

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

TESAVEH/ZACHOR

Haftarah: Shemuel I 15:1-34

FEBRUARY 22-23, 2018 9 ADAR 5778

Shabbat Zachor - This Shabbat, we will read an extra portion of Torah which commands us to remember what Amalek did to us and our obligation to wipe him out. All men are required to hear this special reading and even women should try to fulfill this obligation.

Ta'anit Esther will be on Wednesday, February 28. Purim will be celebrated on Thursday, March 1

IN MEMORY OF Ezra Nouri Dayan

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EDITORS NOTES

A Shabbat to Remember!

If you're the type of guy who ever once in a while finds himself a bit too tired on Saturday morning and sometimes rolls over one to many times and suddenly it's too late to catch the minyan, please keep in mind that this Shabbat you must go to the Synagogue!

There is a misvah in the Torah to remember Amalek and his descendants and to orally recall their wickedness. We are to tell our children in each generation what the people of Amalek did to us during our departure from Egypt. We read: "Zachor Et Asher Asah Lecha Amalek BaDerech BeSetchem MiMitrayim" - "Remember what Amalek did to you on your way out of Egypt! (Devarim 25)" To properly fulfill this commandment, the Rabbis have set a public reading of this passage from a Torah scroll, once every year, on the Shabbat which precedes Purim – so that the 'wiping-out' of Amalek might be adjacent to the 'wiping-out' of Haman, the latter being a descendant of Amalek. Because of this reading, this Shabbat is called, Shabbat Zachor (Remember).

This idea of remembering goes beyond the special Maftir. We read this week the portion Tesaveh and what's unique about this portion is that something or rather someone is glaringly missing. From the birth of Moses is the first portion of the book of Shemot through the book of Bamidbar and in almost the entire book of Devarim, each portion contains the name of Moses, with the exception of this perasha. We begin with the words VeAtah TeSaveh and you should command. The rabbis explain that after the

sin of the golden calf when Moses pleads for forgiveness and G-d wishes to wipe out all the people and replace the nation with a new nation descended from Moses, Moshe not only refuses, he utters the statement, MeCheni Nah MeSifrecha – Wipe me from your Book which in essence is to be wiped from all existence. And although Hashem takes back his threat and does not destroy the people, we are told that the words of the righteous create reality. We remember when Jacob confronted by his father in law Laban curses the one who stole Laban's small idol. Jacob didn't realize it was Rachel who took them and his curse has consequences as we see a short time later when the young Rachel dies in childbirth. In the same way Moshe created a reality to wipe himself from the Torah, some say miSifrech from you sefer Kaf or twentieth book which is Tesaveh.

But perhaps the fact that Moshe is missing from the portion reminds us that even when Moshe is missing, he is still there. And given that today is the 7th of Adar and the day Moshe left the world and this date usually falls within the time frame of this Perasha, then his absence is cause to remember.

There are a number of statements in the Talmud regarding memory.

Rabbi Yochanan said: Just as the olive causes the forgetting of seventy years of Torah-study; similarly, olive-oil restores seventy years of Torah-study. I always wondered if there was some chemical compound within an olive that affected our brain and caused it to forget. And on the other side, although I often hear from my mom that one who wishes to preserve their memory should be sure to take vitamin B-12, ginkgo biloba, and omega-3, perhaps all those should be replaced with a spoonful of olive oil. What did Rabbi Yochanan wish to teach us?

I think the answer to this question lies in another statement in the Talmud. We are told that when Moses dies three thousand halachot – Jewish laws – were forgotten during the period of mourning. And one has to ask with Moses gone, who will teach

these laws again. Rabbi Abahu said: Nevertheless, they were restored by Otniel ben Kenaz, by means of his "pilpul" (erudition). Similarly, we find elsewhere in the Gemara that Rabbi Chanina claims: if, chas v'shalom, Torah were to be forgotten from Yisrael, I would restore it through my "pilpul" (expositions and analyses).

Returning to the olive, perhaps we can suggest that just as the olive causes the forgetting of seventy years of Torah-study—the olive symbolizes the study of Torah without any exertion; studied in this manner, the Torah is not retained, it is forgotten. As the saying goes, easy come, easy go! However: "Similarly, olive-oil restores seventy years of Torah-study"—because olive oil which is pressed out of the olive symbolizes a person's exertion and toil in his Torah study utilizing the power of "pilpul"; he pounds the topics thoroughly, tears them apart and reconstructs them, asks questions and answers them, until the subject matter is as clear as pure olive oil.

