

## Rabbi's Column

In the Torah portion this week, the earth does something miraculous and swallows up a group of people. In the real world, over Shabbat, the person who best vocalized one of the solid underpinnings of how to approach humanity died. Elie Wiesel is also known for being among the first to find a voice to communicate the incommunicable. His written work is extensive. His lectures were innumerable - although some of them became written works, once enough on a particular theme had been given. The effect he has had on generations is almost incalculable.

So, let me tell a couple of stories.

Bill Eisen had a skill with needles, which kept him alive during the Holocaust. When you see the iconic picture that includes Elie Wiesel, Bill is also there, just a few heads over. He moved to Buffalo, which is where I met him, where he served as the Torah Reader and the reader of the Friday Psalm. That's the one which includes "the LORD is robed" - and it was dubbed the Tailor's Psalm, in the Synagogue I worked for. When I read it I think of Bill, and by extension, Eli.

Eli has been, perhaps, the closest thing we have to a prophet. His talks contained obvious points, which were then completely ignored by the powers that be, many of whom had paid for him to come speak and had also paid extra to have private meals with him. He talked about the importance of education - about how being Jewish was a matter of memory, and it was hard to keep remembering things when you never studied the language they were written in. Then the announcement was made that people could sign up before they left - for the basketball league.

He wrote about how he wrote, which, as a writer, I found fascinating. He wrote copiously in French, and then edited massively. Each sentence that was left stood in for dozens that had expanded upon it and surrounded it, but could not survive to make it into the book. Each book was thus, in a fashion, reliving his experience. [Yes, I know that editing is part of all writing and High Holiday sermonizing. I think in this case, though, the symbolism stands. Each sentence that winds up being used, like each person that exists, has a meaning. This meaning includes a reflection of all the sentences and people who have been connected with that sentence or person.]

In his memory - go and learn.