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“Whoever listens to a witness, becomes a witness.”

- Elie Wiesel

Words are insufficient to describe what happened beyond the barbed wire. Only one in every three Jews survived. Six million murdered. Mums and dads, sons and daughters, saftot and sabaim - all victims of the ruthless Nazis. Six million candles were snuffed out as if they were nothing. Six million stories ended too soon. For six long years, they tore families, shattered hopes, and tried to smother love. This beast has three names: World War Two, the Holocaust, and the Shoah. Shoah translates as catastrophe, whereas Holocaust means burnt sacrifice. The six million Jews who were killed were not sacrifices for anything. The only reason they were murdered is because many people bought into the lies of one man.

One man, whose words swayed many to turn against their neighbours. One man, whose ego plunged the world into an all-consuming war. One man, whose ideals, we thought, were thankfully left in the past. But hatred has a way of being dragged with us into the present. People try to say it was one of the things left behind when the war ended, but reports of anti-semitism are rising. Anti-semitism is hatred of Jews. It is hatred towards innocent children and blameless families who have become scapegoats for worldwide problems. Hatred seems like a power that is beyond our control - we cannot force everyone to love each other. But our words have a stronger impact than we realise. We can educate the new generations so that the future may be less blemished than the past.

With time, everyone who lived through this catastrophe will pass. Eventually, ‘Shoah’ will only be a word. No matter how painful the memory is, we need to keep it alive so that humanity does not make the same mistakes ever again. If we neglect to tell our children about how hatred stood in the way of moral responsibility, how will they learn that murder is not a solution to anything? We have to fight anti-semitism, but not with guns, not with war. We must fight it with the understanding that humans are not all the same, and that difference is beautiful. We must fight it with the belief that everyone was put on this earth for a reason, and to take life away is the worst crime a person could commit. We must fight it with the knowledge that hatred will grow unless it is confronted.

If we teach youth about the Shoah, another conspiracy theory might not sway so many to believe the lies that are told. If we teach youth about the Shoah, perhaps wisdom might outweigh violence in the future. If we teach youth about the Shoah, six million will not have fallen forgotten.

tell me you will never forget  
how easy it was  
to convince a nation  
to stain their hands with blood

tell me you will never forget  
that murder  
is not a solution  
to anything

tell me you will never forget  
that blue eyes  
and blonde hair  
are not a symbol of perfection

tell me you will never forget  
the scale of sheer murder  
when those who lived  
pass on  
let us never consign their words  
to mere text  
in a derelict history book

tell me you will never forget  
that life is beautiful  
in all the ways  
that it was created

tell me you will never forget  
that history must remain history  
and that the future  
will be as bright  
as we make it

promise me you will never forget  
because I fear  
what it may cost  
if it is forgotten

some may choose to look away,  
but do not let them say that they did not know  
you have heard the truth  
you are now a witness