There is much more to be said on the subject and I invite you to look at the Talmud's statement from Hillel that there is no comparison between the tzaddik who reviews his studies one hundred times and the one who reviews his studies one hundred and one times. What is the essence of 101? Why are there 101 pesukim in the portion without Moses name? How does 101 relate to the angel of memory Michael? What so wrong if we stop at 100? How does that relate to the Satan? And what about the name Amalek which can be broken into AMAL Kuf or the struggle to 100? Something to discuss with your local Rabbi this Shabbat.

One can relate Memory to the phrase, "Never Forget". Elie Wiesel warned years ago, to forget a holocaust is to kill twice." Elie Wiesel recalled the eminent historian Simon Dubnow, who over and over implored his fellow inhabitants in the Riga ghetto: "Yiddin, schreibt un farschreibt" — "Jews, write it all down." And we have made an effort to do that, to record, document and preserve.

And with a mandate to Remember and to Never Forget, we are all the more so shocked and bothered by the statements coming out of Poland. People often try to rewrite history, but we cannot allow it.

I applaud State Assemblyman Dov Hikind who has joined a small but growing number of Jewish organizations who are urging Jews not to travel to Poland. He is asking the International March of the Living to suspend its trips to Poland, following the

Polish government's recent adoption of a law that makes it a crime to refer to "Polish death camps" or to refer to Polish complicity in the Holocaust.

Steve Lipman writes this week: In a letter to Shmuel Rosenman, chairman of the organization that brings groups of high school students to Poland for an itinerary that largely features visits to concentration camps and other sites connected with the Shoah, Hikind said the program "can make an even greater difference this year by suspending its trip."

"Seeing Poland's government attempt to whitewash its role in the murder of innocent men, women and children via their despicable Holocaust Denial Law has had a chilling effect on all of us who understand what really occurred in Poland — both before, during and after the war," Hiking wrote."

While many Holocaust survivors speak of a climate of anti-Semitism that for decades characterized relations between Jews in Poland and their non-Jewish neighbors, historians point out that the concentration camps on Polish soil were built and administered by Nazi Germany.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center has indicated that it is considering a limited travel ban on Poland, and Temple Sholom in Scotch Plains, N.J., has removed Poland from the itinerary of its 2018 confirmation class Jewish heritage trip.

"Not visiting the concentration camps where innocent souls were murdered by the Nazis – many after being turned over by their Polish neighbors – will be a statement heard around the world," Hikind said. "Holding back the 12,000 [March of the Living] travelers who spend their money in Poland is a statement that will not be ignored.

I have included an article by a friend Rabbi Zev Friedman via the Jewish Voice which follows

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

Why You Should Not Pay for Your Son or Daughter to Go to Poland - Rabbi Zev Friedman

Approximately 3 million Jews, 90% of Polish Jewry were murdered during WWII on Polish soil. The majority of them perished in concentration camps such as Auschwitz, Sobibor, Majdanek, Chelmno, Plaszow, Belzec and Treblinka. Others were killed in killing pits after having dug their own graves. In addition to Polish Jews, more than 500,000 other Jews were killed in (what used to be called) Polish concentration camps. Many believe that the major killing camps were specifically located in Poland because it was fertile ground for anti-Semitism and the murder of Jews would be readily accepted and not provoke protestations.

In sharp contrast, Bulgaria which actually joined the Nazi axis in 1941, did not deport its Jewish population which numbered 50,000 because government officials were courageous enough to rebel against pro Nazi leadership which had taken over the country. Dimitar Peshev, a former Bulgarian minister of justice was recognized as righteous among the nations for his role in blocking the deportation of 48,000 Bulgarian Jews; saving them from certain death.

Recently, the Polish government passed a law stating that "whoever accuses publicly and against the facts, the Polish nation, or the Polish state, of being responsible or complicit in the Nazi crimes committed by the third German Reich shall be subject to a fine or penalty of imprisonment up to three years." Israel, the United States, France and others have characterized this law as a sordid attempt to white wash the Holocaust and change history.

