

## IMPACT OF EXPERIENCED OR TRANSMITTED VIOLENCE ON THE LIFE OF HOLOCAUST VICTIMS

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Submitted: 2012-03-19

Accepted: 2012-06-13

Published online: 2012-12-20

### Abstract

The article over informatik about the trauma experienced by the Jews during the Holocaust and the impal of trauma on next generations. When studying the influence of Holocaust on psychic we consider not only the situation of the camp survivors. We study, too, the psychic and the interpersonal relations of the so called “hidden-children” (those who were hiding before transport with their parents or alone at foreign people) and we study, too, those who were born after the war to the parents-survivors. The dissertation will focus on social mechanisms of collective identity and collective memory which facilitate a transegenerational transfer of the experience of Holocaust. The professional access to them in the health and social care can be improved by under standing and awareness of personal stories of such people.

**Key words:** *transgeneration transport of trauma; PTSD; Holocaust; shoah; victim; hidden-children*

The underlying topic of this article is that the Holocaust experience of the Jews has become one of the essential constituent elements of their Jewish identity. It can therefore be assumed that the Holocaust has become a special bond that connects a certain group of people who otherwise would probably not consider their Jewish ethnic or ethno-religious origin to be determinative in terms of their self-definition. Based on a study of the available literature and analysis of interviews of those who survived the impacts of the Holocaust, we will try to identify the possible reasons why the Holocaust experience has become a major axis of self-identification of the Jewish community, an axis which is also assumed by subsequent generations which did not directly experience the Holocaust. The article describes the fates of the Jewish people in Slovakia who came into direct contact with persecution and loss during the Holocaust. We explore how collective identity is linked to collective memory

and to the concept of trauma development and impact on the lives of members of the Jewish nation.

Judaism is the religion of God’s chosen people. It is a monotheistic system. Bearers of Judaism are Jews, including those who converted to Judaism during its historical development. The main feature of Judaism is the belief in one God, designated in biblical texts of the Old Testament with the sacred tetragrammaton YHWH.

Religion is the response of human beings to their living conditions. It is an organized system of worship. Individual religions have basic beliefs, rituals and practices in relation to life, birth, death or salvation. They often have rules of conduct applied to everyday life (Zaviš 2008, p. 9).

Judaism is based on the biblical text known as the Old Testament. The most sacred text is the Five Books of Moses. The Torah, a verbal religious law, was compiled to interpret and expand the Five Books of Moses, and was disseminated first verbally and later captured mainly in the Mishnah

and Talmud. Strict monotheism is applied through a set of religious duties, which sanctify human life and are used by humans to reach God. These include 613 commandments and prohibitions known as Mitzvot (fear of God, love of God and love of one's neighbor, the world should live in truth, justice and peace, etc.). In addition to the biblical texts of the Old Testament and according to Biblical religious tradition, Jewish religious philosophy is a part of Judaism. Judaism is a way of life that includes all human activities from birth to death (Johnson 2007, p. 17).

Hatred of Jews is often present in the history of the Jewish faith. It is a certain historical phenomenon that accompanies the history of mankind from the time Jews were scattered in the Diaspora after the demise of their country and destruction of the second Temple of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., through pogroms during the Crusades (years 1096, 1099 and 1190), 4<sup>th</sup> Lateran Council (1215), which stipulated the anti-Jewish legislation in Europe, expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula (1492) and Khmelnytsky Uprising (17<sup>th</sup> century) up to the period of the Holocaust. Throughout history, Jews have been permanently restricted in many fundamental rights (isolation in ghettos, prohibition from pursuing some handicrafts, and so on) and periodically harassed through "ideologically justified" genocide.

It is almost incomprehensible why individuals, as well as entire nations, again at certain times in history turned against the Jews and why specifically this faith incites predominantly strong negative emotions. History includes many conquests of the Jews, which were intended to enslave and exterminate this nation. The 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, brought a previously unseen form of anti-Semitism – the Nazi Holocaust, which revealed an extreme nationalism, racism, anti-Semitism, and for the most part the fanaticism of the Nazi ideology.

