**Year in review 5772**

*“Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you.”—Deuteronomy 32:7*

By Dr. Erica Brown/JNS.org

It’s that time again: a new Hebrew year is upon us. It’s time for the Jewish year in review based on a mandate from Deuteronomy that we remember days past because they teach us life lessons for the future. And when our memories fail us, we are told to seek out the help of others.

Yehuda Kurtzer in *Shuva: The Future of the Jewish Past* makes a fascinating observation: “One of the great ironies of modern Jewish life is that we now know much more about our origins, our history, and our ancestry than we ever did before; and as a collective, we care about it considerably less.” But we should; to help we need a quick review of 5772.

We started out of the gate with the long-awaited but highly controversial release of Gilad Shalit only days after Yom Kippur. Our prayers were finally answered. Close to the same time, good news of a different kind hit the papers; Israeli chemist Daniel Shechtman won the Nobel Prize in chemistry for his discovery that atoms could fit together inside of crystals in a nonrepeating pattern. Got that?

He was not the only Israeli to distinguish himself in 5773. In the Paralympics, Israeli tennis player Noam Gerhsony took the gold in wheelchair tennis. And while Israel did not take home any gold medals in this past Olympics, gymnast Aly Raisman brought her team to the gold in a floor exercise performed to Hava Nagila as the first American woman to win the gold for floor exercises. The honor she accorded to the fallen of the Munich Olympics 40 years earlier did not compensate for the fact that Olympic organizers would not honor their memory with a moment of silence. “Shame on you International Olympic Committee because you have forsaken the 11 members of your Olympic family,” said Ankie Spitzer. Her husband, Andre, an Israeli fencing coach, was a victim in the massacre.

On the entertainment front, Matisiyahu shaved his beard and the Israeli film “Footnote” was nominated for an Oscar. Edon Pinchot’s singing charmed the crowds all the way to the semi-finals of “America’s Got Talent” with his pop songs and his yarmulke. Speaking of music, while people may have said disco has been dead for decades, it really died this year with the loss of Donna Summer and Robin Gib of the Bee Gees. Neither of them were Jewish, but Marvin Hamlisch certainly was. He composed the music of a generation with “The Sting,” “The Way We Were,” “Sophie’s Choice,” and “A Chorus Line.” Another pearl of screen and book, Nora Ephron, succumbed to illness but at least doesn’t have to wear turtlenecks anymore. We lost Mel Stuart, who directed “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory” with Gene Wilder.

On the American political front, this year brought us Jack Lew as a new chief of staff for the White House and the hysterical video of Rick Perry dancing with Chabad Hasidim around a menorah—and we’re still engaging in the ever-present question of how “Jewish” presidential candidates have to be to win this year's election. In Israeli politics, the question of Iran’s threat still looms large as two veteran politicians said their last farewells; former MK Hanan Porat died as did former prime minister, Yitzhak Shamir.

In July, 250,000 people mourned the death of the influential authority, Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv at his funeral. He was 102 and had 1,000 descendants. In the ultra-Orthodox camp, we also had the *Asefa* or stadium-packed denunciation of the Internet and social media and the *Siyyum ha-Shas*, the completion of the seven and a half year cycle of Talmud study, one page a day. Sadly, the Beit Shemesh controversy over schooling and the place of women garnered international attention prompting some very profound questions about tradition and modernity. In that spirit, Tamar Epstein is still fighting for her *get*—her Jewish divorce—and another year has passed without resolution.

Three shootings in Toulouse and Montaubon, France shook the Jewish world with the loss of seven lives in March. And Germany’s ban on circumcision caused a world outcry and more anguished debate.

The year that was tells a story of pain and triumph and influence on the world stage. What Jewish event rocked your 5772? What event do you hope for in 5773? Pray hard and hope, and let’s see how history unfolds.

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