Poland alleges that they were not involved in the persecution of Jews during World War II. However, it has yet to explain the following inconvenient truths:

Prior to World War II thousands of Polish Jews took up temporary residence in Germany and Austria (later annexed by Germany) with the rise of the Nazis in 1939.

Many Jews chose to return to their homes and families in Poland. In order to prevent the Jews from coming back to Poland, the Polish government passed a law which revoked the citizenship of people that did not renew their passports in 1938! The New York Times reported that this law specifically targeted the Jewish population and was "designed mainly to prevent their return." Approximately 50,000 Jews were impacted by this anti-Semitic law. The New York Times continued to report on the situation with

headlines, "Poland bars Jews deported by Reich." We all know the fate of the Jews that were in the hands of the Germans.

In July of 1941, the Polish residents of the town of Jedwabne, turned on their Jewish neighbors massacring 1500 Jews, including those that they herded into a barn and burned their Jewish neighbors alive.

According to Jan Gross, professor of history at Princeton University, Polish citizens during World War II were responsible for the deaths of thousands of Jews; some accounts put this number at over 100,000.

Despite the fact that some Jews were saved by Poles who received money in return for safekeeping, there were many incidents where the Polish farmers took the money and murdered their "guests." In countless other cases the Polish would be saviors who turned in the Jews who trusted them and handed them over to the Nazis.

Those few who were fortunate to survive the holocaust often times returned to their hometown to look for any surviving relatives. On July 4, 1946 Polish anti-Semites massacred over 40 survivors of concentration camps who had returned to the city of Kielce.

Poland appropriated Jewish property of families that were persecuted during the Holocaust. According to a report issued by the Polish government in 2012, Poland had over \$10 billion of Jewish property in its hands. By all accounts they have refused to return the stolen property to the rightful heirs, saying that the "process takes time." Case in point is the Hotel Lenart which advertises on its website that it is located on the side of the brick factory which is formally owned by the Friedman family (my grandparents).

Hotel Lenart may be proud of its unique history. Today's multi-function building was arranged in lieu of an old Wieliczka brick factory. Apart from the Salt Mine, the brick factory used to be on the key industrial sites at Wieliczka from 1902 almost to the end of the 20th century. Its founder – Elias Hirsch Friedmann – owned also a mill and a saw mill which together with the brick factory constituted the Friedmann Works. After World War Two, the brick factory was taken over by the Zupy Krakowskie (Cracow's Saltworks) Enterprise; nevertheless, the Brick Factory continued to thrive, like in the 1970s when the Factory was, in turn, made part of Terenowe Zakłady Ceramiki Budowlanej (Local Building Ceramics Factory). For more than a century, there were manufactured bricks, roof tiles and drain pipes.

Despite all of the above, the current Polish government has passed legislation to outlaw anyone from speaking about the collaboration of Poles in the persecution of the Jews during the Holocaust.

The implications of law are clear. If one were to express the opinion of Polish complicity during World War II in promoting attacks on Jews, that individual will be subject to a three-year jail sentence.

Over a quarter of a million participants from many countries have participated in the March of the Living visiting concentration camps in Poland and later traveling to Israel. Undoubtedly, this is an emotional and memorable experience for all that March. However, it also provides the Polish government with millions of tourist dollars. Money is spent on airfare, hotels, food, tour guides, buses, taxes, etc.

In light of Polish anti-Semitism in the past and in light of their attempt to whitewash the Holocaust and change history, why are Jewish Tours promoting trips to Poland?

Just this week the Polish Prime Minister ,Mateusz Morawiecki accused the Jews of being perpetrators of the Holocaust!!

Czechoslovakia, which is currently a staunch supporter of Israel, would be an ideal alternative for the March of the Living. Participants could be taken to Theresienstadt, which played a key role in the Nazis implementation of the Holocaust. Approximately 33,000 Jews were murdered there and 100,000 deported from there to Auschwitz and other killing camps. Participants can also see the ancient Pinkas synagogue in Prague which is inscribed with the names of 80,000 Jews who died in the Holocaust. The Charles Bridge in town which contains a crucifix with Hebrew inscriptions is an important historical reminder of anti-Semitism in Europe.

Efforts by governments around the world to push Poland to change this despicable law will fall on deaf ears as long as Jews continue to visit their country despite their attempts to rewrite history.

Poland has over \$10 billion of Jewish money...why give them another zloty?