The term holocaust is derived from the Greek word holocaustos, which denotes a religious sacrifice that is all consumed by fire. The word holocaust can be understood as absolute disaster and destruction. The term holocaust, which can be understood as a burnt offering sacrifice, has become accepted as a synonym for the Nazi mass murder of Jews in order to completely exterminate

European Jewry. The scientific literature sometimes replaces the word Holocaust with Shoah, which designates the final solution of the Jewish question (i.e., extermination of the Jewish nation). Compared to this term, however, the Holocaust represents a far wider range of events with myriad different sufferers.

Total extermination of the Jews was a clear and conscious program of the Hitler's Nazism from the very outset. Already in the 1920s, Adolf Hitler already in 1920's in his book *Mein Kampf* preached the idea of the final solution of to the Jewish question. Of course, specific stages and forms of the final solution of the Jewish question differed as to intensity and timing according to the occupation plans and possibilities in the territory of the respective countries. They included provisional measures, such as Aryanization, confiscation of all Jewish property, exclusion of Jews from public life, temporary support of Jewish emigration, subsequent deportation to ghettos and deportation to concentration camps. These measures helped to fulfill the tasks of Vernichtung durch Aussiedlung (extermination through expulsion) and Vernichtung durch Arbeit (extermination through labor). Unparalleled to the fate of any other victims of World War II, the Jewish experience involves not only the total intention of the aggressor and its unprecedented methods, but also the psychological impact. Jews did not die for their country or convictions in World War II, but their clear predestination to die was based solely on being declared a Jew (Šamánková 2002).

In his book *Mein Kampf*, Hitler stated: *"With satanic joy in his face, the black-haired Jewish youth lurks in wait for the unsuspecting girl whom he defiles with his blood, thus stealing her from her people. With every means he tries to destroy the racial foundations of the people he has set out to subjugate. Just as he himself systematically ruins women and girls, he does not shrink back from pulling down the blood barriers for others, even on a large scale"* (Hitler 2000, p. 236).

According to the Nuremberg laws, which were intended to "protect German blood and German honor", anyone who had Jewish parents or grandparents or a Jewish partner

was a Jew. These laws deprived Jews of all remaining civil rights and prepared the way for a legal anti-Jewish policy. Over the years, the laws were amended (deportation to the ghettos, ban on certain occupations, expropriation of property, public identification of Jews) (Pavlov et al. 2005, p. 112).

The Jews were divided into three categories:

- full Jews, with at least three grandparents of pure Jewish race;
- half or mixed Jews (Mischlinge) of the first degree, with two Jewish grandparents;
- half Jews of the second degree, with one Jewish grandparent.

This classification often decided one's life or death (Wistrich 2008, p. 118).

The government of the Slovak Republic restricted the civil rights of the Jews with government regulation No. 39/1939. The term "Jew" was defined on a religious basis. The said regulation, among other things, regulated the number of Jews in certain free professions. Another government regulation, No. 230/1939, modified the military duty of Jews and the Jews were transferred to special labor camps. On 25 April 1940, the Slovak Parliament passed Act No. 113/1940, known as the Aryanization Act. Coercion of the Third Reich gradually escalated and a radical solution to the Jewish question was requested. On 9 September 1941, government regulation No. 198/1941 regarding legal status of the Jews (the "Jewish Code") was adopted, which raised strong protests from the Slovak Catholic Church. The act on the deportation of Jews was adopted on 24 March 1942, and the first transportation was dispatched the next day, based on the regulation of the then Prime Minister, Vojtech Tuka (Mlynárik 2005, p. 145).

