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By the Grace of G-d
23rd of Shevat, 5744
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Dr.

New York, N. Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

This is in reply to your letter of Jan. 23, 1964, in which you write that you were born in a DP camp in Germany, a child of parents who survived the Holocaust, and you ask why G-d permitted the Holocaust to take place, etc.

No doubt you know that there is a substantial literature dealing with this terrible tragedy, and a letter is hardly the medium to deal adequately with the question.

However, since you have written to me, I must give you some answer. Hence, the following thoughts.

Jews - including you and me - are "believers, the children of believers," our Sages declare. Deep in one's heart every Jew believes there is a G-d Who is the Creator and Master of the world, and that the world has a purpose. Any thinking person who contemplates the Solar System, for example, or the complexities of an atom, must come to the conclusion and conviction that our universe did not come about by some "freak accident." Wherever you turn, you see design and purpose.

It follows that a human being "also" has a purpose, certainly where millions of human beings are concerned.

Since the Creator created the world with a purpose, it is also logical to assume that He wished the purpose to be realized, and therefore would reveal to the (only) creature on earth who has an intelligence to understand such matters, namely, mankind, what this purpose is, and how to go about realizing it. This, indeed, is the ultimate purpose of every human being, namely, to do his or her share in the realization of the Divine design and purpose of Creation.

It is also common sense that without such Divine revelation, a human being would not, of his own accord, have known what exactly is that purpose and how to achieve it, any more than a minuscule part or component in a highly complex system could comprehend the whole system, much less the creator of the system.

The illustration often given in this connection is the case of an infant, whose lack of ability to understand an intricate theory of a mature scientist, would not surprise anyone, although both the infant and the scientist are created beings, and the difference between them is only relative, in terms of age and knowledge, etc. Indeed, it is possible that the infant may some day

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surpass the scientist in knowledge and insight. Should it, then, be surprising that a created human being cannot understand the ways of the Creator?

It is also understandable that since every person has a G-d-given purpose in life, he or she is provided with the capacity to carry out that purpose fully.

A further important point to remember is that since G-d created everything with a purpose, there is nothing lacking nor superfluous in the world. This includes also the human capacity.

It follows that a person's capacity in terms of knowledge, time, energy, etc., must fully be applied to carrying out his, or her, purpose in life. If any of these resources is diverted to something that is extraneous to carrying out the Divine purpose, it would not only be misused and wasteful, but would detract to that extent from the real purpose.

In the Torah, called Toras Chaim ("instruction in living"), G-d has revealed what the purpose of Creation is, and provided all the knowledge necessary for a human being, particularly a Jew, to carry it out in life. Having designated the Jewish people as a "Kingdom of Kohanim (G-d's servants) and a holy nation," a Jew is required to live up to all the Divine Precepts (Mitzvot) in the Torah. Gentiles are required to keep only the Seven Basic Moral Laws - the so-called Seven Noahite Laws with all their ramifications - which must be the basis of any and every human society, if it is to be human in accordance with the will and design of the Creator.

One of the basic elements of the Divine design, as revealed in the Torah, is that G-d desires it to be carried out by choice and not out of compulsion. Every human being has, therefore, the free will to live in accordance with G-d's Will, or in defiance of it.

With all the above in mind, let us return to your question, which is one that has been on the minds of many: Why did G-d permit the Holocaust?

The only answer we can give is: Only G-d knows.

However, the very fact that there is no answer to this question is, in itself, proof that one is not required to know the answer, or understand it, in order to fulfill one's purpose in life. Despite the lack of a satisfactory answer to the awesome and tremendous "Why?" - one can, and must, carry on a meaningful and productive life, promote justice and kindness in one's surroundings, and, indeed, help create a world where there should be no room for any holocaust, or for any kind of man's inhumanity to man.

As a matter of fact, in the above there is an answer to an unspoken question: "What should my reaction be?" The answer to this question is certain: It must be seen as a challenge to every Jew - because Jews were the principal victims of the Holocaust - a challenge that should be met head-on, with all resolve and determination, namely, that regardless how long it will take the world to repent for the Holocaust and make the world a fitting place to live in for all human beings - I, for one, will not slacken in my determination to
*) "the not being given the answer" and at the same time being expected to serve Hashem etc. -

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carry out my purpose in life, which is to serve G-d, wholeheartedly and with joy, and make this world a fitting abode - not only for humans, but also for the Shechina, the Divine Presence Itself.

Of course, much more could be said on the subject, but why dwell on such a painful matter, when there is so much good to be done?

With blessing

M. Schneerson

P.S. Needless to say, the above may be accepted intellectually, and it may ease the mind, but it cannot assuage the pain and upheaval of one who has /especially been directly victimized by the Holocaust.

Thus, in this day and age of rampant suspicion, etc., especially when one is not known personally, one may perhaps say - "Well, it is easy for one who is not emotionally involved to give an 'intellectual' explanation...."

So, I ought, perhaps, to add that I, too, lost in the Holocaust very close and dear relatives such as a grandmother, brother, cousins and others וְהַיְיָ. But, life must go on, and the sign of life is in growth and creativity.

according to
Mitzvath Hashem