

Kahal B'raira  
Yom Hashoah Service  
2009

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We come together to commemorate a period of history known as the Holocaust or the Shoah. We pause to remember what happened, and to assert our commitment to a world in which all people will live side-by-side without hatred, without bigotry, without violence.

*Together: We come together in sorrow.*

We mourn those who lost their lives, and we mourn an entire Jewish way of life that perished with them. We seek to make our own lives worthy of their incredible suffering and sacrifice. We seek to affirm our own humanity by recalling theirs.

*Together: We come together in anger.*

We are angry, if not blind with rage and hatred, at those responsible for the murder of six million Jews, for the murder of two million children, for the murder of twelve million people of various nationalities and backgrounds, for a campaign of annihilation and destruction, for years of systematic and relentless mass murder.

*Together: We come together in hope.*

We hope that each and every person will be valued, that differences will be accepted rather than condemned, and that justice and morality will prevail. We hope we can create a future with no more genocides, no more mass murders, no more holocausts. We hope we will have the wisdom to recognize evil, and the courage to resist it.

We light six candles  
To remember the light of six million souls  
Extinguished in the Holocaust

*Light Candles*

Today we commemorate the death of six million Jews at the hands of the Nazis. Jews were among thirty five million people dead from all causes related to World War II. Jews were among twelve million civilians murdered by the Nazis in concentration camps, cities, villages, ghettos, fields, ravines, trains and trucks. In addition to the murder of six million Jews, the Nazis murdered people who were Polish, people who were Russian, people who were Gypsies (Romani or Sinti), people who were Jehovah's Witnesses, people who were Catholic, people who were gay, people who were communists, people who were socialists, people who had physical disabilities, people who had mental disabilities. They murdered people who crossed their path, people who hinted at resistance, people who fell into the black hole of the Nazi death machine by accident.

We remember all who were murdered—Jews and gentiles—victims, martyrs, heroes. We honor those who died because they were Jews...those who died because they helped Jews...those who died because they resisted the Nazis...those who died because they were marked for death out of the same perverse ideology...those who died simply because the death machine was so big, so embracing, so arbitrary.

### *Musical Selection*

World War II was more than one war. It was a war of territorial expansion, a war of economic and social control, a war of ideology, a war of regaining lost honor, a war in the name of racial superiority. It was all of these wars. But above all, it was a war against the Jews.

This war against the Jews was waged without pity, without honor, without decency, waged by a nation that had lost its soul. It was to continue until every last Jew on earth was dead. The Nazis had their own name for it—The Final Solution. In the words of historian and scholar Lucy Davidowicz: "The final solution transcended the bounds of modern historical experience."

The tactics, weapons, and strategy of this insidious war were unthinkable and beyond belief. What were they? The tactics were ghettos and concentration camps. The weapons were sadism, deceit, torture, starvation, disease, intimidation, and gas chambers. The strategy was the non-recognition of Jews as human, as Anna Sotto explains in her poem *A6893*:

She didn't cry  
when they removed  
her clothes, her ring  
her shoes, her hair.  
But when they took away  
her name  
She wept

*Six Million Ways*  
*Together:*  
*How many ways can six million die?*  
*Six million ways in six million hearts*  
*Gas chambers, bullets, burned alive, buried alive*  
*Six million ways*  
*On meat hooks, hanging, strangling, beating*  
*Six million ways*  
*Drowning, medical experiments, hunger, thirst*  
*Six million ways*  
*Dysentery, electrocution, stabbing, garroting*  
*Six million ways*  
*Mutilation, exhaustion, typhoid, broken heart*

*Six million ways  
Graves, ashes, lampshades, soap  
Six million ways*

*Chanting, praying, weeping, cursing  
Six million ways  
In silence, fear, defiance, rage  
Six million ways  
Remember, remember  
Six million ways in six million hearts  
Six million memories  
A constellation of sorrow  
At Yad Vashem on the cool green mountain  
In the museum as you leave  
There is a glass case  
With a pair of white baby shoes  
It is permitted to cry*

We want to think of those who participated in these unspeakable acts as monsters. We want no kinship with them. And yet, despite the horrible atrocities they committed, we are all part of the same human race. How were they able to carry out their grim duties day after day, week after week, year after year? Rudolf Hess, Commander of Auschwitz, explained himself.

"I must emphasize that I have never personally hated the Jews. It is true that I looked upon them as the enemies of our people. But just because of this I saw no difference between them and the other prisoners, and I treated them all in the same way. I never drew any distinctions. In any event the emotion of hatred is foreign to my nature. You can be sure that it was not always pleasant to see those mountains of corpses and smell continual burning. But Himmler had ordered it and had even explained the necessity. And I never really gave much thought to whether it was wrong. It just seemed a necessity."

