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# HOUSE OF LORDS

## OFFICIAL REPORT

*ORDER OF BUSINESS*

Holocaust Memorial Day  
*Motion to Take Note* .....1379

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<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Party/Group</b>
CB	Cross Bench
Con	Conservative
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
GP	Green Party
Ind Lab	Independent Labour
Ind SD	Independent Social Democrat
Ind UU	Independent Ulster Unionist
Lab	Labour
Lab Co-op	Labour and Co-operative Party
LD	Liberal Democrat
Non-afl	Non-affiliated
PC	Plaid Cymru
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party

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# House of Lords

Friday 2 February 2024

10 am

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of London.

## Holocaust Memorial Day

Motion to Take Note

10.06 am

Moved by *Baroness Scott of Bybrook*

That this House takes note of Holocaust Memorial Day 2024.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (Baroness Scott of Bybrook) (Con):** My Lords, it is with respect and solemn reflection that I move the Motion standing in my name on the Order Paper.

Holocaust Memorial Day is all the more poignant this year as we reflect on the Hamas terrorist attack on the people of Israel on 7 October. One of the 1,200 people murdered by Hamas was 91 year-old Moshe Ridler, who escaped from a Nazi camp in Ukraine and was sheltered by shepherds before liberation, and who came to live in Israel in 1951. Moshe was murdered in the Holit kibbutz, just over a mile from the border with Gaza. His bungalow was hit first by a rocket-propelled grenade and then by a hand grenade. To his 18 children and great-grandchildren, may his memory be a blessing. His death reminds us that the work of organisations such as the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the Holocaust Educational Trust has never been more important.

Holocaust Memorial Day is intended first and foremost to remind us of what was done to the Jewish people during the Holocaust. An attempt was made to annihilate the Jewish people in their entirety; an attempt to take anti-Semitism to its bitter and horrific conclusion. It is impossible to stand here today and not reflect on 7 October, which saw the deadliest attack against Israel since the state's establishment in 1948. We witnessed the mass murder of over 1,200 Israelis by Hamas, the mass rape of women and young girls, and the abduction of 240 hostages. It is incumbent on us on Holocaust Memorial Day to speak the truth and to repudiate the attempt to level false charges against Israel. We must remember what was done to the Jewish people in the Holocaust and sound the warning of the threat that a resurgent anti-Semitism poses to them once again today.

The significance and meaning of the Holocaust came to be better understood through the heroic efforts of Raphael Lemkin, a Polish Jew who lost 49 members of his family to the Nazis, and who coined the word genocide. Three years after the Holocaust ended, and largely in reaction to what had been done then to the Jewish people, the newly formed United Nations defined genocide as a crime committed with

“the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group”.

Tragically, since the convention was agreed, there have been other genocides, in Cambodia, Srebrenica, Rwanda and Darfur. This year we mark the 30th anniversary of

the Rwandan genocide against the Tutsis. It is very much in the spirit of remembering the Holocaust that, on Holocaust Memorial Day, we remember the victims of those genocides too.

Since the 7 October attack by Hamas, countries across the world have experienced a shocking increase in anti-Semitism. The Community Security Trust, which monitors anti-Semitism in the United Kingdom, has recorded over 2,000 anti-Semitic incidents since 7 October. This is the highest total on record, and, sadly, this increase is reflected across Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia.

The theme for 2024 is the fragility of freedom, highlighting that in every genocide that has taken place those who are targeted for persecution have had their freedoms restricted and removed before many of them were murdered. Holocaust Memorial Day is a time to reflect on how freedom is fragile and vulnerable to abuse, and to consider how to strengthen freedoms across the world.

The Nazi regime was characterised by the brutal oppression and persecution of the Jewish people and other minorities. The Nazis aimed to completely exclude Jews and other minorities from everyday life. Between 1933 and 1938, over 400 anti-Semitic laws were enacted. These laws limited every area of Jewish life. By 1935, the Nuremberg laws had changed who could be a German citizen. As a result, Jews and others lost their rights to citizenship, which not only stripped them of the right to vote but made them stateless. This meant that they could not get a valid passport for travel between countries or acquire a visa to leave Germany. With no escape, many met their deaths in Nazi concentration camps.

It is natural to presume that liberation, when it came at the end of the war, brought great joy. But for those Jewish men, women and children who survived, it also brought home the immensity of their loss. An extraordinary effort was needed to pick up the pieces of broken lives and to start over again. Many were lone survivors. Entire generations were murdered—grandparents, parents, children and cousins. Liberation day was the first day survivors were forced to confront reality. Up until then, survivors had expended all their efforts on the struggle to survive from one moment to the next. They had deflected attention from the world they had lost—their family and friends, their occupations, their neighbourhoods and their possessions. All of these had been taken from them long before liberation, but now they were forced to face the emptiness and try to build something new. Many did, with great success, but for some, such as Primo Levi, who wrote so powerfully about his experiences, it proved impossible to come to terms with the immensity of their loss.

Today, we also mark the 30th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide against the Tutsi. Tutsis who survived the 100 days of slaughter in 1994 had to rebuild their lives. Many returned to communities where their attackers still lived, in some cases as close neighbours. Returning home, they searched for missing relatives, only to find strangers living in their houses, their communities in ruins, and reminders of their families and friends who had been brutally murdered. Liberation meant physical freedom for many, but it also brought home enormous loss, from which many survivors never recovered.

[BARONESS SCOTT OF BYBROOK]

Last week, the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust hosted the annual Holocaust Memorial Day at the Guildhall. It brought home to me how privileged we are to hear first-hand from witnesses to the Holocaust and from witnesses to subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Srebrenica, Rwanda and Darfur. Sadly, the number of first-hand witnesses to the Holocaust decreases every year.

The Government remain committed to the creation of a new national memorial, and we are pleased that MPs overwhelmingly supported the Holocaust Memorial Bill. If enacted, the Bill will remove a statutory obstacle that has prevented the building of a new memorial and learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens. Our aim is that the completion of that memorial should be witnessed by Holocaust survivors.

In March, the UK assumes the important mantle of the presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. We will use this opportunity to explore the circumstances that led to the Holocaust and to highlight the nature of a society that allowed mass murder in plain sight. We will also use the opportunity to reflect on the use of artificial intelligence in Holocaust distortion.

I pay tribute to the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and to its CEO, Olivia Marks-Woldman OBE, and her team, which delivers the annual Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony and thousands of local activities across the country. Similarly, I thank the CEO of the Holocaust Educational Trust, Karen Pollock CBE, who works tirelessly to ensure that the next generation learn of the unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust and can visit Auschwitz-Birkenau as part of the very successful Lessons from Auschwitz programme.

I look forward to noble Lords' reflections. As always, my thoughts and prayers are with the victims, the survivors and their families. I beg to move.

10.16 am

**Lord Dubs (Lab):** My Lords, this is an emotional day for me. I welcome the comments made in the very interesting, important and solemn introduction. I agree with every word that was said.

It is possibly appropriate to reflect on the film that has come out recently about Nicky Winton, the person who saved 669 Kindertransport children from the Holocaust. It was a film that drove me to tears. I am sorry for pausing here—I find this a very difficult occasion. I watched the film, and I thought the actor who played Nicky Winton got his part perfectly. It was a very emotional film. I was asked to write a review of it, and I found it difficult to judge it other than in terms of the emotions that it generated. He was a person who, when there was a serious issue that needed something done about it, decided that he would actually do it. He did not walk away, having said it was awful; he said he would do it, and he saved a lot of lives. Of course, many other lives were saved when Kindertransport children came from Germany and Austria, and some from Poland. Some 10,000 of them were accepted by this country. Your Lordships will know that there is a plaque off Central Lobby commemorating the event and thanking the people of Britain for having given us safety. It is worth having a look at that plaque if you have not already seen it.

I spent the first three days of this week in Berlin because of events to do with Kindertransport and Holocaust Memorial Day. I will say a little about this, because it is probably not so well known in this country. The events were supported by both our ambassador to Berlin and Germany's ambassador to London. There were two features. One was an exhibition in the Bundestag called "Auf Wiedersehen", which commemorated certain Kindertransport children. It was well documented and very poignant, with some letters written by them to their parents before the war started, and letters written by their parents to them. It was a powerful exhibition, and I commend it to the House authorities. We should move that exhibition to London and show it here. It is a real eye-opener, showing what happened and bringing back memories. It is not just a matter of 6 million people dying in the Holocaust; everyone was an individual. This exhibition shows exactly what these individuals went through.

There was also a memorial event at the Reichstag, to which I was invited along with Hella Pick, another Kindertransport person. We saw a very solemn event indeed. The president of the Reichstag, who had made several speeches in the time I was there, made a powerful speech drawing attention to what had happened, the tragedies of the Holocaust and the number of people who were exterminated in the camps.

Germany has come to terms with its past in a most commendable way. For the Reichstag to have such an event and to have speeches—two concentration camp survivors spoke and gave powerful testimony of what had happened to them—was a powerful symbol to me of a country that was determined to understand its past, atone for its past and reflect on its past and the lessons of it for the present time. We should be aware that Germany has done that. Most of us in this country do not think of German efforts as regards Holocaust Memorial Day, and I do not mind repeating that I think we should pay tribute to the Germans for the way in which they have come to terms with it.

I join in tributes paid to the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust for the work it does every year to commemorate—I had a candle in my window last week on the appropriate day, as advised by it. The Holocaust Educational Trust and the Anne Frank Trust also helped us to remember a very solemn day and make sure that we learn the lessons of the past as best we can. Unfortunately, as we look at the world today, we see that we are not learning lessons very quickly; we could learn them much better.

There has been a deplorable, regrettable, appalling outburst of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in this country—indeed, the Germans say that it is the same in their country. We need to work out better ways of commemorating the event and making sure that Islamophobia and anti-Semitism are swept away as best we can. I think that all of us in public life have had a certain number of abusive messages and such things—not just this week but over time. I shall not repeat some of them, because it just encourages people to do more of that sort of thing, but some of them were not very nice.

I want to end on a brighter note. Just before the pandemic, I was invited to talk about the Holocaust and the Kindertransport at a school in Tower Hamlets.

It was a maintained school but one which I think was made up pretty much of all Muslim boys. Their project was the Holocaust and the Kindertransport. There were 300 or 400 boys. The first question asked by one of them was, “What do I say to people who deny the Holocaust ever happened? How do I deal with it?” I thought that was a terrific question to come from a Muslim boy in Tower Hamlets. It was terrific to find that the school was doing a good job. If that sort of educational can spread from our schools, it is a sign that we will go quite a long way towards tackling both anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

10.22 am

**Baroness Ludford (LD):** My Lords, I welcome today’s debate and thank the Minister, the noble Baroness, Lady Scott of Bybrook, for opening it. I am honoured to take part. I also applaud the remarks of the noble Lord, Lord Dubs, whom I shall mention later.

The briefings from the Holocaust Education Trust and from an organisation which I admit is new to me, Protection Approaches, have been most valuable. The work of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust in organising the remembrance events on and around 27 January is also much appreciated, as is that of the Antisemitism Policy Trust—which ran a recent oral briefing that I was grateful to be able to participate in—of the Community Security Trust and of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

I want to start by commenting on the appalling and frightening treatment to which Conservative MP Mike Freer has been subjected, such that he intends to quit politics, remembering, of course, that two MPs have been murdered in the last few years. I send him my support and best wishes. Like me, he is not Jewish, but his support for Israel and the fact that he represents Finchley and Golders Green, with its substantial Jewish population, have led at least some of his attackers to assume that he is—and in one case to call him a “Jewish pig”. This is a clear example not only of where hatred of Israel and of Jews as a people morph into one but of the fact that we are all, truly, in this together.

Not for nothing is this year’s chosen, and inspired, theme of Holocaust remembrance the “Fragility of Freedom”. We can see it right there in the experience of Mike Freer and of others—I very much regret that the noble Lord, Lord Dubs, is getting abuse as well—and in the fact that the horrendous, brutal mass atrocities of 7 October perpetrated by Hamas largely on Jews, celebrated in some quarters as acts of “resistance”, have been followed by an explosion in incidents of anti-Semitism, as well as of Islamophobia, across the globe, including, sadly, in this country.

We think at this time of the 1,200 people murdered on 7 October and of the 136 hostages still held by Hamas in Gaza. As my colleague Alistair Carmichael MP told the other place,

“when I read stories about a restaurant opening in Jordan called ‘October 7’, frankly I despair. It is something that has to be called out and dealt with wherever it happens”.—[*Official Report, Commons, 25/1/24; col. 464.*]

I am affected, I am ashamed, by such expressions of hatred, and I, like others, must stand up and be counted. As the poet John Donne wrote:

“No man is an island,  
Entire of itself ...  
Any man’s death diminishes me,  
Because I am involved in mankind.  
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;  
It tolls for thee”.

In opening the Holocaust Memorial Day debate last week in the other place, Dame Margaret Hodge recalled how her grandfather came to England in March 1939, was classified originally as an “enemy alien” and was sent to Liverpool to live in unsanitary conditions, Jews housed with German Nazis. A few days after he arrived, Dame Margaret’s grandfather commented:

“Because of the lack of language skills very lonely, depressed, cannot memorise, miserable pronunciation. Living like a recluse”.

Even six months later, he said that those who stayed in Vienna

“may have saved themselves from all the horrors and all the difficulties of emigrating”.—[*Official Report, Commons, 25/1/24; col. 459.*]

His freedom was indeed fragile, and those remarks cause us to reflect on our treatment of refugees today, our attitudes towards their undoubted courageous struggles and dehumanising language used against them.

The noble Lord, Lord Dubs, whose emotions today are so understandable, has done as much as anyone in this House, or indeed this Parliament, for the cause of refugees, especially child refugees, of which of course he was one. He was reported in the *Guardian* newspaper to have been very relieved at the demonstrations across Germany against the far-right AfD party, saying that

“it’s a good sign that people are demonstrating and saying this was not their sort of Germany”—

that was reflected in the remarks that he made earlier. I strongly support his suggestion of bringing the Berlin Bundestag exhibition to London, perhaps even to this House.

Holocaust survivor Lily Ebert has inspired much admiration over the years, and her great-grandson Dov Forman has picked up her mantle. As he tweeted recently,

“it has been alarming to see attempts to erase the specific Jewish identity of the Holocaust’s victims. The Holocaust wasn’t just a human tragedy; it was a targeted genocide of 6 million Jews. Families were obliterated solely for being Jewish ... It’s crucial to remember the Holocaust for what it was: a systematic, state-sponsored pursuit to annihilate every Jewish man, woman, and child. This was the racist core of Nazi ideology, a belief in a racial struggle that justified the total destruction of the Jewish people. To honour the victims, we must speak the truth of their identity”.

As we recall and commemorate other Nazi victims such as Roma, gay men, disabled people and political opponents, and other genocides and horrors such as in Darfur, Bosnia, Rwanda, Cambodia and the Rohingya, we must not lose sight of the specific nature and intent of the Shoah.

This is not the time to enter into the controversy about the siting of the Holocaust national memorial and learning centre, but I very much welcome the prospect of such a memorial and centre, wherever located. It must provoke action, as well as reflection on the vow of “never again”.

[BARONESS LUDFORD]

Dov Forman also commented on how

“this dark chapter in history wasn’t only about mass murder. It was the destruction of a rich Jewish culture and civilisation that had thrived for thousands of years. To remember the Holocaust is to acknowledge both the Jewish lives and the Jewish life that was lost”.

When I visit Holocaust or Jewish museums, as recently I did in Prague, or when last year I revisited Yad Vashem, I linger over photos of people and families going about their business, living increasingly integrated lives in their European countries, as they were in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Then I realise with a shock how fragile that apparent normality turned out to be, because of hatred of who Jews are, pure and simple.

Anti-Semitism in Europe has a very long history of routine ingrained intolerance, discrimination and second-class treatment, then growing into persecution, expulsion and pogroms. But the speed and ease of the rise of Adolf Hitler, his thugs and his twisted ideology of hate is of another dimension altogether, and what is deeply frightening and instructive is how all too much of society enabled it, or at least did not resist.

I spoke earlier of the NGO Protection Approaches, which makes a strong case for an atrocity prevention strategy to combine vigilance against incipient hatred with action to prevent genocide and crimes against humanity, and to end the impunity for it. It refers to the 2022 report from the International Development Select Committee entitled *From Srebrenica to a Safer Tomorrow: Preventing Future Mass Atrocities Around the World*, on how the UK can show global leadership in this regard. I do not know whether the Minister can say anything in her closing remarks about what our Government can and are doing on that score to prevent what I think she called “mass murder in plain sight”.

Finally, it is up to all of us to speak up, raise the alarm, hold perpetrators accountable and seek justice. The fragility of freedom means that it can slip away bit by bit, unless we are all eternally vigilant and resolute.

10.32 am

**Lord Stevens of Birmingham (CB):** In her essay *The Future of Auschwitz*, the philosopher Gillian Rose’s radical challenge to those of us who are not Jewish is “not only to identify ... in infinite pain with ‘the victims’, but to engage in intense self-questioning: ‘Could I have done this?’ ... ‘How easily could we have allowed this to be carried out?’” So, Holocaust remembrance means holding two truths in tension: that the Shoah was a unique rupture in human history, but that the virus of exterminationist racism lives on.

It lives on in the Hamas murderer from Gaza who phoned his proud parents on 7 October to celebrate: “Your son killed Jews! I swear, 10 with my own hands mother! Open WhatsApp on your phone and see the dead!” It lives on when a young Israeli at a music festival that day has to hide in the woods to escape certain death—just as his great-grandfather did eight decades earlier en route to a concentration camp. It lives on in Kfar Aza and Sderot, where I have seen with my own eyes the atrocities and death—the hand grenades and knives—meted out to babies and mothers and grandmas.

These crimes pierced the world’s post-Holocaust covenant of a safe national homeland for the Jewish people. In doing so, they confirmed its necessity—because 7 October and its aftermath has brought a terrible clarity: that there are still those who seek the annihilation of Jews. Their threats are not polemic—they are fact. They are not only word, but deed. If they could have murdered more, they would. We have been reminded, in the most brutal way, that appeasing evil does not lead to a just and lasting peace. So taking Holocaust remembrance seriously means seeing the world as it is, and acting to prevent and to stop further genocides.

The Holocaust was a unique tragedy for the Jewish people but, in Avishai Margalit’s telling, it was also “a direct onslaught on the very idea of shared humanity”.

Today we affirm our shared humanity—one in which, as the Talmud says:

“Whoever saves a single life is considered as if he saved an entire world”,

and one in which the Koran, in remarkably similar terms says:

“Whoever saves a life, it is as though he had saved the lives of all”.

10.35 am

**Lord Pickles (Con):** My Lords, I draw attention to my entries in the register of interest, particularly those relating to Holocaust remembrance. That is a particularly fine speech to follow. I have to say that all the speeches have been really good today. The noble Lord, Lord Dubs, talked about the exhibition at the Bundestag. Perhaps I could give notice that it is his intention to bring that exhibition to these Parliaments. By joining the noble Lord, Lord Dubs, in that regard, I hope that I can make up for the appalling reference that I made to him the other day, when I described him as the very epitome of a dapper English gentleman.

