

TURNING OCTOBER SEVENTH INTO A GLOBAL JEWISH INTERGENERATIONAL MEMORY

Insights from Thought Leadership Forum

Zakhor – the exhortation to remember – defines the Jewish experience. It has preserved the Jewish people's values and sense of intergenerational belonging. With the passage of time, the Jewish people have honed their ability to transform tragedy into lasting and meaningful memory. Looking back at why and how this has been done in the past offers this generation valuable insights to which we can turn in this difficult time.

October Seventh was not merely a date; it began a new and ongoing era, impacting not only Israel and Israelis but the entire Jewish people. Feelings of fear and pride, vulnerability and strength have risen to the surface, reminding us all of what it means to be a part of a nation with a shared covenant of fate and destiny. The ability to harness the immense pain around us and channel it towards a better Jewish future rests in the hands of our Jewish leadership.[1]

Every generation's leaders serve as 'memory agents' – they bear responsibility for bridging the inherited past with the future that the next generation will create. These 'memory agents' are tasked with making ancient Jewish memory relevant for the current generation in real time and adding on new layers based on the unfolding present story. Today, our Jewish leadership faces a new 'memory challenge.'

As such, ANU: Museum of the Jewish People[2] and the Weizman National Museum of American Jewish History[3] convened select Israeli and American Jewish thought leaders to develop insights on two questions; First: what are the principles for transforming a Jewish tragedy into a memory that offers value and meaning for generations?; Second: how can we mark the first *yahrzeit*[4] as a global Jewish people? The thinking group embarked on this task acknowledging that while much of the memory work is for generations to come, the current leadership has to play a role in the present.

Memory matters now; actions around this *yahrzeit* and ongoing period can offer our people healing, clarity, and strength, which we hope will help mitigate the ongoing pain. This document aims to provide the shared language and principles to deal with this shared challenge.

[1] "Jewish leadership" includes not only the heads of Jewish institutions and communities, but Jewish professionals, educators, clergy, lay and student leaders, parents, and grandparents. **[2]** ANU: Museum of the Jewish People and its Koret School for Jewish Peoplehood are committed to enhancing a sense of global Jewish belonging through connection to the Jewish story. ANU's Tisch Center for Jewish Dialogue builds on this mission by creating shared spaces for the Jewish people to be in conversation and relationship with one another. **[3]** An essential voice, the Weizman National Museum of American Jewish History stands as a bulwark against hate by teaching the true, joyful, and powerful stories of nearly four centuries of Jewish life in America. **[4]** Anniversary of a Jewish death

PART 1: PRINCIPLES THAT WEAVE A JEWISH TRAGEDY INTO AN INTERGENERATIONAL MEMORY

1 | Bundling

The Jewish people have a pattern of assigning one day to mark a number of Jewish events, spanning across different periods in Jewish history.[5] The main example of this is Tisha B'Av, the Jewish people's central day of mourning. Past generations have 'layered on' new painful events into the Ninth of Av, bringing new content and meaning with each layer. When new "unbundled" dates are chosen to mark a disaster, they are often forgotten over the generations or noted only by a local community.[6] It is no longer customary, and is in fact, discouraged to add new "sad days" to the Jewish calendar.[7]

2 | Agency

Jewish memory places the weight of responsibility for tragic events back onto the Jewish people. This saves the Jewish people from a "victimhood mindset," even from within a period of weakness. It offers agency in shaping both our current reality and future.[8] Even from within this agency, we are not to blame for the evil that befalls us. Hatred towards the Jewish people is a chronic disease beyond our responsibility or ability to cure

3 | Doing Memory

Simple acts of symbolism give everyone access to Jewish memory. Memory does not just exist in the heart or mind, but can be exercised in simple physical actions that require just a bit of literacy and understanding. Some of the best-known examples of how Jews "do memory" are: fasting, lighting candles, sitting on the floor, donating in the name of a lost loved one, and reciting Kaddish

4 | Circles of Belonging

Jewish memory functions in various spaces (public and private) and within various circles (individual, family, community, and nation). Expressing a memory in a number of different spaces acts as a force multiplier, strengthening its impact, meaning, and ability to survive across generations. The State of Israel has played a significant role in commemorating events since its establishment, but it is not and cannot be solely responsible for the preservation of global Jewish memory

5 | Memory as Teaching

Jewish memory holds lessons of eternal relevance; its messages preserve values from the past, enable us to cope in the present, and shape the future.[9] Our memory offers the perspective and guidance we need to deal with our generation's current challenges. As such, forgetting our memories exposes us to repeating old mistakes.

