
From the Editors

In Hebrew, there is no word for “history”—only for “remembrance,” *zikaron*. Memory is an active process, whereas history implies something passive, something you merely study, not live. Remembering the past, and honoring it, is a key component of Jewish history. We as individuals, we as the Jewish people, we as humanity as a whole, we are the sum part of all of our past histories. Our personal histories are tied up with the collective history of the Jewish people. Memory requires active participation, a personal connection.

Respect for memory is incredibly important. When Jewish graves, in places from France to Germany to Australia, are desecrated, when swastikas are sprayed onto the sides of synagogues, when President George W. Bush is equated to the dictator who was responsible for the systematic murder of millions during World War II, it becomes clear that it is very easy for to people to forget or subvert history, and this opens the door for history to repeat itself. Such actions also demonstrate not only disrespect for history but also a denial of one’s personal connection to the past and the importance of memorializing it.

During *Yom Hazikaron*, the Day of Remembrance for those who were killed while serving in the Israeli Defense Forces and for those who were killed in terrorist attacks, every Israeli stands at attention for two minutes to honor the dead. Every Israeli participates; the moment the siren sounds, traffic comes to a standstill; pedestrians stop in their tracks; conversations cease; buses and cars are emptied. Every Israeli stands silent, remembering, thinking only of the dead.

Memory not only creates who we are, it also influences how we

relate to others. This is true of both personal and collective memory. The current situation in the Middle East is inextricably bound to history and to the way history is remembered. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is often tied up with the differences of memory and to the way in which memory is honored. While the discrepancy in memory is not the sole cause of the conflict, it often serves to exacerbate already heated tensions. In August 2002, a Palestinian Authority-controlled school was named in memory of a terrorist who, in 1978, had murdered 37 Israelis along the Tel Aviv coastal highway. By honoring this woman's memory, the PA is teaching the merits of murder. Alexandra Levy's review of Michael Oren's *Power, Faith, and Fantasy* speaks to this topic. Oren's book analyzes the many links between the past and present and the impact of America's history with the Middle East on its current policies. Perhaps one of the most dynamic relationships in the Western world has been that between Jews and Christians. One of the most important focal points of this relationship is based on the crucifixion of Jesus. The memory of this event has often been subverted throughout history to justify violence against Jews, from the Crusades to the pogroms of the tsarist era to the Holocaust. No surprise then, that when Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* was released in February 2004, many in the Jewish community were concerned about a possible resurgence of religious tensions. In his essay, Dan Ross explores the reaction of both the Jewish and Christian communities to Gibson's film and the many dialogues that then resulted.

On April 15, we commemorated *Yom HaShoah*, the Day of Remembrance for those who perished in the Holocaust. Some of us grew up hearing stories of the Holocaust, and some of us are only now beginning to learn about those horrific years. The struggle of how to remember the Holocaust is something every human should experience. For Jews, the Holocaust is something that is always being dealt with, but how do perpetrators of that crime, their descendents, and those who simply who encounter the memory of the Holocaust in their everyday lives come to grips

with the painful history? Nina Johnson's review of the documentary *KZ* and Matthew Mulholland's *The Power of Remembrance* look at how the German people today react to their own memory of the Holocaust.

The role of memory in shaping relationships, whether it's a relationship between two people, two nations, two religions, is immense. Yet we also need to seek to transcend memory. Memory can enlighten us, but it can also weigh us down. Memory cannot dictate who we are you or what we will become; it can only inform us. We need to seek to transcend memory in order to forge new paths in to the future.

-The Editors