The war against the Jews was waged imperceptibly at first. In the beginning it resembled ordinary anti-Semitism...persecution, isolation, dismissal, deportation, random murder, pogroms, official sanction, ghettos, oppression, harassment. These were part of the Jewish way of life in Europe. They were contemptible and shocking to all decent civilized people, but they were familiar. And because of their experience with this sort of thing, Jews knew what to do. They coped as best they could.

*The Butterfly*

The last, the very last,  
So richly brightly dazzlingly  
Yellow  
Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing against a white  
Stone

Such, such a yellow  
Is carried way up high  
It went away I'm sure because  
It wished to kiss the world  
Goodbye

For seven weeks I've lived  
In here  
Penned up inside this ghetto  
But I have found my people here  
The dandelions call to me  
And the white chestnut candles  
In the court

Only I never saw another butterfly  
That butterfly was the last one  
Butterflies don't live here  
In the ghetto

*Pavel Friedman, April 16, 1942, Terezin*

It started small enough, but then it gathered momentum. And so it is with our voices, few at first, and then more with each passing year. Please rise and read aloud when your year comes up. Continue to stand and continue to read aloud all the way through to the year 1945. While it is true that what once affected just a few people eventually destroyed millions, it is also true that our community grows bigger, stronger, and louder when one voice becomes many.

*1933*

*Hitler becomes Chancellor of the German Reich.  
Dachau, the first Nazi concentration camp, opens.*

*1934*

*Hitler declares himself both Chancellor and President after Hindenburg's death.*

*1935*

*Jewish newspapers cannot be sold on the street.*

*1936*

*Jews cannot vote in parliamentary elections.*

1937

*Jewish students are removed from schools and universities.  
Jewish travel abroad is restricted.*

1938

*Jews cannot work as brokers, real estate agents, tourist guides, or matchmakers.  
Jews must carry identification cards.  
Jewish doctors are declared "medical attendants."  
Jewish street names are replaced.  
Jews must have 'Jewish' first names.  
Jewish passports are marked with a "J."  
Fifteen thousand 'stateless' Jews are deported to Poland.  
Pogroms follow the attempted assassination of Von Roth.  
On November 11—kristalnacht—synagogues are destroyed.  
Jews are fined one billion marks for kristalnacht-related damages.  
Jews are forbidden to own or bear arms.  
Jews may no longer head businesses.  
Jews are barred from plays, movies, concerts, and exhibitions.  
Jews remaining in German schools are removed.  
All Jewish businesses are closed down.  
Selected districts are closed to Jews.  
Jews may no longer attend universities.  
Nazi troops enter Austria.  
Nazis destroy the synagogue in Nuremberg.*

1939

*World War II begins.  
Jews are subject to strict curfew.  
Jews must hand in radios to the police.  
Jews are fined 1.25 billion marks.  
Jews in Poland must wear the yellow star.  
Jews in Germany do not receive clothing coupons.  
Jews begin to be taken into 'protective custody'.  
Jews may no longer have telephones.  
Jews must pay special income tax.  
Nazis invade Czechoslovakia and Poland.  
Nazis order evacuation of Jews from Vienna.*

1940

*First prisoners arrive at Auschwitz.  
Nazis invade Denmark, Norway, France, Holland, Luxembourg, and Romania.  
France and Romania introduce anti-Jewish measures.  
Hungary and Romania become Nazi allies.  
Lodz, Krakow, and Warsaw ghettos are sealed off from the outside world, leaving 700,000  
Jews inside.*

1941

*Jews must designate themselves as unbelievers.*

*July 31 - The "official" beginning of The Final Solution.*

*Jews of Germany must wear the yellow star.*

*Jews may not leave home without permission.*

*October 14 - Large-scale deportations to concentration camps begin.*

*Gentiles are forbidden to have friendly relations with Jews.*

*Jews may not use public telephones.*

*Nazis occupy Bulgaria.*

*Nazis invade Yugoslavia, Greece, and the Soviet Union.*

*Ghettos are established in Kovno, Minsk, Vitebsk, Zhitomer, Bialystok, Lvov, and Vilna.*

*Gassing is used to exterminate Jews.*

1942

*Jews must hand in woolen and fur clothing (in January).*

*Jews may not subscribe to newspapers and magazines.*

*Jewish apartments must display the Star of David.*

*Jews are forbidden to use public transit.*

*Jews may not own dogs, cats, birds, or any pet.*

*Jews are forbidden to visit barbershops.*

*Jews must hand over "spare" clothing.*

*Jews no longer receive smoking coupons.*

*Jews must hand over all electrical & optical equipment, typewriters & bicycles.*