Must Israel do America's dirty work? | JNS.org

Whenever Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu uses props for his speeches, his critics pounce. That's why some of his usual detractors—both at home and abroad—could barely contain their contempt for his decision to wave a piece of debris from an Iranian drone that violated Israeli airspace while speaking about the threat from the Islamist regime at the Munich Security Conference on Sunday. For the legion of Netanyahu critics in both the Israeli and the international press, the drone will go down alongside the cartoon bomb picture he used at the United Nations in 2012, when trying to illustrate the Iranian nuclear threat as another example of the prime minister's penchant for drama and hyperbole.

Critics dismissed the Israeli leader's attempt to focus the world on Iran's use of Syria as a military base and its aggression. Instead, they saw his rhetoric as intended primarily for domestic consumption. But while politics is part of anything politicians do, there was more to unpack here than Netanyahu's rivalry with his right-wing coalition partners or an attempt to distract Israelis from the corruption charges that have been brought against him by the police.

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Far from concealing his true motive, Netanyahu later admitted that the main audience for whom the speech had been intended was neither in Israel nor Iran. The one person that he hoped would be listening was the chief of the White House. The only question was whether President Donald Trump was paying attention to a warning that if the United States wasn't prepared to assert itself, Israel was more than prepared to do. As it has often done in the past, the Jewish state is willing to take on America's dirty work. Iran's decision to violate Israeli air space set off a chain of events that inflicted serious damage on Iranian forces and Syrian anti-aircraft installations, even though it also led to the shooting down of an Israeli air-force jet. But while Israel's enemies got the worst of that exchange, there was also little doubt that the attempt to warn Russia, Syria, Iran and Hezbollah of the limits of the Jewish state's patience was not a complete success.

In the wake of Iran's intervention in the Syrian civil war, Israel now faces powerful foes in the north as the Hezbollah-dominated Lebanon and the Syrian regime of Bashar Assad—and its Iranian, Hezbollah and Russian allies—remain essentially unchallenged as they mop up the last remnants of the rebellion against Damascus. Israel may hope that Russia has the will to restrain the actions of its Iranian partners.

But as Iran just proved, its ability to exert military pressure on Israel has greatly increased. Iran's enhanced strategic position cannot be ignored. The financial and diplomatic assets it acquired via the nuclear deal it signed with the West, as well as the certainty that it will eventually be able to get the bomb that the pact was supposed to stop it from obtaining, creates a long-term threat that Israel can't avert on its own. Combine that with Tehran's ability to start a two-front war in the north via Lebanon and Syria, and you have a volatile situation in which even a still powerful Israel no longer calls all the shots.

What is the United States doing about any of this?

The short answer: nothing.

President Trump still occasionally talks tough about Iran but, as Reuters reported yesterday, the State Department is already watering down his demands for America's European allies to join him in an attempt to fix the Iran deal or watch the U.S. re-impose sanctions on Iran. The sunset clauses in the deal must be ended, while restrictions on missile development and a more intrusive inspection regime must be imposed. But the State Department seems to be aiming at creating an amorphous blueprint for consultations that will allow the U.S. president to pretend that he is working on these goals without actually making any progress.

What has this to do with the fighting along Israel's northern border?

The short answer: everything.

Though Trump deserves credit for helping to achieve a victory over ISIS in Iraq and Eastern Syria, which eluded the Obama administration, he also appears content to continue his predecessor's policy of letting Russia control what is happening elsewhere in that country. Which means that for all of his bluster about Iran, its power is growing on his watch as much as it did under Obama.

While no one expects or wants U.S. forces to directly engage the Iranians in Syria, Trump can do Tehran more damage by announcing a firm date for more sanctions on Iran, in addition to a commitment to punish anyone who does business with the regime unless it renegotiates the nuclear deal. That would give the Europeans a stark choice between doing business with Iran or with the United States.

Is Trump listening to Netanyahu? Given the president's lack of interest in serious policy discussions and the distractions posed by other issues, the answer is probably not.

Waving the drone debris was a warning to America that if it doesn't act, then Israel will.

Russia's involvement in this problem complicates Israel's options. But no matter what Moscow says, the Israelis aren't likely to tolerate Iran consolidating its hold on parts of Syria. All of which means that a Trump administration that has been asleep at the

wheel on Syria and Iran had better wake up soon before the situation deteriorates.

