.” The *Khurbn*—like the arising of the Jewish State—contained a deeply hidden secret “locked with seven locks.” The *Tohu vaVohu* was still there for him, and it was impossible to figure out the catastrophe.⁷¹ The *Khurbn* could not be comprehended emotionally, and the brain hadn’t the strength to provide tears to react to it. It was incomprehensible that the world had gone into chaos but did not end. Elberg could not understand why the tragedy had not detonated the world’s destruction:

‘Six million Jews!’ For the first time since the world was created, the atmosphere, the cosmos, registered the reverberation of this poison-drenched, venomous phrase. Truly, how can such a terrible, explosive phrase not terrify and blow apart [the universe]? Why does the world not explode into smithereens, crumble and become pulverized into dust? That mystery will remain an unsolved enigma forever.⁷²

The only response Elberg had was silence. “Search not out things that are hidden from thee” (*Hagiga* 13a), the Sages said. “When speech deteriorates and becomes emptied of value—behold, silence is the mightiest speech.”⁷³

As in Shanghai, however, Elberg forced himself to find meaning. He drew upon the resources of faith and the fact that Jews had actually survived. He wrote in his first published essay in America that once there was deep faith in the world creator as the basis for the world’s existence, one would not be overwhelmed by the time-bound (*mamentalen*) horrors of life.⁷⁴ Survivors also had a responsibility to restore Judaism to history:

Six million Jews murdered *al Kiddush Hashem* helped to form the historical character (*geshtalt*) of Judaism of that time. Each single Jew became an entire world in himself. Each built his own world with blood and sweat. For each drop of spirituality he paid with sleepless nights and unbearable suffering. The physiognomy of Judaism was molded out of his spiritual sublimity. Today, we miss those six million rich participants. Alone, with our own impoverished powers, we must rebuild the *Kelal Israel*. We must breathe a soul back into it, [one] which will assure and cement its historical existence.⁷⁵

What meaning could be found? Treblinka was implicit to the metahistory of the Jewish people. “Treblinka is the most revered book of philosophy. It started with and was founded in Ur-Kasdim. Our father Abraham was the first to begin writing the book. Still today [in 1951] we have not finished writing the book. Treblinka is still taking place in the world.”⁷⁶ That is, historical eras for Elberg were inwardly connected in terms of *Khurbn*. Thus in the summer of 1948, the three-hundredth anniversary of the Chmielnitzki massacres, Elberg aligned those tragedies

with Treblinka. The horrible *Khurbn* of 1648–1649 was revived and repeated through Hitler. There were differences—the *Khurbn* of Hitler was on a larger scale, Hitler went beyond his teacher Chmielnitzki to become the very source and mother of absolute evil, Chmielnitzki had wild masses to do his bidding while the German government had a million Chmielnitzki's—but continuity remained beneath. As such, Elberg deduced, the outcome would also be similar. Before Chmielnitzki there was a great religious culture and then it suddenly disappeared. But “what a wonder, what an unnatural (*umnatirlekhen*) path does Jewish history have.” Before long there was a Baal Shem Tov (1698–1760), Vilna Gaon (1720–1797), R. Israel Salanter (1810–1883), R. Ya'akov Yehoshua Hirsh (author of *Pene Yehoshua*, d. 1756), R. Akiva Eger (1761–1837), Hatam Sofer (Moses Schreiber, 1762–1839). “If so, then why not hope that after the *Khurbn* [of Treblinka] a new Judaism will arise, with a great spiritual potency, and that a new soul will enter the broken body of the people of Israel?”⁷⁷

Elberg still believed that catastrophe happened because of sin. He pointed to the mystery of the rightness of divine judgment (*tsidduk hadin*) and the belief that all God's ways were just (*kol derakhav mishpat*),⁷⁸ and this meant that *Khurbn*-Treblinka was divine punishment for sin. Unless God had a purpose, the author reasoned, an event of such magnitude could not have occurred and no individual could have had the demonic power to kill millions while the world remained silent.⁷⁹

Elberg continued to speak in terms of an ontological battle. He referred to the “kabbalistic” view that darkness and light were born independently and simultaneously at the creation of the world. Hitler symbolized darkness—although he deluded millions into thinking that his was the light of the “higher fatherland ideal,” and the veil disappeared and the *tehom* became apparent only after millions had been sacrificed.⁸⁰ Elberg spoke again of evil/Hitler vs. holiness/Jew. Hitler was “the first, original devil in the bloody history of mankind . . . the king of all evil powers.” Hitler attacked the dead Jews, burned their bones, perverted Jewish burial and made cosmetics from their skin. Why? Because even the dead Jew expressed holiness and Hitler's filth (*tum'a*) was at war with holiness of the eternal Jew. “A Jew is, essentially, authentic to the holiness of a Tora scroll. His limbs and organs are a parchment upon which the entire Tora is inscribed with a secret script. Each Jew is a son of a king, and carries a Tora scroll on his heart like a king. And a Jew does not lose his holiness, even at death.”⁸¹

