

A Sad Ceremony

By Ehud Neor

Yesterday was Holocaust Memorial Day in Israel. For the first time since I can remember, I did not attend a local ceremony in person, rather I stayed at home and watched the official ceremony streaming on the internet. It was one of the saddest things that I have ever seen in my life.

The Holocaust is a black hole in Jewish history. No light escaped from it. An entire civilization, that of Yiddish-speaking central and eastern Europe, disappeared as if it never existed. Though some Jews survived, they were shells of their former selves, many the only remnant of large extended families. Some of these survivors reached Israel, where they were met with little understanding and less sympathy, as in the eyes of Israelis they represented the old type of Jew that was so impotent as to allow himself to be scurried off to the gas chambers without resistance. As a result, the survivors retreated into themselves and refused to speak about their experiences for the following twenty years.



Over time, and with the encouragement of their grown children, the stories emerged. They were not uplifting stories. The only “light” to be found in these stories was in the incredible fact that somehow,

the survivor had survived. With the warming of hearts towards

the survivors, Israel needed a way to incorporate these stories into the Zionist narrative. That was not going to be easy. A nation, especially a young nation, needs heroic narratives to shore-up the national will. With the birth of grandchildren and great-grandchildren to the survivors, a worthy narrative presented itself. The survivors' heroism was in their choice to embrace life and not succumb to the incessant calls of their ever-present nightmares. This is a story that could stand proudly next to the stories of the convoys attempting to bring supplies to a besieged Jerusalem during the War of Independence.

Holocaust Remembrance Day became Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day. Those of us lucky enough to have known survivors embraced—and embrace—the conjunction fully, as we embrace the survivors themselves and as we embrace the memory of the Jews lost to the Holocaust.

This year, though, the entire edifice was in danger of crumbling. The eyes of the survivors on the stage, there to light the memorial torches, were not the eyes of heroes. No, this year they were the eyes of the survivors of old, the eyes that had peered into the black hole and turned away scarred forever, eyes thus able only to reflect a great emptiness, even as they looked upon their own newborn babe. What brought this great reversal to pass? The survivors on the stage bravely went through the proper motions, but after the torch-lighting, there they stood, the saddest group of Jews in the Universe.

To understand this, we need to start with General Dwight D. Eisenhower. When the US army liberated Ohrdruf concentration camp, Eisenhower made a visit.

“The things I saw beggar description.... I made the visit deliberately in order to be in a position to give firsthand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to

‘propaganda.’”

–[General Dwight D. Eisenhower](#), in a letter to Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall, April 15, 1945

Eisenhower promptly arranged visits by reporters, dignitaries, and Congressmen to “bear witness.”

The idea was to document the Holocaust in such a way that it could never be denied. The process that began in that camp at the behest of an outraged Gentile developed into an enormous literature of the Holocaust, non-fiction and fiction alike, that seems to have culminated in Spielberg’s Holocaust Testimony Archive, a huge accomplishment in filming first-person testimonies.

That should have been enough to seal the lid on any attempt to deny what was perpetrated against the Jews of Europe. Today we know that it was not enough, and that there can never be enough evidence to fend off the ever-renewing waves of Antisemitic Holocaust denial. This is a fact. A fact the first to understand the significance of were the few remaining survivors in the world. Thinking that Antisemitism of the dangerous type (is there any other type?) was confined now to autocratic Arab regimes ruling over failed Arab states, they may have understood that the renewed Antisemitism in Europe of the past twenty years was a product of the massive influx of Arabs from those self-same states. They were correct in this assumption.

But what were the survivors to make of the crass, debased Antisemitism that once again reared its ugly head in of all places the *Goldene Medine*, the United States of America? They are all well into their nineties now, having survived the Holocaust as children. Do they understand “social media?” Did they know what (at the time) a “tweet” was? More to the point, what could they make of a “Rapper,” and the “music” that made him famous, to the extent that he had millions of followers on

his social media? All those followers listened to his Antisemitic rants and propagated them on down the line. To whom? To siblings, friends, and worst of all, to children. This would be enough to quell the bright outlook of a survivor, but worse was to come.

What came was enough to make that righteous Gentile Eisenhower roll over in his grave. This time, on Oct. 7, the perpetrators themselves documented their atrocities. They live-streamed rape, torture and murder and their glee in doing so. Social media was flooded with a new category of media: the Yid snuff film. In a grotesque mirror image of the siblings imbibing of that evil rapper's Antisemitism, these films recorded hundreds of Jewish parents, siblings, friends, and children on the receiving end of cruelty that hasn't been seen since the Holocaust. Before the Jewish people could process what had happened, the denials came far and wide, unapologetically, in the face of overwhelming evidence supplied by the evil monsters themselves.

This is what brought that "Holocaust stare" back into the eyes of the survivors lighting the memorial torches. Judge for yourselves. I have provided the link to the ceremony below. The torch lighting begins at 1:03:45. The survivors' stories are uplifting but look at their eyes after they light the torches. Take special notice of the last torch lighter, Gad Fartouk, who, before lighting insisted on proclaiming something to those present, things that the microphone did not pick up at 1:25. Trying to read his lips, I think that at one point he said, "Am Israel Chai!" meaning: "The People of Israel Live!" But he was saying other things too. It was obviously unscripted, and his caregiver (son?) lost patience and tried to force Gad's arm down to light the torch. Gad did not give up. He said a few things more, then allowed his hand to be guided to light the memorial flame.

His words will be reported if they have not been already. Until then, I will provide my own script:

“It’s happening again! Nothing has changed! Forces of evil want to murder the Jews. And the world will stand by again! Beware fellow Jews! It is happening again!”

[Link to clip.](#)