I thank the usual channels for arranging this debate, which I hope will be a regular feature of Holocaust memorial week, like the long-established one in the other place. I also thank the Lord Speaker for organising, in conjunction with the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, a thoughtful discussion on the nature of genocide last week. I join in thanks to Karen Pollock for her excellent work with the Holocaust Educational Trust and to Olivia Marks-Woldman of the HMDT for organising so much in a very difficult year: 5,000 different organisations putting together local events, 3,000 buildings lit up, including the Blackpool Tower and the London Eye; thousands of candles in peoples’ windows and 6 million digital candles on billboards across the United Kingdom.

I am also grateful for the commitment given by the Government, the Leader of the Opposition, the Liberal Democrats and Scottish National Party to the building of a memorial to the Holocaust and a learning centre next to Parliament in Victoria Tower Gardens. We will soon have an opportunity to debate this long overdue measure, and I look forward to debating it with some vigour—though I am mindful of the very wise words of Sir Peter Bottomley, the Father of the House of Commons, when he said that perhaps this debate was not an appropriate place to spend much time on that, and that we should concentrate on the Holocaust.

I took over the post of the Holocaust envoy in 2015. In that time, I have visited many death camps in Europe, had the opportunity of listening to very distinguished historians and met many survivors. But there is one thing I have never entirely understood—something I have never been able to get my mind around. Why did we not do something about Hitler, when it was there and it was plain? The nature of what was happening in Nazi Germany and the death camps was known to the authorities in the United Kingdom many years before the liberation—and even at the time when we decided to announce that they were occurring, we underestimated the number of people who had been killed at that point by 1 million.

However, by midday on 7 October, I knew exactly why we did nothing. Before Israel had an opportunity to get much of a defence and before Israel did anything in Gaza, people were dancing in the streets throughout the world—and, to our eternal shame, in the United Kingdom—celebrating the murder of children. I came to the conclusion that the world is very happy to bow its head once a year in remembrance of long dead Jews, but it is indifferent to the fate of living Jews and hostile to the thought that Jews might defend themselves.

Even when they saw the full extent of the horrors that Hamas committed—many Members will have seen the film and heard testimony this week—many of the #MeToo campaigners and the campaigners against female genital mutilation turned a blind eye to Israeli suffering. We were asked to consider these mutilations “in context”. Have we really become a country in which parents are advised not to send their children to Jewish schools in school uniform; where Jewish students are reluctant to wear a kippah on campus; where travellers are advised not to wear a Star of David on the Tube; where Hebrew-speaking tourists are assaulted on London streets; or where a decent, hard-working MP is hounded out of office for standing up for his Jewish constituents? The very nature of liberal democracy is at risk.

So I hope we will not hear any statements in future from university vice-chancellors, from police commissioners or politicians, about having a zero tolerance approach to anti-Semitism, because it is clearly not the case. It is a lie. Casual anti-Semitism is widespread in modern Britain: you need only to look, every Saturday, to see those useful idiots marching alongside Jew-hating anti-Semites, giving them credibility and credence and inadvertently encouraging them on to even greater depravity.

Before Israel had a chance to defend itself, even while the crowds in major cities were dancing with glee at the murder of children, the twin pillars of denial and distortion were working to form an alternate reality, a distorted truth. The term “genocide” is habitually misused and distorted. My noble friend the Minister read out the definition, so I will not repeat it—but from their mouths Hamas are condemned. United States President Joe Biden summed it up well when he said that Hamas’s goal had always been to annihilate Israel and to murder Jews. The South African attempt to subvert the meaning of genocide at the ICJ and to use it against Israel is a distortion of the truth. For the

victims to be guilty of the crimes committed by the perpetrators is a perversion of reality. The Foreign Secretary is correct when he says:

“I take the view that Israel is acting in self-defence after the appalling attack of 7 October”,

and that the argument that Israel has

“the intent to commit genocide, I think ... is nonsense”.

Denial is the first stage of genocide. That process was truncated in the October pogrom. I participated in an interview on LBC with an imam from east London who laughingly told me and the listeners, a few days after the massacre, that no children had been murdered by Hamas. Queen’s College Muslim Association went one step further, saying that there was a great deal of video evidence that Hamas deliberately avoided targeting women and children. Denial and distortion are formidable obstacles to the truth when there are plenty of witnesses about; consider their potency when the number of survivors who witnessed the Holocaust is diminishing. That is why the presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, which the UK begins this month, will strengthen the coalition that rebuts denial and distortion. One of the first events will be a gathering of experts to examine the possibility and pitfalls of artificial intelligence on the digital records of the Holocaust.

The last 15 years have focused on gathering testimony from survivors, including from many people who experienced the Holocaust as children. A great effort has gone into digitising records. The amount and the depth of the material is impressive. The worry is that the very strength of this evidence might be our Achilles heel. We live in an era of seeing is not believing. Images and testimony are vulnerable. History is up for grabs.

The consequences of cheap, widespread fakery are already with us. Holocaust survivors were recent recently distressed by a photograph of the then Home Secretary laughing at the gates of Auschwitz. It was a photoshop. It was not a very good fake, but it was good enough to cause hurt. Misleading words might be put into the mouths of survivors, mimicking their voices and trivialising the Holocaust. “The food might have been a bit bland, but there was plenty of it”. “On Sundays, we used to play football with our SS guards”. “Tuesday night was bridge night”. The fake recording of Sir Keir Starmer shouting at staff is a harbinger of what is to come on the road to a zero-trust society. AI will enable Jew haters to identify and target anti-Semites with a precision previously not thought possible—an echo chamber of bigotry that encourages deeper hatred.

Our presidential year will bring perpetrators of violence and the conditions that caused the Holocaust more into focus. Our theme this year is “In Plain Sight”. It comes from something profound that my friend and Holocaust survivor Ivor Perl said to me on a visit to Auschwitz. We first met on the March of the Living, an annual event taking place in Poland. People attend from all over the world and they are of all ages and backgrounds. There are plenty of enthusiastic youngsters about, which makes it a more uplifting experience than I would have expected. Gradually working our way through Poland, we arrived at the end of the march at Auschwitz.

[LORD PICKLES]

I am on the international committee supervising the preservation of the Nazi concentration camp and consequently I am a regular visitor. While Ivor had visited the camp since he was a prisoner there, it had been some time. We stood as a group on the separation ramp, where families were torn apart. Ivor movingly describes this moment in his memoir *Chicken Soup Under the Tree*. For the first and only time that week, Ivor looked vulnerable, and I went up to him and said possibly the world's most stupid thing, which was, "Are you all right, Ivor?" He firmly gripped my wrist and said, "Listen, Eric, don't believe all that crap about 'The birds never sing in Auschwitz'. It was a day like this when we first came here, a warm, sunny day, blue skies with cotton-wool clouds, birds were singing and butterflies were fluttering between the lines. The Holocaust did not happen in dark corners, hidden away; the Holocaust happened in broad daylight, in plain sight, with the whole world watching".

We will anchor historic memory with a schools project across member countries addressing what happened in the Second World War in their home towns. The best projects will be presented to a special youth conference in London later this year. The 80th anniversary of the camps' liberation will be explored in short clips on social media in 80 objects. Countering anti-Semitism in sport will be launched in Scotland in the summer. Our legacy project will be a data portal that unites and combines testimony and digital records from around the world. It will be easier to find out the truth of the Holocaust.

In conclusion, today the words "Never again" ring hollow and false. We have work to do. Let people of good will work together to make the UK a beacon of hope and tolerance. We will have succeeded only when we can say "Never again" in our hearts as well as our mouths. I hope that better times will come.

10.49 am

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent (Lab):** My Lords, it is a privilege to follow the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, and my noble friend Lord Dubs. I refer to my interests in the register, not least my roles with the Antisemitism Policy Trust and HOPE not hate.

I will focus on the importance of bearing witness to evil and the onus on us all to make sure that the truth lives on. My family arrived in the UK in the 1880s, fleeing the pogroms of tsarist Russia. My ancestors fled state-sanctioned violence and arrived here in the hope of a better and safer life. Little did they realise that their choice of final destination was to guarantee the survival of my family. As far as we know, not one of those who chose to remain in Poland, Ukraine and Belarus survived the Shoah. For my family, anti-Jewish hatred is not an academic exercise; it is formative to my understanding of my place in the world.

As they have for many noble Lords, the pogroms and the Shoah have shaped not just my existence but my worldview. My family knows only too well where hate can lead and the importance of security and freedom. We also know the value of truth and the danger of misinformation, distortion and propaganda, which is why bearing witness to horror and evil is so important. It is why people's stories, as horrendous as

some of the details are, need to be heard, repeated, shared and remembered, not just on Holocaust Memorial Day but always.

The facts of history are often too easily forgotten. The sheer scale of the Holocaust, and of the genocides that have followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur, enables us to remember facts and statistics but can allow us to ignore or forget the impact on people, families and communities. People's stories and experiences—their pain and survival—touch our hearts and ensure that we remember where hate and division can lead. Personal testimony also allows us to directly counter propaganda, lies and distortion about some of the greatest crimes that the planet has ever seen.

Your Lordships' House recognised this principle as soon as the first concentration camps were liberated in 1945. Within days of the liberation of Buchenwald, in April 1945 our Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, asked a delegation of parliamentarians from both Houses to travel to the camp to see the horrors at first hand and bear witness on behalf of our Parliament and our country. Two Members of your Lordships' House attended on our behalf: Earl Stanhope and Lord Addison. Their experiences were published as *The Report of a Parliamentary Delegation* by the Prime Minister.

I consider myself quite political and generally better informed than most on matters related to the Holocaust, but I did not know of this report or delegation until a few years ago. Just before the pandemic, my noble friend Lady Golding, a fellow resident of north Staffordshire, gave me some of her parliamentary papers that she thought might be of interest. When I started to go through the box, I realised that they were not just her papers but included some of her father's, who had been the MP for Caerphilly, including during the war. Ness Edwards was one of the 10 members of the delegation to travel to Buchenwald. My noble friend unfortunately cannot be with us today, but I wish to share the words she used when discussing her father and his experiences during a debate in the other place:

"My father was a member of that delegation. His name was Ness Edwards. He was the hon. Member for Caerphilly for 29 years. I remember him telling me about the horrors of what went on in that camp. They are engraved for ever on my mind and heart.

There has been much talk tonight about the passage of time. I was but a child on the day when I opened the door to my father on his return. He stood there, grey and drawn, and said, 'Do not touch me. I am covered with lice. Everyone in the camps is covered with lice. We have been deloused many times, but I am still covered with lice.' He could not sleep for many weeks, and he had nightmares for many years ... My father spoke to me and to my brothers and sisters about what he had seen in the camp. He told us of the hanging gibbets. Human beings were put on hooks and hung from under their chins until they died. He told us that the people in charge of the camp rather liked tattoos, and they skinned people and used their skins to make lampshades. They discovered that, when people die, their skin is given to shrinking too quickly, so they tried skinning them alive. My father showed me photographs of piles of bodies on carts. Three weeks later, the allies had not had time to remove them all. He showed me photographs of men in thin clothes, photographs of skeletons, and photographs of men with haunted eyes. I will always remember the look in those men's eyes—the look of utter bewilderment and



incomprehension. They had been starved and beaten, yet their spirit was still there”.—[*Official Report*, Commons, 12/12/1989; col. 901.]

Ness and the nine other representatives of our Parliament did us a huge service by travelling to bear witness. The final paragraph of their report states:

“In preparing this report, we have endeavoured to write with restraint and objectivity, and to avoid obtruding personal reactions or emotional comments. We would conclude, however, by stating that it is our considered and unanimous opinion, on the evidence available to us, that a policy of steady starvation and inhuman brutality was carried out at Buchenwald for a long period of time; and that such camps as this mark the lowest point of degradation to which humanity has yet descended. The memory of what we saw and heard at Buchenwald will haunt us inefaceably for many years”.

In recent months, I have thought often of the parliamentarians who chose to travel to the camps to bear witness, who determined that reading testimony and watching Pathé News was not enough and who decided that they needed to be able personally to share their experiences of hell with our Parliament, the Government and future generations. It was in this spirit that I chose to go to Israel last month with Labour Friends of Israel on a solidarity mission to visit the site of yet another pogrom, to meet the survivors and hostage families, to see for myself the devastation and to be able to bear witness for the next generation.

The history of the Jewish community has been filled with too many chapters of pain and death. We are a very resilient community, but the human cost we have paid for our very existence is far too high. My generation was meant to read about the persecution of Jews in history books. Pogroms, death, torture, systematic killing and anti-Jewish propaganda were for my grandparents’ generation. I was meant to live in an enlightened world where humanity and human rights are protected and cherished. I honestly believed that I would never be speaking about a modern-day pogrom, yet that is what happened on 7 October in southern Israel.

I am still struggling to process everything I saw. I could spend the next hour telling your Lordships’ House about the horrors I saw and the survivors I met. I will not do so, but I want to share one story: the experiences of a young woman I met only weeks ago. In Tel Aviv, the survivors of the massacre at the Nova music festival have claimed a space and filled it with the remnants of the festival. A young woman who had survived the massacre joined us as we saw the burned-out cars, the festival toilets riddled with gun holes and the drinks fridges in which people hid from terrorists. She told us of the horrors that had happened in each part of the festival: of the young disabled girl who was burned alive with her father; of the people killed while hiding in toilets; of the running, the rapes, the shooting and the brutality.

They have recreated the lost property area of the festival. It is reminiscent of visiting Kanada at Auschwitz. Every item left behind in the lost property is now evidence of someone who died and has not been able to return to claim it. On screens throughout the venue, there were recordings of the party taken before the massacre—young people dancing and enjoying themselves before hell was unleashed. The images of their laughter

and joy are burned into my memory, because so few of them survived. Nova was a trance music festival. I did not even know what it was, but apparently Israel leads the world in trance music DJs. As we toured the exhibition, we listened to their music. I had to stop when one of the songs was a trance version of the Hatikvah, as I stood in the remnants of a massacre.

Our guide told us not just of her personal trauma on 7 October, and how her life was saved because her boyfriend made them flee five minutes before everyone else, but of what happened to her in the hours and days that followed. She spoke of watching on a video call her best friend running for her life, desperately trying to get away from the terrorists, and the moment of complete horror when she heard a shot and the call ended. She told me about how she struggled to get hold of her friends as the day progressed and her fear of not knowing who was alive and who was dead, as she hid in a house on the edge of the festival not knowing whether the terrorists were going to find them next.

Our guide explained that, in the days that followed, she had to choose which funerals to go to. She had lost 20 friends; her boyfriend had lost 45. There were too many funerals, and she could not attend them all. She could not say goodbye. Her story is one of thousands that happened on 7 October. Already, however, people are trying to downplay the attacks to distort the facts and claim lies and smears. It is our job to make sure people know what really happened.

To finish, I will touch on the anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim hate that has followed on our streets since 7 October. Not a day has gone past when members of our community are not scared. I am therefore so grateful to CST and its extensive network of volunteers, who are doing everything they can to try to keep us safe when others are trying to hurt us. There cannot be any room for bad faith actors who want to make political gain by exploiting the fear of those touched by 7 October and the awful war that has followed in Gaza. Together, we must resist the efforts to divide us.

As Holocaust Memorial Day has reminded us this year, our freedoms are all too fragile. There is a responsibility on all of us to do everything we can to protect and cherish them. The work of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the Holocaust Educational Trust do extraordinary work to remind us where the hate can lead. However, the onus is on us to listen and to act so that this time, “never again” really does mean never again.

11.01 am

**Lord Austin of Dudley (Non-Aff):** My Lords, it is a privilege to follow a moving and brilliant speech by the noble Baroness, Lady Anderson.

I will start by telling your Lordships about a 10 year-old Jewish boy from a town called Ostrava, in what was then Czechoslovakia. One night in March 1939, he was awoken by a noise in the street. He got out of bed, peered out the window and saw the German soldiers march into the town square. It was the night Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia. A few days later he was waved off on a train by his mum and teenage sisters. It was the last time he would see them: they were rounded

[LORD AUSTIN OF DUDLEY]

up and sent first to a ghetto, then to Theresienstadt, and finally to Treblinka, where they were murdered in October 1942.

That little boy arrived in the UK a few months before the noble Lord, Lord Dubs. When he arrived, he was able to speak only three words of English: “hot”, “cross” and “bun”. However, he grew up to become the youngest grammar school head teacher in the country, was honoured with an MBE for his work in education and charity, and brought up four children—of whom I am the second.

As noble Lords can imagine, I grew up hearing about the Holocaust from my parents, hearing about the suffering and the appalling cruelty, and the industrial nature of the slaughter. That left me with a lifelong conviction that prejudice leads to intolerance, then to victimisation and then to persecution, and that every one of us has a duty not to stand by but to make a difference—to fight discrimination, intolerance, bigotry and racism wherever we find it.

Every year, we have these debates and Holocaust commemorations. Every year, politicians pledge to combat anti-Jewish racism and proclaim “never again”, but look what we have seen over the past year. On 7 October, more Jewish people were killed on a single day than on any day since the Holocaust. This was not resistance or self-defence, as Hamas and its supporters claim. This was mass murder motivated by racial hatred, organised by anti-Semitic fascists committed to destroying the world’s only Jewish state and not just wiping out the Jewish people who live there but causing the genocide of Jewish people worldwide. The Hamas charter makes that absolutely clear. On campuses, on social media and even here in Parliament, we see history distorted with deliberate and offensive false equivalence drawn between what the Nazis did in the Holocaust and a democratic state defending its citizens.

Let us be really clear what we are commemorating today: this debate is to commemorate the Holocaust. It follows Holocaust Memorial Day last Saturday. That date—27 January—was chosen because it is the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, a death camp where 1.1 million people were murdered after being transported from all over Europe in cattle trucks. We are commemorating what happened there and at other death camps: the industrial slaughter of 6 million Jewish men, women and children, and the Nazis’ attempt to wipe out the Jewish people in their entirety. That is what the Holocaust was. It is very specific.

Yet this year, disgracefully, people and organisations have attempted to mark Holocaust Memorial Day without mentioning Jewish people at all. Even the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Scottish First Minister and some local authorities chose instead to waffle meaninglessly about general vague genocides. We have also seen messages from Holocaust charities and even survivors or their families besmirched by comments calling them Nazis or accusing them of supporting genocide, even as they carry out the solemn act of remembrance.

I believe—I am sure there is not a person in the House who does not—that the humanitarian disaster in Gaza is dreadful. War always is. The death of

innocent people is always devastating, and I want an end to the death and suffering as soon as possible. However dreadful it is, though, and however much pain and suffering there is, it is not genocide and it is not comparable to the Holocaust. In fact, drawing these comparisons is the latest form of Holocaust denial: not only does it minimise the industrial scale, the planning and the determination of the Nazis’ attempt to wipe out the Jewish people in their entirety but it is the latest attempt to accuse the victims of the Holocaust and the victims of genocide of being its perpetrators.

