



THE UNITED JEWISH CONGREGATION OF HONG KONG SHABBAT SHALOM

27 – 28 January, 2006

28 Tevet, 5766

Parashat Va'era
(Exodus 6:2–9:35)

Rabbi Michael Schwartz
Cantorial Soloist Julie Howard

D'var Torah by Rabbi Michael Schwartz

Shalom Chaverim,

On January 27 (tomorrow!) the world will observe – for the first time -the day designated by the United Nations as “International Holocaust Remembrance Day”. (On January 27, 1945, the advancing Soviet Army liberated Auschwitz-Birkenau.)

UN events to mark the day include: messages delivered by dignitaries, including Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and a lecture on the theme “Remembrance and Beyond” by Professor Yehuda Bauer of Hebrew University. Other cultural activities - a concert, readings, a commemorative poster, an exhibit from Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum, and a candlelight vigil at UN headquarters – are an effort of outreach by the UN designed both to educate about the Holocaust and to help prevent future acts of genocide.

Preventing another genocide is one of the clear goals of the commemoration day: “The Holocaust also reminds us of the crimes of genocide committed since World War II,” said UN Assembly President Jan Eliasson, “it must, therefore, be a unifying historic warning around which we must rally, not only to recall the grievous crimes committed in human history but also to reaffirm our unfaltering resolve to prevent the recurrence of such crimes.”

If the universal message of the Holocaust can prevent future horrors, this will be a worthwhile day of commemoration for the world.

Yet, it is essential that even today – especially today - we emphasize that the Holocaust was not just a tragedy in general, but a tragedy for the Jews in particular.

Like Nazi Germany a generation ago, there are – very sadly - those today who actively seek to destroy us. Then, as now, those who want to harm us are allied with falsity and evil. Headlines today note that Iran denies the Holocaust, aims to “wipe Israel off the map”, and that it is making efforts to build nuclear weapons.

Sadly, the UN and the world has not prevented genocide from happening again and again in the world over the last 60 years. The situation in Darfur at this very moment is an affront to what humanity must be about and yet very little is being done.

Will “International Holocaust Remembrance Day” wake us all up to the danger of a nuclear-armed Iran, to the danger of the unchecked falsehood in the rhetoric of terrorists, and to those who deny the right of Israel to exist? No, the *universal* message of the Holocaust can only prevent future horrors if the *particular* Jewish tragedy of the Holocaust is acknowledged and understood in terms of the world’s ongoing battle between the forces of dark and light, evil and good, lies and Truth.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Michael
26 Tevet 5766

26th January, 2006