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‘Faith, Ethics and the Holocaust’: THE HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR'S FAITH AND RELIGIOUS BEHAVIOR AND SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR TREATMENT

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Abstract

The survivor's religious experiences, both during and after the Holocaust have been underexplored in the psychological literature. This essay concerns itself with the survivor's religious realm as it affects the psychotherapeutic process. It also provides a conceptual framework for helping the therapist understand the significance of religion in the survivor's life. When a survivor's religious framework, his symbolic world, can no longer 'make sense' of his life, when he cannot recognize his own identity, his psychological world begins to crumble: Clinical symptoms are thus an attempt to preserve self-cohesion, self-continuity and self-esteem amidst a tottering symbolic world. Treatment should focus on helping the survivor rebuild or create new viable human meaning formations that support self-affirmation.

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