

CREATING HOPE FROM HOLOCAUST MEMORY

Carrying on the memory and the legacy of the Holocaust, the experiences of the Jews who endured the hate and murders of that generation, should not be confined to just one day.

While emphasizing the universal messages of the Holocaust, we must recognize the importance of learning and identifying the uniquely Jewish experience and our message for all humanity. Bear witness through the words of Elie Wiesel in his speech to the United Nations, where they continue to deny and erase Jewish rights.

Whether posting on social media, or gathering with your friends and family, remembering the Holocaust is not about this day or that day each year. It is an ongoing connection we can keep alive, as this, too, is a part of the roots that bind us.

Even on a holiday like Tu B'Shevat, or on Purim, Passover, every holiday, moment of prayer or hearing the Torah, we can think of those men and women, children, parents and grandparents, whose lives were ripped apart by social and legal Jewhated.

From within the depths of despair, the mere IDEA of the Land of Israel, their faith even when battling with the question of why, their hope that one day a Jew may live free - this was what sustained our people through every trial of our history.

It reminded them of their dream of living free in the homeland of our prayers, of our past, of our illusions for the future. It was a strong Jewish identity that empowered them in their suffering, something to believe in. And today as we face the hate again, in its new forms and clean, acceptable messages that cut deep into our souls - we can remember that their Jewish spirit, their hope, was what sustained them in their most painful of times. And this is a lesson we can continue to carry on in our own lives.

There are many ways we can make Holocaust memory meaningful, privately or with loved ones or learners anytime throughout the year. One need not wait for an official day, and, sadly, there are tragedies from the Holocaust that could be commemorated on nearly any day of the year...

Just as we commemorate Yom HaShoah through personal and communal reflection on our people's suffering, so, too, must we ensure on other days that the Holocaust remains protected from universalism, generalization and controversy that threatens the memory of what transpired in that universe of hell. We must ensure it becomes a part of the identity of our youth in a positive, meaningful way that helps them understand that our story is one of empowerment and pride as we emerged from the ashes of destruction.

START THE CONVERSATION

- What was a Holocaust story that you remember hearing in your life?
- Were you ever inspired by something you heard about how Jews confronted the hate, tortures and threats of death?
- What can the planting of a tree in Terezin tell us about the Jewish fight for and expression of survival?
- Have you ever thought about what makes the Holocaust a uniquely Jewish tragedy?
- Do you think that we can find a way to keep Holocaust memory alive in a meaningful way for nonJews through teaching them about the Jewish experience?
- What can we learn from the stories of the Jewish connection and dream of the Land of Israel that can be found in the memories of survivors?
- If you could create your own Holocaust memorial - creative, or ceremonial, personal or communal - what would you focus on? Who would you invite?
- Why must we continue to tell the stories of the Holocaust? Is it only to "never forget?"
- What messages of pride and empowerment can we share with future generations?