We have described the issues that were tangible. But the increasing repression and persecution also meant something different, intangible. The psychological pressure, building "a ghetto without walls", was much worse. These types of discriminatory measures included various bans on entering certain squares, designated streets, parks, orchards, and forests. Jews were forbidden to go to cinemas, theaters, libraries and other cultural and sport facilities. Strict measures were introduced within the public sphere. Bans also applied on school attendance,

and Jewish children were prevented from getting an education. An additional measure followed requiring that all Jews over the age of six publicly wear a distinctive yellow star inscribed with the word "Jude" in black.

The period of the Nazi Holocaust thus brought a new way of creating hatred against the Jews. In this case, we are talking about archetypal patterns, generating a collective consciousness of the group. In psycho-social terms (among others), Judaism represents the same archetypal heritage, which works based on a message and connects to the history of the suffering of the Jewish people from ancient times until the Shoah.

In this respect, the exclusivity phenomenon plays a primary role among Jews. From the very beginning, Jews self-defined themselves as a specific group ("the chosen people") and separated themselves from other nations using theoretical postulates and a complex and rigid system of commands and prohibitions, covering nearly all acts of daily life, that an individual in a different environment is unable to meet. Any deviation from the strict commandments of the Torah is punishable by expulsion from the order of "the chosen". Betrayal of one's own religion is one of the three "deadly sins". The requirements of the Jewish religion are immense, and its relentlessness often turns those who should obey them into the role of victims, as we can see in the prehistoric story of the Sacrifice of Isaac.

Hidden psychological motives of the second member of the archetypal pair (aggressor) are also transmitted from the past and need not necessarily relate to the real "unsettled scores" with the selected victim. Collective aggression is either caused by a charismatic leader or otherwise brought back by psychological mechanisms to the surface of collective consciousness under appropriate historical circumstances. "Collective revenge" is reported to be a hidden psychological motive in relation to the outbreak of World War II started by Germany and its genocidal policy against Jews.

In World War II, both men and women were exposed to similar conditions in ghettos and concentration camps as the Nazis applied their techniques of depersonalization and loss of human dignity. Men and women were killed. All of them were set to be exterminated,

physically destroyed, because the regime designated them “an impure race” and this was associated with the fact they were subhuman creatures and didn’t deserve to live. Jews were killed with unusual brutality, humiliated, mistreated, were subject to experiments involving extremely heinous killing practices. Even children were not safe from this frenzy and babies were killed in cold blood. Concentration camps were institutions that treated Jewish women as representatives of a persecuted nation. Jewish women came into ghettos and concentration camps with acquired models of behaviour that corresponded to the structure of the patriarchal families in which they grew up. In the concentration camps, people spent some time before death and had to learn how to live in a certain way and, in particular, how to survive. Survival of women was associated with many specifics, such as their inseparable association with children, due to which some women had to die or undergo abortion. Despite these most extreme situations, they tried to take care of their loved ones, because they had acquired the role of guardians. They formed fixed bonds with each other, which were crucial for their lives and survival. In fact, these bonds served as replacement families, providing emotional and psychological support. They had to be prepared however, in case they had to leave their pseudo-family for any reason (transfer to another camp) and subsequently create another replacement family in the new location.

People who survived the Holocaust can be viewed in two different ways: as passive victims who were not able to defend themselves and only hoped to survive; or as a conscious (even if only internally) fighting creatures that actively tried to do things and did not obey the fate prepared for them by the Nazis. Linden points out that anyone who survived the Holocaust suffering had to be a warrior. Survival was associated with immense effort and an active approach. Jews fought for their own survival as well as the survival of their nation. Millions of people died during the Holocaust, but a portion of them (about one and a half million people) saved themselves. Some have considered that their survival was largely due to the fact they were lucky – they were not chosen to go to the gas chamber during the selection process,

they received their food ration, did not get an infection, and so on. Several similar strategies can be traced by studying and comparing the stories of Holocaust survivors, which helped them survive this immense suffering both physically and mentally (Linden 1993).

