

Jewish

The following excerpts come from statements of Reform, Orthodox, Reconstructionist, and Orthodox branches of the Jewish Faith as found in Preventing the Holocaust - a Jewish Response, by David Saperstein. We thank Rabbi Martin P. Biefield Jr. for collecting this testimony in full as well as for resolutions from Independent Jewish groups such as B'nai B'rith International, the American Jewish Congress, the National Council of Jewish Women, and the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds.

Reform Judaism:

The Central Conference of American Rabbis expresses its extreme concern over the potential destruction to our civilization that a nuclear war poses. A nuclear war, even a "limited" one, would result in death, injury and disease on a scale without precedent. Civil defense and medical treatment would be totally inadequate. Our tradition speaks to us of Bal Tashkit, the danger of exposing ourselves to health hazards; Yishuv Haaretz, the abhorrence of willful destruction of the environment; and Yishuv Haaretz, the betterment and guardianship of the earth. Inspired by the prophets, we raise our voices to call upon the United States Government and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to adopt a mutual freeze on the testing, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons and the delivery systems for nuclear weapons. We further call upon the US and USSR to work against the proliferation of nuclear weapons and weapons-grade material and to commit themselves to reducing their present levels of nuclear weapons and weapons-grade material.

We commend the endeavors of outspoken clergy, responsible physicians and scientists, and concerned citizens who advocate nuclear disarmament.

Reconstructionist Judaism:

We should not try to judge the issue of thermonuclear catastrophe as if it belonged under the category of "war". Wars, however terrible, are lost or won, lead to political or economic results, are just or unjust. A thermonuclear world catastrophe could lead to the wreckage of all human societies, to the destruction of human life or even all life on earth. It would be more akin to the Biblical Flood than to any war....

We cannot prevent such a catastrophe by blotting it out of our consciousness. Indeed, the opposite. Jewish tradition teaches us that it is when we grapple directly with our deepest fears and griefs, when we fully mourn, that we release ourselves to live new creative lives. It is one of the most important functions of a religious community to pierce the thick hide of "psychic numbness" and to reawaken our passion and compassion.

The great command of the Torah: Choose life that you may live.

Conservative Judaism:

We affirm the responsibility of mankind to preserve life on earth. We call upon the leaders of our government to strive for bilateral programs leading to a nuclear freeze as a step toward the alleviation of tension and hostilities and the redirection of our priorities.

The nuclear arms race has siphoned off resources from the battle against hunger, disease and suffering. We must invest in enhancing the quality of life rather than squandering funds on instruments of death. As Jews it is our historic duty to proclaim the message of Isaiah: The earth was created to be settled for life and not for the mass extinction of humanity who bear the image of God.

Orthodox Judaism:

The Torah offers us a choice between life and death, but commands us U'Vacharta B'Chaim, to choose life. The specter of total destruction which now hangs over our heads must provide the impetus for all countries to search for alternatives to armed confrontations as a means of resolving conflicts among nations. Every congregation must educate itself on the possibilities of nuclear war and urge our government to press forward even more vigorously in the movement to halt the growth of nuclear weapons.