

## Teaching The Next Generation Through Story

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All people love a good story. The storyteller has always held a cherished position in all cultures. The more primitive the culture the more venerated the teller of tales. Values and cultural mores are often the legacy of the storyteller. The more distant the events in the historical past, the more valued becomes the storyteller's role in securing the legacy of the culture.

Jewish tradition has had its storytellers. Our literature is rich not only with the printed sacred text but also with Aggadic and Midrashic material.

In our day the book and more recently the media of movies and television have undertaken this role. Even with the success of the media the direct story going from teller to listener is never supplanted. The story of personal encounter is always the most exciting

Children are always ready to hear a personal story of a person they know. The grandfather's story, the grandmother tale is always most pertinent for it enables the child to create an identity that is related to a known person. Around the campfire, in a study hall every child is ready for a story.

Time has all but removed those survivors from our midst. It becomes difficult to portray the "Shoah" so far removed in time. And yet we must remember. We must instruct the next generation - That is our sacred task.

We contend that we still have storytellers who can, in truth, still weave the stories of the "Shoah" so that the next generation will remain active participants in Jewish history.

The Chassidic tale is always captivating. The Apter Rav, Avraham Yeshia Heschel told tales as did his fellow Chassidic masters with a nuance, he was always central to the story. Thus I will tell my tale and repeat my story.

Amsterdam lost more Jews than any other Western European center. As a second-generation survivor my story retains magic for the new generation

Personalizing Jewish history with the teller of the story at its very center has a magnetic pull on the hearts and minds of the young.

What happened to me as a young person, telling my story before a group of young people has a relevance that challenges all other instruction.

Other than one grandfather I never knew my grandparents. I never had an extended family of great aunts and uncles, cousins, to whom to relate.

A story:

My parents were just married. It was 1940 Amsterdam. The Nazis were all over the city. "Razzia"- the roundup of Jews was a daily event. On my father's birthday the Gestapo removed his parents and most of his brothers and sisters from the home and threw them into open Lorries. He was delayed in coming home and escaped their fate. He never saw them again. Their fate was Auschwitz. Their names are engraved in Yad Vashem. My father never could celebrate his birthday.

Lost stories with lost lives. I must recapture the missing tale for in these stories is my identity and the identity of my children and an entire generation.

Yes I will tell the story for it is mine. But it is also yours and it must become the tale of a new generation for without the story their identity as Jews and as human beings is at peril.

Wiesel has said that Jewish history is absurd. Absurd for it doesn't make any sense to try and survive in a world that denies us the right to survive. 'But-and this is what we must always remember- a tale of absurdity ultimately means a tale against absurdity.'