Knowledge of historical events and their chronological documentation are not enough for an overall understanding of all internal connections. It is necessary to realize and fully respect the fact that a part of the Jewish soul was brutally forced to get humiliated, raped, and physically exterminated by the Holocaust. Understanding the emotions and feelings that are associated with the tragic events of the Nazi Holocaust period requires a great deal of empathy and genuine interest for the given individual. It should be noted, however, that such a huge dose of aggression that was committed on members of the Jewish faith cannot be admitted by the individual members until such event no longer has effects. So, when the destructive power of the war and its current situations was gone and ceased to have an immediate effect, the survivors experienced the feeling of anger for what was committed against them, their parents, and relatives. Everybody had to deal with tremendous damage to the soul. And this anger and rage, which are the reverse sides of the human sadness and depression in one’s mental life, along with other feelings such as survivor’s guilt, remain with you for life. In this way, they developed a primary trauma (Šamánková 2002). There are and always were people who were barely willing to talk about their experience during their lifetime and carried them to the grave. In addition to the silence, many Jews of this generation hid their Jewishness after the war. This applied to speeches to the public, as well as to the behavioural strategy in private life and even within family circles.

Victims are required to adapt and not bring back memories of this huge stain on the conscience of mankind, which the Holocaust undoubtedly is. And, as mentioned earlier, they really did so. In extreme efforts to recapture the lost life and human dignity, they “forgot” about their humiliation. They created new families and achieved successful careers. Some of them eventually (after a period of latency) developed a disorder – a diagnosable syndrome requiring treatment.

The community is relieved of its burdensome co-responsibility and sacrifice of its trauma, but for the price that was later paid, to a heavy extent, by their children (Dasberg 1995).

In this mood and in this way, induced feelings are generated in members of the second and third generations. Children, the second generation born into families with Holocaust survivors, were born into an atmosphere where these people live with closed suppressed thoughts and feelings. The feelings are sadness, shame, anger, and in particular, helplessness, that generally arise in the mental life due to traumatic experiences. One has the feeling that he/she is left completely helpless, cannot control the situation at all. He/she becomes a victim. If a mass phenomenon, a multiple trauma occurs, these feelings – unrecognized, to which life situations they really belong – live in the collective consciousness of the nation that experienced the trauma, and in the personal subconscious of the families and individuals.

The last important factor was therefore the post-war situation to which the affected victims returned. The decisive factors are the number of surviving family members, acceptance or non-acceptance by the surroundings and the political situation. Circumstances of the return can become a source of secondary trauma, as the victims do not find their original homes, are unable to perform their original professions due to medical reasons, no one wants to listen to their stories, and they might even be called a liar. Most frequently, they find out that they are completely alone in the world, have lost everything that made up their previous existence, and no one is interested in their fate. Hidden children may paradoxically find that meeting with their family of origin may be traumatic as a result of the relationship created to a new family (Durst 1995, Fogelman 1995, Karpf 1997, p. 130).

The generation that survived the war was immediately and tragically affected, and experienced a turning point in their life. The loss (human, intellectual, and material) and perceived absence were inseparable guides in the post-war years. The extent of life devastation and intensity of the cruelty experienced, along with possible frustration in the face of absurd evil and the unreality of additionally considered alternatives, as well

as other factors, in many cases resulted in withdrawal from the world and displacement of the part of memory containing stressful experiences. Members of the first generation sometimes developed a phenomenon called identification with the aggressor. A former prisoner in a concentration camp in his further life with his family mimicked the behavior of the Nazi tyrants. What the first generation survived as a severe conflict of history, the second generation has problems to go through, also carrying transmitted traumas. The trauma experienced by the first generation is transmitted to the second generation in the form of interpersonal, personality, and psychosomatic disorders.

