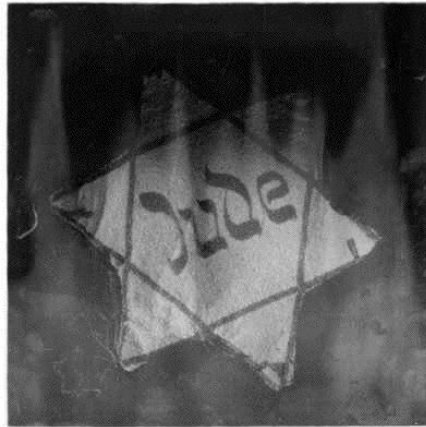


Lights of the Past, Enlightening the Future

A Christian-Jewish Prayer Service Commemorating
Yom HaShoah
Holocaust Remembrance Day

Hosted by Boston Inter-Religious Dialogue Students
(BIRDS) at Boston College



Wednesday, April 18, 6:00 p.m.
School of Theology and Ministry Chapel
9 Lake Street, Brighton Campus

Opening Remarks

Introduction:

Genesis recounts six days of creation, yet tonight we remember destruction...the destruction of six million Jews during the Holocaust – the Shoah. On this Star of David, a symbol of Jewish identity, we are presented with six points. As we light these candles we remember the past so as to never again repeat it. With each flame we remember one million murdered Jews. We also offer a prayer with each candle.

Prayer/Candle 1: A Recollection from the Shoah

Speaker: It came to pass in those days, that in Poland there was a wise and pious man called Old Itzikil and his wife Mirel. They had six children.

All: After Poland surrendered Itzikil's neighbors asked him, "Do you think this is possible?"

Speaker: Itzikil paused, took a small candle from his bag and said:

All: "A rabbi gave this to me long ago saying to keep it for a special occasion. I have kept it for the honor of the messenger God has promised. I live in hope. We shall see this candle lit one day."

Speaker: A month later the graves were dug. Itzikil tried there at the pit's edge to light it, flinching at the sound of gunfire. Did he see his first child fall into the pit? His sixth?

All: Itzikil succeeded in lighting his precious little candle. He lifted it high – at that precise moment the life of his last child was extinguished. We remember with you oh exalted God Itzikil's hope and faithfulness to your promises.

Prayer/Candle 2: Recollections from the Shoah

Speaker: It came to pass in those days that dying once did not satisfy the nations, they attempted to murder human dignity before the flames of the crematorium consumed. Yet, dignity lived...

All: ...in the young Jewish girl who slapped SS officers, who in their creative cruelty commanded Jews to dance on the bodies of their dead relatives lying in the street.

Speaker: Dignity lived...

All: in the rabbi who, though forced into the gas chambers with the children of the dead, led the children in a quiet song of praise.

Speaker: Dignity lived...

All: ...in the ghetto resistance fighters. All of whom died fighting without aid.

Speaker: Dignity lived...

All: ...in the grandmother who held her granddaughter's hand saying, "Come, let us walk together. Hold my hand and try above all not to be afraid." Together they were forced into Auschwitz, that dark place under a flaming sky. We remember, oh exalted God, and we thank you

that your chosen people persevered in the dignity of your divine image.

Prayer/Candle 3: Psalm 44

Speaker: We have heard with our ears, O God, our ancestors have told us, what deeds you performed in their days:

All: You with your own hand drove out the nations, but our ancestors you planted; you afflicted the peoples, but our ancestors you set free;

Speaker: For not by their own sword did they win the land, nor did their own arm give them victory;

All: But your right hand, and your arm, and the light of your countenance, for you delighted in them.

Speaker: You are my King and my God; you command victories for Jacob.

Through you we push down our foes; through your name we tread down our assailants.

All: For not in my bow do I trust, nor can my sword save me. But you have saved us from our foes, and have put to confusion those who hate us.

Speaker: In God we have boasted continually, and we will give thanks to your name forever. Selah

All: Yet you have rejected us and abased us, and have not gone out with our armies. You made us turn back from the foe, and our enemies have gotten spoil.

Speaker: You have made us like sheep for slaughter, and have scattered us among the nations.