We have seen placards on the streets of London since 7 October at the so-called pro-Palestine demonstrations comparing Israeli policy to the final solution, comparing Israeli leaders to Hitler, and replacing or equating the Star of David with the swastika. On Holocaust Memorial Day itself, “Gaza Holocaust” was trending on social media. The poster advertising a demonstration in Glasgow scheduled for Holocaust Memorial Day said, “This Holocaust Memorial Day, join us as we protest the genocide in Gaza and demand that never again is now”. Claiming that Israel is committing genocide, calling Israelis Nazis, comparing the world’s only Jewish state to Hitler’s Germany or saying that Zionism is racism is not just completely untrue; they are appalling insults. What could be worse than smearing a country that Holocaust survivors helped set up as a safe haven after centuries of pogroms and persecution, and then the systematic attempt to wipe out the Jewish people in their entirety? What could be worse than comparing it to the Nazis?

Think about this: in the Middle East, half a million people have been killed in Syria, almost 400,000 have been killed in Yemen and almost a quarter of a million have been killed a little further away in Afghanistan. The victims of these conflicts are barely spoken about, are not on the news every night, and their deaths are certainly not labelled genocides or compared to the Holocaust. The perpetrators are not called Nazis. The charge of genocide and comparisons to Nazis are reserved for the Israelis because of the pain and grief this specific insult causes them.

As we heard from the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, within hours of the attacks on 7 October—even as people lay dying and before the bodies of the dead had been recovered—people were celebrating on the streets of London. People were justifying or supporting the attacks. We see marches every Saturday and anti-Semitism on the streets of London. I have been down to look at some of those marches for myself. You see lots of signs calling for Israel to be eradicated; you do not see any calling for peace, for Gaza to be freed from Hamas or for the release of the hostages.

There were people chanting about a massacre of Jews by a Muslim army and a mob outside Downing Street calling for Hamas to bomb Tel Aviv. No one is marching in London every Saturday for victims of slaughter in Yemen, Syria, Somalia or Sudan. I am not saying that everyone who joins these marches is a racist, of course, but if the only country you march and protest against just happens to be the only Jewish one, do not tell me you are not an anti-Semite.

As the noble Baroness, Lady Anderson, did, I want to thank the Community Security Trust for its work to protect the Jewish community and fight anti-Semitism. Sadly, since 7 October, that work has never been more important. Last week in north London, a man with a knife attacked a kosher supermarket. What did he say to the visibly Jewish staff? “What’s your side? Where do you stand on Israel and Palestine?” Restaurants and synagogues have been vandalised. The noble Lord, Lord Polak, and I met a group of students here in Parliament only yesterday. We heard how they have been subject to racist abuse, been targeted on campus and are scared to show religious symbols on their way to lectures, as are pupils on their way to school. Anti-Semitic incidents referencing the Holocaust have increased by over 100% in 2023. According to the CST, incidents involving Holocaust denial also rose by 268% on the year before. All this tells us why the work of organisations like the CST and the Holocaust Educational Trust is so important.

We need to teach people very specifically and clearly about the racism and the truth of the Holocaust. We need to be clear about the nature of anti-Semitism that led to this greatest tragedy. Yes, of course, it was a human tragedy, but people were not herded into the gas chambers because they were human beings; they were human beings who were herded into the gas chambers because they were Jewish.

This is not genocide memorial day; this is Holocaust Memorial Day. It is not too much to ask to have just one day in a whole year that is reserved for the commemoration of history’s greatest crime, and to give us the opportunity to pay our respects to its victims. It would be a wonderful thing to have a genocide memorial day to commemorate the victims of other atrocities. Of course I would support that and help organise it. However, that is not what Holocaust Memorial Day is about. I have always felt strongly about this. When I go to events, I see equivalence drawn between the Holocaust and other terrible atrocities. I have always thought about this, but it is particularly important this year because of the false comparisons that we have seen drawn that I listed earlier.

I ask the Minister to ensure that we commemorate the Holocaust properly and specifically, that she will ensure that government-sponsored events commemorate the Holocaust properly, and that the new memorial and learning centre she is leading concentrates on the Holocaust properly and specifically. I also ask her what steps the Government will take to support proposals for a Jewish history week or month, so that people can learn about the contribution Jewish people have made to our country and the whole world, and so that Jewish people are not seen merely and purely as victims. What more can the Government do to support wider teaching on racism and the Holocaust? We need all this because we need people to understand that the Holocaust did not start with gas chambers and the industrial slaughter of 6 million people; it started with words, speeches, prejudice and hatred. It started with conspiracy theories and scapegoats. It started with communities being divided and people being singled out and bullied on the basis of how they worshipped, what they looked like, or their race and religion. That is how it always starts.

In conclusion, as we honour of the memory of the people who were murdered and pay tribute to the survivors, let us pledge again to fight anti-Semitism, prejudice, racism and bigotry wherever it is found, because that is the best tribute any of us can pay to the memory of those who were killed in history’s greatest crime.

11.14 am

**Lord Polak (Con):** My Lords, it is a great honour to follow the noble Lord, Lord Austin. I first pay tribute to the Minister for the way she introduced this debate. To the noble Lord, Lord Dubs: I have no adequate words for your heroism. The noble Baroness, Lady Anderson, spoke so bravely and importantly. She will know, as many Members of this House will know, that in *Yad Vashem* there is an avenue of the righteous. I am sure as a fellow Jew she will concur with me that as for the speeches we have heard so far from the noble Baroness, Lady Ludford, and the noble Lords, Lord Stevens, Lord Pickles and Lord Austin—they are all members of that avenue of the righteous. I pay tribute to them all. As I have said a number of times, it is on a day like this that we miss the late Lord Sacks, who would have known exactly what to say.

The horrors of the past cast long shadows over our present. Although we commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day annually, this year, as has been said, we not only reflect on the enduring scars of the atrocities of the Holocaust, but we mourn and grapple with the anguish caused by Hamas’s barbaric massacre on 7 October, which the noble Baroness, Lady Anderson, described. It was an unprecedented anti-Semitic attack marking a dark chapter reminiscent of the Holocaust itself.

The Holocaust stands as an indelible mark on human history, a stark reminder of the depths to which humanity can descend when prejudice, hatred and discrimination go unchallenged. The testimonies of survivors echo through time, urging us to ensure that such atrocities never find a place in our world again. Yet, as we stand today, we find ourselves struggling to comprehend how, once more, the Jewish people are confronted with ominous signs of history repeating itself.

Our commitment to “never again” feels rather fragile and shallow. Our pledge must extend beyond rhetoric; it demands tangible actions. As I stated in this Chamber just last week, a few days after 7 October, I had a phone call from my daughter. She said, “Grandpa, do you love your grandchildren?” I said, “Natasha, what do you mean?” She said, “Should we send them to school?” That is a Jewish state school in Finchley in 2024, and my family are scared to send their children—my grandchildren—to school.

In an era where social media—and unfortunately, in some cases, the mainstream news outlets—are rife with misinformation, education remains a powerful weapon in our arsenal against ignorance and prejudice. By teaching the lessons of history, we empower the next generation to build a world rooted in tolerance, understanding and respect. In preparation for today’s debate, I was shown a short speech delivered by a young pupil from Immanuel College, who spoke at a Holocaust Memorial Day assembly at school. I believe it is instructive and appropriate to share the insights of

[LORD POLAK]

this young student, Sammy Barnett, who is sitting here with us in the Gallery today with his teacher, Mr Stephen Levey. Sammy's perspective offers a first-hand account of the transformative power of learning. His experiences illuminate the impact that well-crafted education can have on shaping minds, fostering a future marked by compassion and unity. I will now read some of his words:

"My name is Sammy Barnett and in November, I went on the Immanuel College Year 12 Poland trip. I would like to share some reflections with you. Before the trip I was told that it would be life changing. Being so young, I could not understand how this could be. But it was!

I would like to take you to the second day of the trip when we visited the Treblinka extermination camp. I quickly noticed the differences between an extermination camp as opposed to a concentration camp in that the sole purpose of it was to murder all those who were sent there. Over 850,000 Jewish people were murdered there in a span of only 11 months, yet there were no remnants of the camp, except for—stones. Knowing all of this, I quietly walked around Treblinka reflecting on what had taken place here. I looked at all the stones; each one representing a destroyed community. Each one a village, town or city where there was a Jewish community and where the Jewish people were murdered. It would have been hard enough had each stone represented a person, but that was not the case. Each stone represented whole communities, each one its own universe. In 1943, once it had fulfilled its purpose Treblinka was destroyed by the Nazis to remove the evidence that there was once an extermination camp. I could not come to terms with the fact that the average stay for a person at Treblinka was 42 minutes. And that we were here standing on where hundreds of thousands were murdered, was truly humbling.

Then, at the closing ceremony one of the teachers on the trip (Mr Levey) spoke about a survivor who he knew well—Alec Ward. He told us that Alec had survived the Holocaust but had lost every member of his family. My teacher said that Alec was often asked the question, Do you hate the Nazis for what they did to you? His response was always the same: 'I implore you not to hate, as if I had hated the Nazis as much as they hated me, I would never have survived'.

These thoughts weighed heavily on my mind and even more so when we visited Majdanek concentration camp the following day. Majdanek is 5 kilometres from the centre of the Polish city of Lublin and upon arrival we all noticed the stark contrast between Majdanek and Treblinka. In Treblinka, nothing was there, only the echoes of what had been. But in Majdanek you felt as if it were still almost functioning, as the gas chamber and crematorium are still standing. Whilst there, sitting parallel to the gas chambers, my legs began to shake, my eyes began to swell up and I reflected on the words of Alec Ward. Whilst sadness was a prevalent emotion, I felt extreme hatred towards all those who perpetrated the crimes in their attempt to wipe out all of the Jewish people. I was feeling this nearly 80 years later and I was perplexed how a man who experienced it all (and survived) didn't feel any of the hatred that I did.

I left the chambers crying and we were given time for contemplation. The teacher who had spoken about Alec (Mr Levey) saw me crying and came over. I told him that I thought that I was not old enough to experience what I had seen these past few days. I could not understand how all of this had occurred and I was unable to deal with my emotions. He told me that 'nobody is ever old enough to understand. It is impossible to wrap our heads around what happened here 80 years ago and with all that is going on in Israel, we have to try and understand it as best as we can so as to ensure it is not repeated.' I then started to realise why a visit like this to Poland was life changing and the importance of retelling the stories so that history does not repeat itself".

He went on:

"I was in Israel for the festival of succot and I was trapped for a few days unable to leave. The 7th of October is a day I will simply never forget as long as I live; everything was just so

different. Hearing the sirens (and for those who have heard it before know) it's one of the scariest and most gutwrenching noises you will experience. Your heart almost feels like it's down to your stomach and you feel sick; as if there is a hole there. The noise of the rockets exploding overhead as they are knocked out of the sky by the Iron Dome sent shivers down my spine. It's something I wish nobody would have to experience. It was with this background that only a few weeks later I landed in Warsaw with my Immanuel College teachers and friends.

So how do I feel now? After being in Poland and seeing the depths to which humanity sank and hearing about the barbarism of Hamas, at times my faith has wavered, and I find myself asking how could a benevolent God allow such atrocities to happen? But then, when I really think about it, we, the Jewish people have gone through tragic times and yet we are still here today. When we look back at the history of the Jewish people, in every generation we have been oppressed or persecuted, but we have not just survived, we have flourished. In times like this I believe, there is nothing more important than turning to God ... speaking and praying to Him.

It is my personal prayer to God, that during this fighting, there will soon be an end to this conflict, with a secure and lasting peace in the state of Israel. I hope you can all join me in praying for this outcome".

Sammy's testimony and eloquence serve as a poignant expression of the transformative power of education and the importance of remembering and of educating our youth. As we reflect on the horrors of the Holocaust and the recent attack, we are faced with the stark reality that the echoes of hatred and intolerance persist.

Alec Ward, whom Sammy mentioned, was a very much-loved member of my community. Sammy was right: he showered everyone with love and spoke to us all regularly about his experience. He was born on 1 March 1927, in Lublin, and passed away in 2018; he was a special man. His essence was summed up after his death by Karen Pollock, the chief executive of the Holocaust Educational Trust. She said:

"Alec Ward was a wonderful man. He dedicated his life to ensuring the world remembered what happened during the Holocaust, reliving his most painful memories to ensure that the horrors of the past would not be forgotten. He had a warmth and kindness that shone through, even when talking about the darkest of times".

For Stephen Levey and I, and the rest of our community in Borehamwood, the special tune he used to sing at festivals in the synagogue—the tune from his shtetl from when he was a child—is still with us to this day and will remain with us for ever.

Today, we are united in commemorating the victims of the Holocaust and honouring the resilience of those who endured. Let us heed Sammy's call for action. Education, as is exemplified by his journey, remains the most potent weapon against ignorance and prejudice. It is incumbent on us to impart the lessons of history and to cultivate a world rooted in tolerance, understanding and respect for human dignity—something that seems lost and foreign right now. May Sammy's prayer for a secure and lasting peace in the whole of the Middle East and throughout the world resonate with us all. In the face of adversity, let our commitment to "never again" extend beyond rhetoric to tangible actions that promote a future free from the shadows of hatred and discrimination.

11.27 am

**Lord Bilimoria (CB):** My Lords, I am a member of one of the smallest, if not the smallest, religious communities in the world, the Zoroastrian Parsis.

People often ask, “Who?”. I say, “Freddie Mercury, of Queen”. They say, “Ah!”. I add, “Zubin Mehta, the conductor, and the Tatas”. “Oh!”, they say. We total less than 100,000 people in the whole world. We emigrated to India from Persia from the 8th century onwards to escape persecution and forced conversion to Islam.

In many respects, history is comprised of threads that bind memories of the distant past with the present day. What connects modern aspects of faith with the religion of Cyrus the Great and Xerxes? The British Empire was the largest empire the world has ever known, but it is estimated that, in 480 BC, 50 million people lived in the Achaemenid Empire—approximately 44% of the world’s population at the time. That figure would make the Persian Empire the largest ever in history in terms of the percentage of the world’s population at the time.

We see Cyrus as “Cyrus the Great”, the harbinger of one of the greatest empires of the ancient world. He is known for two things. The first is the Cyrus cylinder, perhaps the first recognisable model legal instrument. In the United Kingdom, of course, we consider the Magna Carta as having played a vital role. When I show people around Parliament, I always point out the facsimile of the Salisbury copy of the Magna Carta in the Sovereign’s Robing Room. Of course, in terms of European history the Magna Carta is old: 1215. In 2015, as co-chair of the Zoroastrian APPG, to celebrate the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta I held an event comparing Magna Carta with Cyrus’s cylinder. People rightly consider Magna Carta to be the first Bill of Rights, but it is very new in comparison with Cyrus’s cylinder, which was created around 539 BC.

The cylinder notes the most important aspects of Cyrus’s humility and tolerance, which form vital aspects of the entire tradition of the Zoroastrian faith. This is especially important when you consider the role that Cyrus played, not just in the protection but the act of promotion of many different religions and faiths that flourished in the Persian Empire during this time. He cites his building projects in territories he conquered:

“I rebuilt sanctuaries and chapels that lay in ruins. The deities of Sumer and Akkad that Nabonidus had, to the fury of the people, brought to Shuanna, I returned unharmed to their rightful sanctuaries. I have returned all the deities to their sanctuaries and restored their temples”.

Therefore, it is rightly seen as a major artefact in world history, representing the first detailed look at statecraft within a multiethnic society. There is also a direct link between the protection and patronage of the Zoroastrian community under Cyrus and the role that it enjoys in India, the United Kingdom and the world today.

Cyrus is also known for his magnanimity, a specific example being the refuge he gave to the Jews in Egypt. The Old Testament and the Torah both note this. I quote from a passage in the Book of Ezra:

“Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah”.

He was determined to ensure that the territories he conquered—often lands that had been under the domination of other empires—had their traditional forms of worship and religious practices restored to

the people who lived there. Babylonians and Jews alike considered Cyrus as being on a mission from their individual concept of God.

This country has, I believe, always been a truly pluralist, secular country where all religions are not just allowed to practise their beliefs, and not just tolerated, but are increasingly celebrated. With less than 1% of the world’s population, the UK is still the sixth-largest economy in the world, and that would not be the case without the economic and cultural contribution of our ethnic minority communities, including the Jewish community.

The Jewish community around the world numbers 16 million, out of 8 billion people on this planet—and look at the contribution it has made and makes every single day in every single field, whether in politics, business, the arts or the professions. As the noble Baroness, Lady Scott, said in her excellent opening speech, in spite of this, we have anti-Semitism at its highest level ever since 7 October, with 20,000 incidents, and this is happening around the world. Children are scared to go to school. As chancellor of the University of Birmingham, I know that Jewish students are worried about persecution at university. We have heard about Mike Freer, Minister and MP, standing down out of fear and the horrible persecution inflicted upon him. What is going on? How can we tolerate and allow all this anti-Semitism and, quite frankly, Jew-hating? This cannot take place.

The best way to predict the future is to look to the past. To put things into perspective, it was 80 years from the end of the US Civil War, when the country nearly destroyed itself, to World War II. It is now 80 years since the end of World War II, the Nazi regime’s genocide and the horror of the Holocaust. Six million Jews were brutally murdered. Visiting Auschwitz—we heard the superb speech of the noble Lord, Lord Polak—is something you never forget. You constantly think, “How can anyone do this to another human being?” When I visited Yad Vashem, both the best and the worst museum I have ever visited in my life, the horrors were revealed and explained. That is why, when you leave Yad Vashem, you say, “Never again”. All our children must learn about the Holocaust from a very early age: from primary school all the way until they finish school. Can the Minister assure us that that is happening in every single school in this land?

In October 2022, I was invited on an official visit to Bangladesh, and the first event I spoke at was at the Liberation War Museum. My late father, Lieutenant-General Bilimoria, who retired as commander-in-chief of the central army in India, commanded, as a lieutenant-colonel, the 2nd/5th Gurkha Rifles (Frontier Force) in the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971. As a boy, I remember my father telling me of the horrors he had witnessed, the stories he had heard, the bravery of the freedom fighters—the Mukti Bahini, many of whom were teenagers fighting for their freedom—and the horrors inflicted by West Pakistan on East Pakistan. It was nothing short of genocide. The Minister spoke of the genocides in Cambodia and Rwanda that have taken place since the Second World War and the Holocaust, this being the 30th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide. Surely,

[LORD BILIMORIA]

we should recognise what happened in what is today Bangladesh as genocide. Does the Minister agree? Can she assure us that our new Holocaust memorial, our new museum, will be as impressive and effective as Yad Vashem and the Liberation War Museum in Bangladesh?

In May last year I was a member of the House of Lords' delegation to Israel, organised by ELNET. We came away from that visit completely deflated and disappointed with the political situation in Israel. Our visit to the West Bank filled us with disappointment at the situation with Fatah and the Palestinian Authority—no elections, and Fatah not talking to Hamas. We spent a whole day on the Gaza border. We also learned that young Palestinians have no faith in or respect for their leadership. That day on the Gaza border when we visited the Kerem Shalom crossing is one I will never forget. To think that not for one minute were we worried about the security in Israel. Not one of us predicted that just a few months later would come the horrors of 7 October, the pogrom committed by Hamas, the brutal murder, rape and torture—worse than anyone's worst nightmare. It was brutality beyond belief, with 1,200 innocent Israelis killed and thousands more wounded, and over 240 hostages taken, including Holocaust survivors and babies.

