

A Holy Generation

1. Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, Kinot of Tishah b'Av 1980, *Mi Yiten Roshi*

[W]e mourn not only the *Gedolei Yisrael*, but plain people, plain Yisraelim, plain Jews. For instance, I remember myself, my *Cheder* where I was, which I abandoned as a very young boy, my *Cheder* was a large room, rented from a carpenter. He was called Reb Eli the Stoler... [W]e used to come to Shul to, to the *Cheder*, to go through his workshop... [H]e used to stand the whole day, working as a carpenter, working and saying Tehillim.

He knew Tehillim by heart. Boys, I mean, young boys, we didn't pay too much attention... [H]e hardly knew how to translate a Mishnah, to understand a Mishnah well. But, I am convinced, and I heard it from my father, if there was ever a Jew which was counted among the *Lamed Vav Nistarim*, the one, it was Reb Eli the Stoler.

2. Rabbi Dr. Yechezkel Lichtenstein, **הגדרת קידוש השם בתקופת השואה**

In the period of the Shoah, there was no *Kiddush HaShem* in the traditional sense, in which Jews are killed or take their own lives for their faith. In that terrible period, Jews were not put to the test of saving their lives by converting. They could not choose between life and death, for the essential factor in the eyes of the murderers was not religion but race... [But] it is clear that *Kiddush HaShem* also has two aspects: Visible and Hidden. There is *Kiddush HaShem* of openly sacrificing one's life for fulfillment of Torah and its laws, but there is also *Kiddush HaShem* via the existence of a Jew as a Jew. When the Nazis wished to eliminate Israel from the world, even fighting to live was an act of *Kiddush HaShem*. One should include among the holy ones not only those who were murdered, but also those who were rescued, who succeeded in living in all conditions. Similarly, Ka Tzetnik also wrote, "Now, dying is not heroic. The most heroic act is now to live."

Why memorialize?

3. Deuteronomy 32:7

Remember the days of eternity; understand the years of each generation. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders and they will tell you.

4. George Santayana, *Reason in Common Sense*

Progress, far from consisting in change, depends on retentiveness. When change is absolute there remains no being to improve and no direction is set for possible improvement: and when experience is not retained, as among savages, infancy is perpetual. Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

5. Rabbi Chaim Berlin (19th-20th century Russia), Foreword to his father's *Meromei Sadeh*

With my own ears I heard from [Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin's] holy mouth, when the biography of Rabbi Akiva Eiger was brought before his eyes, published for the first time in Berlin in 1862, he did not want to look at it for so much as an instant, saying, "All of this is within the Jerusalem Talmud's statement, 'We do not construct monuments for the righteous; their words are their memorial.' What will come of my knowing the day of his birth or death, or whether his face looked thus or thus? The essence is to put our eye and heart to the words of his teachings."

6. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (19th century Germany), *The Relevance of Secular Studies*, Collected Writings 7:97
Here, then, we have a people that emerged from the course of world history, that was placed into the midst of the nations to advance the goals of world history, and that was endowed with historical vision. Should not the sons of such a people understand that historical studies of the development of nations are truly not superfluous, but that they are, in fact, virtually indispensable?

7. Dr. Oliver Sacks, *The Man Who Mistook his Wife for a Hat*, pp. 105-106

If we wish to know about a man, we ask 'what is his story – his real, inmost story?' – for each of us is a biography, a story... To be ourselves we must have ourselves – possess, if need be re-possess, our life-stories. We must 'recollect' ourselves, recollect the inner drama, the narrative, of ourselves. A man needs such a narrative, a continuous inner narrative, to maintain his identity, his self.

8. Talmud, Kiddushin 31b

How does one honour a parent after their passing? When quoting him, one should not say, "So said my father," but, "So said my father and teacher, may I be the atonement for his passing." This is within twelve months; after that, one says, "May his memory be a blessing, for life in the next world."

A Model for Memory

9. Mishnah Sotah 9:14

In Vespasian's invasion, they decreed against the crowns of grooms and against the drum. In the invasion of Titus, they decreed against the crowns of brides...

10. Mishnah Taanit 4:6-7

When the month of Av enters we reduce our joy. In the week of Tishah b'Av one may neither cut hair nor do laundry ...

11. Talmud, Bava Batra 60b

One may line his home with lime, omitting a bit. How much? Rav Yosef said: One square cubit. Rav Chisda said: Opposite the entrance.

12. Talmud, Bava Batra 60b

When the second Temple was destroyed, there were many Jews who separated, not wishing to eat meat or drink wine. Rabbi Yehoshua dealt with them. He said to them, "My children, why do you neither eat meat nor drink wine?" They replied, "Shall we eat meat, which they bring on the altar and which is now halted? Shall we drink wine, which they pour on the altar and which is now halted?" He replied, "Then we should not eat bread, for the flour offerings are halted!" "We can eat produce." "We should not eat produce, for the gift of the first produce is halted!" "We can eat other produce." "We should not drink water, for the libation of water is halted!" They fell silent.

He said, "My children, let me tell you something. Not to mourn at all is impossible; the decree has been made. Mourning too much is impossible, for one cannot issue a decree upon the community unless most of the community can bear it..."

13. Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Horowitz, *When and how to mourn: Judaism's many contradictions*

"When Av enters." the *Shulchan Aruch* (Code of Jewish Law) codifies, we lessen our happiness." Tellingly, though, we are exhorted to "lessen." Not to discontinue.

14. Talmud, Rosh HaShanah 30a

How do we know to memorialize the Temple? Rabbi Yochanan cited Jeremiah 30:17, "'I will bring you healing, and I will cure your wounds,' this is the word of Gd. For they called you banished, [saying] she is Zion, no one seeks her." "No one seeks her" – this teaches that she requires seeking.

15. Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Horowitz, *When and how to mourn: Judaism's many contradictions*

The same Jew who spends his midnight hours reciting *Tikkun Chatzos* in tearful memory of the Destruction, nevertheless marches proudly and happily around the *bimah* in *shul* with his *esrog* and *lulav* on Sukkos – *in commemoration of Temple times*. So he not only cries, in remembrance of the Temple; he dances, too. The same family that sits on the floor on *erev Tish'a B'Av* eating eggs and ashes, several months later sets a luxuriant table for its Pesach meal – and, leaning in a kingly manner, eats *matzah* and *marror* (bitter herbs) wrapped together *to remember how Hillel ate it in the time of the Temple*. *Matzah* and *Marror* are not the only things wrapped together at the *seder*; our joy and our remembrance are intertwined too, not only in *korech* (Matzah Sandwich), but in the roasted egg and shankbone on the *seder*-plate and in the *afikoman* as well, all commemorations of what we had in the *Beis Hamikdash* that is no longer standing.

16. Leviticus 26:42, and Midrash Vayikra Rabbah 36:5

And I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham I will remember, and the land I will remember.

Why does it say regarding Jacob and Abraham "I will remember", but not regarding Isaac? Rabbi Berechiah and the Sages debated: Rabbi Berechiah said: Because he suffered. The Sages said: Gd sees the ashes of Isaac as though they were now collected on the altar.