Elberg renewed the theme that Jews, as holy, could not hate Germans forever. The Jewish position was not to depend on whether or not Germans were bothered by what they did. Had they been, for that matter, they would have seen their sadistic murdering before them every minute, they would have suffered, gone insane, collapsed at heart, they “would be

running around the world crazed, looking for Jews to embrace and kiss, looking to throw [themselves] at their feet and ask forgiveness a million times.”⁸² What, then, should the Jewish position be? Elberg understood how flames of hatred for every German could smoulder in the bloodied Jewish heart at the point when Jews learned of mass murder: “We were all prepared then to swear that our hearts would boil and cook forever with horror and anger.” But Elberg doubted in 1946, he recalled, and still doubted in 1964 that Jews, with their inborn human compassion, were psychologically capable of long-term hatred. “Only during limited, uncontrolled moments of turmoil and chaotic-thinking, can Judaism speak with hate-language. Its essence, however, is pure of the microbes of hate. In the depth of its soul no hate can take root.”⁸³

Elberg still spoke of the special holiness of the victims. The *Khurban* was a holy mystery.⁸⁴ Because Polish Jewry was pure, with God’s emanation at its center, it was chosen as the sacrifice (*korban*) for all humanity. God’s name was sanctified by the death of those precious to him.⁸⁵ Polish Jewry was chosen as the “single goat for a sin offering” (*Numbers* 28:22) because it had been sanctified and purified for a millennium.⁸⁶ When Hitler did not let the Jews die quietly but only after prolonged agony, the torture deepened the holy service: “The choking flames sanctified and purified the Jewish soul with an angelic purity, and breathed *Shekhina* into it.”⁸⁷

With regard to the Land of Israel, Elberg in America combined his pre-1939 concerns for the need to apply Tora to the developing polity with his apocalyptic considerations of 1946. Thus, a Jewish State had to be based upon *mitsvot* and strive towards becoming not solely a political entity but the redemptive kingdom, *Malkhut Yisrael*.⁸⁸ It had to be based upon Tora-holiness—Israel became a nation when it had received Tora (*Deuteronomy* 27:9), and that was before it entered the Land.⁸⁹ The Sages explained Jeremiah’s description of how God’s soul wept in secret places because His flock was carried away captive (*Jeremiah* 13:17) by saying that God shed one tear for the first Temple, another for the second Temple, a third for the annulling of Tora. The third tear was equal to the first two. Once the Temples were destroyed the Tora could replace Jerusalem as the holy context for uniting with God, but without Tora all three *Khurban*’s prevailed (*Hagiga* 5b). Thus, Elberg observed, the Jewish State could end exile and move towards redemption only if based upon Tora.⁹⁰ He urged the 1954 Great Assembly of the Agudat Israel in Jerusalem “to shout out to the entire world that the tip of the letter *yod* in the Tora text was more important than the strongest political entity (*Medina*), even one on both sides of the Jordan.”⁹¹

And now that the Jewish state became a reality, what did it mean for Elberg in terms of *Khurban*? The State was reparation for the sacrifices

and incarcerations of Treblinka and Maidanek (*shilumim le-korbanot Maidanek . . . pitsuim le-meune Treblinka*). The State also meant the onset of redemption (*Asshalta deGeula*). But for both reparation and redemption, penitent return (*Teshuva*) and good deeds were required.⁹² Elberg rejected any automatic one-to-one relationship between *Khurbn* and *Medina*:

Whatever the cure may be for the sick body and soul of Judaism, there is no justification for *nationalizing* the *Khurbn*. [I reject any attempt to] create a juxtaposition or parallel between the murder of six million Jews and establishing the State of Israel. As if one is impossible without the other[! As if] the *Khurbn* was the necessary foreboding of redemption in the specific form of a contemporary state[! I reject the] view that the establishment of the State is well worth the price of the harsh sufferings of the *Khurbn*.⁹³

Thus Elberg was concerned, as he was in the late thirties, lest Tora be separated from Land. But now he raised the issue up into his mythic structure by making the State dependent on the reality of holiness—for the sake of which God brought the *Khurbn* upon His people.

At the same time, Elberg enunciated how America served as a positive means of recovery from *Khurbn*. After the war, he related, he had looked for a place where he could study Tora in peace and quiet—never thinking that this would be possible in materialistic and pragmatic America. But wondrously, “God showed me His bountiful grace and blessed me with quietude and gave me the ability to devote myself to Tora as I [devoted myself] in the early days.”⁹⁴ After the *Khurbn* which annihilated the world of Tora, he said, a spirit from above had come miraculously and brought about Tora study-circles (*Kollelim*) in America.⁹⁵ Of course, Elberg’s expectations for America were still incomparable to those for the State of Israel—he never injected any metaphysical holiness or messianic element into his American refuge.

The mythic reality with which Elberg identified himself through the war remained with him in America, along with death-like reality of the *Khurbn* itself. *Khurbn* was rationally and humanly incomprehensible, but it could be understood through faith. It was an essential theme to Jewish existence, as were the punishment for sin, holy sacrifice and the endurance of holiness. Hatred of satan incarnate could be understood as a product of the chaos, but could not remain with the Jew forever. To the believer in a universe of God and Tora, there was no historical-like one-to-one relationship between *Khurbn* and State. Rather, both belonged to the higher category of holiness—the Jewish State would be a reparation for the *Khurbn* and crucible for redemption only when it became holy. Similarly, because Tora could be pursued in America, America also provided in its own way a response to *Khurbn*.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:
METAHISTORY AND CATASTROPHE

Simha Elberg was born into a life of Tora, and in his early years in Warsaw and Montreux he demonstrated his commitment to Tora through study and writing. During the Paris years his attentions turned to studies at the university, to current events and their impact on the people of Israel. In particular, he was concerned lest the secular Zionists overwhelm the religious dimensions to the future Jewish state. He worked to apply Tora to history. He also trusted in world history as centered around French Revolutionary principles and he believed that these principles would defeat Hitler.

