

On Slavery

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Source:

The most devastating effect of slavery, ultimately, is that the slave internalizes the master's values and accepts the condition of slavery as his proper status. People who live in chronic conditions of poverty, hunger, and sickness tend to show similar patterns of acceptance and passivity. As with slaves, their deprivation deprives from their political and economic status and then becomes moral and psychological reality. It is this reality that was overthrown in the Exodus.—Irving Greenberg

We got used to standing in line at seven o'clock in the morning, at twelve noon, and again at seven o'clock in the evening. We stood in a long queue with a plate in our hand into which they ladled a little warmed-up water with a salty or a coffee flavor. Or else they gave us a few potatoes. We got used to sleeping without a bed, to saluting every uniform, not to walk on the sidewalks, and then again to walk on the sidewalks. We got used to undeserved slaps, blows, and executions. We got accustomed to seeing piled up coffins full of corpses, to seeing the sick amidst dirt and filth, and to seeing the helpless doctors. We got used to the fact that from time to time one thousand unhappy souls would come here, and that from time to time, another thousand unhappy souls would go away.—Peter Fischel, age 15, perished at Auschwitz, 1944