Hamas's objective is pure genocide: wiping out the State of Israel. What has happened since 7 October has been tragic: tens of thousands of innocent men, women and children killed and wounded in Gaza. The hostages are still there—over 130 of them. They must be released now. Israel is still trying to remove Hamas and free the people of Gaza from its terror, yet the Hamas leadership have said that what happened on 7 October, it will do again.

Recently I met Jamal Nusseibeh, a Palestinian-American lawyer who has a PhD from Columbia University. He is a barrister, trained in the UK, and was a professor at Al-Quds University in Jerusalem for a number of years. On 6 January he wrote an excellent article in *Time* magazine entitled "Only U.S.-Led Intervention Can Bring Peace to the Middle East", in which he said:

"The current humanitarian and political disaster unfolding in Israel and the Palestinian territories requires immediate international intervention ... the U.S. should lead a multilateral peace-keeping force, with regional Arab and international allies, to physically intervene in Gaza and the West Bank and end hostilities within a political framework which will resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. While this may sound far-fetched, it is the only realistic solution to a long-standing and intractable problem, and it would be in U.S. interests".

Is it not ironic? There we were in May, when we thought a two-state solution would never happen, yet the horrors of 7 October and the four months since then could actually lead to a two-state solution that will bring peace to the region, peace to Israel, the creation of a Palestinian state, and democracy and security for all. We in the UK have a major part to play in this. We might not be a superpower anymore but we are a global power. We are at the top table of the world, whether at the UN Security Council P5, the G7, the G20 or NATO.

I conclude with this. I was very fortunate to have known Archbishop Desmond Tutu. We were fellow fellows at Sidney Sussex College, my college at Cambridge, and at Kellogg College at Oxford. We used to address each other in our correspondence as "Fellow fellow". I once said to him, "You knew Nelson Mandela really well. What was so great about Nelson Mandela? What made him so special? What made him such a great leader?" He said that Nelson Mandela was magnanimous. Cyrus the Great was magnanimous.

This week, on 30 January, we remembered Mahatma Gandhi, because that was the day that he was assassinated. My grandmother, Rati Bilimoria, was in the house next door—I have known about that from my childhood. That one man stood against the British Empire and he defeated it because he believed in might versus right. He believed in non-violence and said, "I am prepared to die, but there is no cause for which I am prepared to kill".

We say "never again", but history keeps repeating itself. We must stop this violence. Shalom means peace. The vast majority of Muslims and Jews want peace, and we have to strive for peace in the Middle East right now. We have to believe in it. As Mahatma Gandhi said, our beliefs become our thoughts, our thoughts become our words, our words become our actions, our actions become our habits and our habits form our character. This time, in commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day 2024, we must believe "never again" more than ever.

11.41 am

**Baroness Smith of Newnham (LD):** My Lords, it is an honour and a privilege to participate in this incredibly important debate. I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Scott, for opening it and for the care with which she did so, discussing not only the Holocaust but the present-day situation. I associate myself with the comments of the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, that we ought to think about making this an annual debate because, as we have heard from right across the Chamber, it is vital that we never forget, yet we have also heard from right across the Chamber how bad we are that we seem to forget and we seem to repeat.

Before I say what I plan to say, I pay particular tribute to the noble Lord, Lord Dubs, as everyone would expect. We all know him in this House and the important contribution he has made to our country, but he also reminds us of the importance of those people who came as refugees as children. I also pay tribute to the noble Lord, Lord Austin, for his personal memories, and the noble Baroness, Lady Anderson, for reading the words of Ness Edwards, because they were so moving. However many Holocaust memorial books and memoirs I have read, I have never heard some of those points, so that has been incredibly important. Putting it on the record is vital.

I particularly thank the noble Lord, Lord Polak, for giving us the words of Sammy Barnett. I think the convention in your Lordships' House is that I am not supposed to address somebody who is not a Member in this Chamber, so I will do so in a very convoluted way. I thank the noble Lord, Lord Polak, for reading the words of Sammy Barnett, which were so moving: a

young person of today, so moved by the events of 80 years ago that he can still bring a shiver to our spines by reminding us of the horrors of the Holocaust, of extermination and the concentration camps. It is truly moving and truly horrific. We have a duty to ensure that we fight in our words, in our actions and with our characters, as the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, put it, to make sure “never again” becomes not an empty phrase but something we can all live by.

The noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, mentioned the importance of education. I am a Roman Catholic. My co-religionists have not always been as pro-Jewish as they might have been. I had in my Catholic primary school some very good teaching, and I remember what one of my Catholic teachers in my infant school, when I would have been six or seven. She would not have used the word “anti-Semitic” to six year-olds, but she said, “Jesus was a Jew, and we need to remember that”. From the age of six, I understood the importance of being—is the word a “Semitophile”? That is, I understood how important it was to treat each and every Jewish person with the same respect as I would anybody else. At various times I have said to people how important it is that we ensure we respect all our Jewish friends and colleagues. Education, even for six year-olds, can be hugely important, and I am very grateful to that teacher for ensuring that I could be slightly more open-minded than the average six year-old in a Catholic community might have been at the time.

Education is so important. From a certain generation onwards in the United Kingdom, I think we all learned about the Holocaust. I learned about Kristallnacht when I was about 10 and was made to read the diary of Anne Frank at secondary school. I say “made to read” because it was a text that we were given as English literature. Why it counted as English literature I am not quite sure, given that Anne Frank did not write in English and it was in some ways appropriate not so much for English literature as for history. I was born in 1969. How recent was that history when I was reading about the life of Anne Frank?

Last night, I watched the film that was made in 1959 based on Anne Frank’s diaries, which had been curated by her father. I say to Sammy and anybody else who feels they are too young to look at what happened in Treblinka or at Auschwitz that those people who lived through confinement and then moved to the concentration camps were sometimes very young. Anne Frank was only 15 when she died. In her diary, she talked about the changes in her life and said, “We couldn’t do this and we couldn’t do that, but life goes on”. Of course, tragically for Anne Frank, most of her family and 6 million other Jews, life did not go on.

As part of the legacy of the Holocaust, we have, through Raphael Lemkin, the definition of genocide. With all respect to the noble Lord, Lord Austin, I hope that your Lordships will feel it appropriate to mention two other genocides. I note that the Holocaust Educational Trust says that Holocaust Memorial Day encourages us to remember the 6 million Jewish men, women and children murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators during the Holocaust, but also to remember all those affected by subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

I put my name down to speak because the genocide in Rwanda was 30 years ago. At the time, I was a graduate student in Oxford, writing about the European Parliament. I was visiting a friend in Italy in 1994, and she had invited to tea a Catholic priest from Rwanda. He said to me, “Please do something about what is happening in my country. You’re involved in politics. Do something”. I was 24. Yes, I was a member of a political party, but I was not a Member of the European Parliament, I was studying it. What could I do?

The honest answer is that I did nothing. I thought, “Shall I write to somebody?” But I did not. I felt helpless. Thirty years on, I still feel a sense of culpability—that somebody said, “Do something for my country, where there is a genocide”. So one thing that is so important is that when someone has a platform and the ability to stand up and be counted, they should do it.

So not only must we remember the Holocaust but we must pay tribute to those people who have died in subsequent genocides. I hope that, when I stand up in your Lordships’ House and talk about China and the Muslims in Xinjiang, as I sometimes do, there is a reason for doing that: genocide still persists and we need to be willing to stand up and be counted. As my noble friend Lady Ludford pointed out, we need to stand up and support our Jewish friends and those in Israel who are facing unimaginable horrors—but we need to stand up also for those who face genocide elsewhere in this world right now.

Finally, I will mention a visit that I made to Srebrenica in 2021. More than a quarter of a century after the genocide against Bosniak Muslim men and boys, the mothers in particular still weep for their sons. They are still trying to find the relics of their sons, because one of the most horrible things that was done was not just the killing of those men and boys but the dismemberment, because, if you did not bury a whole body, it would be much harder for anybody later to identify the corpse. There are families still looking to find another bone of their lost relative. Genocide is not just about those who are killed. It is about all of those who are affected by it: mothers, brothers, sisters, children and grandchildren. All of them can be affected by genocide.

Our Jewish friends in the state of Israel have all been marked by the Holocaust. We keep hearing, “Never again”. We must make sure that we all stand up to be counted and do whatever we can to stop genocide and crimes against humanity wherever they are. We must ensure that anti-Semitic crimes and Islamophobia are eliminated in this country as soon as possible.

11.53 am

**The Lord Bishop of London:** My Lords, I start by thanking noble Lords for their contributions to this debate, and in particular those to whom the Holocaust and anti-Semitism continue to give deep, personal pain. I know that not only speaking in but listening to this debate will cause them greater concern and pain, so I thank them so much. It is a particular honour to follow the noble Lord, Lord Dubs, and the noble Baroness, Lady Anderson, whom I thank so much for what they said.

[THE LORD BISHOP OF LONDON]

Last week, it was my privilege to be at the ceremony for Holocaust Memorial Day at the Guildhall in the City, along with a number of noble Lords. Those who were there could not help but be moved by the stories that people recalled. We recalled the murder of so many people in not only the Holocaust but the other genocides since: Darfur, Rwanda, Bosnia and Cambodia, to name but a few: each person loved; each person known; each person missed and each person grieved for. Their loss makes the world a poorer place, even decades later.

The Chief Rabbi reminded us of the fragility of freedom. He said that with freedom from captivity and death comes freedom to be, and that with freedom to be comes responsibility. As we have heard, the Holocaust did not just happen. Genocide does not just happen. It happens slowly, step and step, and begins with words and polarisation. It can be easy to move from, “This is my view and that is your view”, to “I am right and you are wrong. I am good and you are evil”. There is a risk that we hunker down with our own and, in consolidating our sense of belonging within our own communities—of whatever kind—we differentiate ourselves from others and set ourselves apart.

We can live on terms that set us apart from others. Dangerously, we can begin to decide to whom human rights apply and to whom they do not. Hate speech can move to the violent isolation of those who hold different views or are from different ethnicities, races and religions. Discrimination and dehumanisation can move to persecution based on identity and belief. We in your Lordships’ House know that this is not right and that we have a responsibility to play our part in preventing it.

It has been suggested that perhaps one of the most influential texts in modern political history is the *imago dei*. This is a theology term, applied uniquely to humans, that denotes the symbolic relationship between God and humanity, made in the image of God. The term has its roots in Genesis, chapter 1:

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them”.

This scriptural passage, shared by both Christians and Jews, does not mean that we are carbon copies of God—rather that humans reflect God and are in the image of God in their moral, spiritual and intellectual nature. To see others as made in the image of God means that I see them not just as I see them but in the light of God, who created them. It gives me a responsibility to see them with an inherent value and dignity. That recognition liberates us not only to reach out in support of others but to stand with them and see our mutuality and interdependence, of which the noble Baroness, Lady Ludford, spoke.

Despite the *imago dei* being one of the most important being philosophical legacies in western culture, it is still in western culture that the Holocaust happened and anti-Semitism continues to happen. Freedom remains fragile. It is not enough for us to mark Holocaust Memorial Day; we have a responsibility to challenge prejudice, hatred and the actions that lead to them in our communities, in wider society and, yes, in our parliamentary system. Each year, I mark Holocaust

Memorial Day by listening to personal accounts of man’s inhumanity to man. However, in the midst of those accounts, I also see the best of humanity. It is the best of humanity that lights a candle in the darkness; the darkness will not overcome that. We have a responsibility to act. Let us not shrink from it.

11.58 am

**Baroness Ramsay of Cartvale (Lab):** My Lords, it is always such a sobering privilege to make a speech in the Holocaust Memorial Day debate and to think of the millions of people we are trying to honour in remembrance of their lives. It gives us an opportunity to pay tribute to the marvellous work done in Britain by the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the Holocaust Educational Trust, and to all the activities that are undertaken, including by the magnificent Holocaust survivors, who sadly are decreasing in number. They are all united in trying to convey to the present generations why “never again” are such vital words in trying to prevent the recurrence of the great evil of anti-Semitism.

This year of all years, as the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, mentioned in his speech, these words have never sounded so hollow but, at the same time, so important—hollow because the evil of anti-Semitism is creeping out of its hiding places again. As always, it takes many forms, but as a daughter of a Jewish mother, with family in Israel, I can hear, see and smell anti-Semitism whenever it appears. The late former Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, said that:

“In the Middle Ages Jews were hated for their religion. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century they were hated for their race. Today they are hated for their nation state, Israel”, and that

“anti-Zionism is the new antisemitism”.

I am surprised at the surprise evinced by so many about UNRWA’s close relationship with Hamas. Many have known about it for years. One has only to read the schoolbooks in the UNRWA schools. Israel is rarely mentioned by name; it is called the Jewish Zionist occupier or some such. There have been many Nazi-like caricatures of Jews in these books. Just yesterday, a report went into the UN about 3,000 UNRWA teachers on some chat group who celebrated 7 October. Of course, there are decent and honest people—Palestinians as well as foreigners—working in Gaza health and education ministries, in the hospitals and the schools, with the best of motives. But the iron hand of Hamas is absolute in Gaza. There have been increasing questions about UNRWA’s role in perpetuating rather than resolving the Palestine refugee problem. This is not the place nor the time to go into more details about this subject, but I hope we can soon have an opportunity in this House to discuss all that.

Today, I end with heartfelt thanks and expressions of gratitude to all the splendid people who dedicate themselves to keeping the flame of remembrance of the Holocaust and its lessons alive and bright, for present and future generations to be informed and galvanised to take action.

12.04 pm

**Lord Davies of Brixton (Lab):** My Lords, it is an honour to take part in this debate and to listen to everyone’s contributions. We are, of course, particularly



affected by the testimony of my noble friend Lord Dubs, but all speakers have posed questions that for most of us like myself, who have had a life free of the sort of discrimination faced by too many people, make us ask, “What are we doing about the issue?”. That is the purpose of Holocaust Memorial Day. It is an issue of considerable gravity and historical significance because it relates to the Holocaust.

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust’s website sets out:

“Holocaust Memorial Day is the day for everyone to remember the millions of people murdered in the Holocaust, under Nazi Persecution, and in the genocides which followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur”.

Clearly, we have to pay tribute to the work of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the Holocaust Educational Trust for the amazing, extraordinary and dedicated work that they do. One of the key objectives, as set out in the *Statement of Commitment for Holocaust Memorial Day*, is:

“We pledge to strengthen our efforts to promote education and research about the Holocaust and other genocides. We will do our utmost to make sure that the lessons of such events are fully learnt”.

Clearly, this is a continuing task, a continual battle.

There is no question but that the Holocaust stands out in human history, when the systematic persecution and extermination of 6 million Jews took place under the Nazi regime during World War II. That is why, as a number of speakers have said, we must ensure that “never again” does not become a matter of ritual and is kept firmly in our minds and passed on to our children and our children’s children, echoing down the ages. For all of us, the Holocaust has to serve as a stark reminder of the consequences of hatred, discrimination and the erosion of basic human rights.

It is essential that, in addition to what other noble Lords have said, as well as spending time remembering victims, we remember the bravery of those who resisted the oppression and sought to protect the values of humanity. I take the opportunity of this debate to mention the courageous role played by trade unionists during those dark times. The Holocaust Day Memorial Trust points out that, on assuming power, the first people the Nazis targeted for arrest and imprisonment were political opponents, primarily communists, socialists and trade unionists. Dachau, one of the first Nazi concentration camps, opened in March 1933 to imprison political opponents, including trade unionists. Trade unions were disbanded in May 1933 and union leaders were arrested and incarcerated, or fled into exile. By the end of 1933, almost 27,000 people were imprisoned in concentration camps, the majority of whom were political prisoners.

Trade unionists played a crucial and perhaps overlooked role during the Holocaust. Driven by a commitment to justice and solidarity, they stood against the tyranny of the Nazi regime. They were aware that the principles of fairness, equality and workers’ rights were under direct threat. Despite the dangers they faced, many trade unionists defied the oppressive forces and resisted the erosion of the very fabric of society. They provided shelter, forged documents and facilitated escapes, risking their own lives to defy the Nazi authorities. The lesson for us now is how the courage and resilience of these trade unionists set a model for us to follow, to

exert the power of collective action and the importance of standing up against injustice. We all have to ask ourselves what we would have done in those circumstances. They provide an inspiration that perhaps we could have joined in the fight—a fight that continues now.

When we reflect on the Holocaust and the contributions of the trade unionists, we must all renew our commitment to safeguard human rights, promote equality, and resist discrimination in all its forms. The lessons of history have to inspire us to be vigilant against the seeds of hatred and intolerance, and to foster a world where the principles of justice and solidarity prevail.

The theme of this year’s Holocaust Memorial Day is to highlight the importance of protecting freedom. Will the Minister provide the House with an update on how the Government are supporting greater awareness that events leading to genocide can be subtle, and of the importance that we all recognise the conditions that can lead to persecution?

12.10 pm

**Baroness Brinton (LD) [V]:** My Lords, it is a pleasure to follow the noble Lord, Lord Davies of Brixton. This year’s theme, the fragility of freedom, is very poignant and relevant, and I join in with the thanks for the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the Holocaust Educational Trust for their vital work in ensuring that we never forget the scourge and horror of the Nazi Holocaust of the Jews and other groups of people in the Second World War. I thank them and others, including the group Protection Approaches and the Lords Library, for their briefings. Along with other Peers, I pay tribute to the noble Lord, Lord Dubs. His voice and life are an example to us all.

The noble Baroness, Lady Scott, talked of the importance of recognising the 10 stages of genocide, both in the past but also in our modern-day world. I pay my respects to the 6 million Jews who were murdered by the Nazis because of who they were, what they believed, and the community they came from. Voices from the past, such as Anne Frank, can continue to tell their story to new young generations, as the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, reminded us. We, our children and our grandchildren, must never forget. The voices of survivors have been vital, and this year we heard of the death of Sir Ben Helfgott. He spoke both of his experiences as a child in Buchenwald and Terezin, but also of his life after he arrived in the UK, and how he recovered—but never forgot—and helped others. His life and achievements were extraordinary. May his memory be a blessing.

In my contribution this morning, I will look at three of the other groups who were destroyed by the Nazis in the Holocaust, and how their fragility of freedom continues to this day.

Over the night of 2 to 3 August 1944, 2,897 Roma and Sinti people, mostly women and children, were killed at Auschwitz; 2 August is the day that the Gypsy, Roma and Sinti people mark their memorial, but it is important that we remember them too today. It is estimated that up to 500,000 Roma and Sinti people were murdered or died as a result of starvation or disease during World War II. Many more were used as forced labour, or subject to sterilisation or medical experimentation.