When Elberg returned to Warsaw for a visit in fall 1939 he was caught in the turmoil following the Nazi invasion—he was, indeed, included in the forced labor contingents—but managed to escape. He cherished the memories of what was said in the “rabbinical cellar” in R. Spigelglas’ home in anticipation of catastrophe, the motifs of *Kiddush Hashem*, *Hevle Moshiah*, *Akeda*, *Tehiat haMetim* and *Tikkun*. As Elberg journeyed eastward, physically dead and spiritually abandoned by man and God, out of the black empirical world a prayer emerged. Faith survived the collapse of Europe and the apparent absence of God from history. And so did Tora—which Elberg studied throughout. From these last days in Warsaw through his arrival in Shanghai, the seeds of a metahistory, of a life of Israel with God beyond, albeit through, empirical events became implanted in Elberg’s mind.

At the end of the war, the knowledge of the catastrophe forced Elberg to conclude that God’s creation had been destroyed, that Hitler had returned the world to *Tohu vaVohu*. But Elberg was driven by inner faith and inner Tora to find meaning. The world was destroyed, but God and His Tora remained ontologically “there.” Elberg struggled with the contradictory pieces of knowledge available to him, and in the course of the struggle a means of discourse and a new dimension of consciousness emerged. He found meaning in a metahistory which assumed the qualities of myth. Jewish “history” still existed but now it was the story of *Akeda*, situated closer to eternity than to time. Elberg described an ontic battle between the satanic evil of Hitler and the holiness of Israel under divine direction. Israel was holiness, the *Khurbn* was a process of sanctification, and this holiness would ultimately outlive Hitler. Elberg spoke of the holiest of Jews, those from Poland/Lithuania, as necessarily the new *Akeda*, and of the God-given ability to withstand the pain of the gas chambers. Thus in Shanghai of 1946, Elberg’s Tora-Judaism survived history as history was elevated into myth. In the myth, God’s universe survived the destruction of the world, His rule was so total that even a Hitler was His instrument, and mankind would ultimately turn to Tora.

Elberg had fragmentary thoughts about redemption. The fact that there was a Hitler led him to think there would soon be a “person with the word of redemption in his mouth”;⁹⁶ he thought that God’s “overflowing fury” (*Ezekiel* 20:33) meant that “the hour of divine revelation for all mankind should come soon.”⁹⁷ Although the act of living in the Land of Israel did liberate from the ghetto-exile psychosis, it was not the conclusion to exile nor did it precipitate redemption.

Elberg’s mythic Judaism stayed with him in America. He continued to speak of the incomprehensibility of the chaos which had been wrought by the chaos, and he found meaning in the ontic struggle between satan and holiness, in the (unidentified) sin of Israel which necessitated the terrible but holy sacrifice, and in God’s direction. He thought of Jewish history as “un-natural,” able to overcome the greatest catastrophe, able to revive the spirit of Israel after it was practically obliterated. He spoke of America as providing a means of recovery from *Khurbn* through Tora, while he rejected the “nationalizing” of the *Khurbn*.

Elberg was not precise about his sources and some of his writings seem to have been lost.⁹⁸ The available material leaves several important questions unanswered: (1) How would Elberg reconcile his belief that the *Khurbn* was punishment for sin, with his view that Polish/Lithuanian Jewry was the holy sacrifice chosen by God to improve the world? For what sin were the sinless punished? (2) How would Elberg reconcile the belief that even the dead bones of the victims, equivalent to Holy Scripture, would arise to destroy Hitler’s Germany, with the view that Jews cannot hate forever? (3) How could Hitler, the incarnation of evil, be an instrument of the holy God? (4) If the *Khurbn* was holy sacrifice, why did Elberg’s world remain *Tohu vaVohu* even in 1951? (5) Why, given the reality of the Jewish State and the revival of Tora in America, did Elberg not re-open Judaism to history—just as he closed the door to history upon the Nazi invasion of Poland?

Beyond the problems of Elberg’s use of sources, the unavailability of some of his writings, and the serious religious questions, it can and must be said that his work reveals a courageous attempt at maintaining Jewish belief despite the obliteration of Judaism’s worldly context. Such an attempt helped to keep the Judaism of God, Tora and holiness alive, there for those who emerged from the death camps and ghettos, and for those who bore witness to the catastrophe, to draw upon. Elberg’s work, like that of Taykhtahl, Spira, Schneersohn and others, saved the Jewish world from having to ask the ultimately tragic question: Could the people of Israel have survived, had the Tora—which rests upon belief in Tora—not survived?

