

Yom Hashoah Commemoration

Jewish Community of Japan

Opening Prayer

Our spirit is God's light. As we look at these memorial lights, try to imagine six million candles each one with the name of another Jew.

Each one would represent a unique and precious soul, who had dreams and hopes that were not fulfilled.

They worked, studied, took walks... the ordinary things of life. They all were part of our people.

We are the light now. Only by our remembering can they live again in our hearts and minds.

We will never forget our people whose light was extinguished in the Holocaust.
We are the children of this generation - filled with God's light.

Eili, Eili

Voices of Children

"...We got used to standing in line at 7 o'clock in the morning, at 12 noon and again at seven o'clock in the evening. We stood in a long queue with a plate in our hand, into which they ladled a little warmed-up water with a salty or a coffee flavour. Or else they gave us a few potatoes. We got used to sleeping without a bed, to saluting every uniform, not to walk on the sidewalks and then again to walk on the sidewalks. We got used to undeserved slaps, blows and executions. We got accustomed to seeing people die in their own excrement, to seeing piled-up coffins full of corpses to seeing the sick amidst dirt and filth and to seeing the helpless doctors. We got used to it that from time to time, one thousand unhappy souls would come here and that, from time to time, another thousand unhappy souls would go away..." (from the prose of fifteen-year-old Peter Fischl, who perished in Aushwitz in 1944)

AT Terezin, -- by Teddy, 1943

When a new child comes
Everything seems strange to him.
What, on the ground I have to lie?
Eat black potatoes? No! Not !!
I've got to stay? It's dirty here!
The floor- why, look, it's dirt, I fear!
And I'm supposed to sleep on it?
I'll get all dirty!

Here the sound of shouting, cries,
And oh, so many flies.
Everyone knows flies carry disease.
Oooh, something bit me! Wasn't that a bedbug?
Here in Terezin, life is hell
And when I'll go home again, I can't yet tell.

The Garden -- Franta Bass

A little garden,
fragrant and full of roses.
The path the little boy trudges
is exceedingly narrow.

A small boy,
tender like a budding blossom ...
but when the blossoms bloom,
The little boy will be no more.

It All Depends on How You Look at It -- Miroslav Kosek

Terezin is full of beauty.
It's in your eyes now clear
And through the street the tramp
Of many marching feet I hear.

In the ghetto at Terezin,
It looks that way to me,
Is a square kilometer of earth
Cut off from the world that's free.

Death, after all, claims everyone,
You find it everywhere.
It catches up with even those
Who wear their noses in the air.

The whole, wide world is ruled
With a certain justice, so
That helps perhaps to sweeten
The poor man's pain and woe.

Night in the Ghetto -- Unknown

Another day has gone for keeps
Into the bottomless pit of time
Again it has wounded a man, held captive
by his brethren.
After dusk, he longs for bandages,
For soft hands to shield the eyes
From all the horrors that stare by day.
But in the ghetto, darkness too is kind
To weary eyes which all day long
have had to watch.

Dawn crawls again along the ghetto streets
Embracing all who walk this way.
Only a car like a greeting from a long-gone world
Gobbles up the dark with fiery eyes.
That sweet darkness that falls upon the soul
And heals those wounds illuminated by the day...
Along the street come light and ranks of people
Like a long black ribbon, loomed with gold.

Jewish Forever -- by Franta Bass

I am a Jew and will always be a Jew, forever.
Even if I should die from hunger,
still I will never submit

but always fight for my people,
on my honor,
to their credit.

And I will never be ashamed of them;
this I vow.
I am so very proud of my people now;

how dignified they are!
And even though I am oppressed,
still I will always return to life ...

The Butterfly -- Pavel Friedman

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 lightly 'way up high.
It went away I'm sure because it wished to
kiss the world good-bye.

For seven weeks I've lived in here,
Penned up inside this ghetto.
But I have found what I love here.
The dandelions call to me
And the white chestnut branches in the court.
Only I never saw another butterfly.

That butterfly was the last one.
Butterflies don't live in here,
in the ghetto.

(Excerpt from *The Diary of Anne Frank*)

That's the difficulty in these times: ideals, dreams, and cherished hopes rise within us, only to meet the horrible truth and be shattered.

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 can't 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 that it will all come right, that this cruelty too will end, and that peace and tranquillity will return again. In the meantime, I must uphold my ideals, for perhaps the time will come when I shall be able to carry them out.

A Prayer in Memory of the Six Million: "El Malei Rachamim"

God full of compassion, grant perfect peace in Your sheltering Presence among the holy, to the souls of the men, women, and children of the House of Israel, who were killed in the ghettos and concentration camps of the Shoah. May their memory endure from generation to generation for all time. Master of mercies keep them under Your protecting care. May their souls be bound up in the bonds of eternal life. Adonai is now their inheritance. May they rest in peace. And let us say, *Amen*.

Kaddish

CLOSING READING:

Adonai our God, comfort us on this day of remembering the Shoah.

Comfort all of us who are mourners for our people.

We mourn for murdered families and friends. We mourn for those we do not even know but who are part of us.

Adonai, remember and hear our prayer. May You be the comforter of Israel, the rebuilder of Your people.

May You, who causes peace in the heavens, bring peace here – for us, our families, and for all the world. And let us say, "Amein".

OSEH SHALOM

Hatikva