*Jewish schools are closed.*

*Blind or deaf Jews may no longer wear armbands identifying their conditions in traffic.*

*Jews cannot institute civil suits.*

*Jews cannot buy meat, eggs, or milk.*

*Jews from many countries are deported to concentration camps.*

*Jews in France, Holland, Belgium, Croatia, and Romania are ordered to wear the yellow star.*

1943

*Greek Jews are ordered into ghettos.*

*Jews in Rome are rounded up.*

*Ghettos are liquidated.*

1944

*Auschwitz-Birkenau records its highest-ever daily number of persons gassed, burning over 9,000 people. Six huge pits are used to burn bodies, as the number exceeds the capacity of the crematories.*

*Nazi force 25,000 Jews to walk over 100 miles in rain and snow, followed by a second forced march of 50,000 persons.*

1945

*On May 7, after years of destruction and death, Germany surrenders.*

*Please be seated*

Six million Jews are dead.  
Two thirds of the Jews of Europe—murdered.  
Those who survive are parents without children, brothers, or sisters.  
They are children without parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, or cousins.  
They have no home to return to, no place to go.  
Numbed, sickly and starved,  
many are liberated,  
only to die.

*Men:*

*I am poured out like water  
And all my bones are out of joint  
My heart is become like wax  
It is melted in my innermost parts  
My strength is dried up like a potsherd  
And my tongue cleaves to my throat  
Psalm 22*

*Women:*

*I am distraught in my complaint and will moan  
Because of the voice of the enemy  
Because of the oppression by the wicked  
For they cast mischief upon me  
And in anger they persecute me  
My heart writhes within me  
And the terrors of death are fallen upon me  
Fear and trembling come over me  
And horror has overwhelmed me  
Psalm 55*

The 5,000 inmates of the Börgermoor concentration camp, mostly political prisoners, labored in the wetlands near the Dutch border, extracting peat from the marshy soil. To add to their ordeal, Nazi guards forced the prisoners to sing cheerful songs during their two-hour march to and from the moor. A group of prisoners retaliated by writing a song that truthfully reflected the workers' situation.

In August 1933, in a cabaret presentation in the camp, sixteen prisoners with spades on their shoulders marched onto the stage singing this song. The composer, Rudi Goguel, conducted the Chorus with a broken spade handle. The camp guards enjoyed the song, failing to grasp its coded reference to the downfall of the National Socialist regime. Disseminated outside the camp by relocated prisoners and outside the country by refugees, *The Soldiers of the Moor* stood as an international emblem of spiritual resistance to Nazi oppression.

*Peat Bog Soldiers*

Far and wide as the eye can measure, Heath and bog are ev'rywhere.  
Not a bird's song gives us pleasure, Oaks are standing bleak and bare.

*Chorus: We are the peat-bog soldiers, We march with spades on shoulders to the bog. (Repeat)*

Here in dreary desolation, we're behind the prison wall.  
Far from every consolation, barbed wire does surround us all.

*Chorus*

Mornings we're marched out in one line, on the moorland to our toil.  
Digging in the burning sunshine, thinking of our native soil.

*Chorus*

Homeward, homeward, each is yearning for his parents, child and wife.  
In each breast a sigh is burning – We're imprisoned here for life.

*Chorus*

Up and down the guards are pacing, No one can escape this place.  
Flight would mean a sure death facing, Four-fold' round the guards do pace.

*Chorus*

But for us there is no complaining, winter will in time be past.  
One day, free we'll be exclaiming: Homeland, you are mine at last.

*Then no more will Peat-Bog Soldiers,  
March with spades on shoulders to the bog (Repeat)*

We are taunted by those who accuse the Jews of acquiescing,  
For going to their deaths without fighting,  
For collaborating with the enemy in the ghettos and death camps.

But consider the Jewish people—  
Scattered in many cities of many nations,  
A peaceful civilian population without military training, weapons, allies;  
A collection of families: old people and children, mothers and fathers,  
Desperately trying to understand the insane persecution that beset them day after day.  
They obeyed the law and met persecution with head bowed.

Nothing in human history would have hinted at the horrors yet to come.  
When people were told to move into ghettos, they moved.  
They organized schools, hospitals, theatres, they lifted their heads, they adapted.  
When they were told they were being deported to Jewish colonies, they believed.  
When they were told to undress for showers, they were given soap and towel.  
And so death was prepared for them, secretly and deceitfully.