NOTES

* Most of Elberg's writings are dispersed through rare periodicals and booklets. I am thankful to the following for exceptional help in gathering them: The staff of the Library of Congress Hebraica Division in Washington, Moshe Kolodney at the Agudat Israel Archives in New York, Zalman Alpert of Yeshiva University in New York, Naftali Winter at Mossad Harav Kook in Jerusalem, Haim Levi and Eliahu Igel at the National Library in Jerusalem, and Jean-Claude Kuperminc at Alliance Israelite Universelle in Paris. I met with Elberg on 10 May 1990 in Boro Park, Brooklyn, and he shared some personal recollections, but he bears neither credit nor blame for anything said here. I am indebted to the students in my 1987 course on the holocaust in Jewish thought at Haifa University for stimulating discussion, and grateful to Judith Bleich, Charles S. J. White and Herman Taube for their personal support. I had the opportunity to deliver portions of this essay at the 20th Scholars Conference on the Holocaust at Vanderbilt University in March 1990, and at the International Conference on Literature of the Holocaust: Literary, Philosophical and Historical Implications sponsored by Bar Ilan University at Florida International University in October 1990.

Elberg has used various pseudonyms, including "E. Simhoni," "S. Aaronson," "E. Freyt," "Yeruham Hasofer." I refer to him as Elberg in the text of my essay. Elberg generally did not cite his sources, and when he did he made only general references—e.g., "Kabbala." In several cases I was unable to find his source.

1. I use the Yiddish term *Khurbn* for the holocaust, the term normally used by the Orthodox. However the Orthodox have also used the English "holocaust," and were perhaps the first to do so. See "frightful holocaust" (translation for "*Khurbn un katastrofe*") in Eliezer Silver, *Address Delivered by Rabbi Eliezer Silver, President, Agudat Israel of America at the Opening of the Special Conference of Agudat Israel for the Strengthening of the Jewish Religion* (Belmar, New Jersey 20 August 1942, Yiddish with English translation): 22; "military holocaust" in [Editor], "*Tammuz 5704*," *Hakeriyya Vehakedusha* IV/47 (20 June 1944): 1. Reform Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver spoke of the "universal holocaust" at the National Conference on Palestine, 2 May 1943. Abba Hillel Silver, "The Conspiracy of Silence," *Vision and Victory* (New York 1949): 11.
2. See Gershon Greenberg, "Orthodox Theological Responses to Kristallnacht: R. Haim Ozer Grodzensky ('Ahiezer') and R. Elhanan Wasserman," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 4 nr. 4 (1988): 431–441 and 4 nr. 4 (1989): 519–521. *Idem*, "Mahane Israel-Lubavitch: Theological Response to *Khurbn* 1940–1945," *Modern Judaism* (forthcoming). Nehemia Polen, "Divine Weeping: R. Kalonymous Shapiro's Theology of Catastrophe in the Warsaw Ghetto," *Modern Judaism* 7 (October 1987): 253–269. On R. Yitshak Mendel Danziger see Efraim Shmueli, "*Kiddush Hashem* during the *Shoa*," *Jubilee Volume in Honor of Our Teacher the Gaon Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik II* (Jerusalem and New York 1984, Hebrew): 1187–1210. David Landes, "Death, Deconstruction and *Derashot*: The Auschwitz Sermons of R. Tsevi Hirsh Mayzels," *Proceedings of the International Conference on Religious Jewry and Religious Thought During and After the Holocaust 16–19 June 1986*, forthcoming. Pesah Schindler, "*Tikkun* as Response to Tragedy: *Em Habanim Smeha* of R. Yissakhar Shlomo Taykhtahl—Budapest, 1943," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 4 nr. 4 (1989): 413–433. Mendel Peykarz, *Ideological Trends of Hasidism in Poland During the Interwar Period and the Holocaust* (Jerusalem 1990, Hebrew). Shlomo Rozen, Shimon Efrati, Efraim Oshry, Haim Yisrael Tsimrman, Moshe Haim Loy, Yehiel Veynberg and Meir Ayali have published works about halakhic deliberations.
3. Simha Elberg, *Akedat Treblinka. Gedanken un refleksen* (Shanghai 1946).
4. See E. Simhoni, "Tsu gast in shtetl G[rojec]," *Dos Yudishe Togblat* (Warsaw) 10 nr. 6 (Warsaw 1 October 1937): 8.
5. On Elberg and Spigelglas see Simha Elberg, "Der letster Rosh Hashana fun Poylishen Identum. In a rabbinischen keler tsuzamen mit R. Natan'ke Spigelglas," *Dos Idishe Vort* 104 (New York September–February 1965): 33–36. *Idem*, "Rav, a Khasidisher Rabi un a Rosh Yeshiva," *Dos Idishe Vort* 107 (January–February 1966): 17, 18, 20. *Idem*, "Varshever ba'ale-batim. R. Natan Spigelglas in kreyz fun ba'ale batim," *Dos Idishe Vort* 98 (November–December 1964): 15–18. *Idem*, "A Id fun Varsha. R. Natan Spigelglas z"l," *Dos Idishe Vort* 92 (February–March–April 1964): 24–28. *Idem*, "R. Natan Spigelglas zts"l (tsveyter artikel)," *Dos Idishe Vort* 93 (April–May 1964): 25–27. *Idem*, "R. Noska Spigelglas z"l un zeyne khaverim," *Dos Idishe Vort* 94 (May–June 1964): 16–19, 26. *Idem*, "Drey zeynen geven. R. Natan Spigelglas, R. Menahem