Families associated with the painful history of the Holocaust often lived in isolation. As if the imaginary ghetto continued sixty years after the war: We will continue to hide from the world by being silent about our identity, separated as in the ghetto, connected by a shared secret in addition to the shared history. With a barrier from the outside world in our minds. Uncertainty and distrust in mainstream society is even more penetrated inside the survivors. As well as in those who met reluctance and non-acceptance again after returning to their former homes. Many of the Jews tried to merge internally with the society, to remove differing elements, lack of characters, that were in line with the ideology of assimilation and which seemed to provide a safe anonymity. The reasons also included a fear of or conscious suppression or aversion to anything associated with Judaism. A significant number of survivors decided to emigrate because they did not want to return to a country that failed to protect them or even released them to death, to a marked and empty home, in a population that included those who assisted in persecutions and deportations. Some of them have lost the ability to believe in God or in the concept of God's existence based on the events that occurred. Recapitulation and settlement of accounts, which are characteristic of the last stage of life, hit the war generation very heavily, as a result of the experienced events, and coping with the past events required from the affected persons not only to recall their memories but also to open old wounds and unrelenting confrontations. In this way, the affected persons suffered a secondary trauma.



Transmission of intergenerational trauma occurred as a result of Jewish children living with severely traumatized parents. Some of them had vivid and terrifying nightmares about the concentration camps, cattle wagons, torture, living skeletons and gas chambers, even though they were born years after these events occurred. Children from the second generation were often named after dead family members who became victims of the Holocaust. In addition to their own lives, they lived the lives of the dead family members and were often reminded of it. In fear of losing another child, in a mood of hypercompensation, the children were overwhelmed with love and care from their parents in the safety of their homes, often in isolation to be protected from being hurt by society. This developed an environment in which a child lost his/her identity.

Very often, due to a fear of diseases, cold and hunger, the children were dressed excessively and provided with excess food, and as a result, they later created a special relationship to food intake and sometimes developed eating disorders. They experienced all of this as a result of the horrors survived by their parents in the concentration camps. Especially when the mother lost a child in a concentration camp, or had to undergo a forced abortion (see above).

The Holocaust period is also often associated with the term “concealed child”. The method of concealment was to change the identity of children. Ideally, children were not supposed to hide in basements, but they should be included in the families and orphanages with false documents. The easiest way was to smuggle and hide toddlers; hiding older children was more difficult. A significant proportion of them came from Orthodox Jewish families and often only spoke Yiddish and had no idea of the Catholic faith and customs. These children had to pass special speech and catechism courses to avoid disclosure while visiting the school or in everyday family life. Prefabrication of the cover legends and documents was also complicated. It should be noted, however, that the Nazis punished the hiding of Jews by murdering the entire household. One who accepted a Jewish child, risked the lives of his whole family, or the lives of the members of the entire monastery or orphanage.

These hidden children lost their concealed identity and lived with a constant sense of threat. After the Holocaust many of them never found their original families, have not found how and where their parents, siblings, and entire extended family were killed.

The Jewish Association “Hidden Child” was founded in 1991 after the World Organization of Jewish children who survived the Holocaust was established in the USA. The main reason for the establishment of this association was trauma experienced during the Holocaust and after the World War II. Hidden Child, as an independent organization, enabled people with similar life experience to unite and made them feel that they are not alone.

In his book *Shadows of the Shoah: Jewish Identity and Belonging*, the author Jeleniewsky Seidler (2000, p. 11) wrote: *“How can we make sense of being born and growing up in the shadows of the Shoah without being able to speak about the unspeakable terror that killed so many in our families? As the second generation we were rarely to hear stories of love and loss or to participate in the mourning of so many who had been brutally murdered. Rather we were to grow up ‘normally’, and to learn to turn our backs on the past as we struggled towards future identities while imagining ourselves ‘like everyone else’. Fearful of difference we were often ambivalent about Jewish identities that could threaten a sense of ‘Englishness’.”*

The traumatic experience is perceived as unfair or beyond the ability to understand. The threshold of when a person experiences trauma is different for each individual, and its experience is also dependent on a large number of individual factors. It is therefore desirable to keep in mind that talking about collective trauma is not inherently traumatic because it is collective, that is because it refers to a “marked” group. The collective dimension, however, is a significant factual predicate to its character (and also for the future duration and potential transfer to the next generation), because it creates the stigma phenomenon (Goffman 2003, p. 58).

