

The Rabbi Writes

Welcome back to everyone who was away over Pesach. Many thanks to everyone here who assisted with the services. We had a lovely Yom Tov.

As I write, we are heading into Yom HaShoah. This year's commemoration is particularly poignant. There are fewer eyewitnesses and survivors with us to tell of their experiences. Alongside other manifestations of anti-Semitism, there has been a marked growth in the peddling of Holocaust Denial literature. Most particularly, with reference to Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Party, I don't recall ever having heard so many people suggest that "It is like 1933 all over again!"

The comparison is based on an improbable, once-thought unelectable leader; populism and a readiness to be blind to, and worse, endorsing of, repetitive anti-Semitic tropes.

I just don't know!

Over Yizkor I was thinking about my grandparents, who were in Berlin in 1933. What would they make of the comparison, or of Jeremy Corbyn? With hindsight, so much of the error of yesteryear was to underestimate and play down the danger. However, some suggest that our acute sensibilities are too finely tuned.

There are so many differences to the wider picture, including the existence and protection of Israel. Nonetheless, the readiness of notional liberals both in their institutions and in their droves to discriminate against Jews and against the Middle East's only liberal democracy should ring alarm bells. It is right that our community is protesting.

Remembrance, itself, is partly the act of recalling an event in the past. We mourn its victims and celebrate its heroes. Our Seder service goes further. We are supposed to feel and identify. The mitzvah of Pesach is to have each participant appreciate that without the plagues and Hashem's intervention, we and our children would still be enslaved to Pharaoh.

The Seder is not solely about the events of yesteryear – it is about the present day and about the future, contextualised by our reliving and retelling of the past. Eating the Hillel sandwich is our way of tying our observance with the words and deeds of a survivor of his era – of recapturing and evoking his memory of a lost world, and of embracing his way of coping.

As we move through our calendar into Yom HaShoah and then Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut, may we pay heed to the remaining survivors of the era and the pioneering builders of Israel. We should take every opportunity to listen to their voices and study their writings. For us, remembrance is incorporating our collective story into our personal memory.

I congratulate Barry Colman on arranging another Survivor Dinner (next Shabbat) for the youth. Please do join our upcoming celebrations of Israel with the Yom HaAtzmaut evening service and the Zionist Visionaries course in May.

Shabbat Shalom



I put out a couple of table quiz sheets for your Sedarim. Herewith the answers:

The first was the 10 Plagues

- a) Boils (Boyles), b) Pestilence (anagram of Pet License), c) Hail (Norman Hale), d) Death of Firstborn (Henry VIII had an elder brother who died), e) Frogs (Frogmen), f) Blood (Blood Orange), g) Locusts (Clue gives Low-cussed), h) Darkness (Quotation from Heart of darkness), i) Lice (Elements 3: Li and 58: Ce), j) Wild Animals (Wilder Niemals)

The second were the 15 stages in Dayeynu

- a) Firstborn (First Bourne), b) Exit from Egypt, c) Manna (To the Manor Born), d) Shabbat (Black Sabbath), e) Supplied our needs, f) Given us Wealth, g) Split the Sea (Split C), h) Walked on Dry Land, i) Temple (station), k) Drowned oppressors, l) Judged our enemies, m) Torah, n) Judged Idols, o) Israel (Rugby player Israel Folau), p) Mount Sinai (Hospital Ambulance)

Through Pesach I have started to put out a series of short videos on the 48 Modes of acquiring Torah Wisdom from the 6th Chapter of Pirkei Avot, known as Perek Kinyanei HaTorah.

All of the above, together with other recent Divrei Torah and materials are on the new and revamped Kinloss Website. My page is <http://www.kinloss.org.uk/rabbi-lawrences-weekly-messages-and-divrei-torah>