[BARONESS BRINTON]

Today, the Gypsy and Roma community faces a very fragile future across Europe. Last autumn, research by the EU Council found that members of the community were suffering shocking amounts of bullying in the education system, prejudiced reporting by the media and threats to their legal status and rights, including as a result of recent legislative changes. We too in the UK have had legislation that affects the legal status and rights of our Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community, and research also shows that GRT children are the most bullied community in our schools.

Hitler murdered 250,000 physically or intellectually disabled people in the T4 programme. People ask where God was in the Holocaust, but Pastor Martin Niemöller's longer 1946 version of his famous confession, which starts

"First they came for the Communists",

says:

"Then they did away with the sick, the so-called incurables".

He wrote and spoke movingly about how his church initially supported the Nazis in euthanasia, then slowly realised it was wrong but remained silent for too long, after which he was imprisoned by Hitler. As a Christian, it is hard to hear. That is the truth of his famous confession, what he had to live with, and that is why, after the war he publicly called on the German people to understand the impact of their silence. He spent the rest of his life talking to people around the world about how dangerous bystander silence was, including visiting South Africa and then Rhodesia. He said we all have a duty to stand up for people being persecuted, even and especially when we disagree with their views. That is a hard thing to hear today, when our society is so divided.

This is not just history for disabled people. The fragility of freedom is close to us now. In the pandemic, "do not resuscitate" orders were placed on disabled patients' files without their knowledge or their families' consent. Thankfully, as soon as it was uncovered, the Government and the NHS issued clear instructions to stop. But be in no doubt—certain people, chosen by this grouping, died because they were discarded. Those with underlying conditions were also denied intensive care, and some were even told there was no point in taking them to hospital. Many disabled people, including me, heard from others arguing against lockdown that they were going to die soon anyway, so there was no point in trying to protect them.

LGBT people were also targeted by Hitler and the Nazis in the Holocaust. On 6 May 1933, the Nazi-run German Student Union and SA raided and looted the Institute for Sexual Science, renowned for world-leading research on LGBT people, which was run by Magnus Hirschfeld. It promoted acceptance for gay people and pioneered surgeries for transgender people. Some trans people worked there as staff, and some of those employees, most famously Dora Richter, disappear from the historical record after that raid and are assumed to have been murdered by the Nazis during or after the attack. Four days later, the archives and library of the institute were burned on the Opernplatz. Dr Hirschfeld, himself both gay and Jewish, was away on a speaking tour at the time, and lived in exile in

France until his death in 1935. During the Holocaust, gay and transgender people were deported to concentration camps and murdered.

The freedom of LGBT people is increasingly fragile today. The level of murder and physical attacks grows year on year, and Uganda last year made being LGBT not just a criminal but a capital offence. That is the beginning of the ninth level of the stages of genocide.

All noble Lords who have spoken have said why this year's theme is very pertinent. Genocide and crimes against humanity are never inevitable and can often be prevented. That is why we have to remember the 10 stages of genocide, reflect on them in our lives and society today, and never be bystanders again.

12.17 pm

**Baroness Altmann (Con):** My Lords, it is humbling to speak in this debate after so many powerful, exceptional speeches, which I have been privileged to listen to, and to follow the noble Baroness, Lady Brinton, as well. I also pay tribute to my noble friend the Minister; to the noble Lord, Lord Dubs, for his truly emotional speech; and, as others have done, to the Holocaust Educational Trust, the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the CST. I declare my interests in connection with Judaism—I am Jewish—and Israel.

The Holocaust did not start with World War II. The Stockholm declaration, signed not that long ago, states that its aim is

"to ensure that future generations can understand the causes of the Holocaust".

I will focus on the events that culminated in the 1940s. As anti-Semitism once again pervades social discourse, public debate, national or social media, and even supranational organisations, I feel that the threat posed to the freedoms that liberal, western countries have built during my lifetime, and of which I have always been so proud, and perhaps too often taken for granted, is serious.

My family were mostly murdered by the Nazis. My grandparents were fortunate enough to flee Berlin and Vienna in the 1930s.

We have always been proud of the progressive tolerance, mutual respect, interfaith co-operation and human rights legislation that has been built up in our country. The free world committed to ensuring collectively that the virus of anti-Semitism would never again be allowed to flourish. We have this anti-racist legislation, we have Holocaust education and interfaith dialogue, yet anti-Semitism has returned despite it all. "Never again" is an empty slogan without understanding the background and recognising that what is happening right now is a potential rerun of the very hatred that led to the Holocaust.

I must pay tribute to so many noble Lords who have stood up with us against what has been happening to demonise Jewish people again. I thank my noble friend Lord Pickles and I thank every noble Lord who has spoken, so many of whom are doing wonderful work: the noble Lords, Lord Stevens, Lord Austin, Lord Bilimoria, Lord Davies, the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of London and the noble Baronesses, Lady Anderson and Lady Ludford. I also thank my noble friend Lord Polak, who has tirelessly worked to protect Jewish communities and to foster interfaith

and intercommunity relations, and those who are yet to speak. I am sure they will make powerful interventions as well.

Something is happening to western democratic discourse since 7 October. The late Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks, of blessed memory, warned that the appearance of anti-Semitism in a culture is an early warning of collective breakdown. He likened it to a virus, and he explained how, like all viruses, it has mutated. Throughout history, anti-Semitism has been justified in some way by recourse to the highest authority, as he explained it, within the surrounding society. There was religion in the Middle Ages and in post-Enlightenment Europe, there was science. Today, the dehumanising of Jews seems to be originating in human rights, the very source of our civilised world, so that the only democracy in the Middle East is being accused of breaching human rights, racism, apartheid, ethnic cleansing and even genocide. The ultimate weapon of this new anti-Semitism is quite simple. It goes like this: the Holocaust must never happen again; but Israelis are the new Nazis; the Palestinians are the new Jews; all Jews are Zionists; therefore, the real anti-Semites of our time are none other than the Jews themselves. Sadly, these are widespread views among many communities, and they are infecting the far left, academia, the media and political life. I pay tribute, as others have done, to our honourable friend Mike Freer who has suffered so greatly.

Having spent decades curing itself of the virus of anti-Semitism, Europe seems to be being reinfected by parts of the world that never went through the self-reckoning that Europe commendably undertook after the Holocaust. Anti-Semitism flourishes when people feel the world has turned upside down. Therefore, like the 1870s, when there was economic disruption and the rise of nationalism, today's anti-immigration views are another warning of which we must take heed. We must not take freedom for granted. We must make sure that those millions did not die in vain and pray that we learn the lessons in time. We must not forget where prejudice, hatred and evil lead.

Let me end on a message of hope for the future: the Holocaust survivor Rose Schindler said that where there is no hope, there can be no survival, so I am hopeful that we will recognise what is happening and be able to intervene in time.

*12.25 pm*

**Baroness Merron (Lab):** My Lords, it is, as always, an honour to follow the noble Baroness, Lady Altmann, and her words of hope. I feel I should say that I feel reassured to be in the company of noble Lords present today, including my noble friend Lord Dubs, who epitomises so much of what and who we are speaking of in this Chamber. I thank the Minister for her sensitive and clear introduction to such an important debate today. I draw attention to my interests in the register in respect of the Jewish community.

It is a privilege to be taking part in this debate today, albeit humbling. Why do I say that? Some events are so devastating in their inhumanity and so instrumental in shaping the world in which we live that, even if we were not actually there, we have a duty not just to remember but to be a voice and a witness. I,

too, want to speak today about the power of bearing witness, which is exactly what we are doing in this debate. I have felt this very strongly in meetings I have been at in Parliament in respect of the atrocities committed on 7 October in Israel by Hamas terrorists, who still hold hostages whose fate is unknown. I, like other noble Lords, have seen footage collected from body cameras and CCTV of the horrific massacre that killed more than 1,200 innocent Israeli citizens and foreign workers, the largest number of Jews killed since the Holocaust. The noble Lord, Lord Stevens, was right to talk about the glee with which the terrorists conducted themselves. It was that that shocked me the most, along with the images I saw, which I do not feel I want to speak about again.

I have heard the pain of families speaking of their loved ones among the 240 Jews who were kidnapped and taken to Gaza and of those who were attacked, murdered, raped or traumatised. The devastation continues to be felt by the Jewish community here, which remains in continuing shock while 130 hostages remain in Gaza. This week, I heard of the sexual violence perpetrated on Jewish women in the disturbing testimonies of those who rescued bodies or conducted forensics and prepared the mutilated bodies for burial. In all of this, I feel helpless, as so many of us do, but there is one thing I know I can do: I can be a witness, I can remember and I can speak up. I can speak up both for those who died and for those who are living. That is exactly what we are doing today when we remember the Holocaust and the genocides that have followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. With the backdrop of the ongoing situation in Gaza and Israel, this debate is particularly pertinent while we are seeing division, tension and the proliferation of anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim hatred in our own country.

The theme for this year's Holocaust Memorial Day is the fragility of freedom, focusing our attention on the precarious nature of freedoms that need to be protected, and remembering how the descent by Germany in the 1930s from democracy to tyranny shows just how fragile that freedom can be. Let us remember that the mass murder of 6 million Jewish men, women and children did not take place only in the darkness of the ghettos and the camps. Hundreds of thousands were murdered in the bright light of forests and woodlands surrounding well-populated towns and villages. Let us also remember that the Nazis also persecuted and murdered those whom they saw as different: the Roma, the Sinti, gay men, political opponents and disabled people.

As we have heard today, the oppression of Jews did not start with the outbreak of war in 1939. In the six preceding years, Jews were persecuted by more than 400 decrees and regulations at every level of government, including by officials, who took the initiative. In every genocide that has taken place, those who are targeted for persecution have had their freedom restricted and removed before many are murdered. Genocide is after all a subtle and slow process, as the right reverend prelate the Bishop of London reminded us.

There is always a set of circumstances that occur, or are created, to build the climate in which genocide can take place. In Amsterdam, for example, even before the murders and the deportations to concentration

[BARONESS MERRON]

and work camps, Jews had to give up their bicycles. They were forbidden to use trams or cars and forbidden to go to theatres, swimming pools or tennis courts, or to visit Christians at home. They were allowed to shop only between 3 pm and 5pm, and not allowed on the streets between 8 pm and 6 am.

On that point, over the summer I had the honour of being asked to review a new book called *Nobody Lives Here*, which paints a vivid picture of occupied Amsterdam during Anne Frank's time of hiding through the eyes of Lex Lesgever, a young Jewish boy, the only survivor of his large family and someone whom I have never met. I accepted the invitation because I felt I had a responsibility to bear witness to that young boy's experience so that he might be heard and remembered, and it was an honour to do so.

We all know that anti-Semitism is the world's oldest hatred. As soon as the events of 7 October unfolded, I knew it would unleash a hatred of Jews in our own country and, as sure as night follows day, it did. Within hours of the attack, the atrocities perpetrated by Hamas were lauded on social media as an act of resistance. Since then, the global number of anti-Semitic incidents has gone through the roof. Synagogues have been firebombed, the Star of David has been smeared on the doors of Jewish homes, Jewish cemeteries have been desecrated and there have been verbal and physical attacks on Jews. Week in, week out, we see protests on our streets, with anti-Semitic slogans and signs, including calls to globalise the intifada, destroy the Jewish State of Israel and disrespect the Star of David.

In the 68 days following the Hamas terror attack on Israel, the Community Security Trust recorded at least 2,093 anti-Semitic incidents across the country. That is the highest ever total reported to the CST across a 68-day period, and the CST has been recording anti-Semitic incidents since 1984.

My Jewish friends feel the pain of explaining to their children that they must stop wearing their blazers which show that they attend a Jewish school. Colleagues are swamped with vile abuse and threats on social media for being Jewish, or for not being Jewish but speaking out against terrorism. It has left me and many others with an underlying anxiety about what might be said or done to us.

In the last year we sadly lost Sir Ben Helfgott MBE, Holocaust survivor, Olympic weightlifting champion, educator and honorary president of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust—may his memory be for a blessing. Sir Ben touched the lives and hearts of countless people, including me, and I am grateful to him and all those who educate and inform—who take on the scourge of anti-Semitism and those who protect us, including the CST, the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, The Holocaust Educational Trust, the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Jewish Leadership Council. We are blessed to have them.

I am grateful to those who protect us, including the CST, the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, the Holocaust Educational Trust, the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Jewish Leadership Council. We are blessed to have them.

Today we bear witness, and in so doing we honour those who survived and pay tribute to those who did not. It is a privilege to do so.

12.35 pm

**Baroness Fox of Buckley (Non-Aff):** My Lords, 136: I shall repeat the number 136 because on Wednesday Ashley Waxman Bakshi asked a packed room of parliamentarians to keep reminding the world that there are still 136 hostages in Gaza, including Ashley's cousin Agam Berger.

We are here today for Holocaust Memorial Day to keep the memory of the decades-old Holocaust alive. Yet, shockingly, even the memory of what happened on 7 October last year is already fading. That is why so many of the powerful, moving and insightful speeches that we have all heard today really matter. The largest anti-Jewish pogrom since the Holocaust is actively and wilfully being forgotten, and even denied. Indeed, when some seek to remind the world of the hostages—by, for example, putting up posters of their faces—they are treated with contempt and openly subjected to anti-Semitic abuse. Posters are venomously ripped down. One viral video shows an activist responding to a plea for humane empathy with Jewish suffering. His response was to spit out the question, “Where's your proof?”

Sadly, such echoes of Holocaust denial are making a comeback. Indeed, the reason why Ashley and the other remarkable Israeli witnesses whom some of us heard this week are forced to tour the world's capitals to give testimony is that—and this is a real shock—so many in official positions have demanded proof that sexual violence was used on 7 October. Often the very same progressives, NGOs and international women's organisations that rail against #MeToo incidents and demand support for their violence against women and girls initiatives suddenly become sceptical and mute and look the other way, even with evidence that Jewish women and girls were gang-raped, sexually mutilated and degraded. This casual mood of denial was revealed in the shocking recent *Economist/YouGov* poll showing that more than one-fifth of young Americans agreed that the Holocaust was a myth, while many responded by saying they were not sure whether it was a myth.

Until recently, Holocaust denial was a fringe affair: the racist preoccupation of explicit anti-Semites who called it a hoax, usually associated with the far right. But today a more common form of Holocaust denial is to rip the Holocaust from its concrete and specific context and appropriate it for a range of nefarious ends. This dilution of the meaning of the Holocaust is often espoused by well-intentioned social justice warriors. The Holocaust is anything but absent from political discourse—that is one irony. The Holocaust and its perpetrators, the Nazis, are now prolifically referenced, but I am not sure that this constant go-to metaphor is that helpful. Social media is littered with people smearing their political opponents as Nazis. *Newsweek* headlined an article:

“Just How Similar is Donald Trump to Adolf Hitler?”—and such an approach is commonplace.

Policies that people do not like are routinely denounced using Nazi analogies. The Rwanda plan has been compared by some campaigners to herding Jews on to

cattle trucks destined for the camps. I have heard the Tories' voter ID scheme being compared to Gestapo checks. Everything from the Brexit vote to anti-ULEZ protests has recently been denounced as proof that society is descending into 1930s-style fascism. Some animal rights activists claim that the meat industry is guilty of a holocaust of lambs, cows and chickens, while abortion fundamentalists brandish literature denouncing a holocaust of unborn babies.

I worry that when the Holocaust, as a metaphor, is so promiscuously and prolifically used that it will mean we render the Holocaust itself mundane, inevitably relativising its gravity and uniqueness. So often, it can also lead to airbrushing Jews from the story. We saw that with a number of politicians, as the noble Lord, Lord Austin, illustrated, who put out video messages on Holocaust Memorial Day and failed to mention the Jews. They were just forgotten, deliberately or not.

As many noble Lords have mentioned, we have to admit that the Holocaust has now been weaponised, specifically to attack and delegitimise the world's only Jewish state. We have heard that from a number of noble Lords. I will not repeat their examples, but just cite the idea of young radical peace protestors unapologetically carrying placards with the star of David inside a swastika.

This relativism that now turns the barbarities of the Holocaust into an accusation against the Jewish state considers itself progressive and, worse, is mainstream. One popular progressive commentator, that Dr Shola off the telly, tweeted at the Auschwitz museum:

"I unfollowed you after your disgraceful endorsement of Israel's extermination, ethnic cleansing & genocide of Palestinians. The museum should be ashamed of itself. Never again means never again for anyone. You're an embarrassment to humanity". Think about those words. Inevitably, Dr Shola was never off the TV after she posted that.

So how should we tackle such ignorant attitudes? For many, the answer is education. As a former teacher, this makes me nervous, as too many thorny questions are outsourced to schools and colleges. Anyway, it is not that simple. After all, the Holocaust is already a compulsory part of the national curriculum and has been since 1991. One concern is that the Holocaust is rarely explained in educational settings as a specific policy designed to purge society of Jewry. Pupils rarely grasp that this was the first, and so far the only, time in history that a state attempted to murder every single member of a people—the Jews. Instead, such is the enthusiasm to make the Holocaust relatable for today's pupils that there is a whole list of other victims, as the noble Baroness, Lady Ludford, explained so well, often at the expense of a factual, detailed account of the Nazis' industrialised final solution for Jews. This was more than just authoritarian rule or human rights abuses; it was an attempt at eradicating the Jews.

This drive to make the Holocaust relevant in schools today for pupils has also led to an embrace of concepts associated with identity politics. In trying to make Holocaust education so relevant as to reflect the diversity of each and every pupil, students are asked to imagine themselves as persecuted by evil Nazis—victims due to their individual identity. In the midst of this *mêlée*, I am afraid that Jews barely get a mention or are known about.

Fuelling relevance via identity politics is a trend, by the way, that is infecting the whole curriculum and can counterproductively encourage competitive victimhood. I remember that, in 2004, a poll carried out in nine European countries by Ipsos found that 35% of people thought the Jews should stop playing the role of Holocaust victims. Since then, often via official educational initiatives, every identity group has been encouraged to view themselves through the prism of their historic victimhood, from slavery to colonialism. Parallel to this, teachers and lecturers have embraced the idea that centuries of western accomplishments should be disparaged and demonised as hateful expressions of white supremacy.

Identitarian ideology has been given an intellectual veneer as decolonisation theory that divides the world into victims versus colonisers. Equality, diversity and inclusion policies institutionalise the divisive focus on skin colour, ethnicity and victimhood across schools and universities. This toxic mix creates a hierarchy of oppression through which, importantly, anti-Jewish hatred is justified. In the EDI schema, Jews have been designated as all-powerful colonisers, the ultimate expression of white privilege and the rightful targets of contempt and hostility among the young and anyone who cares about the oppressed.

To confuse the educational landscape further, identity politics makes it hard to be open in classroom debate about such issues. It can, for example, make it difficult to challenge any young Muslim pupils and students if they express sympathy with Islamist anti-Semitism. A decade ago, when I was giving a lesson on free speech, a vocal group of Muslim sixth-formers told me that 9/11 was a Jewish plot and that the Charlie Hebdo massacre was justified because the cartoonists had insulted the Prophet Muhammad. They also, by the way, bullied fellow Muslim classmates into silence—the kind of young people who the noble Lord, Lord Dubs, rightly referred to as the heroes and the hope of this story.

