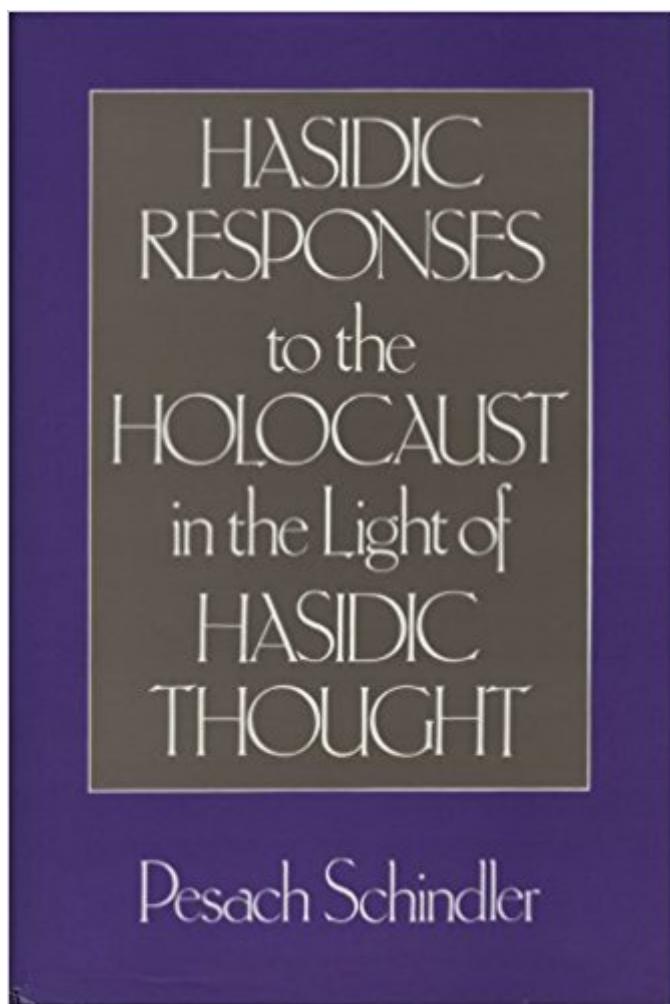


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# Hasidic Responses To The Holocaust In The Light Of Hasidic Thought



## **Synopsis**

An amazing book discussing the evidence that many Hasidim faced death in the Holocaust with a defiant and even joyful acceptance of the Divine decree. Dr. Schindler shows how they thwarted the Germans' efforts to reduce them to sub-human status and explores various trends within Hasidic thought in its response to suffering in general, and the Holocaust in particular.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This very scholarly work accomplishes its two goals. First, it provides an excellent overview of the origins and development of Hasidism, the influential mystical movement that swept through Eastern European Jewry in the 18th and 19th centuries. Second, and more importantly, it attempts to explain how Hasidism responded to the problem of evil and suffering in the world and more specifically how it responded to the great evil of the Holocaust. The major theme offered here is that most Hasidic rabbis and their devotees acted in the spirit of passive resistance to their German oppressors. The book offers an excellent analysis, specialized and scholarly. For academic or special Judaica collections.- Robert A. Silver, Shaker Heights P.L., OhioCopyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This unique work brings together the theology, sociology, as well as the history of the Hasidic world and thought thus giving us the tools to better appreciate the horrible sacrifice that these Jews sustained during the Holocaust era. Dr. Schindler accurately demonstrates how, for the most part, the Chasidic response thwarted the de-humanizing of these Jews by the Nazis, and further explains

the actions that many took in the spiritual realm to resist Nazi persecution under the crudest conditions. In this work are detailed basic Chasidic doctrines describing the concepts of evil as understood in Jewish theology and Chasidic hashkafa, the concept of Kiddush Hashem and Kiddush Hachayim, the relationship between the tzadik and the chasid, and Chasidic thought relating to legitimate resistance to their Nazi oppressors. Rabbi Schindler, the teacher that he is, demonstrates a great respect for his readers inasmuch as this work is written in a dignified and scholarly manner, fully footnoted and annotated in non-technical language. One of the most intriguing parts of this work was the chapter dealing with exile and redemption, especially those parts dealing with the teachings and demeanor of both Rav Yissachar Teichtal and the Piasecznar Rebbe, Rav Kalonymos Kalmish Shapiro, both of martyred and of blessed memory. Reading this section, as well as that on Rav Ziembra and of his activities in the Warsaw Ghetto, is a must by anyone and everyone to enable all to better understand the Holocaust tragedy in its fullest meaning for us today. --The Kosher Bookworm

This excellent book really deserves to be much better known than it is. I didn't find it until nine years after publication, and now that I have, I'm recommending it to everyone I know who is interested in the Holocaust. Pesach Schindler does an excellent job of presenting a perspective that, until now, has mostly been overlooked by secular Holocaust scholars. This pioneering historical study gives us the Hasidic side of the story, which challenges some commonly-held misconceptions about how Orthodox Jews reacted to Hitler. In the popular mind, Hasidic Jews (and Orthodox Jews in general) are often seen as cowards who did not fight back, and are usually written off as "useless" or "obsolete" by the Zionist movement for not having grabbed guns to kill the Nazis. But in "Hasidic Responses," the reader learns that many Hasidic Jews *\*did\** resist the Nazis -- not with guns, but by drawing on the inner strength of Hasidic teachings about the ultimate goodness of God, the honor and privilege of martyrdom, and the value of sanctifying every moment of life through Torah and mitzvot. Hopefully, this book will help change the common misconception that the Orthodox "went like sheep to the slaughter." The author presents a variety ways that Hasidic Jews actively responded to the Holocaust, and explores some of the moral and theological reasons they acted as they did. He points out that many Hasidim resisted through non-violent non-cooperation and refusal to obey Nazi decrees, because to do so would mean to violate the laws of their faith. For example, there is no record of any Orthodox Jew ever being a "capo" or overseer in the concentration camps. The Hasidim took very seriously the commandment to love their neighbors as themselves, and therefore felt it was immoral and forbidden to curry favor with the guards at the expense of their

fellow prisoners. When the round-ups first began, the Hasidic Jews actively refused to name fellow Jews or give away their hiding places -- and many paid with their lives for that refusal. Others simply decided not to register with the Nazis at all, and went into hiding, refusing to wear the yellow star or show up for "selections." These underground Hasidim continued to study Torah, wear Hasidic garb, and practice their faith even though it was now forbidden. Yes, they understood that they would be killed if discovered, but they also understood that everyone dies sometime, and that it's better to die with one's integrity intact than to survive at the expense of human decency. As a Hasidic Jew myself, it is my hope that readers of this book will come to understand that the Hasidim who died in the Holocaust -- many by taking stands for their faith and refusing to be dehumanized -- were true martyrs, not the helpless victims they are so often portrayed to have been. In my opinion, this book should be required reading for anybody involved in Holocaust studies. I would give it ten stars if I could!

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