- Zemba, R. Avraham Veynberg," *Dos Idische Vort* 95 (June–July–August): 37–40. *Idem*, "Azoy iz umgekumen a Id in geto," *Dos Idische Vort* 101 (April–May–June 1965): 11–13. *Idem*, "Rabbi Natan Spigelglas of Warsaw," *Ele Ezkara* VII ed. Isaac Lewin (New York 1972, Hebrew): 197–215. *Idem*, "Rabbi Net'ke Spigelglas, May his Memory be for a Blessing, the Gaon and Sanctified [Person]," *Hapardes Jubilee Volume* (New York 1951, Hebrew): 451–454.
6. See Simha Elberg, "Varshever ba'ale-batim. R. Natan Spigelglas in kreyz fun ba'ale-batim," *Dos Idische Vort* 98 (November–December 1964): 15–18.
 7. The rabbis who wrote for *Emek Halakha* included Meir Dan Plotzki of Ostrova, Yehuda Arye Rozenstreykh, Avraham Mordekhai Maraka, Menahem Mendel Sirkus of Warsaw, Eliezer Valder of Narol, Ya'akov Meir Biderman of Warsaw, Yosef Razin of Dvinsk, Yoav Yehoshua of Kintshak, Natan Spigelglas of Warsaw, Zevi Arye Framer of Kaziglov, Mordekhai Kalina of Vishogrod, Yisrael Yehoshua Kalina of Magnashev, Shalom Yosef Halevi Feygenboym of Laktsh, Ya'akov Ze'ev Yaskavitch of Rabnitz, Yehiel Avraham Blankman of Shvershin, Alter Ya'akov Meir Brizman of Lapy, Yehiel Meir Blumenfeld of Warsaw, Ya'akov Arye Eyzintsvayg of Warsaw, Hanokh David Gringlas of Lentshna, Yehonatan Halevi Eybeshits of Volomin, Avraham Zevi Vigdaravitch, Efraim Fishel Veynberger, Menahem Mendel Halberstadt, Ya'akov Yitshak Hasid, Yitshak Ya'akov Landa, Avraham Spigelglas, Yuda Shraga Heyzhan. Student contributors included Benyamin Herts, Barukh Hoykhgelernter, Alexander Zisha Hoykhgelernter, Asher Anshel Felzenshteyn, Reuven Akiva Eyzenberg, Haim Yoel Zshalandsh, Ya'akov Yitshak Hasid, Yisrael Eliezer Hanigshtack, Yitshak Ya'akov Landa, Avraham Spigelglas, Avraham Hillel Zelitska, Mordekhai Arye Ederman, Yehuda Arye Ratenberg.
 8. Simha Elberg, "What Will Happen to Tora?" *Emek Halakha* 1 nrs. 2–3 (Warsaw, January–February 1927, Hebrew): 77.
 9. On Elberg and R. Menahem Zemba see Simha Elberg, "Rabbi R. Menahem Zemba of Warsaw," *Ele Ezkara* II, ed. Isaac Lewin (New York 1957, Hebrew): 38–51.
 10. Elberg's published poetry first appeared the following year in Warsaw. See Simha Elberg, "Avek a yohr," *Dos Yudishe Togblat* 9 nr. 1 (20 September 1936): 1 and Simha Elberg, "Lider . . . 5697 . . . Zitsen tsvey khaverim . . . Meyn shtub," *Dos Yudishe Togblat* 10 nr. 13 (26 September 1937): 8.
 11. Simha Elberg, *Offering of First Fruits* (Warsaw 1936, Hebrew): 5.
 12. Simha Elberg, *Offering of First Fruits* (Warsaw 1936, Hebrew). The deliberations were addressed to R. Menahem Zemba, R. Eliezer Lifshits of Grojec, R. Haim Ozer Grodzensky, R. Meir Shapira of Lublin, R. Ya'akov Ze'ev Yaskavitch, and the writer Alexander Zisha Fridman. There were *Haskamot* (authoritative certifications) by R. Lifshits, Yitshak Zelig of Kotsk, R. Zemba, and R. Spigelglas.
 13. Simha Elberg, "Montreux tsum tsveyten mol (reyze eyndruken)," *Dos Yudishe Togblat* 9 nr. 117 (7 February 1937): 5. E. Simhoni, "Oyfn Tsionistishen kongres in Tsirikh," *Dos Yudishe Togblat* 9 nr. 270 (9 August 1937): 4, 5.
 14. Simha Elberg, "Oyf di bregen fun Seine, in Pariz. Reyze beshreybungen," *Dos Yudishe Togblat* 9 nr. 11 (4 October 1936): 4. E. Simhoni, "Vi ozoy iz ariber der 14-ter Yuli in Paris; milionen menshen tantsen oyf di gasen fun Pariz," *Dos Yudishe Togblat* 11 nr. 242 (19 July 1939): 4. E. Simhoni, "Noyt un arimkeyt in Pariz," *Dos Yudishe Togblat* 10 nr. 35 (24 October 1937): 6. S. Elberg, "In di arime kvartalen fun Pariz (reyze beshreybungen)," *Dos Yudishe Vort* 9 nr. 20 (16 October 1936): 8.
 15. E. Simhoni, "Oyfn Parizer univerzitet," *Dos Yudishe Togblat* 10 nr. 85 (19 December 1937): 4. In July 1947, Elberg visited Paris to defend his doctoral dissertation at the Sorbonne. The subject was "The Problem of Slavery Among the Jews of Antiquity." [Editor], "Shriftsteler Harav Dr. S[imha] Elberg in Pariz," *Di Vokh* nr. 9 (Paris, 15 August 1947): 3. The editor stated that the dissertation had been published in the American Yiddish press. The award of the doctorate was not indicated in *Catalogue des Theses de Doctorat—Universites Francaises—1947* (Paris 1951) or *idem—1948* (Paris ?).
 16. E. Simhoni, "Komunist, sofer un hazan . . . (fun Parizer Yudishen leben)," *Dos Yudishe Togblat* 10 nr. 13 (26 September 1937): 8.
 17. E. Simhoni, "Di tragedie fun di oyslendishe Iden in Frankreykh," *Heynt* (Riga) 296/1352 (25 December 1938): 3.
 18. E. Simhoni, "A shpatsir iber der velt-oysshtelung in Pariz," *Dos Yudishe Togblat* 9 nr. 263 (1 August 1937): 3, 7.
 19. E. Simhoni, "150 yohr Franzoyzishe revolutsih," *Dos Yudishe Togblat* 11 nr. 180 (7 May 1939): 6. See Alfred Rosenberg, *Kampf um die Macht. Aufsätze von 1921–1932* (Munich 1937), cited by the author.

