

## My Reading Chair by Harry Friedland

I have previously written about “The Uncomfortable Couch” - and there will be more of that in due course - but this is a very different - and a much more important thing.



The owner of the reading chair should find a comfortable place to put it (a corner, a bay-window, a nook, a room, perhaps somewhere in a garden when the weather is fine - a place where he or she can sit undisturbed to READ: a place which is conducive to reading, where there is not too much noise or music which is unpleasant to them, and virtually no traffic; a place where they will not be called on to take out the garbage or wash the dishes or switch the dish washer or the clothes washer on or off, or to take the chicken out of the oven when the bell goes off, or to answer the telephone or the front door bell, yadayada).

The chair should be to the entire satisfaction of its occupant (“the owner”): not some other family member or a boss or whatever. This applies to its size, shape, ergonomic design, colour, upholstery - everything. It should be positioned in good lighting but probably not in direct sunlight. It may need to have a high backrest with tilting ability and a footrest - or not - entirely at the “owner’s” discretion. Oh - and a lumbar support cushion, if necessary. It may also need a neck support cushion for older readers such as myself, who tend to doze off from time to time (and when they do, THEY SHOULD NOT BE DISTURBED). The chair may need to be accompanied by a small, very stable side table to hold endless cups of tea or coffee and a plate for cake or cookies. It should also need to hold an A5 notepad and a working pen. You just never know when the need to make a note, or a doodle, may arise.

Oh, and this is a good place to say a word about telephones:

I once had a partner at my law firm (Avu Sholem - may his soul rest in peace) who had strong opinions about telephones. This man was a true thinker, of the old school. He enunciated a very important principle: TELEPHONES HAVE NO CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO BE ANSWERED - and he backed that up with very sound reasoning: callers call you when they have prepared themselves to do so. They have thought about what they want to say,

they may even have planned how they want to say it, and they call at a time when it is suitable to them. That immediately gives them a strategic advantage. It may not be suitable for you at the moment that the phone rings (I dread to think of the possibilities!) And telephones have caller identity and voice mail for a reason: you may not be able to take the call, or may not want to do so. There is very little in this world that is so important that your phone absolutely has to be answered immediately.

I remember this hilarious comic scene in a Bette Midler/Woody Allen film, in the privacy of their own bedroom, where they are trying to make love - but they are both busy professionals, and their phones keep ringing, and they are the kind of people who feel compelled to answer the phone whenever it rings. Good professionals, but terrible lovers. My feeling is that you will know when something of a catastrophic nature is happening: your sixth sense will kick in, or you will observe crowds of people wailing and beating their chests in the street, or multiple wailing sirens, or air raid warning sirens -you know, that sort of thing. Or they will call repeatedly. Otherwise - be selfish. After all, that's what the caller is doing in every case. He/she chooses his/her moment. IT CAN WAIT.

Depending on your personality, the chair may be suitable for reading OR thinking, or it may only be suitable for reading. In my case the chair was only suitable for reading. I was a solitary soul, and I did a lot of solitary walking - but I was lucky: I had Table Mountain in my back yard. And that's where I did my thinking. I've said this before but it's true in its own way: I took my troubles to the mountain, and the mountain usually solved them. Today living in Milnerton, the mountain is no longer have the mountain in my back yard (although I can see it) - but I do have these endless, sparkling white powder-sand beaches which I visit virtually daily. The Atlantic may be cock-shrinking cold, but its excellent for walking. Same thing.

Just... for me, time has passed...

The Age of Cellphones has changed all that of course: you can write a bit, walk and think a bit, write a bit - you get the picture. This for example is being written on my phone while sitting in my reading chair. I can no longer even bear to sit at my desk and write on my computer —→ BORING!

I cannot read or write in bed. Beds are for sleeping. Or whatever.

So - get thee a reading chair. It may become an old friend.

---

**My Reading Chair by Harry Friedland, written in April, 2024**

**Posted on the CHOL Share Your Story Site in May, 2024**