In their research, the authors Klimová and Roubalová Kostlánová observed the following in second and third-generation Jews:

- dysfunctional family relationships, loneliness and symbiotic dependence;

- frequent morbidity - a depressive disorder and psychosomatic disorders;
- a tendency to repeatedly get into the role of victim;
- a tendency to experience feelings of guilt;
- overestimation of the importance of food, which they consider a major value and food is a central cause of various disorders they suffer from;
- compassion and self-identification with other vulnerable human groups;
- the need to take care of life to an increased extent;
- a higher level of education, higher professional status, interest in helping professions;
- role in the original family described as “festive candle” – the individual (or siblings) take the role of „destiny repairers“ (Klimova and Roubalová Kostlánová 2011, p. 11).

The intention of the aggressors was partially successful – i.e., the aim to destroy not only the bodies but also the souls. Experience from the camps, experience of persecution based on racial origin (i.e., for something fundamental) destroyed all that is built up in an individual through maternal care: self-preservation, existence of defensive boundaries of the personality, love of self or others, the basis of trust in the human race – everything that creates a connective bond between mother and child (Honzák 2011 p. 60).

Trauma develops as a result of shock from the sudden succession of negative events for which an individual was not prepared and from the consequences of these events. As a result, there is a distortion or degradation of individual and collective histories and their value and normative foundations. Experiencing trauma can be understood as a sociological process which is defined by a painful injury to the collectivity, creates a victim, creates an attribute of responsibility and spreads the spiritual and material consequences. If trauma is “experienced, thought, and externally manifested in a certain way”, it will be identified in the collective identity of the respective group, and its presence will cause the necessary revision of the forms of collective identity (Alexander et al. 2004, p. 45).

The trauma of the Holocaust as a result of group hatred and violence undermined the very instinctive basis. Thanatos, represented in the consciousness by the guilt category, dominated in the areas that should be ruled by Eros, self-acceptance and acceptance of others. At the level of the individual psyche, the Holocaust trauma causes a loss of sense, hope, and love. This leads to the emergence of depressive disorders and various manifestations of traumatophilia when an individual repeatedly and consistently develops a tendency to self-destruction. The second generation has suffered from the absence of the family dialogue, mostly lived through the wounded souls and the bodies of their parents in a non-verbal matter. Trauma, with its roots lying in a large society, and in the previous generation, is processed by the second generation primarily as a consequence of family dynamics. The second generation is accompanied by psychosomatic disorders, sometimes significant eating disorders and the wounded concept of a man, the feeling of guilt associated with depression after the loss of a sense of their own lives (Goffman 2003, p. 58).

It should be noted that disorders resulting as a response to the stay in concentration camps should not be seen as a manifestation of pathology of the personality, but rather as a sensitive human response to a situation that is beyond nature and humanity. If the experience from the concentration camp poses no risk for human health, it would mean that the given individual is insensitive.

Forgiveness plays a major role in the treatment of transmitted trauma, and often seems to be the only way we can eliminate the consequences of injustice or wrongdoing. The individual then regains his/her inner peace through reconciliation. The forgiveness process, however, is not automatic and not easy because sometimes the victim considers that forgiveness mitigates the importance of guilt and as a result, he/she undergoes a long way in the process of forgiveness until he/she overcomes the trauma and finds the above-mentioned reconciliation.

*“Sometimes forgiveness is a process. If we have been deeply hurt, it takes time for the wound to heal. In this case forgiveness acts as a continual cleansing of the wound so that it can heal properly. As we think about*

*a person who has hurt us or sinned against us, feelings of resentment and emotional pain well up. Then we must reaffirm our commitment to forgive them. It is not that the first act of forgiveness is invalid, but that an ongoing process may be necessary until we are completely healed*" (McClung 1991, p. 56).

