

9-24-98 Holocaust

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ANTI-SEMITISM AND THE HOLOCAUST

To: The Universal House of Justice

Date: 24 September 1998

From: Research Department

REFERENCES IN THE BAHA'I WRITINGS TO ANTI-SEMITISM AND THE HOLOCAUST

In an email message of 8 July 1998, Mr. xxx asks for "any and all available references to anti-Semitism" in the Baha'i Writings, especially in the correspondence of Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice. Furthermore, he asks if there are any references to the Holocaust in the Baha'i Writings. We reply as follows.

We have been able to find very few references specifically dealing with anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. However, we share with Mr. xxx the attached compilation entitled "The Holocaust and the Greater Plan of God",¹ which was prepared in response to a question as to whether the Holocaust was part of the Greater Plan of God. In a letter on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer dated 3 February 1988, we read that the "Baha'i attitude to the Holocaust and the massive sufferings inflicted on mankind by the World Wars is clearly set forth by Shoghi Effendi in *The Promised Day is Come*...." Extracts 3 and 8 of the attached compilation are such references taken from *The Promised Day is Come*.

Further, Mr. xxx may be interested in the following two extracts from letters written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice regarding the Jewish people:

"It would be impossible for any community, much less the Baha'i community, to forget the suffering of the Jewish people throughout a long period of history. As you know, Baha'u'llah, like the Prophets before Him, stated in His Writings that the Jews would return to their homeland, and this fulfillment of their heart's desire has taken place. Moreover, 'Abdu'l-Baha has confirmed that the travail of the Jewish people is now to be ended. He wrote in a Tablet:

"... The ignominy which Israel has suffered for well-nigh twenty-five hundred years will now be changed into eternal glory, and in the eyes of all, the Jewish people will become glorified to such an extent as to draw the jealousy of its enemies and the envy of its friends.

"However, beyond this lies the supreme reality that the Manifestation of God for our age spent the latter part: of His life in that area of the world in which the Jews have today established a State. The Centre of our Faith, its Shrines and administrative headquarters are established there. From these two distinct points of view, you can see that it is impossible for the Jews to be

forgotten in a Baha'i context. The blessings which will be conferred upon them for what has occurred in the Holy Land in this new dispensation will become increasingly evident."

(2 January 1992, to an individual believer)

It is important to bear in mind that in the Writings it is not, Judaism, per se, which is criticized. On the contrary, like the other great religions of the world, Judaism is a divinely revealed system, albeit as with all previous dispensations it has been overtaken by an ineluctable superannuation. As recounted in the Book of Certitude, it is principally the clerics who, from age to age, have misled their followers and contributed to confusion and lack of true understanding. This benighted condition, induced by the leaders of religion, has never been limited to a single people. It prevails at the advent of each of God's Messengers and is the primary cause of their persecution. Accordingly, Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha speak against the spiritual blindness which led the Jews to denounce Christ to Pontius Pilate, leading to His crucifixion. The purpose is mainly didactic, to illustrate the ever-recurring patterns enacted in the dialogue between mankind and the successive Messengers of God. However, in our time, it is the followers of Muhammad, not the Jews, whose malevolence subjected the Supreme Manifestation of God to incalculable suffering and who are thus the object of divine judgement.

Perhaps you are familiar with the following Tablet revealed by 'Abdu'l-Baha published on page 5, number 250 of "Baha'i News", cited December 1951; and it provides a perspective in which to view your [Jewish] heritage from the Baha'i standpoint.

"You have asked Me a question with regard to the gathering of the children of Israel in Jerusalem, in accordance with prophecy.

"Jerusalem, the Holy of Holies, is a revered Temple, a sublime name, for it is the City of God... The gathering of Israel at Jerusalem means, therefore, and prophecies, that Israel as a whole, is gathering beneath the banner of God and will enter the Kingdom of the Ancient of Days. For the celestial Jerusalem, which has as its center the Holy of Holies, is; a City of the Kingdom, a Divine City. The East and West are but a small corner of that City.

"Moreover, materially as well (as spiritually), the Israelites will all gather in the Holy Land. This is irrefutable prophecy, for the ignominy which Israel has suffered for well-nigh twenty-five hundred years will now be changed into eternal glory, and in the eyes of all, the Jewish people will become glorified to such an extent as to draw the jealousy of its enemies and the envy of its friends."

(Abdu'l-Baha revealed this tablet in 1897
to a Jewish community in the Orient)

The Jewish people have suffered enormously during centuries of exile, and those who sought to justify their evil actions have at different times victimized them by appeals to religion. We Baha'is sympathize deeply with the victims of that suffering. At the same time, Baha'is accept that the Jews were responsible

for the fate met by Jesus Christ, because this is what the Writings indicate, and we accept that, as with all people who fail to recognize the Manifestation of God at the appointed hour, their destiny as a people has been shaped by the consequences of their failure to recognize and accept Him. This is hardly a radical view. The drama of the Old Testament is largely the story of the travails and victories of the Israelites as they responded or not to the Covenant of God. We also believe, as stated by 'Abdu'l-Baha in the passage quoted above, that Providence is delivering the Jews from their historical abasement and lifting them into a glorious condition.

You yourself should take pride in your [Jewish] heritage. Shoghi Effendi once remarked in a letter written on his behalf to an individual believer of Jewish background, "You ... should never wish to disassociate yourself from a group of people who have contributed as much to the world as the Jews have." If the Baha'is whom you meet appear to exhibit little interest in knowing about the Jewish people it is their loss that they do not avail themselves of the opportunity to learn about it from you. The hallmark of the Faith is the ingathering of all peoples, united in their common adherence to the Cause of God and in their obedience to His noble laws.

(22 December 1993, to an individual believer)

Footnote

1. The compilation that was attached to this letter is in the Compilations section of ARCHIVE under the title "Holocaust."—ARCHIVE Editor