Remembering Elie Wiesel on his Fifth Yartzeit

It is hard to believe five years have passed since the world lost the great teacher, humanist, and writer; Elie Wiesel. With the surge of antisemitism and acts of anti-Israel fueled hatred, I’m conflicted between being grateful he is not here to witness this, and sad that he isn’t here to respond and inspire us to be loud and proud.

I often turn to his teachings through my class and lecture notes, carefully written during over 35 years of being his student. I’ve gathered pages of quotes from these years and divided them into sections: Learning, Holocaust and Memory, Hope, Faith and Belief, and Literature and Music. I’m beginning to write a book on how his teachings impacted my life, with the hope that it will help inspire others to see the world with his lessons as a guide.

I’ll share two quotes from each section as we remember a master teacher, philosopher and peace-loving Jewish activist.

Learning

**“Education is not education without ethics”**

( Boston University class, “ The Jewish Response to Jewish Persecution “Sept. 13, 1976 )

**“Judaism is by definition anti-racist. Racism is biological , a matter of law, humanity. Anyone who accepts (our) religion can be a Jew from any society, any country.”**

( Boston University class, “ Holocaust: Memory and Conscience, Nov. 7, 1977)

Holocaust and Memory

**“Abraham Joshua Heschel at Auschwitz said, “Ask 6,000,000 for forgiveness, we can’t forgive”**

( Boston University class, “ The Jewish Response to Jewish Persecution, Sept. 28, 1976)

**“If the Holocaust would not put an end to anti-Semitism, nothing will.”**

(Boston University class, “ the Jewish Response to Jewish Persecution, Sept. 21, 1976)

HOPE

**“We must learn how not to hate, not how to hate.**

**To abolish hate in our hearts won’t do, it must be ( abolished) in our enemy’s heart . Outlaw fanaticism**.”

(Boston University class, “ The Jewish Response to Jewish Persecution. Sept. 21, 1976)

**“I don’t have the right to live in despair. No one lives alone.**

**Everyone is my hope. Especially my students.**

(Boston University final class lecture Dec. 11 2007)

Faith and Belief

**“Everyone can have a relationship with God, therefore there is hope.**

**Through prayer there is direct contact- prayer awakens your spirit.”**

(Boston University class, “ Rabbi Nahman, March 15, 1978)

**“Every moment can be a miracle. Each person’s humanity, each spark of humanity is a miracle.”**

( 92nd St Y Lecture, “ Personal Reflections of Elie Wiesel,” March 25, 2001)

Literature and Music

**“ A poet and a non-poet can say the same things yet. A poet makes words sing!”**

( Boston University class, “ Rabbi Nahman”, March 15, 1978)

**“Rabbi Nahman believed if we knew how to sing we could be closer to God”**

(Boston University class, “ Rabbi Nahman”, March 15, 1978

May his name and memory be a blessing and an inspiration.

The world needs his voice and his teachings more than ever.

Cantor Deborah Katchko-Gray