20. E. Simhoni, "Pariz for Hitlers entfer," *Dos Yudishe Togblat* 11 nr. 173 (27 April 1939): 4. To support his position Elberg cited [?] von Metsch's *Militarische Politik* (Berlin? 1939).
21. E. Simhoni, "A shpatsier iber der velt-oysshtelung in Pariz (der Erets Yisrael-pavilian)," *Dos Yudishe Togblat* 9 nr. 251 (18 July 1937): 5.
22. E. Simhoni, "Der Mizrahi kongres in Tsirikh (eyndruken)," *Dos Yudishe Togblat* 9 nr. 264 (2 August 1937): 3. See Moshe Avigdor Amiel, *The Spiritual Problems of Zionism. Towards an Explanation of the Spiritual Situation in the Land* (Tel Aviv 1937, Hebrew): 31.
23. E. Simhoni, "Oyfn Tsionistishen kongres in Tsirikh," *Dos Yudishe Togblat* 9 nr. 277 (17 August 1937): 5. See also E. Simhoni, "Di Yudishe agents hot zikh gelozt iberbeten (fun unzer korespondent in Tsirikh)," *Dos Yudishe Togblat* 9 nr. 284 (25 August 1937): 6.
24. Simha Elberg, "Azoy iz umgekumen a Id in geto," *supra* and *Warsaw of Above* (Bene Brak 1969, Hebrew): 310–313. On R. Grodzensky's rescue activities in Vilna see Efraim Zuroff, "Rescue Via the Far East: The Attempt to Save Polish Rabbis and Yeshiva Students, 1939–1941," *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual* I (1984): 153–183. *Idem*, "Rescue of Students of Polish Yeshivas Through the Far East in the Era of the Shoa," *Midor Dor* (summer 1979, Hebrew): 49–76; Yitshak Arad, "Concentration of Refugees in Vilna on the Eve of the Holocaust," *Yad Vashem Studies* 9 (1973): 201–214; Yehuda Bauer, "Rescue Operations Through Vilna," *Yad Vashem Studies* 9 (1973): 215–233; and Aaron Sorsky, editor, *Ahiezer*, 2 vols. (Bene Brak 1970, Hebrew).
25. Simha Elberg, "Azoy iz umgekumen a Id in geto," *supra* and *Warsaw of Above*, *supra*, p. 308 [Hebrew].
26. Simha Elberg, "Der letster Rosh Hashana fun Poylishen Identum. In a rabbinishen keler tsuzamen mit R. Natan'ke Spigelglas," *supra*.
27. E. Simhoni, "Eyropa," *Aleyn . . . supra*. p. 50.
28. E. Simhoni, "Eyropa vi Sodom," *Aleyn . . . supra*. p. 51.
29. E. Simhoni, "Plitim," *Aleyn . . . supra*. p. 52.
30. E. Simhoni, "Mir vartn," *In Veg* (Shanghai November 1941): 28–30. See Efraim Zuroff, "Attempts to Obtain Shanghai Permits in 1941. A case of rescue priority during the Holocaust," *Yad Vashem Studies* 13 (1979): 321–351.
31. Elberg's handwritten inscription in the Library of Congress copy of *Aleyn . . .* reads: "Freynt Dr. [A.] Mukdoni [Alexander Kappel 1878–1958, then in New York] a matana fun dem Sodom shtet Shanghai a grus. Dr. A. Simhoni. Shanghai 25.IX.41." Simha Elberg, *Aleyn . . . Lider* (Kovno 1940).
32. Simha Elberg, "A Rabi in galut. Mitn Amshinover Rabin [Shimon Shalom Kalish] zts"l in Shankhey," *Dos Idische Vort* 188 (June–July–August 1976): 15, 16, 21. See also S. Elberg, "Yeshivot in Shankhey," *Yidishe Shtime fun veytn Mizrah* (Shanghai December 1945): 2; E. Simhoni, "In the Jewish Ghetto in Shanghai," *Shearim* 47 (Tel Aviv 13 December 1945, Hebrew): 2; Gershon Gura, "Simha Elberg, *Aleyn . . . Lider*, Kaunas 1940; *Vander-Veg • Lider*, Shanghai 1942; *Akedat Treblinka. Gedanken un refleksen*, Shanghai 1946," *Shearim* 91 (21 November 1946): 3. Cited in Joseph Gar, *Bibliography of Articles on the Catastrophe and Heroism in Yiddish Periodicals* 2 vols. (New York 1966).
33. E. Simhoni, "Drey lender hobn mikh oysgeshpign," *Vander-Veg • Lider* (Shanghai 1942: 19.
34. E. Simhoni, "Eli, Eli, lama azavtani," *Vander-Veg • Lider*, *supra*, p. 19.
35. E. Simhoni, "Meyn tefilla," *Vander-Veg • Lider*, *supra*. p. 14.
36. Simha Elberg, "Introduction," *All of Simha* I (Brooklyn, N.Y. 1964, Hebrew): 7.
37. Simha Elberg, *Akedat Treblinka. Gedanken un refleksen* (Shanghai 1946): 12. Referred to here as AT.
38. AT, pp. 35–36.
39. AT, p. 28.
40. AT, p. 4.
41. AT, p. 3.
42. AT, p. 5.
43. AT, p. 30.
44. AT, p. 12.
45. AT, pp. 22–23.
46. AT, p. 14.
47. AT, p. 13.
48. AT, pp. 18–19.
49. AT, p. 17.

