

RABBI'S MESSAGE

REMEMBERING THE PAST WHILE LOOKING AHEAD

This April is a season full of opportunities to remember. We begin the month in the midst of Passover week, remembering the Exodus from Egypt and the journey through the wilderness that leads to the Promised Land. Also occurring in April are two more modern holidays related to the state of Israel. Memorial Day (Yom HaZikaron) for Israel is a very important day; every able Israeli citizen serves in the military and *everyone* has lost someone dear during one of the many wars in their 70-year history. But the very next day is a celebration of Independence (Yom Ha-Atzmaut), in which the heart of the Jewish people thrives joyously. With this year being the 70th anniversary, the celebration will be as dramatic as when the U.S. celebrated the bicentennial 18 years ago.

With all these remembrances, Yom HaShoah, the remembrance of the Holocaust, stands alone. Never has the modern world seen such a dramatic example of evil, and we always pray, "Never Again!" This year, Temple Beth Torah will once again commemorate Yom HaShoah, with a Shabbat service featuring a Holocaust survivor. Local Humble resident Alex Pollak will help us learn about Jasenovac, the camp where his parents were murdered. Jasenovac is not one of the most well-known camps, but it was equally destructive.

Yes, it is absolutely important to remember the horrors that have been perpetrated in the name of hatred, and do everything we can to educate the world and each other to prevent other such tragedies. It is also absolutely important to look beyond the past, seeing how the bright spots can enhance our world. While murder and persecution happened nearby, Alex Pollak and his sister were rescued and hidden by a kind, brave Christian family. That family was not alone, and countless non-Jewish people became known as the Righteous Gentiles. While much of the world let Hitler poison the minds of his supporters, there *were* people who stood up and did whatever they could to save precious souls. The Talmud states: "Whoever destroys a soul, it is considered as if he destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world." (*Mishnah Sanhedrin* 4:5) Future generations live on because of those who make a difference.

Holocaust scholars talk about perpetrators, victims, bystanders and up-standers. The smallest groups are actually the perpetrators and the up-standers (those who take a risk to help others). The largest group, by far, is the bystanders (those who are not actively committing harm, but doing nothing to prevent it). When we are able to learn from the example of a strong minority, we can change the world. Remembering the past must include awareness that we **CAN** influence the future. We can do it one soul/one life at a time. Let us remember...and let us move forward! LET OUR PEOPLE GROW!

L'shalom,

Rabbi Dan Gordon

Lunch & Learn with Rabbi Dan

Wednesday, April 18, 12:30 PM

Nourishment for the Body, Mind and Soul - Once a Month

Rabbi Dan Gordon facilitates a relaxed discussion on a variety of topics, including mitzvot, Torah, holidays, current events and Jewish Practices. Each month is a different topic, and everyone gets a chance to participate. Bring your own lunch and get ready to nourish both your mind and your body! No RSVP necessary, feel free to just show up!