You have sold your people for a trifle, demanding no high price for them.

All: You have made us the taunt of our neighbors, the derision and scorn of those around us. You have made us a byword among the nations, a laughingstock among the peoples.

Speaker: All day long my disgrace is before me, and shame has covered my face at the words of the taunters and revilers, at the sight of the enemy and the avenger.

All: All this has come upon us, yet we have not forgotten you, or been false to your covenant. Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from your way, yet you have broken us in the haunt of jackals, and covered us with deep darkness.

Speaker: If we had forgotten the name of our God, or spread out our hands to a strange god, would not God discover this? For he knows the secrets of the heart.

All: Because of you we are being killed all day long, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Rouse yourself! Why do you sleep, O Lord? Awake, do not cast us off forever!

Speaker: Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression? For we sink down to the dust; our bodies cling to the ground.

All: Rise up, come to our help. Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love.

Prayer/Candle 4: Lamentations 2:10-13, 21a

Side A: The elders of Daughter Zion sit on the ground in silence; they have sprinkled dust on their heads and put on sackcloth. The young women of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground.

Side B: My eyes fail from weeping, I am in torment within; my heart is poured out on the ground because my people are destroyed, because children and infants faint in the streets of the city.

Side A: They say to their mothers, “Where is bread and wine?” as they faint like the wounded in the streets of the city, as their lives ebb away in their mothers’ arms.

Side B: What can I say for you? With what can I compare you, Daughter Jerusalem? To what can I liken you, that I may comfort you, Virgin Daughter Zion? Your wound is as deep as the sea. Who can heal you?

All: “Young and old lie together in the dust of the streets; my young men and young women have fallen by the sword.

Prayer/Candle 5: Isaiah and a Story of Guatemalan Genocide

Speaker: A reading from the Book of Isaiah:
Is this the manner of fasting I wish, of keeping a day of penance:

All: That you bow your head like a reed, and lie in sackcloth and ashes? Do you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?

Speaker: I am Rigoberta and I am an indigenous Guatemalan woman. My mother and brother were tortured and killed by the army, and my father died when he was burned alive, along with 38 other people, by members of the army at the Spanish Embassy in 1980.

All: Is this the manner of fasting I wish?

Speaker: My name is Rosa and I am an indigenous Guatemalan woman. My parents were executed when I was five. I crawled out from the hiding place where my mother had placed me when I saw the soldiers coming. For days, I sat for two days with my parents' dead bodies waiting for someone to come. Finally, my uncle arrived, and we hid in the mountains, eating grass to ward off their hunger. We came to Cotzal after wandering for a long time, and I grew up here, but this is not my land.

All: Is this the manner of fasting I wish?

Speaker: We are the residents of the town of Dos Erres, Guatemala. Disguised as guerrillas, government special forces units attacked our village. Men were herded into the school building and the women into two churches. After searching in vain for communist propaganda, soldiers began smashing the heads of infants against walls and trees, and the skulls of older children were crushed with sledgehammers. Men were shot and dumped into a well, and women and girls were raped, then mutilated with machetes. 350 of us died that day.

All: Is this the manner of fasting I wish?

Speaker: This rather, is the manner of fasting I wish:
Releasing those bound unjustly
Untying the thongs of the yolk
Setting the oppressed free
Breaking every yolk
Sharing your bread with the hungry
Clothing the naked
And not turning your back on your own

All: Then your light shall burst forth like the dawn, and your wound shall be quickly healed; your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Exalted are you O God, you remember your Guatemalan children, you hear their cries, you see their hardships. Help us to hear with your

ears and see with your eyes, that we may act as your liberating and reconciling hands.

Prayer/Candle 6: Adapted from “Rwandan Genocide Survivor Recalls

Horror”

(http://www.cbsnews.com/2100-18560_162-2218371.html?pageNum=2&tag=contentMain;contentBody)

Speaker: What prompted the genocide? There are things you can point to. The Hutus had long-standing resentments against the Tutsis, who formed the nation's elite. They had the better houses, better jobs.

Radio broadcasts called day and night for the Hutus to go out and kill Tutsis and the Hutus were told by their own leaders that if they didn't join the killers, they would join the dead.

