



IMPRISONED IN AUSCHWITZ  
for two years, having eluded death  
by the narrowest of margins, the

man known as Ka-tzetnik 135633 survived the Holocaust to discover that survival alone would not end his torment. For over 30 years, through nightly dreams of terrifying intensity, the writer remained captive to the horrors of Auschwitz. Finally in 1976 he sought help from Professor Jan Bastiaans, the Dutch psychiatrist who first recognized Concentration Camp Syndrome and successfully treated camp survivors with a therapy involving doses of LSD. Shivitti is a memoir of that experience. MAPS has reprinted the Preface to the new edition of Shivitti with permission from the publisher.

## Shivitti: A Vision

Preface to the new edition by **Claudio Naranjo, M.D.**

WE HAVE HERE a little book of immense bearing, which might well be announced in terms similar to those chosen by a reviewer of the recent movie on the sinking of the Titanic. Just as in his review he observed that the moviegoer should not come to admire such things as camera work or even plot, but to grasp the enormity of the event that was reflected by the movie—here the reader should not look so much for literature, psychotherapy, or history as for the extremity of the experience of the holocaust.

Before all else we should be aware of the rarity of this document. Not only was it exceptional enough for the author to survive Auschwitz, but it is a rare thing for someone who has undergone such a descent into hell to be able to tell the story. Furthermore, I am sure that most human beings don't even succeed in being truly present to themselves before such horror, while here we have still another striking

exception: De-Nur is able to be a witness in retrospect because he was an exceptional witness of life at its worst, while it was happening. It is precisely to this that we may attribute his very survival—or more exactly, to the fact that he was able to keep the Shivitti (i.e. the reminder of the presence of God) always before him throughout his years of imprisonment.

Beyond all that, this is a more exceptional book than a simple memoir would have been. That had been accomplished already by De-Nur under his pseudonym (Ka-tzetnik 135633) in his earlier book *Salamandra*, driven by a sense of mission in reporting what he had lived. The present volume is, rather, a report on hell revisited, i.e. one on the experience of dealing again with his scarcely bearable memories in order to heal from them and so to regain a peace of mind after thirty years of sleeplessness and nightmares. As I write this I am reminded of what I once heard a South American shaman

say concerning courage. "There is the courage of ordinary warriors," he said, "who risk their lives in battle, and there is the greater courage required for the inner adventure of ingesting 'teaching plants' that are part of a healer's training." If it was already a heroic feat for De-Nur to have been able to survive physically through an exceptional spiritual aliveness, an additional heroism was involved in his willingness to return to Auschwitz decades later under the effect of LSD.

I consider it a great privilege that Mr. De-Nur has asked me to write this preface to his very remarkable book, and take pleasure in feeling that I am the right person for it. I not only know but feel great regard for the three persons involved in his narrative: De-Nur himself, his wife Eliyah (here Nike), and my colleague Dr. Bastiaans. Rather than commenting any further on a book that speaks for itself, I want to end this preface with some reflection on the deliberately ignored usefulness of LSD and other psychedelics in psychotherapy.

Having been one of the very few (along with Dr. Bastiaans and Dr. Grof) privileged to receive institutional support for clinical research in this field, I had occasion to draw the world's attention in the sixties to the extraordinary potential of substances that I then proposed to call feeling enhancers (now rebaptized empathogens) and fantasy enhancers (or oneirophrenics). Having had the opportunity to ascertain that these constituted something akin to psychological lubricants that make it possible to offer therapeutic help to some beyond the possibility of being reached effectively, I have naturally been sorry for the unfortunate way in which politics has interfered with the precious healing potential of psychedelics in psychotherapy. With the enlightened exception of the Netherlands and Switzerland, psychedelics are regarded today as dangerous drugs without any usefulness, and thus rendered useless through prohibition. I cannot help but feel that in times of global crisis when it becomes clear that our very survival is endangered by our obsolete patterns of relationship to self and others, and when our highest hope lies in the human factor, we allow ourselves to scorn such a powerful and timely therapeutic resource! It is true that some individuals are addiction prone and that

addiction is a sizeable social problem in our midst; yet it is no less true that addiction arises from improper drug use, and improper drug use is fostered by a social situation in which the constructive potential of drugs is thwarted.

I hope that the time comes when LSD and other therapeutically useful substances can be controlled (like morphine and the amphetamines) and yet put to good use by experts, and when schools arise for the transmission of expertise from the living few to a new generation of practitioners. Because of this I hope that this book not only conveys De-Nur's spiritual accomplishment and human understanding, but also speeds up the recognition of a form of psychotherapy that could be helping many if it were not for a questionable prohibitionism that is part of an excessively tough minded and puritanical Establishment. I consider this prohibitionism part of a truly evil aspect of our society, and I do not see great difference between the mind-set of those who persecuted Jews at the time of World War II and that of those who invoke morality to wage today's "war on drugs." Today, as ever, the foremost characteristic of the Adversary is that of pointing away from himself to say "there is the Devil!"

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Gateways Books and Tapes has republished a paperback edition of *Shivitti: A Vision*. *Shivitti* was first published in Israel in 1987, and then translated into English and published in the United States by Harper & Row in 1989. It has been out of print for several years.

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