Instead of mocking Netanyahu's props, serious observers should be seconding his counsel that Trump must make it clear to Russian President Vladimir Putin that he won't put up with Iran turning Syria into a base from which it can attack Israel. And that it's time to change the nuclear deal. Trump has the leverage to make these demands stick, if only he will use it. The alternative isn't more empty diplomacy. It's letting a bad situation turn into something far worse.

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Summary of the Perasha Nathan Dweck

Purim is special day where we can really strengthen our emunah and trust in Hashem. We read the story of the megilah and how despite how grim things looked Hashem was able to turn things around in an instant. We dress up to show that things are not always as they seem. While it looked like the Jews were going to be killed Hashem was watching over us and orchestrating events from behind the scenes to save us. It is a time of true happiness recognizing that we have a kind father that is constantly looking out for us, even in the darkest and bleakest of times. And that recognition helps give us emunah that Hashem loves us and will continue to take care of us in the future. And this is the happiness of Purim. This is what we should be thinking and feeling as we hear the megilah, as we share mishloach manot, as we eat, drink, and dance. We are celebrating the kindnesses of Hashem. That he loves us and is taking care of us. And that is why we are happy! May we all merit true happiness this Purim and a growth in emunah that will last us throughout the year!

Tesaveh - A description of the clothing of the Kohen

- 1- Hashem tells Moshe to make priestly clothing for Aharon. A description of the efod (the apron).
- 2- A description of the hoshen mishpat (the breastplate).
- 3- A description of the me'iyil (the robe) and the tsits (headplate).
- 4- Hashem describes to Moshe the process of inaugurating Aharon and his sons as kohanim (7 days of korbanot, anointing oil and wearing the special clothes)
- 5- Hashem describes to Moshe the process of inaugurating Aharon and his sons as kohanim

- 6- A description of the olat tamid (the daily olah offering)
 7- A description of the golden mizbeyach (which the incense was brought on)

FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

We celebrate many holidays throughout the year, but Purim seems to have a special place in our hearts. There seems to be a higher level of happiness and brotherhood, among people of all ages, than we see on the other holidays. The commentaries point out that happiness was a major factor in the miracle of Purim. As we read in the megillah, Queen Esther invited Ahashverosh and Haman to a party in order to try to save the Jewish people. However, when the king asked her to make her request, she simply invited both of them to another party the following day. Only at the second party did she ask the king to save the Jewish people. Why did Esther invite them to a second party rather than plead for the Jewish nation right away?

By the first party, the pasuk says that Haman was "happy and in good spirits." Esther understood, as our Sages teach us, that when a person is happy, he is more likely to be successful in his endeavors. So she delayed her request for a day hoping that his mood would change. As we know, the next day Haman was forced to parade Mordechai in public and give him tremendous honor, and Haman was greatly humiliated. When he then came to the second party, he was in low spirits, and Esther was then able to defeat him.

Perhaps that is why Purim is such a joyous holiday. We learned from the story of Purim that a person's level of happiness can affect his level of success. So the Rabbis instituted special misvot on this day to promote happiness, like mishloach manot and matanot la'ebyonim to help us internalize this lesson. We should take a few minutes on this special day to think about all that we have to be happy about, and celebrate! Baruch Hashem, we have so much blessing in our lives, but sometimes we lose focus. Let's take the happiness from Purim and carry it over to the rest of the year, and thereby generate more success and blessing in our lives.

Shabbat Shalom and Happy Purim.
 Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR
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 Our Protection from Amalek

On Shabbat Zachor, we read the final three verses in Parashat Ki-Teseh which command us to remember

the unprovoked attack launched against our ancestors when they left Egypt by the nation of Amalek. This attack occurred in a place called Refidim, and the Sages teach us that this location was so named because while Beneh Yisrael were there, "Rafu Yedechem Min Ha'Torah"— they became lax in their engagement in Torah study. It was on account of this laxity, we are taught, that G-d brought upon us the vicious attack of Amalek.

In commanding us to remember this incident, G-d instructs, "Remember what Amalek did to you." Despite the fact that this unfortunate incident was our own doing, a result of our failure to properly devote ourselves to Torah, G-d nevertheless describes the war as something brought upon us by Amalek, rather than something we brought upon ourselves. One Rabbi compared this to a king who had a close friend whom he trusted and regarded very highly. The friend, however, proved unworthy of this trust, and one night tried to break into the palace. The guard dogs immediately began to bark loudly, chasing the man away. The king heard about the incident, and summoned his friend to the palace.