There are things you can point to, but do they explain what happened? What could possibly explain what happened?

Here's one explanation from one killer who had been Immaculee's neighbor, Alex Ntibirukee, who spent 11 years in prison after admitting he killed six people:

All: "They told me that I would be rewarded with a piece of land and a banana plantation. They told the same to other people, but you see they didn't give me any banana plantation. They told us to kill, and we killed. We just did it."

Speaker: He had grown up with Immaculee and been her family's handyman. Asked if he and the others would have killed Immaculee had they discovered her, Ntibirukee says:

All: "Because of the way I was, I would have attacked her definitely."

Speaker: For days, then weeks, then months, the seven women stayed squeezed into the tiny bathroom, surrounded by evil.

Asked what was going through her mind, sitting in the bathroom hour after hour, Immaculee says:

All: "How are they going to catch us. Where they will start cutting you. If they will rape you."

Speaker: She says she was terrified the entire time she was cooped up in the tiny space. They all expected to be killed, eventually. One said she just hoped she'd be shot and not tortured; another made the pastor promise to put dirt on her corpse so dogs wouldn't eat her.

And what did the women have to eat? Not much.

All: "I remember sometimes we used to eat just...beans. And there was this little insect that came out of the beans. And he brought it. It was, 'Jesus, well how am I going to eat it?'"

Speaker: But after a while, she managed to eat, by closing her eyes. Still, Immaculee said she lost 40 pounds - one third of herself disappeared during her three months hidden in the bathroom.

All: "I was completely a skeleton. I remember...thinking, looking at my hands. And I was like, 'This is what the biologists used to tell us, you know. We are really-we have a skeleton like this.' ...I can see every bone."

(Pause)

All: Help us, oh, exalted God, to remember the genocides of Rwanda which we keep at a comfortable distance. Empower us to act in accordance with the challenge our memory brings.

Conclusion once all candles are lit: Leo Baeck's Survival Story

Speaker: In the camp we would assemble in the darkness. To light a candle there, or even a match, would have brought immediate disaster upon us. We spoke about matters of the spirit and eternal questions, about God, about Jews in the world, about the eternity of Israel. In the midst of the darkness, I sensed light in the unlit room, the light of the Torah.

Reflection

Prayers of the Faithful:

Speaker: For the victims of genocide, both past and present

All: Have mercy

Speaker: For those who have died in concentration camps

All: Have mercy

Speaker: For those who died at Auschwitz

All: Have mercy

Speaker: For all those who died at Chelmno

All: Have mercy

Speaker: For all those who died in Belzec

All: Have mercy

Speaker: For all those who died in Majdanek

All: Have mercy

Speaker: For all those who died in Sobibor

All: Have mercy

Speaker: For all those who died in Treblinka

All: Have mercy

Speaker: For all those who have died in modern genocide

All: Have mercy

Speaker: For all those who have died in the genocide and civil war in Guatemala and Rwanda

All: Have mercy

Speaker: For all those displaced by war and brutality

All: Have mercy

Speaker: For women, men and children

All: Have mercy

Speaker: For the maimed and the crippled

All: Have mercy

Speaker: For the abandoned and the homeless

All: Have mercy

Speaker: For the imprisoned and the tortured

All: Have mercy

Speaker: For the widowed and the orphaned

All: Have mercy

Speaker: For the bleeding and the dying

All: Have mercy

Speaker: For the weary and the desperate

All: Have mercy

Speaker: For the lost and the forsaken

All: Have mercy

Speaker: For those fleeing in terror

All: Have mercy

Speaker: We now ask you to take a moment and write your own prayer for the victims of genocide, for the peace of our world, for the healing of the human race. On your way out, we ask that you nail your prayer onto the ghetto wall. The Jews faced many walls, from the ghettos across the world, to the walls of the concentration camps, to the walls of prejudice against the Jews barring them from social advancement and acceptance. With our prayers nailed to the wall, we remember how they have suffered and nail ourselves to them and against those barriers. We remember the suffering of our sisters and brothers of the Shoah, and with our prayers of solidarity, we remember how we may have failed them before but must now teach the world to never let such suffering, to them or others like them, happen again.