When I told this story about what had happened in the classroom to a group of teachers, some admitted that such attitudes were one reason they shied away from teaching the Holocaust. They feared that any confrontations if students put forward conspiratorial Holocaust-denial theories would mean that they, as teachers, would be branded Islamophobes—self-censorship to avoid causing offence, or even fear of more aggressive responses. Noble Lords have already mentioned Mike Freer; let me also reference the Batley Grammar School teacher who is still in hiding for fear of his life.

Before we open more learning centres or do more education-related projects, at the very least we need to ensure that educators are not silenced, cancelled or smeared for teaching truths that some identity groups find unpalatable. To ensure that the Holocaust is not forgotten and is understood, it needs to be resituated back into its unique historical context and dragged out of the jaws of identity politics and diversity dogma.

For now, the greatest memorial to the Holocaust must surely be solidarity with Jewish people, wherever and whenever they are being attacked because they are Jews. I finish by repeating "136, 136"—let us shout it

to the rafters until those 136 hostages are brought home, and then Holocaust Memorial Day will be more than a slogan.

**Lord Parekh (Lab):** My Lords—

*12.48 pm*

**Lord Singh of Wimbledon (CB):** My Lords, I have visited Auschwitz, and a small mountain of children's shoes will be for ever etched in my memory. The shoes were taken from children who went laughing and skipping into showers, on the promise that they would be given new clothes. The showers were not of water; they were of deadly gas. I speak from a Sikh perspective, and I apologise if what I say does not agree with some people.

On Holocaust Memorial Day, we remember the horror of the systematic killing of Jews in the 1940s with the lighting of candles and the words “never again”. The words “never again” have echoed in subsequent commemorations, only to be followed by the horror of future genocides, including the forgotten Indira Gandhi Government's massacre of Sikhs in 1984 and now, ironically, Israel's excesses against the people of Gaza, condemned by the United Nations, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other human rights agencies.

“Never again” will continue to be a distant aspiration in a world that has lost its sense of direction and is still living with 19th-century norms of powerful countries pursuing strategic and economic dominance. Friends and enemies are decided by the support they give in return for a readiness to turn a blind eye to the abuse of human rights. To get to “never again”, we urgently need to reset our moral and political satnavs to the realities and ethical imperatives of the very different world in which we now live.

Sikh teachings remind us that, despite superficial cultural differences, we are all members of one human family with equal rights and responsibilities. The UN declaration of human rights, drawn up in the aftermath of the Second World War, is an echo of this 500 year-old Sikh teaching. People of India and Pakistan, Russia and Ukraine, Israel and Palestine, and even Americans, are all part of our one human family, with a common desire for peace for themselves and for their loved ones.

In earlier times, talk of one human family was considered impractical idealism; today it is an imperative. The 21st century is, as I have mentioned, very different from earlier eras, with people in once distant parts of the world now sharing common problems such as global warming, the misuse of scientific advance and a world awash with arms. There is urgent need to look beyond ourselves to the needs of others, or, in the closing lines of the Sikh daily prayer, to look to the well-being of wider humanity.

We urgently need to look at why religion has become a major source of conflict and genocide. Religion is designed to give us guidance for responsible living, but all too often, claims of superiority and exclusive relationships with God, and with dated and divisive social and cultural rituals, are seen by many as more important than the uplifting ethical teachings. The Sikh gurus were very concerned about such false divisions in the India of their day. Sikh scriptures, the Guru

Granth Sahib, deliberately include verses of Hindu and Muslim sayings to show that no one religion has a monopoly of truth. Today, we should be highlighting the important ethical teachings found in our different faiths.

The reality is quite different. We British, even at interfaith gatherings, never discuss religion out of fear of offending religious sensitivities. Religious holy books are not the word of God in a literal, possessive sense, but reflections on a godly way of life, interspersed with social and cultural practices and negative attitudes to others. Today, most religious people in the UK skip the dated social and cultural texts and focus on the underlying ethical teachings. But for some, dated culture is all too often more important than ethical guidance, and negative attitudes to others are food and sustenance to the religious extremist.

A Christian hymn reminds us:

“New occasions teach new duties,  
Time makes ancient good uncouth;  
They must upward still, and onward,  
Who would keep abreast of truth”.

Today, religious leaders urgently need to do a bit of spring cleaning to take out, or put in context or true perspective, the negative teachings and highlight ethical teachings that have much in common with faiths that we see as different. It is a big ask, but it is the only way to go if we really want our one human family to get to “never again”.

*12.54 pm*

**Lord Parekh (Lab):** My Lords, I apologise to the noble Lord, Lord Singh of Wimbledon. It is not that I was too keen to stand up and say my bit but simply that I mistook his place for mine.

I am greatly puzzled by this whole question of anti-Semitism. I grew up in a country where anti-Semitism was never heard of: India. In Kerala in India, the king, gave refugee Jews who were running away from Iraq a kingdom and said, “You are the kings of this area. You have your Jewish subjects. You are entitled to ride an elephant. You are entitled to collect taxes”. There they lived happily ever after. This is the history I was taught of the Jewish people, and it turned out to be true when I checked documents afterwards and was taught by a Jewish professor of English literature at St Xavier's College, Bombay. He also happened to be the national poet of English—namely, Nissim Ezekiel.

All through my life, as I was growing up in India, I had Jewish friends—not very many, because the Jewish population was rather small—and after the creation of Israel, many of them moved there. In fact, even now, just outside Jerusalem there is a colony of Indians and there are Indian restaurants, as I discovered during my second visit to Israel a few years ago. So there was this Jewish community in India, and I grew up among them. Then I landed in England and talked to a lot of people, and I initially began to hear snide remarks. As I interacted, I heard vicious remarks, and I began to ask myself, “Where is this anti-Semitism coming from?” Philo-Semitism is easily understood, but what is anti-Semitism composed of? What is it based on? Why is a particular community singled out and made an object of jokes, hatred and other undesirable treatment?

The process did not begin 100 years ago; it goes back to the Greeks and the Romans—Philo the Greek and others. Why has this process continued, changing form here and there but nevertheless persisting? Well, Christianity accused Jews of deicide—that is an old story—and another element was added: Jews turned away the offer of accepting Christ as their leader. In the Middle Ages, Jews were asked to dress differently so that they could be easily recognised. The process went on and culminated, as we know, in the Holocaust.

If you deconstruct this process and ask how it was formed and what elements were added to it at what stage, you begin to see a fascinating picture. That picture is in danger of being ignored today if we are not careful. Here, I will tell how the word “Holocaust” came into our vocabulary and what it means. The word is Roman and first appeared in the third century, when it was used fairly widely and came to mean a burnt offering to God. It appears again in the 14th century, when it simply meant burning or destroying something totally.

If you look at the Holocaust, it has three characteristics that distinguish it from the normal forms of genocide. First, it is not limited to a particular group, as genocide would be. It can include, as Hitler’s camps did, gays, disabled people, Gypsies and others. So the Holocaust includes not just one particular group but simply a large collection of heterogeneous people. Secondly, the Holocaust included the systematic and total annihilation of a people. That was the goal. Thirdly, and just as importantly, is the pseudo-religious orientation. From the time of the Romans, a “holocaust” meant that you eliminated people as a kind of sacrifice to God, purging society of an undesirable element and offering it to God, so holocaust becomes a ritual—there is a theology of holocaust—which is what makes it such a dangerous and frightening thing. That is why the Holocaust happened only once, and you cannot compare it to other elements or say that there are different forms of Holocaust. The Holocaust happened to the Jewish community, which suffered intensely. That is why I would say that the word “Holocaust” should be reserved entirely for what happened to them under the Nazi’s.

That brings me to the next issue, about the mass or systematic destruction of a people. Why would anybody want to do that? Killing individuals I can understand, but why kill a whole people? Why do you want to kill a whole people, and how do you kill a whole people? If you do not like them, avoid them or ostracise them—why do you want to kill them? There again, something interesting begins to happen. You take a group of people and straightaway there are certain characteristics that you find unacceptable. In India, I saw this when Isb was growing up, in the days of the partition of the country, when I saw Hindus butchering Muslims and Muslim blood on the streets, and I asked myself, “Why are Hindus so beastly to Muslims?” They were tolerant of other minorities—of Christians, Jews, Parsees and others—but not of Muslims. Why, and how?

You take a community, abstract certain characteristics of that community and refer to them not by their concrete designations but in terms of those abstract characteristics. For example, you say, “I’m not disturbing you—I’m disturbing a Muslim”. Or you say, “You

don’t appear to me as you in your concrete social designation—you appear to me as an abstraction, a Jew”. Even here, in our conversation, we talk about “a Jew”, and I find it offensive to talk about somebody as “a Jew”, or “a Hindu”, or whatever. This man is a human being with certain concrete characteristics that distinguish him from others. Why are we abstracting that away and talking about him entirely in terms of those characteristics, which subsume him under others, so he is seen as other Jews? Then you have formed a group, which is now ready to be sent to a camp.

The first thing is, with any kind of mass killing, you abstract certain characteristics that you disapprove of, abstract those characteristics from those individuals, and those individuals now become ready for killing. They are targets—but why are they targets for killing? Why do you want to kill them? You could avoid them, as the Spanish did to the Muslims—send them away from the country—but why kill them? You kill them because another element comes in: you find them undesirable and devious, so their very presence contaminates your people, and you want to get rid of them. Why do you find their presence undesirable? How do you make that kind of judgment? That judgment is entirely untenable, not just in the case of Jews but in the case of Hindus.

There is another element that I have been able to detect. Hindus have suffered in many ways, in the same way as the Jews have, in being expelled from three countries—Sri Lanka, east Africa and Burma. They were expelled, and the description that was given to them was more or less the same as that given to Jews in certain parts of the world. Happily, they were not killed, but they were thrown out of the country, and lock, stock and barrel they arrived here, or elsewhere.

So, you abstract certain characteristics, classify them in a certain way, get rid of them. But are all human beings like this? Can you persuade anyone to kill anybody? No: there are sensible people in any society, but how are those sensible people swept off their feet? That happens because of another element, which is “drip, drip, drip”: the kind of prejudice you are attributing to a community, racism, is in these people in small doses and has been permeating for a long time, and they are neutralised by the “drip, drip, drip”, so that a person may not be a downright blatant racist, but nevertheless he will make remarks which will indicate racial discrimination. We draw the distinction in our own language between racial discrimination and racism. So, we have this peculiar scenario of a large body of people which is mildly racist and another layer which is rabidly racist, or dehumanised, and that is where the scene is set for mass murder or whatever. And when that scene is set up, there is nothing we can do. That is where the problem comes in.

“Never again”: but how are we going to stop something happening again? What mechanisms have we developed by which we can educate people into resisting murderers? That we have not thought through, which is why holocausts have occurred in Bangladesh and in China, with Uighur Muslims and others, and will continue to occur, unless we are able to find out how to stop people becoming victims of this kind of abstraction.

1.07 pm

**Lord Gold (Con):** My Lords, I am very honoured to be taking part in this debate today and indeed to be following the noble Lord, Lord Parekh. I am also privileged, as are we all, to have heard such powerful and moving speeches.

Born a few years after the war, and only understanding in the 1960s the true horrors of the Holocaust from the safe comfort of my suburban life in England, I rather thought that it could never happen here—I still believe that—and that, even if there was a serious rise of anti-Semitism, as we have seen since 7 October, Israel, the Jewish state, was our haven and we could escape there. If our lives were truly threatened, Israel would come to our rescue, just as it did when it gave a home to those Jews who, after 1948, were expelled from the neighbouring Middle Eastern countries and when it rescued hostages from Idi Amin's Entebbe in 1976 and 14,000 Ethiopian Jews in 1991.

Great Britain was the country where, in 1936, when Mosley's fascists marched in London, a combination of Jews, Protestants and Catholics, all true East Enders, stopped them in Cable Street and effectively ended fascism in Great Britain. Now, nearly 90 years on, under the guise of stopping the war in Gaza, we have seen marches openly calling for the destruction of the only democracy in the Middle East and renewing anti-Semitic tropes that we have not seen here since the days of Mosley. The marches of the 1930s resulted in the passing of the Public Order Act 1936, banning the wearing of political uniforms. It is time for the Government to renew and modernise this legislation by banning the wearing of face masks in public marches and taking action against those calling for jihad and the destruction of Israel. I hope the Minister, in closing, will give us some comfort today that the Government will come forward with such legislation.

For me, the frightening lesson from the Holocaust is that, however safe and protective a society appears to be, there is no guarantee that it could not happen again, and in places where it was thought impossible for there to be such hatred. As other noble Lords have said, it is shocking that an excellent constituency MP, Mike Freer, who is not Jewish, is not seeking re-election as he fears for his safety because of his stand against anti-Semitism and his position on Israel.

The Jews in Germany pre 1933 were a thriving community. While accounting for only 1% of the population, they had strong communal organisations, were well integrated into German society, regarded themselves as true German citizens and were strongly represented in all walks of life, including medicine, law, academia and journalism. When Hitler came to power, that ended. Over the six years before the war, as the noble Baroness, Lady Merron, pointed out, more than 400 decrees and regulations stripped the Jewish population of their rights and property. From being citizens, they became outcasts. A *Times* obituary to Isca Wittenberg, reprinted on this year's Holocaust Memorial Day, stated:

"Isca ... recalled a 'happy childhood' in Frankfurt—until 1933, when the Nazis came to power. 'I was profoundly disturbed by how people, friends, could change so much one day to the next,' she said. Local children became hostile, spitting at her.

Antisemitic slogans appeared on posters in the street. She was no longer allowed to see her best friend, a girl from a Christian family who lived nearby".

When I was at school in the 1950s, there was no Holocaust education. Today in England it is, of course, part of the national curriculum, and the work of the national holocaust trust in increasing awareness of the Holocaust, notably through its outreach programme, has been remarkable and deserves much praise. However, it seems to me that more must be done. Young people in particular are not joining the dots. They learn about the Holocaust—or, perhaps better still, hear about it—but somehow do not realise that calling for the destruction of Israel is anti-Semitism, and that Israel was born out of the Second World War to provide protection for Jews everywhere. Why do they not see that the brutality and wickedness of 7 October is a new form of hatred which cannot be condoned and must not be ignored?

Already the atrocities of 7 October, when at least 1,200 people were slaughtered—many of them children, with many women raped and abused and no sanctity given to the dead—seem to be forgotten or, at least, no longer given prominence in news reports. Just as the BBC religiously reports in each bulletin, as though by rote, that " Hamas is recognised by the UK Government as a terrorist organisation", reference to the slaughter of 7 October and the hostages who remain in captivity is largely an afterthought, if mentioned at all.

We must not be complacent. It is a big error to assume that because the Holocaust is in the national curriculum our children really understand not only what happened but the risks that still exist in our modern lives. As through time we lose the few remaining victims of and witnesses to the Holocaust, it is the duty of each of us to educate those born since. As Jews say every year at Passover, it is our duty to remember the exodus from Egypt as though we were there. Similarly, the more we tell our children what happened less than 100 years ago, the greater the chance that we will learn from history how important it is to treat everyone equally, protect all our citizens and destroy the scourge of anti-Semitism.

It is for that reason that I applaud the Government's stand against anti-Semitism and their unbending support for a new Holocaust memorial. I know that a number of people, some of them in this House—although fortunately not today—have questioned its location. While respecting these views, I believe that giving the memorial such prominence in being next to our mother of Parliaments shows the world how important we regard remembering the Holocaust to be. As to the growing anti-Semitism that so frightens us, our police must be uncompromising in their actions against those rising up, and our judges must give a clear, uncompromising message in their sentencing that anti-Semitic acts will not be tolerated and that those guilty of them will be strongly punished as an example to others.

1.16 pm

**Lord Young of Norwood Green (Lab):** My Lords, it is a pleasure and an education to follow the noble Lord, Lord Gold. I congratulate the noble Baroness, Lady Scott, on her moving and very thorough introduction to this debate.



I was born into an Orthodox Jewish family in 1942 and my mother kept a kosher household—the sheer delight of a bacon sandwich did not pass my lips until many years later, but that is another story. Our adventure playgrounds were the bomb-sites created by the Luftwaffe, probably an unintentional consequence on its part. I am proud of my Jewish roots. As I have confessed, I am a non-practising secular Jew. My maternal grandmother was born in Odesa. Many of my relatives experienced or died in pogroms and the Holocaust.

My late Dutch cousin Leo described to me how, when he was a seven year-old boy, his family were hidden in a room in a household—rather like the Anne Frank experience—with his mother holding her hand over his mouth to make sure that he did not cough as they heard the footsteps of Nazi soldiers searching for them. It was a terrifying experience but, unlike Anne Frank, they survived.

At the turn of the last century, this country was a refuge for my grandparents, but anti-Semitism, as we have heard from the noble Lord, Lord Gold, was rife. It took the combined efforts of many to oppose Oswald Mosley in the famous Cable Street riots. The noble Lord, Lord Davies, was right about the role of trade unions, communists and many others in that. I am somewhat puzzled as to why, when you see marches of Jewish people today, there is not a trade union banner in sight. It is unfortunate, to say the least.

I pay tribute to Lord Russell of Liverpool—I am glad to see his grandson back in his seat—who was an astonishing man. If you look him up on Wikipedia, you will see an amazing history. He was one of the chief judges at the Nuremberg war trials and had a distinguished record in the First World War, getting the Military Cross several times. He was an astonishing gentleman.

I knew nothing about him whatever until, as a very precocious reader at 15 years old, I took out of the library a book called *The Scourge of the Swastika*. If your Lordships have not read it, I recommend it. It educated me, as a young man, about the true scale, nature and horror of the atrocities. It is an astonishing book. Lord Russell also wrote another book called *The Knights of Bushido*. It was about Japanese war crimes and, again, it educated me and opened my eyes. It made me understand why, as a young apprentice, when I met former prisoners of war of Japan, they said, “I would never buy anything made in Japan”. At the time, as a rather callow youth, I thought that was a bit extreme—but after I read *The Knights of Bushido* it did not. I pay tribute to Lord Russell of Liverpool; we owe him a debt. With those powerful testimonies he demonstrated the capability of men and, unfortunately, women’s inhumanity when they are convinced by lies and propaganda—which, in today’s society, are all too easily stimulated by social media.

As we are talking today about the origins of Israel, there is another book I would recommend. It is a very important book, written by my noble friend Lord Turnberg on the Balfour Declaration—a valuable read and historical analysis.

If noble Lords want to witness the power of propaganda, I recommend a film. As I was going to bed one night, as is my wont I was channel-hopping—I probably should not do it—and a black and white film

came on with very strident German voices. I had to see what it was, and it was an astonishing film called “Triumph of the Will”, made by a controversial but brilliant German film director by the name of Leni Riefenstahl. When you see that film of the Nuremberg rallies, you can see the power of propaganda. The amazing speeches by Hitler and the marches are just astonishing. It is quite a long film, but it is educational. If we do not learn from history, we are doomed to make the same mistakes again. Such are the benefits of late-night channel-hopping.