50. AT, pp. 23–24. The text reads: “*Der galah Niemoeller fadert fun Deytshn falk harata un als sakhar far seyn harata bet er fun unz eyn kleynikeyt: mehila, mir Iden, saln sey, di Deytshn, fargebn zeyre bagangene kegn unz sind.*” I have been unable to identify the source for this formulation. See Martin Niemoeller, *Ueber die deutsche Schuld, Not und Hoffnung* (Zuerich 1946) and James Bentley, “Guilt and Repentance,” *Martin Niemoeller 1892–1984* (New York 1984): 159–178.
51. AT, p. 38–40.
52. AT, p. 5.
53. AT, p. 32.
54. AT, p. 36.
55. AT, p. 14.
56. AT, p. 11.
57. AT, p. 27.
58. AT, pp. 8–9. According to the Maharam of Rottenburg (d. 1293):

When a man has committed himself to *Kiddush Hashem*, and to sacrificing himself *al Kiddush Hashem*, whatever is done to him—be it stoning, burning, burial alive, hanging—does not hurt him at all. . . . Know that it is so: There is no man in the world who would not cry out if his little finger touched fire. Even if he thought of holding back, he could not. Many sacrifice themselves to burning and murder *al Kiddush Hashem*, blessed be He. And they do not cry out, not “Oy” and not “Avoy.” Samson bar Zadok, *The Book of Tashbets, Including the Interpretations and Customs of His Rabbi Maharam of Rottenburg* (Jerusalem 1973 edition, Hebrew): nr. 415, p. 107.
- R. Shimon Schwab, author of *The Fountainhead. Collected statements on the onset of the messiah* (New York 1941, Hebrew), told me that Maharam’s statement circulated during the *Khurbn* years. It is cited in connection with Elhanan Bunem Wasserman by Aaron Sorsky, *The Light of Elhanan II* (Los Angeles 1978, Hebrew): 213n. Cf. Elhanan Bunem Wasserman, *Ma’amar Ikvassa Demeshiha . . .* (New York 1938/1939): 22.
59. AT, p. 5.
60. AT, p. 37.
61. AT, p. 32.
62. AT, p. 74.
63. AT, p. 32.
64. AT, p. 46.
65. AT, p. 33.
66. E. Simhoni, “Yeshivas in Shanghai,” *Shearim* 51 (Tel Aviv 10 January 1946, Hebrew): 3.
67. E. Simhoni, “Shankhey, New York, Pariz. Reyze eyndruken,” *Di Vokhensteytung* nr. 582 (London 18 July 1947): 2–3; nr. 583 (1 August 1947): 2; nr. 584 (15 August 1947): 2(?). I have been unable to acquire the rest of the series, which dealt with Paris. On the Swedish initiative to rescue the Yeshivas see David Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis and Jews. The Jewish refugee community of Shanghai 1938–1945* (New York 1976): 557.
68. [Ed.], “The Great Mir Yeshiva. 324 Tora greats and pious ones came from Shanghai,” *Hapardes* 21 nr. 5 (February 1947, Hebrew): 9–11. [Ed.], “Literarishe notitsen,” *Idishe Shtime* 8 nr. 8 (New York 17 March 1947): 6. See also [Ed.], “Harav Dr. Simha Elberg (E. Simhoni) bazukht redaktsie fun Tog,” *Der Tog* (New York 21 March 1947): 3, which reported that AT had “evoked great interest with its rich content and moving themes.” Elberg and R. Ya’akov Berish Mandelboym (b. 1912 Zamoshtsh) were welcomed to America from Shanghai as “fighters for the religious renaissance of the Jewish people, co-workers in the religious press and literature,” [Ed.], “A khaverishen . . .” *Idishe Shtime* 8 nr. 4 (14 April 1947): 4. See Simha Elberg, “Passover and Celebration,” *Hapardes* 21 nr. 11 (New York August 1947, Hebrew): 13–14. This issue of *Hapardes* (p. 7) contained brief selections of *Akedat Treblinka* translated into Hebrew. In 1950 Elberg became the journal’s editor. For a contemporary observation about the route taken by Elberg see Yitshak Levin, “Vilna, Tokyo, New York. Vi azoy Tora-Iden haven gevandert iber drei kontinenten. Der kol ha’tora oyf’n patsifishen okean-eyndruken fun an umgevoynlikher nesiyya,” *Idishe Shtime* 2 nr. 3 (April 1941): 6.
69. Simha Elberg, “Di kadoshim—vi azoy darf men zey gedenken?” *Dos Idische Vort* 164 (New York April–May–June 1973): 10–12.
70. Simha Elberg, *Warsaw of Above, supra*, pp. 13, 316–317 [Hebrew].
71. Simha Elberg, “The Kingdom of Israel and the State of Israel,” *Hapardes Jubilee Volume*, ed. Simha Elberg (New York 1951, Hebrew): 354–361.