"I'm really sorry about those dogs," he said. "It's terrible the way they frightened you. They should never have done that."

Although it was obviously the man's fault that the dogs attacked him, the king, out of his unconditional love for his friend, focused on the dogs' aggressiveness rather than the friend's grave breach of trust.

Similarly, Amalek's assault Beneh Yisrael was because of our "breach," due to our failure to properly devote ourselves to Torah. Yet, in speaking about this incident G-d begins by focusing not on our failure, but on the brutality of Amalek. This expresses just how much G-d loves and cares for His people, how even in our times of failure He wishes for our wellbeing and looks angrily upon those who oppress us.

In the next verse, however, G-d indeed draws our attention to the cause of Amalek's attack. He describes how at the time of this attack Beneh Yisrael were "tired and weary, and not G-d-fearing." Rashi explains the phrase "and not G-d-fearing" as referring to Amalek, but according to the Or Ha'haim, it refers to Beneh Yisrael's condition at that time. Because they were "tired and weary"— lax and apathetic toward Torah study – their Yir'at Shamaim declined. Torah study is what keeps us alert and sensitive to our religious duties, and thus when our devotion to learning is lacking, so is our overall devotion to G-d.

And when this happens, we become vulnerable to "Amalek," to the many adversaries that threaten us and seek to perpetrate evil against us.

This is the fundamental message of Shabbat Zachor – the importance of Torah learning as our source of protection against Amalek and our other foes. As long as we remain committed and dedicated to Torah study, our enemies are powerless against us. As we recite at the Seder, "Ve'hi She'ameda La'abotenu" – it, the Torah, is what has stood in protection of our people throughout the generations.

Particularly in our day and age, when enemies of the Jewish people pose such a grave threat to our existence both in Israel and around the world, we must heed the reminder of "Zachor," the warning of "Rafu Yedechem Min Ha'Torah." When we are "tired and weary," when we do not approach Torah study with the vigor and intensity it demands, then we become vulnerable, as we lose our single most important source of protection and defense.

**VICTOR BIBI
SOD HAPARASHA**

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**Rabbi Wein
MY ORCHID PLANT**

Among my many failings is the fact that I do not have a green thumb. Plants and I do not agree and, in fact, many times I feel that the plants that I have in my home are just downright hostile to me. The care of these plants and the reason that they have survived so long has always been due to the distaff side of my home. I very much enjoy flowers and plants and I see in them some of the bountiful goodness of the pleasures that the Lord has arranged for humans in this world.

So I persist in watering and caring for the plants in my house in spite of my bumbling efforts to keep them sprightly or at least alive. The only exception to this seemingly endless tale of frustration is the orchid plants that I have in my house. They require very little care and that is what they receive. Their flowers are absolutely magnificent and their presence has a soothing effect on my rabbinic nerves that sometimes become frustrated and jangled.

And the greatest thing about orchid plants is the fact that after they shed their flowers after a month or two they do not die but remain dormant, sometimes for more than a year, and then suddenly revive

themselves and begin to produce the bulbs that will then produce their beautiful flowers.

I love to watch this process for it gives me a sense of revival and resilience. There is a great human lesson to be learned from the orchid plant and I am grateful to have that opportunity. The Torah itself indicates that humans have much to learn from nature – both the animal and plant kingdoms – and that only a fool would ignore these lessons built into God's creation.

I have had an orchid plant in my home that has been dormant for well over a year. About a month ago, the person that helps clean and keep my house orderly proposed that I dispose of this plant since it obviously was no longer going to revive itself and produce flowers. I told her that this plant had done so previously and that I would hang onto it, if for no other reason than a sentimental one.

The plant must've heard the warning that it was on a very short leash and, beginning two weeks ago, it began to wake up. It now has suddenly sprouted bulbs and just before Shabbat it gave birth to the first beautiful orchid flower. I was deeply touched by the event for it highlighted to me the continuity of life, which is one of the basic values of Judaism and of its Torah.

