

*H.P.*

*4*

*Dove*

DEAR FRIENDS OF THE RADIO AUDIENCE

Some twenty years have passed since the Nazis murdered six million of our innocent brothers and sisters. Divine Providence willed it that we who shared their tribulations should stay alive. Anyone of us, the survivors, who will carefully examine the history of his own salvation must admit that it was due not only to one, but to a number of miracles. G-d, we must recognize, has kept us alive not blindly or accidentally, but for a purpose and mission. The first and holiest duty placed upon us is to preserve for future generations the memory of our martyred dead.

The world has already forgotten our tragedy. But we have not forgotten, nor will we ever forget what was done to our people. Neither must we forget that the greater part of the non-Jewish society remained indifferent at the time when the greatest catastrophe of all times overtook our people.

But merely to remember, merely to make a mental note of our tragedy is not enough. We must do something to express our remembrance in deed, so that it will not fade from our consciousness. Somehow we must go to some sacred place and there offer a sacred oath, similar to the one our forefathers in the Babylonian captivity pronounced, when they bound themselves to remember Jerusalem: If we will forget our dead brothers and sisters of the third Jewish destruction "let our right hand forget its cunning, let our tongue cleave to the roof of our mouth if we will not remember you." Such an oath was made by the European Rabbis who survived the holocaust.

These rabbis met in the holy city of Jerusalem in May of 1962.

They were four hundred in number, including some of the luminaries of the Torah world. At the conclusion of their deliberations they issued the following proclamation:

Dear Jewish Brothers And Sisters: \*

Our generation was destined to witness the third destruction within the martyrology of our people, brought about by the German-Amalekite murderers in the annihilation of one third of the Jewish people. One thousand years of flourishing Jewish life became extinguished. The only thing, that remained are the cemeteries, the sacred resting places of our perished brothers and sisters and the old burial places of Europe which contain the mortal remains of our relatives. But even their graves were not immune from the hand of the despoiler. Many tomb stones were overturned and broken and many fences destroyed. Monuments were uprooted and used to pave sidewalks, to the extent that many graves were completely obliterated. The "sacred plots" were desecrated and those who lie in them were made nameless.

My dear listeners. How can we the living go on with our daily life in peace, comfort and the pursuit of pleasures in the face of the certain knowledge that the death rest of our nearest and dearest has been broken? How can we remain silent when the very memorials of our flesh and blood are being eroded in the ravages of men and time? What will become with the single and mass graves which are scattered in fields and woods? Who will ever visit them and shed a tear of pain and anguish? Who does anything about it and who will do something in the future? Certainly not the non-Jewish world. It stood by idly and indifferently when for four long years the living Jews were starved, tortured and killed. How can we expect any respect before the dead Jews coming from such quarters? The non-Jewish world has already forgotten the bloodiest

tragedy the world has ever seen. But for us, Jews there can<sup>not</sup>/be, there must not be forgetfulness. The bloody era cannot and must never be a forgotten or remote chapter in the history of our people.

"The voice of the blood of thy brother cries up to Me from the earth." My dear brothers and sisters. Do you not hear their voice which cries out to us from their graves? Beloved children, they ask, why did you forget us?

We cannot avoid and evade their question. What has been our answer, what is our answer now? This conference of the surviving rabbis of Europe must be the forum from which the response must go forth, both to the dead and to the living as well. We rabbis of Europe, the spiritual leaders of communities and congregations now laid waste, we who are "near to the slain" have the sacred duty to be the Shofar which disseminates this call. Our's must be the voice of human and Jewish conscience, to arouse our fellow-Jews from lethargy and indifference. The fate of the massgraves of our people murdered by the Nazis, as well as that of the old cemeteries of Eastern Europe must become a matter of deep concern and interest. We are therefore founding at the conference the instrument to carry out this task, a world-wide organization, to be called Geder Avot.

The GEDER AVOT organization has set for itself the following program:

- 1) To repair the fences of the neglected cemeteries of Eastern Europe.
- 2) To safeguard these cemeteries from further damage.
- 3) To see to it that the cemeteries should not be confiscated by the local authorities.

4) To transfer the mortal remains of our martyrs from their mass-graves to the Holy Land for re-burial.

5) To publish memorial books to record the names of the martyrs who do not have a tombstone and the names of those dead whose tombstones have been destroyed.

6) To collect signatures for a demand from the West German government to pay for the repair of the cemeteries despoiled and desecrated by German soldiers.

Our call goes forth to you, dear brothers and sisters who dwell in the Land of Israel and all the free countries of the world, particularly in the United States of America. We turn especially to the worthy rabbis, the leaders of communities, congregations and Landsmanshaften. Hearken to our call which is the call of those who no longer can speak. Hearken to the call of your own conscience and communicate your concern to those who listen to you. Prevail upon your members to join and support the Geder Avot movement and organization, so that with united and dedicated efforts we may go forth in our holy task. May G-d grant us, in response to our efforts, to live and see the realization of the Prophet Ezekiel's great vision: "Behold, I will open your graves..... and bring you into the land of Israel..... And I shall put my spirit in you and you shall live." (Ezekiel 37, 13-14)

My Dear Listeners Of The Radio Audience:

This proclamation was signed by nearly four hundred rabbis of European background, including the greatest spiritual leaders of our generation. It made a great impression in Israel and among the Jews who dwell in the free countries of Europe and tens of thousands of them have already associated themselves with the Geder Avot movement. We have publicized this project in the United States and Canada as well and I am now

utilizing the means of this radio-microphone to express my fervent hope and prayer that you will listen to my voice and call and proceed to work for the establishment of local chapters and branches of the Geder Avot movement.

For further information kindly contact the following address:

WORLD CENTER OF EUROPEAN RABBIS,  
GEDER AVOT SECTION  
1230 - 43rd Street  
Brooklyn, N. Y. 11219  
Tel. UL 4 - 3777