

College opened in the strand. Reopened after the war. I became the junior, junior, junior lecturer in Hebrew, which I had learned, but not in Berlin. I'd learned it here. And--

Biblical Hebrew, or--

Yes, biblical Hebrew. And I think, really, from then I just went ahead, as one did in those days. You no longer do now because things are quite different in universities. As long as you did your duty and published, and I have seven books here, you just became, at first, a senior lecturer, a reader, professor. And I finished up in the strand at King's College as the dean, you know, and Professor of Christian literature.

And my main interest, of course, I was fortunate in the sense that I am multilingual. So, I mean, I wrote about Thomas Mann, and Dante, and French. A bit like George Steiner. Don't know if you've heard of him, a [INAUDIBLE] at Cambridge, but it was a very happy life, and in many ways, a really most rewarding life.

The students were good, and most of them were-- almost all of them were ordinands to be priests. And things have changed completely. This is-- I left in 1980. That's 16 years ago. I went for one year to Chicago, which I enjoyed.

And then, I mean, all I can say is then we went, of course, once went, visited Israel, and once visited Berlin, and traveled. But I mean, I know nothing of grit. And I wrote one more or two more books after I retired.

What were the titles of your books?

I think one was-- do you know, I have to remember it. I'm completely out of it now. It doesn't really interest me anymore. I've very much changed. Where are we?

You see, I wrote about Auschwitz. I was one of the first ones to write about Auschwitz.

A Theology of Auschwitz.

I was one of the first ones. I didn't know it was going to become a major industry. I wrote a book about Kafka.

Oh, this one. The trial of-- The Trial of Man. And I see you have one, Stories of-- what is it?

I always-- unlike my father, I was just the opposite. I always anticipated things. Because, I mean, I published this about story and faith years before everybody began to talk about story. And now it's sort of common coinage. It's really quite a good book if you're interested in that. But what is the-- then I wrote this Pity and Terror. That's the latest book which I wrote and published, which is really about, what is it, you know, about tragedy, and wrestles with the whole problem of-- well, it doesn't really wrestle with the problem. It simply shows that we, in our modern age, cannot claim that our great sufferings are tragic, alas.

Individual fates are tragic, but I mean, I can't regard Auschwitz as a tragedy because there's no catharsis for it. There is no coming up. It's all powder and dust. And that's where I'm a very deep pessimist about--

I'm not sure that I follow you. You can't regard it as a tragedy because something--

Well, because I cannot see any--

Something which came out of it?

Well, Israel perhaps. That's the only possibility. Well, that, of course, I mentioned, although this is not a political book. But I mean, I acknowledge that Israel probably wouldn't exist if it weren't for this Holocaust.

But it's very difficult to make this connection. It can become simplistic and too easy, and I wouldn't like that. Because it

would really erase the sufferings. And, I mean, my-- what about the gulag? I mean, there again.

No, historically, I hated to be pessimistic. I'm transcendently, like my father, optimistic. But historically, I'm terribly pessimistic because when I see what human beings are capable of as individuals, and I mean, even your position in Israel, God, I pray that you are on the right path of peace. But, I mean, there are-- I mean--

Some very, very conflicting forces which--

Well, I think it's the Hamas. I mean, it's just the Iranians.

Yeah.

And I mean, I don't think they would give up. But I don't want to frighten you. I mean, you know better than I do.

No, no. I think-- look, something has to be tried. I think--

Well, I think you are on the--

Criticism of Rabin, he did try something very strongly. And how it will all end--

I think that is possible-- I think if they're left alone without influences from outside, I wouldn't be pessimistic. I mean, in that particular corner of the Middle East, I think there might be really a beginning like Northern Ireland. I mean, Northern Ireland is only just really a minuscule example that people find it so difficult to live together. Would you find it difficult to live-- to be friends with Arabs?

No.

No, I thought you wouldn't. Do Arabs come to your university, or--

Arabs study in all of the universities, especially in Haifa.

Yes, we met--

--a lot in Jerusalem, but also in ours, as well. In our musicology department, I can remember, I think, maybe, maybe two or three in the 23 years that I've been there.

And they don't cause any trouble?

No.

No.

Certainly these-- not in that sense, no. Lots of interesting-- one [BACKGROUND NOISES] I think it was when I was the chairman of the department from 1983 to '84, and I remember a man came from Nazareth and we accepted him. He passed the entrance examinations and so on.

But I had a talk with him and he said, you know, I think I'm not going to actually study. He was a teacher. And he said, it's because I just have no feeling for harmony in western music. It is not a part of it. It's just-- it doesn't exist at all.

I mean, you can't say that they have a lack of it, or, I mean, it's kind of conceptually and actually, it is not there. And he just felt that his lack of feeling for it, which he was incapable of developing, was such that he didn't see, really, the point. He couldn't in studying musicology where this dimension of harmony so absent in his life could only be artificially reproduced. And that was the reason that he--

We had an example-- similar examples in a different realm. The other day I went to a seminar on, well, all sorts of [? medieval ?] liturgy and so on. And there, it was general agreement that what we need in Christian churches is more silence, quiet. And--

Literal silence?

Silence, quiet, instead of this endless talking. This is so much talking. And we all--

Oh, at the time of services?

Yes.

Is there talking in services?

Well, I mean the prayers are so-- it's all predictable talk and so on.

Oh, I see. You're referring you're not referring to talking on the part of the congregants.

No, I do mean lots of-- the other day, I mean, what you get very often is a very good church, and Bach prelude is played, and people will talk in front of you. You know, that sort of-- anyhow, there was a general agreement we must promote silence. And there was a very nice middle-aged African who I think had some sort of position, and who he said-- he simply said what your student said. For us Africans, silence is insupportable. We can't be silent.

He said, it just simply doesn't belong to our culture.

Yes, of course. In some cultures, silence means an absence of life.

That's what he said.

Now, you know, in this portion of the missionary which is called [NON-ENGLISH], the Hands of the Fathers, there are many, many, many statements extolling the virtues of silence. And one day just for fun I went through my library, and of course, I've had history courses, and philosophy courses, and a medieval reader here and there, and so on. And I went just at random and I made a whole page of cross-cultural and cross-historical aphorisms dealing with the virtues of silence, just to be quiet.

And I remember once in my own doctoral examination there was a certain professor who I said to my thesis advisor, I said, you know, really-- he hardly said anything. And he said, well, it's his very good breeding.

[LAUGHTER]

He will maybe say something very concise and to the point, and otherwise he doesn't just talk.

Just talk.

And of course, there is a lot just talk, which there is a very important word. I have it. I've sort of just browsed through it a little bit, but by the rabbi who was known from the title of one of his works, the [NON-ENGLISH]. And he has one which is called [NON-ENGLISH], guarding speech. Guarding your speech.

And actually, if you go through the-- the confessional, the list of things that we say on Yom Kippur, oh, I guess there's at least 100 [NON-ENGLISH] for the sin of this, and this, and this, many, many, many have to do with speech. Many. Speech is certainly responsible for very much it's at the root of communication. And, of course, the misunderstanding or the jumping to conclusions about things which we say which are the cause of often a lot of unnecessary strife.

But Hitler would have been unthinkable without his devilish speech. Would you like some more tea before you go, do

you think?

Maybe. Let's close up shop here.

And well, I hope--

[MUSIC PLAYING]