We all pass through difficult and sad times. We all, in the words of Proverbs, "fall seven times." But we are commanded to rise again to continue, for the challenges and difficulties of life are inescapable. The strength and resilience that the Lord built into human beings must be exploited by continuing to do acts of kindness, mercy and justice. Watching my orchid plant bloom again brought home to me this attitude... a mere flower served as both a great challenge but also a comfort.

I realize that even orchid plants do not bloom forever. All things in this world are finite and that applies to work with plants as it does to humans and other creatures. This realization however does not dampen my enthusiasm at seeing my orchid plant once again blossom and give forth flowers. The plant does not seem to be overly concerned about its ultimate future and demise. Meanwhile it does what it is supposed to do – produce beautiful flowers so that the human beings can have enjoyment.

That is also a great lesson to humans who are haunted by our sense of mortality and finiteness. In Proverbs again, King Solomon in describing the great woman of valor, states that "she is able to laugh even to the last day." We do not see anything humorous about the last day. But the deeper meaning is that

while we have not yet arrived at the last day, we have to pursue our mission and task in life with enthusiasm and joy and not with a sense of doom and foreboding.

The gift of life and resilience that the Lord has planted within us is what makes life magical and gives it a whiff of eternity. I am very grateful to my orchid plant for having taught me so many important lessons.

Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks Crushed for the Light

There are lives that are lessons. The late Henry Knobil's was one. He was born in Vienna in 1932. His father had come there in the 1920s to escape the rising tide of antisemitism in Poland, but like Jacob fleeing from Esau to Laban, he found that he had fled one danger only to arrive at another.

After the Anschluss and Kristallnacht it became clear that, if the family were to survive, they had to leave. They arrived in Britain in 1939, just weeks before their fate would have been sealed had they stayed. Henry grew up in Nottingham, in the Midlands. There he studied textiles, and after his army service went to work for one of the great British companies, eventually starting his own highly successful textile business.

He was a passionate, believing Jew and loved everything about Judaism. He and his wife Renata were a model couple, active in synagogue life, always inviting guests to their home for Shabbat or the festivals. I came to know Henry because he believed in giving back to the community, not only in money but also in time and energy and leadership. He became the chairperson of many Jewish organisations including the national Israel (UJIA) appeal, British Friends of Bar Ilan University, the Jewish Marriage Council, the British-Israel Chamber of Commerce and the Western Marble Arch Synagogue.

He loved learning and teaching Torah. He was a fine raconteur with an endless supply of jokes, and regularly used his humour to bring "laughter therapy" to cancer patients, Holocaust survivors and the residents of Jewish Care homes. Blessed with three children and many grandchildren, he had retired and was looking forward, with Renata, to a serene last chapter in a long and good life.

Then, seven years ago, he came back from morning service in the synagogue to find that Renata had suffered a devastating stroke. For a while her life

hung in the balance. She survived, but their whole life now had to change. They gave up their magnificent apartment in the centre of town to a place with easier wheelchair access. Henry became Renata's constant carer and life support. He was with her day and night, attentive to her every need.

The transformation was astonishing. Before, he had been a strong-willed businessman and communal leader. Now he became a nurse, radiating gentleness and concern. His love for Renata and hers for him bathed the two of them in a kind of radiance that was moving and humbling. And though he might, like Job, have stormed the gates of heaven to know why this had happened to them, he did the opposite. He thanked God daily for all the blessings they had enjoyed. He never complained, never doubted, never wavered in his faith.

Then, a year ago, he was diagnosed with an inoperable condition. He had, and knew he had, only a short time to live. What he did then was a supreme act of will. He sought one thing: to be given the grace to live as long as Renata did, so that she would never find herself alone. Three months ago, as I write these words, Renata died. Shortly thereafter, Henry joined her. "Beloved and pleasant in their lives, and in their death undivided." [1] Rarely have I seen such love in adversity.

In an earlier Covenant and Conversation, I wrote about the power of art to turn pain into beauty. Henry taught us about the power of faith to turn pain into chessed, loving-kindness. Faith was at the very heart of what he stood for. He believed that God had spared him from Hitler for a purpose. He had given Henry business success for a purpose also. I never heard him attribute any of his achievements to himself. For whatever went well, he thanked God. For whatever did not go well, the question he asked was simply: what does God want me to learn from this? What, now that this has happened, does He want me to do? That mindset had carried him through the good years with humility. Now it carried him through the painful years with courage.

