

## **Please join me to remember the Holocaust**

This past year, Trudy died. She was the last member of our congregation who survived the camps. Tattooed with a number on her arm, she survived to raise children and grandchildren and become a great-grandmother. Each day since her liberation, she lived to defy the attempted genocide. *Zachor*—remember—that was an obligation. Jack Werber phrased it this way when he wrote *Saving Children: Diary of a Buchenwald Survivor and Rescuer* “Escape was not our goal since it was so unrealistic. What we wanted was to survive, to live long enough to tell the world what had happened in Buchenwald.”

Now the task is ours. There is a difference between history and memory. History is an academic pursuit. Memory is personal. History is objective, seeking to be devoid of emotions and learnt in order to be preserved. Memory seeks to be preserved in the souls of those who experienced and shared in vivid detail as well as being full of emotions. History strives for objectivity. Memory is faithful to what was experienced. In the 77+ years since the war ended, survivors are disappearing. We need to own and treasure the painful memories of what happened. It is the work of subsequent generations to pledge with full conviction: Never again!

Yom Hashoah is the date that we Jews put on our calendars as a holy time. It is ours to own. Although millions died during the Holocaust, the deliberate systematic genocide was brutal and ruthless in its antisemitic intentions; eliminate every Jew from the face of the earth. The Nazi’s corrupted science, twisted Darwin’s theory of survival of the fittest by portraying Jews as less than human. It ran deep into society through laws and policies. But it also festered a long simmering hatred to Jews. Such antisemitism was not isolated; it still exists—and we must be constantly on-guard for any indication that this hatred could erupt again.

And it can! Some T-shirts worn on January 6<sup>th</sup> 2021 at the Capital showed the depth and depravity of certain white supremacists. Recall the marching in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017 as Nazi flags paraded down in front of a synagogue on a Shabbat morning. The Anti-Defamation League reported a record number of incidents of hatred against Jews in the last few years. Yes, we need to preserve the memory of the Holocaust

in all its gruesome detail. For the sake of the victims as they did not die in vain; for the sake of future generations who should never endure such a fate.

Yom HaShoah is different than International Holocaust Memorial Day. First off, the Israeli Knesset chose the date Yom HaShoah to correspond to Jewish resistance; it is set to correspond to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. International Holocaust Memorial Day was established on the date when the Russian army liberated Auschwitz. Both are important, both are essential—but Yom HaShoah is ours... to remember our dead, to look inward for the strength and courage to continue the fight against such hatred.

It is easy to confine hatred to the leaders. Hitler was evil. The Nazis were evil. But as Professor William Goldhagen showed in his book, Hitler's Willing Executioners, ordinary individuals carry responsibility for it. Primo Levi was an Italian chemist, partisan, writer, and Jewish Holocaust survivor. He wrote: “Monsters exist, but they are too few in number to be truly dangerous. More dangerous are the common men, the functionaries ready to believe and to act without asking questions.” Passivity is compliance! Add to this sentiment, Elie Wiesel’s quote: “We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim.”

Yom HaShoah is essential to commemorate—not for the past alone.... But also for the future.

Join us Wednesday night at 7:30pm for our community’s Yom HaShoah Memorial and Commemoration.