



The Prince of Wales and
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The Holocaust must never be allowed to become simply a fact of history: we must never cease to be appalled, nor moved by the testimony of those who lived through it. Their experience must always educate, and guide, and warn us.

Survivors of the Shoah, President Rivlin, Your Majesties, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a particular honour, although one of the most solemn kind, to be present here today, and, on behalf of the United Kingdom to commemorate all those

so tragically lost in the Shoah.

To come to this sacred place, Yad Vashem – “A Memorial and a Name” – is to be faced with that for which no name, no words and no language can ever possibly do justice.

The magnitude of the genocide that was visited upon the Jewish people defies comprehension and can make those of us who live in the shadow of those indescribable events feel hopelessly inadequate.

The scale of the evil was so great, the impact so profound, that it threatens to obscure the countless individual human stories of tragedy, loss and suffering of which it was comprised. That is why places like this, and events like this, are so vitally important.

For many of you here, and for Jewish people across the globe, those stories are your stories: whether you witnessed and somehow endured the appalling barbarity of the Holocaust personally; or whether it touched your lives through the experience of your loved ones, or through the loss of parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts or other family you were never able to know. But we must never forget that they are also our story: a story of incomprehensible inhumanity, from which all humanity can and must learn. For that an evil cannot be described does not mean that it cannot be defeated. That it cannot be fully understood, does not mean that it cannot be overcome.

And so it is of particular significance that we should gather here, in Israel, where so many of those who survived the Holocaust sought and found refuge, and built a new future for themselves and this country.

In the same way, it has been a singular privilege, throughout my life, to have met so many Holocaust survivors who were welcomed to the United Kingdom and who began new lives there, contributing immeasurably to the welfare of our country, and the world, in the years that followed.

I have such inspiring memories of remarkable people such as Anita Lasker-

Wallfisch, who somehow survived both Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen before moving to Britain after the war. There, as a wonderfully talented cellist, she co-founded the English Chamber Orchestra, of which I am proud to have been Patron for the past forty-three years.

On her arm she bears the number by which tyranny had sought to make her less than human. Yet, through her music, she reminds us of the greatest beauty of which we are capable. Over the years, she has shared her story bravely and powerfully, determined that some good might come from the unspeakable evil she endured and overcame. From the horror, she brought harmony, healing and hope.

Just as each life lost in the Shoah stands for all the millions who died, each inspirational story such as that of Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, stands for the strength of spirit, the unparalleled courage, the determined defiance, of the very best of humanity when confronted with the very worst.

For my own part, I have long drawn inspiration from the selfless actions of my dear grandmother, Princess Alice of Greece, who in 1943, in Nazi-occupied Athens, saved a Jewish family by taking them into her home and hiding them.

My grandmother, who is buried on the Mount of Olives, has a tree planted in her name here at Yad Vashem, and is counted as one of the Righteous among the Nations – *hasidei ummot ha'olam* – a fact which gives me, and my family, immense pride.

Ladies and Gentlemen, almost a lifetime has passed since the horror of the Holocaust unfolded on the European continent, and those who bore witness to it are sadly ever fewer. We must, therefore, commit ourselves to ensuring that their stories live on, to be known and understood by each successive generation.

Anita Lasker-Wallfisch has said: “there is a risk that the Holocaust will be placed under a glass bubble just like the Napoleonic Wars or the Thirty Years War. But if we don’t make the connection between memories of past atrocities

and the present, there isn't any point to it."

She is, it seems to me, absolutely right. The Holocaust must never be allowed to become simply a fact of history: we must never cease to be appalled, nor moved by the testimony of those who lived through it. Their experience must always educate, and guide, and warn us.

The lessons of the Holocaust are searingly relevant to this day. Seventy-five years after the Liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, hatred and intolerance still lurk in the human heart, still tell new lies, adopt new disguises, and still seek new victims.

All too often, language is used which turns disagreement into dehumanisation. Words are used as badges of shame to mark others as enemies, to brand those who are different as somehow deviant. All too often, virtue seems to be sought through verbal violence. All too often, real violence ensues, and acts of unspeakable cruelty are still perpetrated around the world against people for reasons of their religion, their race or their beliefs.

Knowing, as we do, the darkness to which such behaviour leads, we must be vigilant in discerning these ever-changing threats; we must be fearless in confronting falsehoods and resolute in resisting words and acts of violence. And we must never rest in seeking to create mutual understanding and respect. We must tend the earth of our societies so that the seeds of division cannot take root and grow. And we must never forget that every human being is *be-tselem Elokim*, "in the image of God," and even a single human life is *ke-olam malei*, "like an entire universe."

The Holocaust was an appalling Jewish tragedy, but it was also a universal human tragedy, and one which we compound if we do not heed its lessons.

On this day, in this place, and in memory of the millions who perished in the Shoah, let us recommit ourselves to tolerance and respect; and to ensuring that those who lived through this darkness will forever, as in the words of the prophet Isaiah, be "a light unto the nations," to guide the generations that

follow.

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