

Dear friends of Hillcrest Jewish Center,

Below is a short message I wrote for the occasion of the joint annual commemoration of Yom Hashoah. I hope you find it meaningful.

Perhaps the most difficult challenge we encounter as we remember those who perished in the Shoah, and as we are mindful of the few survivors left among us, is to be the voice and the presence of those who don't have a voice and don't have a presence.

Who will tell their story? Who will tell the story of those who perished, and who will tell the story of the survivors, once they are gone. Many organizations are recognizing the importance of the second and third generations, children and grandchildren of survivors, but it is evident that the task of telling the story cannot be limited to the few children and grandchildren, but must fall on all of us.

And as we tell their stories, I encourage us to make a commitment to explore the values of the victims of the Shoah. We need to remember that the vast majority of the victims of the Shoah, were what we call *frum yiddn, religious Jews*; Jews for whom Yiddishkeit was important. When Hitler killed them, he also destroyed their Jewish lives.

I am not sure how much good will come from me saying "Never Again," again. I like to believe that my commitment to live an observant life, a life of Torah and Mitzvot, a life imbued by the values of the majority of the Jews who perished in the Shoah, will go a longer way to preserve their memory.

So here is my challenge to all of us tonight. Let's strengthen our Jewish observance and our Jewish learning, not only to come closer to HaShem and to our roots, but also to give an everlasting voice and presence to those whose voices and presence were taken away.

Rabbi Manes Kogan