## CONCLUSION

After the war, Jews were exposed to extreme criticism from other people. Numerous suggestions have occurred that the Jews themselves were guilty of their own suffering and deaths, as they only passively observed what the Nazis were carrying out and did not defend themselves in more active ways. Blaming the victims for lacking a stronger character is common in politically organized mass cleansings. However, use of the term "complicity" is only possible if the victim had some space for free choice. The Nazis deliberately deprived their victims of their individuality and incorporated them into a total institution in which they actually had no free choice – because the Nazi propaganda involved proclamations that the Jews were not a "pure race" and therefore they should be killed by virtue of law.

With time, the Holocaust period has started to be perceived as something unique, standing beyond history and without parallel. Explanation of the Holocaust would mean that our experience is also applicable to this extremely tragic event. This attitude, however, does not facilitate the position of victims. It is difficult to understand, empathize with their position, because somehow language does not allow the communication of something so radically deviated from the ordinary human experience. By emphasizing an inability to understand the Holocaust, there was a risk that the Holocaust would become solely a Jewish tragedy that cannot be understood just because it is Jewish. The Holocaust was gradually perceived also as the testimony and witness to the barbarism of Nazi Germany, war atrocities, and proof of anti-Semitism. In this way, the Holocaust became an extraordinary symbol, which started being referred to.

In modern history, the Holocaust is a very sensitive issue, which was kept in silence after the war, and it took several years for the world

to truly learn what is the meaning of the phrase "final solution". The fact that a civilized nation was able to systematically kill about six million people who did not comply with its concept of "pure race" evokes feelings of horror. Since the actual feasibility of the Holocaust in the minds of quite a significant number of people goes beyond understanding and explanations, the vision of its repetition induces feelings of uncertainty and anxiety. If ethnic origin was a sufficient reason for persecution, it unifies, just for the same reason, all ethnic Jews from the Shoah until today.

The objective of spreading awareness about the Holocaust is to provide information that:

- the Holocaust was a turning point in the entire history of mankind. It was an unprecedented attempt to assassinate a group of people and its culture;
- the study of the Holocaust helps to think about the use and abuse of power. It can increase the awareness of potential genocide in the world today;
- the study of the Holocaust helps to understand the consequences of prejudice, racism, anti-Semitism, and stereotyping in any society. It also helps to understand the value of diversity in a pluralistic society, and greater sensitivity to the position of minorities;
- the Holocaust showed how a modern nation can utilize bureaucratic infrastructure to implement destructive policies ranging from social engineering to genocide.

Victims originating from the first to third generations due to personal experience with the cruelty of the Holocaust or the trans-generational transmission of trauma suffer from health problems requiring specialized medical care. Employees of hospitals and social care institutions should be aware that the personal history of every human significantly determines his/her behavior and attitudes to the surrounding environment. Therefore such staff members should not only be familiarized with inter-generational transmission of trauma in Holocaust victims, but should also expect the occurrence of its manifestations, accept these facts, and provide these people with highly professional and humanistic assistance (Ralbovská 2010, p. 81).



**Last words:**

„It lay for years in an iron cupboard, buried so deep that I've never been sure what was actually in it. I knew I had strange things inside me, flammable substances, a mystery bigger than sex and more dangerous than shadows or ghosts. What lay in my iron cabinet had no name or shape. But whatever it was, it was so powerful that words broke to small fragments before being able to describe it. Sometimes I thought that I had a terrible bomb inside me, I felt flashes of doom. When

*I was in school and completed the written exam before time ran out, or when I was dreaming on my way home from school, the safe world suddenly disappeared. I saw things which I knew should not be seen by a little girl. Blood and broken glass. Piles of skeletons and black barbed wires with pieces of human flesh on it. Mountains of suitcases, mountains of children's shoes, whips, guns, leather boots, knives and needles” (Epstein 1994, p. 17).*

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