For most there was no consciousness of resisting  
Because they did not know what awaited them.  
And among many of those who knew, who understood—  
Adults protected children, old persons, and those paralyzed by fear.  
They chose spiritual resistance.  
They stayed with those they loved to comfort them until the end,  
Like Dr. Korczak, who accompanied his wards of the orphanage in the Warsaw Ghetto,  
Wiping their tears, looking after their buttons,  
Leading them to their inevitable unjust death in dignity.

Some among this battered, starved, sick, emaciated, isolated, frightened,  
Hopeless mass of Jewish humanity had the presence of mind,  
At the moment before death,  
To chant kaddish, sh'ma y'Israel and ani ma-nim.  
Some lived to tell the world of the unspeakable horrors  
That were forced upon them and upon those who died.  
Some managed to obtain arms and organize resistance.  
Even if they could not save themselves, they would die fighting.  
That such resistance took place at all is a miracle...  
A small light from the black hole of agony;  
But, as one of the Treblinka death camp fighters said,  
'If not a single Jew resists, who will ever want to be a Jew again?'

And so there was resistance—  
In the ghettos of Minsk, Vilna, Bialystock, Warsaw,  
And by the inmates of Sobibor and Treblinka.  
Armed revolts that were theoretically impossible.  
In Warsaw they called in General Jurgen Stroop,  
A specialist in civilian pacification.  
He quashed the revolt with tanks and flame-throwers.  
He had to level every building, to kill every fighter.  
The battle began on Pesach, April 19, 1943, and, incredibly, lasted 42 days.  
General Stroop published his Warsaw battle diary as a gift to Himmler. He called it "The Jewish Quarter of Warsaw is No More."

"During the grand operation, Jews who had already been transferred to Lublin or Treblinka, had escaped from there, and returned to the ghetto equipped with arms and ammunition. While it was possible at the beginning to catch considerable numbers of Jews, who are inherently cowardly, it proved increasingly difficult to capture Jews and

bandits in the second half of the grand operation. Repeatedly, fighting groups of 20 to 30 or more Jewish youths aged 18 to 25, accompanied by a corresponding number of females, unleashed new resistance. These fighting groups had orders to offer armed resistance to the last person and if necessary to commit suicide to escape capture.

"During the armed resistance, females belonging to fighting groups were armed just like men. Some of them were members of the He-chalutz movement. Not infrequently, these females fired pistols from both hands. Repeatedly they concealed pistols or hand grenades in their underpants to use at the last minute.

The resistance offered by the Jews and bandits could only be broken by the energetic and relentless day and night commitment of our assault units ... I therefore decided to embark on the total destruction of the Jewish quarter by burning down every residential block...

The longer the resistance lasted the tougher became the men of the Waffen SS, Police and Wehrmacht, who tirelessly fulfilled their duties in true comradeship and stood together as exemplary soldiers. Only the continuous and tireless commitment of all forces made it possible to apprehend and/or destroy 56,065 Jews. To this confirmed number must be added the Jews who lost their lives in explosions, fires, etc. whose numbers could not be ascertained.

The grand operation was terminated on May 16, 1943 with the dynamiting of the Warsaw Synagogue at 20:15 hours."

*Together:*

*Thus we remember the Jews who fought back*

*In the ghettos, in the forests*

*Even in the death camps.*

*"Men and women brutalized beyond human recognition*

*Hopeless as we shall never be hopeless*

*And with absolutely no help or encouragement...*

*These people were nevertheless able to regain a sense*

*Of their own worth as human beings*

*Organize a system of underground resistance*

*Suffer setback after setback as members were killed*

*Secure arms under very tight surveillance*

*And then move together*

*With one spirit and one aim*

*To successfully shoot down their captors*

*And blow up the camp."*

*Terence Des Pres describing Treblinka*

Who were these rebels?  
They were the temporary survivors.  
They were the death workers.  
"Hopeless as we shall never be hopeless"  
Achieving a miracle of redemption through rebellion,  
They were the prisoners who "stayed alive  
By killing others so that the killing itself could be stopped..."  
We remember their intolerable torment, the terrible price of their heroism.  
Let us remember, let us honor all of the Jews who resisted the Nazis,  
And all of the gentiles who resisted the Nazis by saving Jews.  
They resisted so that history could remember  
That humanity itself was not totally extinguished by The Final Solution.  
Let us remember the killings that continue in many lands throughout the world  
Let us remember the obligation to speak out and to resist.

