

**PERSPECTIVE: Healing After the Holocaust**  
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Recently my mother came up from New York City to see us. She especially wanted to spend time with her granddaughter, our 2-and-a-half-year-old, Ana.

My mother is a Holocaust survivor. In 1938, the beginning of World War II, she was 10. One evening, as we were finishing dinner, my mother began to tell us what it was like growing up in Germany.

“I was from a happy home, where my parents loved each other, and life was enjoyable and simple,” she said. “Then, one day, my favorite teacher in school was replaced by a Nazi, who made all the Jewish children sit in the back of the room. Our homework was taken, a line put through the page and returned to us without ever having been looked at. The Jews were never called on. I used to plead in the mornings with my mother not to have to go to school.

“Then, the segregation began. We had to travel on a train just for Jews and travel a long way to go to a school the Nazis designated for Jews only. My father had had a steel and metal business. It was taken over by a Nazi. My father had to pass it every day on the way to the only job he could find — in a woodshed. Personal bank accounts were also taken and an allowance given to each Jewish family from their own money that they had saved and worked for.”

Ana was sitting on her daddy’s lap directly across the table as my mother continued her horrifying experience. She told us of *Kristallnacht* (the Night of Broken Glass), which she remembers as if it had happened yesterday.

“It was the night of Nov. 9 going into the 10th, 1938, when the Nazis burned all the temples and went from house to house beating the Jews in the middle of the night,” she said. “At 4:00 a.m., the bell rang and a Nazi youth claimed it was the police. My father said to us, ‘I’ve never had any dealings with the police.’ They insisted he come down.

“When he went down, they began beating him with clubs until he was lying in the street in a puddle of blood. We could hear the screams. The Nazis must have thought he was dead.

“A little while later, my father was able to get himself up the stairs to the apartment. Buckets of blood poured from his head. His skull was split open. No ambulance would come for a Jew, so the family had to take him to a Nazi doctor, who stitched his head up without any anaesthesia and then bandaged it and sent him home.

“The next morning, the bell rang. It was the Nazis again, who said, ‘Pack your bags and be ready to leave in one hour.’ My mother pleaded with them because of my father’s condition, but to no avail. With my mother on one side of him and my sister and I on the other, we held him up as we walked to where the women were separated from the men. Soon the women and children were sent home, and the men were sent to the concentration camp Dachau.”

As my mother was telling us this story, I was filled with grief and fought to hold back the tears. I didn’t want to hear it, but I felt it was important to know my family’s history.

She was about to continue her story when Ana, still on my husband’s lap, put her hands together and started chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo loudly and would not stop, pausing occasionally to recite the prolonged Namu-myoho-renge-kyo.

Ana had chanted before, but never that much! She chanted and chanted, even though I broke into sobs. I could not believe my eyes or ears — my 2-and-a-half-year-old daughter healing us, comforting us.

My mother, who does not practice, began to cry also, not believing what she saw. “I don’t believe this is a coincidence,” she said. “Now, look at that, I am telling about this horrible horror that happened to our family, and it’s as if she is trying to say: ‘This is the way to heal. This is the way to peace.’ She wants to send comfort.”

Ana’s great-grandfather was pulled from his home on *Kristallnacht* and beaten, almost to death, because he was a Jew. Now, almost 60 years later, his great-granddaughter is chanting the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra naturally, the sound bursting from her life like the rising sun.

Thank you, Nichiren Daishonin and presidents Ikeda, Toda and Makiguchi, for making it possible for Ana Tish to chant the Mystic Law, ensuring the happiness of her ancestors and the happiness of all humankind to come.

**WT**

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