



## Why Germany?

The two most nationally defining events in the last 2,000 years – the hellish Holocaust and the redeeming Israel reborn – both took place within three years of each other and within the lifetimes of most of our parents and even many of us. To suggest that our most inconceivable nightmare was the necessary price the Jews had to pay for the realization of our most exalted dream borders on the blasphemous. But to overlook the incredible and inextricable juxtaposition of humanity's deepest shame with humanity's highest hope would be blinding ourselves to the commanding voice of Jewish history, to the Bat-Kol which calls out from the depths of our collective national soul: "I shall not die but I shall live and declare the glorious works of God."

In attempting to define the meaning of Ohr Torah Stone's 30th year celebration, we must hark back to our journey from Auschwitz to Jerusalem, and the remarkable role the establishment of Efrat and OTS played in epitomizing the miracle of connecting these two cataclysmic events.

Ohr Torah Stone was born against the back-drop of Efrat; indeed, the very first building erected in our city-in-formation, was the dormitory of Neveh Shmuel, the first of nineteen schools that OTS would establish. And Efrat lies between Hebron and Jerusalem: Hebron, where God first promised Abraham that he would "patriarch" a great and eternal nation through which all the families of the earth would find blessing, and Jerusalem, where humanity would eventually achieve its culmination when King Messiah will lead the world towards compassionate righteousness, moral justice, and everlasting peace. Efrat, the bridge between the Covenantal promise of our past and the Messianic glory of our future, expresses Israel's unbelievable return to Judea after close to 2000 years of exile and persecution, in accordance with God's commitment; "Even if you are scattered to the ends of the heavens, from there will I gather you and from there will I bring you up..."

The Torah of Ohr Torah Stone is sometimes considered revolutionary by the reactionary religious establishment. Yet it is wholly faithful to its geographical and theological origins, to the Torah of

Abraham, Boaz, Ruth and King David; an inclusivistic and universalist Torah, a Torah which subsumes within itself science and philosophy, political ethics and advancement technology, Israeli Defense Forces and Jewish – Christian Israeli – Palestinian dialogue, a Torah which trains and sends out both male and female religious leaders, a Torah which reaches out with love and respect to Jews across the entire spectrum of the religious divide, within Israel and throughout the world, a Torah which demands that we love the alien and accept the convert, a Torah which is in the forefront of social action and human freedom, a Torah which – in sum – engages, embraces and even dares to redeem the world.

But, you will ask, why take the first part of our Celebration to Germany, to the very country which initiated the Nazi scourge and whose very language still evokes the piercing cries of innocent babies silenced forever? Exactly for that very reason: because Germany intimately proves that our God is not a God of death-camps; He is a God of Redemption. Because Israel is not a nation of victims; we are a nation of victors. Because, you see, we won the war against Hitler!

Hitler, first and foremost, waged a war against the Jews, against the Jewish people who gave the world the compassionate morality of the Ten Commandments, against the Jewish nation who gave humanity a Torah (Bible) which insists that every human being created in God's image must be free and inviolate, that right will eventually triumph over might, that the human spirit of love and goodness will ultimately reign supreme.

Nazism, with its racist message of elite supermen destined to enslave the world with their superior power, is the antithesis of our universal Jewish doctrine; hence Hitler set out to murder the last Jew, to destroy the last Jewish sacred text, to obliterate the Jewish people as a nation and Torah teaching as a religion. To gain this objective, he waged a "War against the Jews" and against the free world. He waged a World War of two antithetical ideologies, Amalek vs Israel.

Alas, it was an exceedingly costly war in which we were forced to sacrifice six million of our people, sacred lambs every single one. But in every war there are those who win and there are those who lose... And we won!

And so we enter the city of Berlin, the capital of what was once Nazi Germany, the city of the bunker of Hitler's suicide where "Der Feuhrer" went to an ignominious death at his own hands; we the proud citizens of the reborn powerful nation-state of Israel, we the students, faculty and supporters of Ohr Torah Stone institutions, we who founded Ohr Torah Stone on the soil of the alt-neu flourishing city of Efrat, where King David Messiah shepherded his sheep, we whose Torah

institutions send emissaries of our Torah of compassionate righteousness and human freedom to every corner of the globe, we proudly enter the city of Berlin, the gravesite of Hitler, with a crucial message of victory:

Hitler is dead, but Israel and our Torah lives. Even in Hitler's own city of Berlin and throughout Germany, we have 11 rabbis and educators, flourishing institutions of Bible and Talmud, sonorous sounds of Torah learning, mocking the deep abyss of evil snakes and murderous scorpions left impotent by the failure of the hateful Nazi ideology which Hitler espoused. Here we come on our way to Israel to which we sing our new Song of Victory:

In every generation they have stood up against us to annihilate us.

But the Holy One Blessed Be He always saves us and our Eternal Torah from the bestial hands seeking humanity's destruction."

*Am Yisrael Hai, Am Yisrael Yitgaber, Ohr Torah Yig'al ve'Yiga'el.*