*Together:*  
*For my days are consumed like smoke*  
*And my bones are burned as a hearth*  
*My heart is smitten like grass and withered*  
*For I forget to eat my bread*  
*By reason of the voice of my sighing*  
*I am like a pelican of the wilderness*  
*I have become as an owl of the waste places*  
*I watch and have become like a sparrow*  
*That is alone on the housetop*  
*My enemies taunt me all the day*  
*They that are mad against me do curse me*  
*For I have eaten ashes like bread*  
*And mingled my drink with weeping*  
*My days are like a vanishing shadow*  
*And I am withered like grass*  
*Psalm 102*

*My New Dress*  
For the first time  
after seven long years  
I put on  
a new dress

But it's too short for my grief  
too narrow for my sorrow  
and each white glass button  
like a tear  
flows down the folds  
heavy as a stone  
*Rachel Korn*

*Keeping Quiet*

Now we will count to twelve  
And we will all keep still  
For once on the face of the earth.  
Let's not speak in any language;  
Let's stop for a second,  
And not move our arms so much.

It would be an exotic moment  
Without rush, without engines;  
We would all be together  
In a sudden strangeness.

Fishermen in the cold sea  
Would not harm whales and the man gathering salt  
Would not look at his hurt hands.

Those who prepare green wars,  
Wars with gas, wars with fire,  
Victories with no survivors,  
Would put on clean clothes  
And walk about with their brothers  
In the shade, doing nothing.

What I want should not be confused with total inactivity  
Life is what it is about  
If we were not so single-minded  
About keeping our lives moving  
And for once could do nothing,  
Perhaps a huge silence  
Might interrupt this sadness  
Of never understanding ourselves  
And of threatening ourselves with death.

Perhaps the earth can teach us  
As when everything seems to be  
Dead in winter  
And later proves to be alive

Now I'll count up to twelve  
And you keep quiet and I will go.

*Pablo Neruda*

We begin and end two minutes of silent meditation with the ringing of a bell.  
Its echo is six million voices strong.

*Two Minutes of Silent Meditation*

Although we are consumed with grief for what has been, we must also turn to hope for what will be. We look to a future that is more humane than the past, a future that includes freedom, dignity, and respect for all.

It's really a wonder that I haven't dropped all my ideals because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out. Yet I keep them because in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart. I simply cannot build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery and death. I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness. I hear the ever approaching thunder which will destroy us, too. I can feel the sufferings of millions and yet if I look up into the heavens I think it will all come right, that this cruelty too will end and that peace and tranquility will return again.

*Anne Frank*

*Together:*

*They shall beat their swords into plowshares*

*And their spears into pruning hooks*

*Nations shall not lift up sword against nation*

*Neither shall they learn war any more*

*But they shall sit*

*Every one under the vine and under the fig tree*

*And none shall make them afraid*

*Isaiah*

*Blessed are they that mourn*

*For they shall be comforted*

*They that sow in tears*

*Shall reap in joy*

*Though they go on their way weeping*

*They who bear the measure of seed*

*They shall come home with joy*

*Bearing their sheaves*

*Psalm 126*

In honor of those who said these very words before their lives were taken, and in memory of all who perished, we rise in tribute and recite the Mourner's Prayer.

*All rise for the chanting of the Traditional Kaddish*

*Yit-gadal ve-yit-kadash shmei raba, b'alma divra khir'utei ve-yamlikh mal-khutei be-hayei-khon uve'yomei-khon uve-hayei di-khol beit yisrael ba-agala u-vizman kariv v'imru amen.*

*Ye-hei shmei raba meva-rakh l'alam ul'almei'almaya.*

*Yit-barakh ve-yish-tabah ve-yitpa'ar ve-yitromam ve-yitnasei ve-yit-hadar ve-yit'aleh ve-yit-halal shmei di-kudsha brikk hu, l'eila mikol bir-khata ve-shirata tush-be-hata ve-nehemata da-amiran b'alma, v'imru amen.*

*Ye-hei shlama raba min shmaya ve-haymin aleinu v'al kol yisrael v'imru amen.  
Oseh shalom bimromav hu ya'aseh shalom aleinu v'al kol yisrael v'imru amen.*

*Please be seated*

*Musical Selection*

There are stars whose radiance is visible on Earth though they have long been extinct. There are people whose brilliance continues to light the world even though they are no longer among the living. These lights are particularly bright when the night is dark. They light the way for humankind.

*Hannah Szenes*

We darken six candles  
But we will always remember the light of six million souls  
Extinguished in the Shoah

*Extinguish Candles*

*Together:  
For as long as we live, they too shall live.  
They are, and always will be, a part of us  
Because we will remember.*