Our parsha begins with the words: "Command the Israelites to bring you clear olive oil, crushed for the light, so that the lamp may always burn" (Ex. 27:20). The sages drew a comparison between the olive and the Jewish people. "Rabbi Joshua ben Levi asked, why is Israel compared to an olive? Just as an olive is first bitter, then sweet, so Israel suffers in the present but great good is stored up for them in the time to come. And just as the olive only yields its oil by being crushed → as it is written, 'clear olive oil, crushed for the light' – so Israel fulfils [its full potential

in] the Torah only when it is pressed by suffering.”[2]

The oil was, of course, for the menorah, whose perpetual light – first in the Sanctuary, then in the Temple, and now that we have no Temple, the more mystical light that shines from every holy place, life and deed – symbolises the Divine light that floods the universe for those who see it through the eyes of faith. To produce this light, something has to be crushed. And here lies the life-changing lesson.

Suffering is bad. Judaism makes no attempt to hide this fact. The Talmud gives an account of various sages who fell ill. When asked, “Are your sufferings precious to you?” they replied, “Neither they nor their reward.”[3] When they befall us or someone close to us, they can lead us to despair. Alternatively, we can respond stoically. We can practice the attribute of *gevurah*, strength in adversity. But there is a third possibility. We can respond as Henry responded, with compassion, kindness and love. We can become like the olive which, when crushed, produces the pure oil that fuels the light of holiness.

When bad things happen to good people, our faith is challenged. That is a natural response, not a heretical one. Abraham asked, “Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?” Moses asked, “Why have You done harm to this people?” Yet in the end, the wrong question to ask is, “Why has this happened?” We will never know. We are not God, nor should we aspire to be. The right question is, “Given that this has happened, what then shall I do?” To this, the answer is not a thought but a deed. It is to heal what can be healed, medically in the case of the body, psychologically in the case of the mind, spiritually in the case of the soul. Our task is to bring light to the dark places of our and other peoples’ lives.

That is what Henry did. Renata still suffered. So did he. But their spirit prevailed over their body. Crushed, they radiated light. Let no one imagine this is easy. It takes a supreme act of faith. Yet it is precisely here that we feel faith’s power to change lives. Just as great art can turn pain into beauty, so great faith can turn pain into love and holy light.

[1] 2 Samuel 1:23.

[2] Midrash Pitron Torah to Num. 13:2.

[3] Berakhot 5b.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z"TL “Remember that which Amalek did to you on the way when you went forth from Egypt.” (Devarim 25:17)

After the downfall of Egypt, the Israelites felt secure and became somewhat self-reliant. This great generation certainly did not forget their Father and King, yet a minute degree of trust in Hashem’s help was subtracted from their minds. Therefore Amalek came to refresh their Awareness of the need for Hashem’s constant help. This is therefore one purpose of our many enemies, to remind us always to call for help from Hashem and to become more aware of Him.

We see this principle clearly in the Purim epic. Picture the scene: two wine drinkers are reclining on festive couches. One says, ‘sell to me all the Jews in your empire for destruction,’ and the other replies, ‘they are yours for the asking’. And Ahashverosh removes his ring of royal authority from his finger and hands it to Haman the sworn enemy of the Jews.

Suddenly the Jews saw doom staring in their face. Now the Jewish nation arose, under the leadership of Mordechai, in a mighty effort of the spirit, never before equaled. On this the Talmud asserts: “The removal of the ring was greater (accomplished more) than 48 prophets & 7 prophetesses” (Megilah 14A). Whatever the prophets (including Moshe) achieved, it was less than that which Haman (from Amalek) accomplished.

Resulting in, “They accepted again the Torah in the days of Ahashverosh” (Shabbat 88A). And this time it was without any reservations, done with full free will & with joy & love for Hashem. Because they knew they were doomed, they fasted for three days, all due to the guidance of the Torah leaders, Mordechai & Esther.

Thus they achieved a complete repentance in a national experience never even remotely equaled in the history of Mankind.

And then, suddenly, there is Haman hanging and also his ten sons, neatly in a row!!

But Israel has an alternative. If we cry out in gratitude always to Hashem, we do not need any harassment from the nations; for calling to Hashem out of grateful happiness gains even more favor from Hashem.

Shabbat Shalom & Happy Purim From your friends at Yeshiva Gedolah Bet Yisrael