72. Simha Elberg, "Poland," *Hapardes* 25 nr. 12 (September 1951, Hebrew): 19–20. Simha Elberg, *Warsaw of Above*, *supra*, p. 324 [Hebrew] and Simha Elberg, "Tenz, muzik un . . . kavod for 6 million kadoshim," *Dos Idishe Vort* 85 (February–March–April 1963): 19–21.
73. Simha Elberg, "The Kingdom of Israel and the State of Israel," *supra*.
74. E. Simhoni, "Dr. Natan Birnbaum [who died 3 March 1937], tsu zeyn 10-ten yohrtseyt, aharon shel Pessah," *Idishe Shtime* 8 nr. 4 (April 1947): 4. See also Simha Elberg, "Das vort in galut," *Dos Idishe Vort* 3 nr. 24 (March–April 1956): 6–8.
75. Simha Elberg, "Oyropeaishe Idishkeyt," *Dos Idishe Vort* 81 (September–October 1962): 9–11.
76. Simha Elberg, "The Kingdom of Israel and the State of Israel," *supra*.
77. E. Simhoni, "300 yor nokh gezerot T'kh," *Dos Yidishe Vort* 2 nr. 25 (Munich 28 May 1948): 4, 5. Elberg referred to Natan of Hannover (d. 1683), *Abyss of Despair* (Hebrew) and Jacob Emden (d. 1776), *The Scroll of the Book* (Hebrew). A remarkably similar statement was published at the same time by Shlomo Nutter, "Di 300-yorike tekufa, 1648–1948," *Kol Israel Ba'gola* 23 (Munich, 27 May 1948): 3.
78. Simha Elberg, "The Kingdom of Israel and the State of Israel," *supra*.
79. Simha Elberg, "The destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee" [*Isaiah* 49:17] *Dos Idishe Vort* 183 (November–December 1975, January 1976, Hebrew title, Yiddish text): 7–9.
80. Simha Elberg, "In a finsterer nakht," *Dos Idishe Vort* 106 (November–December 1965, January 1966): 9–11.
81. Simha Elberg, "Ikh far keyn Poyln," *Der Algemeyner Zhurnal* (New York) 5 nr. 244 (New York 10 September 1976): 9.
82. Simha Elberg, "Politishe un literarishe teshuva," *Dos Idishe Vort* 88 (September–October 1963): 25–27.
83. Simha Elberg, "A hatuna oyfn Har-Tsion," *Dos Idishe Vort* 91 (January–February 1964): 9–16.
84. Simha Elberg, "The Kingdom of Israel and the State of Israel," *supra*.
85. Simha Elberg, "Poland," *Hapardes*, *supra*.
86. Simha Elberg, *Warsaw of Above*, *supra*, pp. 11–13 [Hebrew].
87. Simha Elberg, "The destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee," *supra*.
88. Simha Elberg, "The Kingdom of Israel and the State of Israel," *supra*.
89. Simha Elberg, "The Nation of the Book," *All of Simha* IV (Brooklyn, N.Y. 1964, Hebrew): 25–29. See also Simha Elberg, *All of Simha* IV (Brooklyn, N.Y. 1964, Hebrew): 25–29.
90. Simha Elberg, "Essay on the Power of Tora," *All of Simha* I, *supra*, pp. 10–16 [Hebrew].
91. Simha Elberg, "Tora un medina—oder medina un Tora," *Dos Idishe Vort* 1 nr. 7 (June–July 1954): 7–9.
92. Simha Elberg, "The Kingdom of Israel and the State of Israel," *supra*.
93. Simha Elberg, "Khurbn, kedusha un geto oyfshtand," *Dos Idishe Vort* 1 nr. 5 (April–May 1954): 4–6.
94. Simha Elberg, *All of Simha* I. *Book of Seasons* (Brooklyn 1964, Hebrew): 8.
95. Simha Elberg, *All of Simha* III. *Book of Seasons* (Brooklyn 1978, Hebrew): 12. With regard to Elberg's position on memorializing the *Khurbn* see Simha Elberg, "Memorializing the *Shoa*. What and How," *Hapardes* 59 nr. 3 (November 1984, Hebrew): 2–3 as cited by Joel B. Wolowelsky, "Observing Yom Hashoa," *Tradition* 24 nr. 4 (Summer 1989): 46–58.
96. AT, p. 13.
97. AT, p. 11.
98. The cited works which I have been unable to locate include *Sermonizing* (Warsaw 1936, Hebrew), *Lider fun heylikn Yid* (Shanghai 1942), *Yapan* (Shanghai 1942), *Tsvishn blut un feyr* (Shanghai 1942, Russian). I have also been unable to acquire a complete run of *Emek Halakha*.