

I've heard about this conference for people who say the Holocaust never happened. How can people believe it never happened when there is so much evidence for it and many survivors are still alive to give testimony about their experience in the death camps? What is going on with these people?

This is my thinking – see if it makes sense to you. Holocaust deniers believe the Holocaust never happened not because of any evidence, but because they have to believe it never happened. Their logic requires that it never happened. Let me explain.

In the view of Holocaust deniers, the Jews and their accomplices fabricated the whole myth of mass executions of Jews by the Nazis. I'm not sure just how much of this thinking is conscious on the part of Holocaust deniers, but their logic says the Holocaust cannot have happened because if it did, it would mean that they were wrong in their dearly-held belief about a worldwide Jewish conspiracy that controls Hollywood, the world banking system, the United Nations and most of the governments of the world. If Jews really did run the world "from behind the scenes," why would they have allowed one third of all the Jews of the world to be murdered? In the logic of the Holocaust deniers, the Jewish

bankers who secretly rule the world must have had relatives, maybe even close relatives, who lived in the lands conquered by Germany and therefore ended up in the ovens. Surely they would have stopped such a mass execution of their own kind if they had all that power. If the Holocaust really did happen, that would mean that the Jews are not so powerful and that a Jewish conspiracy does not rule the world. But that is an utterly unacceptable thought for those who cherish the belief that a worldwide conspiracy of Jewish bankers is responsible for all the problems of the world. They believe that the Jews rule the world, so by inescapable logic, they also know that the Holocaust did not happen. It simply could not have happened. Certainly the picture of Jews as victims being massacred does not fit with their view of Jews.

There is another very strong reason why many people want the Holocaust to "go away." When we learn about the unspeakable things done to the Jews of

THE REV.
WILLIAM G.
GARTIG



Europe during the Holocaust, we feel deep, almost overwhelming sadness and sympathy for the victims. And not everybody wants to feel for the Jews. One lady told me she was "sick and tired" of being made to feel sympathy for Jews. I take it that against her will, when she heard or read about the Holocaust, she found herself feeling a connection to Jews, caring for Jews, recognizing a common humanity with Jews. And she didn't like it one bit.

Those who see the state of Israel as "the villain" may also resent having stories of the Holocaust "tug at their heartstrings," when they don't want to feel to feel sympathy for Jews. Those whose sympathies are strongly with the Palestinians may not want to hear about the sufferings of the Jews. People who are angry with the Jews may not really want to identify with them and think about their pain.

Those who are hostile to the state of Israel also know that the Holocaust gains Israel sympathy and supporters

because it casts the Jews as innocent, wronged people who you naturally want to "root for." There was great sympathy for the Jews immediately after World War II when the camps were liberated, and the world saw the news-reels of the ovens and the lime pits filled with corpses and so much more that turned the stomach.

Those hostile to the state of Israel also know that it would not exist if it were not for the Holocaust. The main justification for the existence of the state of Israel is the Holocaust, which showed the need for a Jewish homeland where Jews could be safe from such things ever happening again. Because in the Jewish homeland Jews would be armed, they would no longer live at the sufferance of non-Jews, depending on their kindness and decency (which has often been found lacking). If you can remove the Holocaust by saying it never really happened, then you have removed the main justification for the existence of the state of Israel.

The Rev. William G. Gartig will answer your questions about the Bible, Episcopal life and other religious subjects. Send questions to 2146 Cameron Ave. Apt. 5, Cincinnati, OH 45212-3631 or at gartigwg@episcopal-dso.zzn.com.