[5] These events can expand across different historical periods, as long as there is proximity between the dates. [6] For example, the Khmelnytsky Massacres, which was a significant Jewish tragedy and is supposed to be remembered on Tach veTat, the Jewish fast day on the 20th of Sivan, is no longer familiar to the Jewish masses. [7] There is precedent in halakic (Jewish legal) practice to not add any additional days to the Jewish calendar due to a lack of authority to institute new enactments. As an example, Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz, also known as the Chazon Ish, recommended placing Holocaust remembrance onto the Ninth of Av, instead of creating a separate fast day. [8] Call it "The Eicha Problem", there is a challenging side to this sense of agency, generating a sense of intergenerational guilt and shame along with it. [9] For example, Passover's message that, "We were slaves in Egypt," offers value to every generation, and is translated into many distinct traditions within family passover seders.

PART 2: PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FIRST YAHRZEIT

1 | Respect the pain

Place hostages, survivors, and victims at the center. An unfolding event does not allow for interpretation or reflection. Memory practices around the first anniversary are to be authentic and unedited, giving voice to the impacted first circles, specifically:

Hostages: We pray that by the first yahrzeit, the hostages will be home. Until they are home, the hostages are the center of global Jewish action and gathering. Future generations will judge us for our collective action in response to the captives.

Living survivors deserve to shape the story and commemoration of October Seventh. Give them voice and space wherever possible.

Say their names: Read the names of those who lost their lives on October Seventh.

Personalize: Bring it back to the human story. Learn about one individual, and find a way to honor their memory.

2 | A shared memory requires a shared date.

While it is very challenging to choose a shared date, without one, we will be unable to place October Seventh and this period within a global Jewish memory.[10] There are currently four commemoration dates: October Seventh, Simchat Torah, Shemini Atzeret (the day before Simchat Torah in the Diaspora), and the State of Israel's official day of mourning (most likely the 24th of Tishrei, the day after Simchat Torah in the Diaspora). In the future, global Jewish leadership should coalesce around one date for collective mourning. It should be noted that intergenerational Jewish memory relies on Hebrew calendar dates, and thus a Gregorian date will weaken the memory in the long-term.

3 | Addressing Simchat Torah

While a joyous holiday cannot contain the full remembrance of a tragedy, there are relevant traditions on Simchat Torah that can offer commemoration in the immediate future:

The Yizkor service[11] is particularly important, being that yizkor was said the morning of the October Seventh attack.

Hakafot as an act of Jewish solidarity[12] – the rounds of dancing with the Torah scrolls on Simchat Torah can be dedicated to the memory of October Seventh.[13]

[10] The memory of the Holocaust has been damaged through the inability to coalesce around one day in which to mark it as a Jewish people. Different circles mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yom HaShoah, and the Ninth of Av. [11] The memorial prayer recited Simchat Torah morning [12] In 1942, Rabbi Yitzchak Yedidya Frankel, called on his community in Florentine, Tel Aviv to extend Simchat Torah in solidarity with the suffering of European Jewry, of whom they had been cut off from. As he told his congregation, "At this exact hour, in Warsaw, Krakow, and every other city in Poland, they should be beginning their Simchat Torah celebrations. But we do not know whether the synagogues are open, whether the Jews are allowed to go to them, whether they are performing the traditional processions holding the Torah scrolls. We are completely cut off from them, and despite our attempts to make contact, the communities do not answer. But all Jews are responsible for one another. Let us act in their stead and perform processions on their behalf, at least symbolically." [13] For example, in the memory of the fallen, for the return of the hostages, in honor of the southern Israel communities' heroism, for the safety of our security forces, etc.

4 | Telling a narrative that holds vulnerability and strength, pain and hope.

The catastrophic events of October Seventh also brought to the surface Jewish heroism and virtues. Holding light and darkness within a coherent story preserves the memory's authenticity with the strength the Jewish people need to face this ongoing crisis.

5 | Practical ways to mark the first Yahrzeit in the public and private space:

Shared Symbols: Yellow ribbon (for the hostages), red anemone flowers (for the resilience of Israel's southern communities). Offer pins, stickers, social media images.

Shared Acts: Offer basic acts that any Jewish individual can take on. For example, light a candle.

Shared Content – Old and New: From *Acheinu*, a Jewish song calling for the release of hostages, to *Kinat Be'eri*, a new lamentation written by Yagel Harush, widely distributed during this year's Tisha B'Av.

Shared Melody: Music and melody – short, repetitive sounds – elicit deep emotional feelings associated with memory. A popular example from this period is Abie Rotenberg's "*Acheinu*."

Shared Spaces: Mark October Seventh with a community beyond your own – whether between Israelis and Diaspora Jews, secular and religious, tapping into our sense of belonging and hope is an antidote to the pain and loneliness. Public remembrance is to be shared with non-Jewish allies and neighbors.

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