There have been so many powerful speeches today. I pay tribute to the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, and support his view about the Holocaust museum. I also pay tribute to my noble friend Lord Dubs; we are privileged to have among us somebody who was the result of the Kindertransport and to be able to learn from his knowledge and experience.

I once went to Israel as part of a delegation from Labour Friends of Israel, in a historic year when Israel withdrew from Gaza. It was an interesting delegation because somebody who accompanied me was Rachel Reeves. I knew nothing about her until I encountered her on that trip. I told her what I did and asked her what she did, and she said, in her south London accent, that she was a Bank of England economist. I had to confess that if I had had 10 guesses at her occupation, I probably would not have got it—but she has demonstrated that she was a damn good Bank of England economist.

The trip was interesting because we went to the Knesset, met with Israeli politicians and had a good tour around; we went to Tel Aviv and close to the borders of Lebanon. Looking back, probably the most important thing that happened was that we went to Ramallah and met with Palestinian politicians from Fatah. They were very cynical about Israel withdrawing from Gaza. I said to them, “If I was in your position, if I’m honest, I would be pretty cynical about Israel’s motives”. But I said, “Look, it’s what you’ve been campaigning for. It’s what you’ve been asking for. This is a golden opportunity”. I do not know whether people remember what happened, but I will tell noble Lords, in case they have forgotten. Hamas fought with Fatah. They literally fought to the death; they were killing each other. Israel left behind a lot of flourishing industry. It was a great opportunity for Palestinians to do something positive—an opportunity that was squandered, once again.

That was not the first occasion when Palestinians have squandered opportunities. For another lesson from history, cast your mind back to President Clinton and the accords, when Yasser Arafat had the opportunity for most of the West Bank to be given back to Palestinians. He did not have the courage and he walked away. I cannot remember the exact words, but Clinton said something like, “You’ll live to regret this”. How true that was.

Israel has had many great leaders: Golda Meir, Moshe Dayan and Yitzhak Rabin, who was tragically assassinated. Unfortunately, as many of my noble friends and colleagues have said, Netanyahu is not of that calibre. He does not seem to espouse a two-state

[LORD YOUNG OF NORWOOD GREEN]  
solution. I suspect that if there was another election now, he would not be in power. I do not think that those kind of attitudes help the Israeli cause.

I condemn both Islamophobia and, obviously, anti-Semitism. But I have to say—I have many Muslim friends and have pointed this out to them—that when opinion polls are conducted in the Islamic community, there is a very significant number of Holocaust deniers. There is a very significant number who say that 9/11 was a Jewish conspiracy. That ought to be worrying. As the noble Baroness, Lady Fox, said, education is clearly part of the answer to this. The work among interfaith communities is really important, but I do not think that by pretending that those attitudes do not exist, we somehow make them go away.

As we have heard so many times today, support for Palestinians can unfortunately drift into anti-Semitism. I felt utterly ashamed of the Labour Party—it was perhaps one of the few occasions when I felt like I wanted to leave the party—because of the evident anti-Semitism during Jeremy Corbyn's leadership. I praise Keir Starmer for unequivocally acting on the recommendation of the Equality and Human Rights Commission on the evident anti-Semitism in the party. Jeremy Corbyn said it was exaggerated, and we suspended him. That action by Keir Starmer has gone a long way to removing the stain of anti-Semitism within the Labour Party.

I want to end on a positive note. I am a *Times* reader, and like many people I always read the obituaries, as the old joke goes, just to check you are not in there. I read an astonishing story the other day that I recommend to your Lordships: the obituary of a Holocaust survivor called Isca Wittenberg. What an astonishing woman she was; she was absolutely amazing. I must quote some of it. They were in Germany beforehand. She said:

“Because I could not comprehend how our good German friends could become our enemies”—

we know it can happen; we watched it happen in former Yugoslavia, when people who lived together started to kill each other—

“I felt a need to understand more about human nature and this eventually led ... to psychoanalysis”.

She had a career in psychotherapy, in the NHS and private practice. The obituary continues:

“In psychotherapy, she said, ‘we know that all people have two sides to them, one loving and one cruel or indifferent’. That interest in the struggle between good and evil within individuals could ... be traced back to her upbringing as the daughter of a rabbi”.

I cannot go on, although I want to. It is such an amazing story of the life of a survivor who gave so much to our society, and it demonstrates how we benefit.

I also pay tribute to my noble friend Lady Anderson for the very moving story she told. I did not know much about her heritage, but her story was wonderful. I want to have a look at some of the papers she mentioned, if she will let me.

I was reflecting on what we could ask the Government to do. They are doing a lot, but I think that education is important, as the noble Baroness, Lady Fox, said, including the ability of teachers to discuss this. There has been an interesting situation in the Michaela Community School recently. It is a secular school

where over a third of the pupils are Muslims who attend voluntarily. There is an interesting judicial challenge going on there for the right to run a secular school.

The noble Lord, Lord Gold, also had a point when he talked about the banning of masks in demonstrations. Masks attempt to evade our identity.

As I said, I want to end on a positive note. Yes, it is a worrying time, but I still believe that we live in a multifaith, as well as non-faith, and multicultural society. The majority—I stress: the majority—want to live in peace and harmony with each other and recognise the contribution that different religions, faiths and non-faiths have in making this still a great country and great society. I feel very privileged to have taken part in this debate.

1.32 pm

**Lord Sterling of Plaistow (Con):** My Lords, I very much appreciate being able to speak in the gap. I am of the second generation born in this country, due to the pogroms that took place in Russia in the 1880s. My grandmother managed to get to this country—that was very important—and we have lived in this country ever since. As far as I am concerned, it was an absolute honour that we were allowed to live here in freedom, which we were never allowed before. I happen to be one of those people who have no interest at all in living in Israel. This is my home. I will help Israel as much as I can all my life, but this is my home.

My national service was in Egypt in 1953. I went out via Cyprus and got to Israel for the very first time. It was an extraordinary time to be in Israel. I then got heavily involved, for 35 years, in every single negotiation on how to bring peace in Israel. I have always believed in the two-state approach—but as it was in the earlier days before everything was occupied in different areas.

Something I remember and will never forget is when I went to an exhibition in Israel. Some blind children were being taken round to hear what had happened in the genocide of the Holocaust, and they held out their hands in order to touch the lightshades that were made of human skin. That brought the reality back.

Let us come to what happened on 7 October, which more and more people seem to want to try to forget. I happen to be a human being, I like to think, and I do not want any innocent human beings, woman or child, killed—I will not use the word “unnecessarily”. It just is not right, if it ever can be. Sadly, what is happening in Israel has caused a huge dilemma as to how to proceed. However, we must remember that 7 October was planned. In war—it was an active war where I was, in the Canal Zone, to a degree—atrocities sometimes happen. But cold-bloodedly planning four years ahead exactly how you will do it is something totally different from anything else I have ever come across. If I may say so, social media has played a shocking role in this, and so has the wider media, as we all know.

I will make two further points, if I may. First, In our own Moses Room, you can see Moses holding the tablets, so we have in our own House what this stands for. The only mistake Moses made when he moved off was turning right instead of left; otherwise, we would have got the oil, but we did not. Secondly, on Victoria Gardens, I disagree, as I have for many years, as noble

Lords know. We do not need monuments of any kind. I do not mind something small if you want but, in practice, it is about ideas.

Finally, I want to ask the Minister a question. It is all about education. Jesus was a rabbi, and “Rabbi” means “teacher”. Several people have referred in the debate to education. I checked this several years ago, and most state schools, as well as others, do not carry out the law when in fact, they must talk about and teach the Holocaust. I beg the Minister to get the Department for Education and others involved, in order to do what is right and proper. That is our only chance going forward.

1.37 pm

**Lord Reid of Cardowan (Lab):** My Lords, with the indulgence of the House, I will make a brief contribution. I did not intend to speak today. I came along as a matter of respect and to listen, and I am glad that I did because I found some of the speeches quite incredible, not least that of the noble Lord, Lord Dubs. In my 40 years in Parliament, or thereabouts, I have rarely heard a more moving contribution. I am proud to call him a colleague and a friend.

I have only one point to make. The magnitude of the horror of the Holocaust is such that we, out of necessity, constrain it within certain limits of place and of time. The place? Germany under the Nazis. The time? The period between 1933 and 1945. I understand why we do this, but it is extremely misleading. In terms of time, we can go back 1,000 years in European history. The Jews were certainly excluded at stages; then, they were ghettoised; then, they were forcibly converted; then they were proscribed. And then, they were annihilated.

The Holocaust was the natural outcome of the seeds of a thousand years of European—dare I say it?—Christian conduct. The noble Baroness, Lady Smith, mentioned the Catholic Church; I do not think Martin Luther and the Protestants were very keen on the Jews, either. It was a Christian phenomenon, and one which we should face up to. Of course, at the end of the 19th century it culminated in the writings of Joseph Chamberlain, the Dreyfus affair, the caricature of “Jewish Bolshevism”—which enabled people to go for Communists and Jews at the same time—and the terrible outcome of the Holocaust. But there was a long period before 1933, or even before 1921, when the Nazis adopted the original programme.

Secondly, the Holocaust was also not confined to concentration camps and death camps. Fewer than half of the people who died, died in concentration camps and death camps. And it was not confined to Germany or Poland. It happened in Hungary, Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia, in western Europe and France; thank God, not in Britain. So, yes, the Nazis gave licence, but they did not order each and every execution. It sprung from the history of European civilisation and Christianity, and when it was unleashed by the Nazis, all sorts of people were involved in annihilating the Jews.

Why do I mention those two aspects? Because, if we truly want to learn the lessons, we should not confine it mentally to one nation, one area and one epoch, and recognise that even today it is ubiquitous. It is there:

we see it in the politics of rabid right-wing nationalism, which will turn on the Jews because they are not of this country, and of the rabid left wing, which equates monopoly capitalism with the Jewish financiers. We have seen how insidiously that can creep into our own party on this side of the House.

We truly want to learn the lessons in order to combat it. It is uncomfortable, but we had better recognise the length of anti-Semitism and its ubiquitous nature. That is the task that faces us. It is widespread and long lasting, and I have no doubt that it will continue to be so—so all of us have a responsibility to counter it wherever and whenever it occurs.

1.43 pm

**Lord Palmer of Childs Hill (LD):** My Lords, if I felt nervous at being a Jew, I feel doubly nervous after the worthy comments from the noble Lord, Lord Reid, which are very pertinent. I must first declare some of my interests. I am president of the Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel and a vice-president of the Jewish Leadership Council—and there is another long list which I will not bore your Lordships with.

I feel privileged to be part of this debate—although it seems to have taken a long time to get to the winding-up speeches. Wow; the speeches have been absolutely splendid and very moving. It is hard to pick one of them—it applies to every single one of them. The speech of the noble Lord, Lord Dubs, must be one, because his memories of the Kindertransport and having lived through it are very pertinent. I am also extremely grateful to those who are not Jewish but who have come along to support and to speak. As the noble Lord, Lord Reid, so rightly said, this affects so many people, and it is nice to know that there are people other than Jews who feel as strongly as I do about this.

Let us be clear; all genocides are terrible. Every genocide is terrible. Why is the Holocaust at times singled out? In my view, it is just a genocide, but it was industrial killing. It was not just going off and killing people; it was having people going into chambers in order to be gassed and killed. That is why the Holocaust is so different, as was referred to by my noble friend Lady Ludford.

Holocaust Memorial Day is necessary so that people remember and learn from the past’s horrific events. For most people, these are events which they at best read about, or perhaps they have seen a film about the horrors. We have heard some more personalised views this morning.

In 2023, a number of Holocaust survivors passed away. They were witnesses able to share their experiences, such as, as has been mentioned, the remarkable Sir Ben Helfgott, a survivor mentioned by the noble Baroness, Lady Scott, and my noble friend Lady Brinton. The works of the Holocaust organisations—the Holocaust Educational Trust and the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust—are to be highly commended.

Sadly, I am of an age—an age I do not always admit—where the Holocaust is more personal to me. My late mother and her five brothers were some of the 70,000 refugees from Nazi persecution who came to the UK before the Second World War, in between the

[LORD PALMER OF CHILDS HILL]

wars. Her mother—my maternal grandmother—and her aunt and family, were alive at the end of the war in 1944, as far as we know. In 1945, they disappeared, completely without trace. It was mentioned earlier that it was not only the people in the camps who were killed; there were people who were alive during the war but who at the end of the war were never seen again. They lived in the small village of Szrensk in Poland.

Is it any wonder that Jews like me say—and I say the words mentioned so many times during this debate—“Never again”? Never again should that happen. Is it any wonder that Jews in Israel, the only state with a Jewish majority, have built into their psyche that they will not wait and accept that they should stand in line for the gas chambers? To my mind, that explains the Israeli reaction to the horrendous Hamas murders and abductions on 7 October, referred to by the noble Baroness, Lady Scott, and their relationship with the Holocaust. These were peaceful Israelis and their friends, almost all civilians, attacked in their homes by murderers, and murdered and mutilated. There were approximately 1,200 in the kibbutzim, and at a music festival, who were killed and mutilated—actually 1,200 killed. Over 200 hostages were taken—some now dead, some alive and almost forgotten.

A few days ago, I met some families of Holocaust survivors, which is always very sad and worrying. But the one who really affected me was a young woman in her early 20s who was present at the music festival in Israel on 7 October. When the murderous Hamas came and killed these innocent festivalgoers at this music festival, she found herself underneath a whole heap of dead people. She survived only because she was lying underneath this pile of dead people. How traumatising can that be? Can one wonder at Israel's response to these horrors? No country could do nothing.

In my view, when Hamas attacked, it knew that it would get an armed response, and it welcomed that armed response, leading to untold suffering among the people of Gaza. But the people of Gaza were suffering under Hamas control; they still suffer, and will suffer while Hamas is there. Aid and building materials were misappropriated to build miles and miles of sophisticated tunnels. Have noble Lords seen those tunnels? They make the London Underground look antiquated.

What could have happened? All the money spent on underground tunnels could have been spent on making Gaza a sophisticated Singapore of the Middle East. It has a seaboard. It could have water produced from seawater and all sorts of things happening, but the money that went to Gaza was taken to build sophisticated tunnels in order to kill Jews.

It is hard to pick out all the comments made in the debate. The noble Lord, Lord Pickles, talked about students, as did the noble Lord, Lord Austin. It affects so many people. What worries us, as mentioned by other noble Lords, are the denials that some of these things happened—this modern view, of which President Trump is an exponent, of fake news. There are many stories, but this one particularly worried me. I saw reposted a picture of Israelis throwing people into a

pit and killing them. I looked at it and said, “But they're speaking Arabic and they're not wearing Israeli uniforms”. I looked it up and found it was Syrians killing the people in the pit, but it was in the media as Israeli terror. There is so much of this.

The noble Baroness, Lady Anderson, movingly spoke about family and other genocides. It resonates when we talk about people's stories. The noble Lord, Lord Polak, was very moving. I saw the young man he mentioned going off. I am sure he will talk for ages about his words being spoken in the House of Lords.

The noble Lord, Lord Polak, spoke about the late Lord Sacks. Jonathan and Elaine Sacks were, and she is, lifelong friends of my wife and me. They lived very near us, and we were friendly. His words would have been very resonant. He had a most marvellous turn of phrase. I mention him only because of how memories are stirred. Here we are on a Friday having a debate about the Holocaust, Israel, the Jewish community and others. I remember another debate obtained by the most reverend Primate the Archbishop of Canterbury on a Friday, in which Lord Sacks wanted to speak. He had a problem, because the *Companion* says you have to be present at the beginning and the end of a debate. I remember him telling me that he had special dispensation from the most reverend Primate to leave before the beginning of Shabbat. I say to the noble Lord, Lord Polak, that it is at 4.46 pm today, so he still has a bit of time.

The noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, spoke as a Zoroastrian. I must admit that I found it good to find that there is a minority smaller than the one I belong to. My noble friend Lady Smith spoke as a Catholic and made a very good point about other genocides. We must remember that the Holocaust was special, but all genocides are special in that people are killed.

People talk about the future and what could happen in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank. Some years ago, I had coffee in London with a member of Fatah, the ruling party in the Palestinian Authority and the opposition to Hamas. I asked this member of Fatah what I, as someone who has always been known for trying to find a compromise, could encourage the UK Government to provide for Hamas that it wanted in order to be part of a peaceful solution in the Middle East. This member of Fatah said to me, “Lord Palmer, they want only two things”. I asked, “What are the two things?” The answer was the killing of Jews and the removal of Israel from the map. How do you deal with that?

I think it was the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, who mentioned the marches and the hate that comes from them. I will not go over all the points that he and other Members made very clearly, but there is one thing about the marches that really gets me. Let us say that a number of people go there because they are worried about the Palestinians. I understand that, but then they scream out, “From the river to the sea, Palestine shall be free”. They have not got the foggiest idea—or maybe they have—that “from the river to the sea” means, if noble Lords do not know, from the Jordan to the Mediterranean. There was a video—I am not sure whether it was a spoof—from Utah in America in which people were asked which river it was, and they

got the wrong river, which sea it was, and they got the wrong sea. The point is that, “From the river to the sea”, this chant that goes along on the marches, means the complete removal of the State of Israel. Perhaps people should remember that.

Back to Holocaust Memorial Day, which we are talking about. It is a day set aside to remember 6 million Jewish men, women and children murdered by the Nazis and collaborators, not to forget the killing of Roma, gays, the disabled and political opponents. This has been a very stimulating debate. I am glad that it was had, I hope that it will be repeated in the future, and I congratulate all those all around the House who have stimulated so much discussion today. Shalom.

1.56 pm

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage (Lab):** My Lords, I have commented before about the absolute privilege of listening to debates in your Lordships’ House, but today’s debate has been even more extraordinary in hearing the testimony of so many noble Lords with deep, passionate and personal commitment to Holocaust Memorial Day. The incredible personal testimonies and witness have been emotional and deeply meaningful. I thank the Minister for leading the debate, and for her compassion and commitment, which were very clear from her opening remarks.

I thank all noble Lords who have spoken so powerfully. It is always invidious to single people out, but I do not care about that; I am going to do it anyway. I thank my wonderful noble friend Lord Dubs for his remarkable testament and his remarkable life. We all love him, and we are so grateful that he is here. I thank Nicky Winton for saving my noble friend so that he can be here with us today: it is such a privilege to be in this House with him. I also thank the ancestors of my inspirational noble friend Lady Anderson for fleeing to this country so that she can be with us today. I thank her for her vivid reflections on her visit to Israel. I also mention my noble friend Lady Merron for the outstanding work that she has done with the Jewish community over so many years, and for making us so proud when she represented the Jewish community at the King’s Coronation recently.

Such horrors as we saw in the Nazi massacre of a generation of European Jews, and the genocides that have followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur, can feel beyond the limited capacity of the only words we have to express them, but the weight of history demands that we do what we can to recognise so many precious lives lost. We remember them and, as others have said, their potential, which was so devastatingly cut short. At the heart of our remembrance is our commitment to strive always to act on the lessons learned. Yet we hear again of the dreadful anti-Semitism after 7 October, and we witness on our streets the horrors of anti-Semitism, including horrible scenes on television, such as the pictures of hostages that were posted by their friends and relatives being torn down from hoardings in London just a few weeks ago.

