How did a 1942 Jew, hauled off under the whip of the German beast, retain a sense of chosenness? How could he feel part of G-d's anointed people, while he watched with his own eyes the denigration of the elders of a generation, the saints and the scholars?…

When we realized that we were the targets of the Germans just because we were Jews - that our Jewishness was being attacked - then our Jewish pride came to the fore

Jews whose faith was strong faced the events that developed with the vigor of the believer. I am not speaking of wonderworking rabbis or of grocers who secretly and humbly had mastered the Talmud and Kabala, but simple Jews whose faith in the Almighty was the core of their being. Such a Jew simply follows the dictates of the Torah as he knows best. And when he doesn't know, he approaches a Rabbi, whose authority and wider knowledge and accessibility to sources is recognized and relied upon.

And so, Jews approached me. Through the divine watchfulness of G-d, I survived and was able to return and forage the can of the questions and answers I had hidden away.

Right after the war I dug up my notes on the questions and my answers, and proceeded to examine the sources at greater length and fill out the answers. Only then did I begin to perceive the significance of these questions as a record of Jewish uniqueness. And I was awed by the privilege granted me by Providence to be the scribe who recorded these questions asked in the depths and the responses that emerged from the depths of misery and degradation, of suffering and death and of resurrection. Did our enemies, the Germans - many of them church going sons of churchgoing mothers and fathers - ask their priests and ministers how to care for the Jewish dead? Were they concerned to learn whether one may use clothes stolen from a dead Jew, or a curtain ripped from the ark where the Torah-scrolls are kept? Did they receive dispensation to bayonet pregnant mothers? But we Jews did inquire after food when forced to eat on a fast day. We wanted to know the correct form of the blessing a Jew says before going to his death.

The world at large may not understand this. But the greatness of the Jew can be seen in these very concerns. The enemy does not kill blindly, savagely, like a dog frothing at the mouth, but kills methodically, like a robot, measuring height, weight, years, setting aside plumbers and electricians while determining that doctors and nurse should die. The enemy robs and kills, and the Jew, knowing that he is being killed only because he is a Jew, sanctifies G-d in going to his death, wants to die with the correct words on his lips, because the Jew, who sanctifies every atom of life, sanctifies dying as well; and a martyr's death must be accompanied by a blessing that is correct.

What do you say to a Jew who is a Jew unto death? Can the modern Jew fathom it? Can the world fathom it? Can the German fathom it? Does one laugh perplexed? Does one gasp amazed? Because it is amazing, and at the same time it is a very basic question that requires an answer: What blessing do you recite when you are about to be martyred?

It is so elementary that tears are not enough.