

# Professor Monty Noam Penkower

## ASMEA Bernard Lewis book award remarks

Washington DC, November 5, 2023

Greetings to all from Jerusalem, the capital of the State of Israel and my home for the past twenty-one years.

I am delighted at having been selected as a recipient of the Bernard Lewis book prize this year for my volume *After the Holocaust*. Aware of the pioneering, scholarly contribution made by the late Professor Lewis in alerting our world to the dangers of radical Islamism, I am particularly moved to accept this award. At a time when Israel continues its war with Hamas, a terrorist adversary guilty of unprecedented atrocities against civilians and one that is committed, along with Hezbollah (a second Iranian proxy), to a genocidal campaign aimed at destroying the one Jewish State, I had to stand with my fellow citizens and forego the ASMEA annual conference.

The chapters of *After the Holocaust* examine facets in the drama of how the survivors of the Shoah contended with life after the darkest night in Jewish history. They include the Earl Harrison mission and its significant report, the effort to keep Europe's borders open to refugee passage, the murder of the first Jew in Germany after V-E Day and its aftermath, and the iconic sculptures of Nathan Rapoport and Poland's landscape of Holocaust memory up to the present day.

After a third of world Jewry had been obliterated by Nazi Germany and collaborator nations into anonymity and ash, most survivors had few doubts about the pressing, vital need for sovereignty in their ancestral homeland, Eretz Yisrael. From then onwards, that tiny sliver of land hugging the Mediterranean continues to serve the Jewish people and their allies in the on-going struggle for decency and truth as a bridge against

apocalyptic despair, providing some solace and even joy in the wake of hitherto unimaginable horror.

Alas, the Holocaust is still at times trivialized, universalized, even brazenly denied outright. Furthermore, senseless hatred of Jews and the depersonalization of the powerless are not alien to our age. Anti-Zionism is the new antisemitism. All who cherish freedom must champion Israel's right to exist and to thrive as a beacon of light in a very troubled planet. Forty years ago, I concluded my volume *The Jews Were Expendable* with these words: "The cancer of bestiality is the concern of us all, and the infinite preciousness of life requires daily affirmation." Embracing that same credo tonight, I thank Michael Lewis and the ASMEA prize committee for this great, prestigious honor. It is one that I shall long cherish. *Shalom!*