As I grew up in the 1950s and 1960s, the long shadow of the Second World War was ever present and real for my parents and grandparents. The trauma they had been through and the long, painful legacy

that war leaves for those affected by it were ever present. My family is not Jewish, but our roots are in the East End of London, where there was a significant Jewish community whom they worked and lived alongside—as referred to by the noble Lord, Lord Gold. As news emerged, both during and after the war, of the horrors of the Nazi Holocaust, it was felt deeply even by those whose families were not directly impacted. The heartbreak for the families and those who had managed to escape to this country was incalculable and unimaginable.

Our parents and grandparents made sure that we understood that, while we could never feel the depth of pain of the Jewish community, we had an absolute duty and responsibility to educate ourselves about what had happened, to learn the lesson from it and pass it on to future generations. The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of London and the noble Lord, Lord Stevens, referred to that responsibility of those of us who are not Jewish.

All across the country now, there are services and events to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. I worked with our small liberal Jewish community in Stevenage to initiate ours around 13 years ago. We are blessed to have in our community the formidable Gillian and Terry Wolfe who have supported us, led by their wonderful Rabbi Danny Rich and lay reader Linda Paice. I say a huge thank you and pay tribute—as others have—to the Holocaust Educational Trust and Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, which provide such enormous support nationally for this type of civic engagement, as well as many other activities.

On Monday night in Stevenage, our moving and emotional Holocaust Memorial Day event heard extremely powerful testimonies from the charity, Generation 2 Generation. As many of the survivors and witnesses are now reaching an age when the demands of travelling and speaking become too much, Generation 2 Generation is supporting them to pass the baton to their children and grandchildren. I know that the noble Baroness, Lady Ludford, mentioned the grandson of Lily Ebert, and these people are doing similar witness. Our first witness that evening was Anita Peleg, the chair of Generation 2 Generation, on behalf of her mother, Naomi Blake. Anita used her mother’s photographs and audio recordings of her mother telling her own story; we heard that Naomi, then Zissi Düm, was born in 1924 in Mukačevo, Czechoslovakia, to a large Jewish family within a thriving Jewish population.

Naomi’s settled life changed from one day to the next in 1944, as the German-backed Hungarian regime took over. She and all her family, friends and neighbours in Mukačevo were marched into a ghetto. By 1944, all the Jews had fled or been deported. Naomi’s words are a sharp echo of the theme for this year’s Holocaust Memorial Day: the fragility of freedom. She said: “One feels that one has nice neighbours, reliable neighbours, but that can all change in a moment”.

Other noble Lords have referred to the conditions that were imposed. They were imposed in Hungary as well: Jews only allowed to walk in the road; Jews cannot leave home after dark; Jews forbidden to meet in groups; Jews forbidden to study; Jewish men to be taken to forced labour camp; Jews not allowed to own

[BARONESS TAYLOR OF STEVENAGE]

businesses. Things went from bad to worse for Naomi and her family as, in April 1944, they were taken five kilometres out of town and then put into cattle trucks to Auschwitz. She was then moved to Stutthof concentration camp, where prisoners were subjected to awful punishments including being made to stand in scorching sun for hours with no protection. Naomi was then moved to Brahnau concentration camp, where she and her sister worked in a munitions factory. There, the women workers at least were able to retaliate a little, as they passed on the skills involved in sabotaging the bombs that they were assembling for the Nazis, ensuring that they would never work.

We have heard about starvation being used as a weapon to keep prisoners in order. In those camps, with food so scarce, understandably it became unbelievably precious to them. One prisoner had a battered picture of bread from her family's bakery that she would look at in bed to imagine herself back in the time when there was plenty. Those women promised each other that, when they were free, they would always carry bread with them—a promise that Anita told us her mother always kept.

In 1945 Naomi managed to flee into the woods from the notorious death march with some of her fellow women prisoners. Unfortunately, although they remained free, the liberating Russian soldiers that they met subjected them to further physical and sexual abuse. Naomi returned to Mukačevo in July 1945 to find that her home was in ruins and 17 family members, including 10 young nieces and nephews, had been murdered.

Naomi eventually came to this country, went to Hornsey art school and followed her career as a successful artist. As her daughter told us, being able to pour her feelings about what had happened into her work was something she always felt had helped. This quote from Naomi will stay with me for ever:

“To survive is not just to snatch a little more bread for yourself, but to help others. That is what makes you stronger”.

Our second testimony was from Mariana Buchko, supported by Peter Dawson. Mariana is a young woman refugee from the current war in Ukraine and Peter is her host. She told us about the pain of having to leave her husband there, as he is fighting in the war, and of leaving Ukraine, with the pain of having lost so many family members and friends, who have lost their lives at the hands of Putin's murderous invasion. In spite of her own very immediate and present distress, Mariana wanted to tell us the life story of a long-lived Jewish survivor of the Holocaust and about the Ukrainian city of Berdychiv, the Jewish capital of Ukraine. These are Mariana's words:

“My story was about Moisei Weinschelbaum from the city of Berdychiv in Ukraine (Berdychiv is the unofficial Jewish capital of Ukraine). During the Second World War, up to 40,000 Jews were killed in this place alone. Moisei is the only survivor from the entire large family, he is 96 years old and before the Russian invasion of Ukraine he still lived in Berdychiv. Today I need to know where he is and whether he is still alive”.

To have survived the Holocaust and then, in your 90s, to be living with the daily reality of the horrific Russian bombardment of your country, is beyond comprehension. Mariana's courage was tangible that

evening. Peter Dawson, her host, played for us a haunting Ukrainian folk song on his cello. The fragility of our freedom was brought to life in the words and music of survivors and their witnesses. It was an evening of powerful and emotional commemoration, which those who were present will never forget.

When we contemplate the fragility of freedom, we must be vigilant to the climate in which genocide takes place. It starts with instability and insecurity, whispers and then shouts of blame and hate speech that the fault lies with a particular group or groups. Then come the restrictions on that group's freedoms and rights. It then develops into segregation, separation, violence and the degradation of people, which was so powerfully referred to by my noble friend Lady Anderson. It is not because of who they are but because of what they are, and it is shaped by a twisted ideology that creates “others” of our fellow humans—our brothers and sisters. It is a present and living danger as we sit here today and, as the noble Lord, Lord Stevens, said, appeasing evil acts does not assuage that at all.

My noble friend Lord Young mentioned an issue I do not want to shy away from: the stain of anti-Semitism that has so recently infected my party. I love the Labour Party—I have been a member for nearly 40 years—but this was a very dark time in our history. I praise the courage of a number of my noble friends, and friends in the other place, who suffered during this time but also stood up against what they saw, and of my party leader Sir Keir Starmer, who has rooted out the anti-Semitism and its perpetrators and transformed our party to be the home it absolutely should be for our Jewish members. Of course we always have more to do, but the journey is well and truly under way.

As we watch our fragile world and its freedoms becoming engulfed in tensions and hate, we must have the courage to speak out against that, wherever we see it. The courage comes from learning the lessons, listening to the witness and keeping the memory of dark times so we guard against them. It is ever more important, as so many noble Lords have said, as we reflect on the shocking events of 7 October and the subsequent conflict in Israel and Gaza.

A national Holocaust memorial situated in the heart of our capital city, adjacent to the mother of Parliaments, will be a powerful daily reminder to our decision-makers in this country—and the millions of visitors who come to London every year—that we take that responsibility seriously. I know there are different views across the House on this subject and it is absolutely right that the whole matter is properly debated, in Parliament as well as through the planning process, but I feel the responsibility that my parents and grandparents felt. We must create the means to carry the lessons down from generation to generation. A lasting Holocaust memorial in this place—which is so respected, so valued and so revered as a symbol of democracy and freedom—will be such a powerful symbol of our commitment and intent. I also agree with the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, and my noble friends Lord Dubs and Lady Anderson that, if we can bring that German exhibition here to London, possibly even to Parliament, it would be a wonderful step forward.

More than ever, there is a need to educate our young people about the history of the Holocaust, and about the nature and reality of anti-Semitism and all hate crime. They are bombarded daily with internet images: some reflecting, at best, unreliable historical information and, at worst, fearful disinformation and denial. With the Community Security Trust recording 2,098 incidents of hate crime in the two months between October and December last year, the highest since records began, and other hate crimes rising as people respond to divisive rhetoric by turning against their neighbours and communities, everyone is starting to feel uncomfortable divisions.

In Stevenage, we share our Holocaust education endeavour with our schools. Children can often be remarkably insightful as they learn, so I will share with your Lordships a poem written by a primary school child at the Leys school in Stevenage. The noble Baroness, Lady Smith, referred to Anne Frank and these are a seven year-old's reflections on her:

"Anne Frank, Anne Frank  
How lonely you must be  
Anne Frank, Anne Frank  
Stuck in your diary  
Diary called 'Kitty'  
As a birthday present for you  
Trapped in a room with seven other people  
Oh how cramped it must be  
Quiet, quiet, silent all the time  
Oh how boring, just let out the feelings  
Oh Anne Frank, Anne Frank  
Rest in Peace".

We cannot change the history that lies behind us, but we can shape the history that stretches ahead. The best commemoration we can offer to the victims of genocide—the 6 million Jews, the Roma and Sinti, the Slavs, the homosexuals, the trade unionists and the disabled people murdered by the Nazis, and the victims of genocide in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur—is to do all we can to shape the future of a tolerant, equal, generous and caring country where, to use Naomi Blake's words, helping others is what makes us stronger.

2.12 pm

**Baroness Scott of Bybrook (Con):** My Lords, we have been here for over four hours and I do not know whether I can quite do justice to everything that has been said. Thank you—it was an amazing debate, one that I will never forget. I want to say a really personal thank you to those people who have spoken today and for whom, either through their family history or their heritage, the Holocaust is so much more important. Those of us who, like me, do not have that in our heritage or family history cannot imagine what it is like. I thank them for actually saying what they feel today. That was the powerful part of this debate.

The noble Lord, Lord Dubs, is just a hero; I have to say he is one of mine, even if he is from that side. I thank him for what he has done and continues to do. He could not have been more welcome as a child coming into this country and I thank him for everything he has done for us.

I do not know what to say to the noble Baroness, Lady Anderson. The testimonies she brought to us, particularly the testimonies of the young people who

were at that festival, are something none of us should ever forget. We should remember them when some things, particularly in the media, are said about the Jewish people and Israel today.

I say to the noble Lord, Lord Austin of Dudley: yes, he has differing views from some of us, but I thank him for what he said.

My noble friend Lord Polak spoke on behalf of Sammy Barnett. I cannot thank Sammy directly, but I can do so through my noble friend. The bravery of a young man telling his story, when perhaps he does not feel very brave and feels out of his depth, is amazing. He is exceptionally brave to tell that story, and I thank him for that. I am sorry that my noble friend's grandchildren feel unable to go to school, or that they are even questioning whether they can do so. That is not what we want in this country.

I thank my noble friend Lady Altmann, who I have heard many times describing her private family history, for reminding us that we can still have hope. We might not think so at this time, particularly after 7 October, but we still have messages of hope out there.

The noble Baroness, Lady Merron, said that sometimes you feel helpless. We in this place should not be feeling helpless. We are really lucky: we can speak up, as we have done today, and bear witness to everything that happened on 7 October and keep talking about it, keep moving forward and keep on top of it. We should not feel helpless, and I do not want the noble Baroness to feel that way, because I think we are lucky. It is important that people in a place of influence—I hate to use the word "power"—such as this talk about things like this all the time.

I thank my noble friends Lord Gold and Lord Sterling and the noble Lords, Lord Young of Norwood Green and Lord Palmer of Childs Hill, for their testimonies. They have all made a difference today, and they are something that all of us in this Chamber will not forget.

I say a special thank you to my noble friend Lord Pickles. He seems to be everywhere that I am when we are talking about the Jewish faith and the Jewish community, and I know it is in his heart. He says that "Never again" will be listened to only if it gets into our hearts. I know it is already in his heart, and he continues to work to ensure that that happens.

I cannot answer everything, but I shall read the whole debate and then send a letter out and put a copy in the Library. However, a couple of themes came out that I found very strong. The first was that this did not start with the Holocaust or with World War II; it started with politics and people, and with debates probably like this one, although not going in the right direction. Then there was the propaganda that we heard about at Nuremberg. That is the bit that is important for us, as we move forward, to take more notice of and look more into, rather than just looking at what happened in World War II. I am sure my noble friend Lord Pickles will take that forward; indeed, he probably already is.

It is important for the whole world to realise that these things do not start slowly. We must nip them in the bud and catch them because we can see them

[BARONESS SCOTT OF BYBROOK]

leading to something dreadful again. My noble friend Lady Altmann brought that up, as did the noble Lords, Lord Singh and Lord Parekh. We have to learn the lessons not just of the Holocaust but of how we got there in the first place. Many noble Lords mentioned that it was not in the last century but before that, and we need to look at that as communities of the world.

The second theme that came out strongly, from the noble Lords, Lord Bilimoria and Lord Young of Norwood Green, the noble Baronesses, Lady Fox and Lady Smith, and my noble friend Lord Gold, was education. We go back to thanking the Holocaust Educational Trust and others—I shall speak a little more about them in a minute—for all that they do, but we must support them. We must keep the language and the stories going. I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Taylor, for those two wonderful stories from Naomi and Mariana, because she will remember and repeat those stories, but Naomi has gone, and I think Mariana has gone. All the Holocaust survivors who I get so much knowledge from are getting increasingly very old. That is why, as I said, we want to get the Holocaust memorial built: I want some of those survivors to still be there. I thank the noble Baroness for those testimonies; they are so powerful.

I have probably forgotten many people; I am really sorry. There are a couple of points I want to answer, particularly from the noble Lord, Lord Austin. He quite rightly challenged us on the fact that Holocaust Memorial Day is now extended to other genocides. The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust did that and wanted that, but some places that commemorate the Holocaust do not use other genocides. It is up to those people what they do, but there is a United Nations International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide on 9 December. Perhaps we in this House should remember that.

I am going to stop there because I am conscious of the time, but, as I said, I will go through the whole debate to see whether I can answer any other specific points. Building on the importance of education, I thank your Lordships, on their behalf, for the many tributes to the Holocaust Educational Trust and the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust in the important work they do. It is import that we continue to support them to do that work to raise awareness and understanding, especially among young people. The work they do is impressive and invaluable, and if any of your Lordships have not seen some of it, I suggest you talk to them. Some of the stuff they do in prisons, in particular, is very interesting.

However, there are some other people in this country who are doing wonderful things, and I do not think they are ever mentioned in these debates. I want to bring up just a few of them, if your Lordships have just another few minutes. We are greatly blessed by these institutions, which are dedicated to broadly similar aims. Holocaust Memorial Day provides a fitting moment to reflect on the work that they do. I mention first the wonderful work done by the Wiener Holocaust Library, founded by Dr Alfred Wiener. He was looking at the roots of the Holocaust well before the Second World War; we can learn from that. It is one of the world's leading and most extensive archives of the Holocaust

and the Nazi era. I expect the story of how the library came into existence and came to London is well known to your Lordships—I am sure the noble Lord, Lord Dubs, knows it—but if you do not know it I suggest you look it up, because it is another inspirational story.

Just before Holocaust Memorial Day, Her Majesty the Queen became the first royal patron of the Anne Frank Trust UK. As we have heard, the trust uses Anne Frank's tragic story to teach about where anti-Semitism and prejudice can lead if it is not challenged. From listening to the noble Baroness, Lady Taylor of Stevenage, we know that even young children can get close to Anne Frank's story, when the Holocaust may be too big for them to understand at that age.

There are many wonderful institutions outside London, helping people across the country to access powerful and effective educational opportunities. The National Holocaust Centre and Museum in Newark, Nottinghamshire, is a genuinely inspirational place to which I expect many noble Lords have already been—if they have not, I urge them to go. The centre was the brainchild of Stephen and James Smith, along with their mother Marina, who in 1991 visited Israel's national Holocaust museum and wanted to bring something back.

The Holocaust Centre North in Huddersfield is another valuable and important institution. The success of that centre is testimony to the work of the Holocaust Survivors' Friendship Association, and the late Lilian Black—may her memory be a blessing—and many friends of the HSFA. In 2023 the Holocaust Centre North was awarded the first King's Award for Voluntary Service, in recognition of the involvement of survivors and members of the second and third generations, as well as friends and allies in various aspects of their work.

Heading across to the north-west of England, we see the Lake District Holocaust Project. This is an interesting project that I am sure the noble Lord, Lord Dubs, knows about, established in 2013 to remember 300 Jewish orphans who were sent to the Lake District to recuperate after the war. In June 1945 the Home Office gave permission for 1,000 Jewish orphans aged from eight to 16 to be brought to the UK for recuperation. In the end, 732 of them made the journey, with 300 arriving in the Lake District. These children had been discovered in notorious ghetto camps near Prague, but many had been used as slave labour in camps across Nazi-occupied Europe for many years. Many of the boys went on to lead really successful lives. The most successful was the late Sir Ben Helfgott—may his memory be a blessing—who was at the forefront of campaigns to introduce Holocaust education and remembrance.

There are also many smaller projects, and I mention one in particular—Learning from the Righteous, a Holocaust education charity that promotes dialogue and understanding to tackle racism and discrimination through learning about stories of resistance and rescue during the Holocaust. That is just a small sample of what is going on across this country. I hope that noble Lords do not mind me mentioning them, because they do not get mentioned very often. I want to thank them



all in *Hansard* for their very important work. We need to keep supporting them in order for them to continue to educate our country.

I want my final words today to focus on Holocaust survivors, and the survivors of subsequent genocides. I have had the honour to hear testimony, as many noble Lords have, from survivors of the Holocaust, and from Cambodia, Srebrenica and Rwanda. I think we can all agree that listening to survivors of the Holocaust and subsequent genocides has a profound effect on us.

This year, Janine Webber shared her experiences at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Holocaust Memorial Day event. Janine was born in Lwów in Poland—now Lviv, Ukraine—in 1932. Janine shared her story and that of her family, of how she survived the Lwów ghetto, and how her uncle found a Polish farmer who was willing to hide her, which was just the start of a further ordeal. We heard about her struggle through many years to survive and

how eventually, after the war, she made her way to Paris—this was all while she was a schoolgirl, and very, very brave—and then to London in 1956. Janine still lives in London and regularly shares her testimony with schools.

At this year's Holocaust memorial ceremony at the Guildhall, we heard testimony from Mala Tribich MBE, sister of the late Sir Ben Helfgott, Ivor Perl BEM, Vera Schaufeld MBE and Antoinette Mutabazi, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide against the Tutsi. It is our duty to ensure that their testimony is never forgotten. Holocaust survivor and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Elie Wiesel said that he believed

“firmly and profoundly that whoever listens to a witness becomes a witness, so those who hear us, those who read us must continue to bear witness for us. Until now, they're doing it with us. At a certain point in time, they will do it for all of us”.

*Motion agreed.*

*House adjourned at 2.30 pm.*





