**REMARKS FOR YOM HASHOAH 5783**
**RABBI DAN MOSKOVITZ**

Tonight, Yom Hashoah HaGevurah, we remember the calamity, the near annihilation of our people, 6 million of our brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, children. And tonight HaGevurah, that extra word that we so often leave out of the official name for this solemn day, HaGevurah, tonight the 80th Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. HaGevurah, an act of resistance and revolt by hundreds of Jewish insurgents in 1943. Tonight we gather to remember and also to resist, to resist the rise of antisemitism and holocaust denial.

It is not merely enough to say as the philosopher George Satayan observed, “Those who do not remember history are bound to repeat it”, Our task is much more challenging than merely remembering, so much more difficult than marking a moment with ceremony, candles and tears, our gathering here tonight is no different than on all other nights, to contrast with the Passover seders we just

concluded, because this is not a task bound to one night, one commemoration, but it is ongoing.

Our *shlichut*, our sacred purpose is so much more important, so much more vital, because the light of memory is fading.

We gather here this evening at the twilight of an era, as The Survivors Declaration hauntingly observes, “the age of the Holocaust Survivors is drawing to a close. Before long no one will be left to say: “I was there, I saw, I remember what happened.” All that will be left will be the books of research and literature, pictures and films and archives of testimonies.”

It is in that void that the deniers and the distortionists, will come, as they have continually, on every night and every day since even before the liberation of the camps to say “this did not happen, this wasn’t so bad”, or the relativism of comparing our trauma to any other trauma.

HaGevurah, our act of resistance is the very existence and work of the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre; that is why VHEC is so important, and why Temple Sholom has joined as an official partner in this ceremony this evening and in the work of the Centre. It is why the whole of the Vancouver Jewish community, which davens in separate synagogues, holds diverse political and social views, comes together tonight entirely unified and aligned. We come to support the work of VHEC, to bear witness, to capture and convey memories from a generation passing to those that remain in its shadow. The post-survivor era, the post-witness era; this is the era that our children and grandchildren will inherit.

There is one significant difference between our contemporary generation, Jewish and non-Jewish, and the generation of the 1930s, the victims and the survivors. That difference is that we have the experience they didn't have. We know it can happen. We know that antisemitism, if it's not confronted vigorously, forcefully, immediately, undefeated, can develop into monstrous dimensions.

So we don't have the luxury, the privilege to say, let's wait and see how this thing develops. Leaders today have to confront antisemitism immediately and defeat it immediately, before it's too late. That's why the work of CIJA and the vote of the Vancouver City Council to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliances' definition of Anti Semitism was such an important and vital tool in this ongoing Gevurah, resistance against the forces of darkness and hatred.

We gather tonight not only to light candles, but to stoke the embers of memory and conscience so that even as the last survivors relay their stories and experiences, they kindle in each of us a commitment to never let their *ner neshama*, the light of their soul, gutter and fade. We pick up the torch, we carry it forward, we light the way, in the shadow of their light so that the Gevurah, the resistance of our generation will be against those who deny or diminish what happened to them and all of those millions that have no voice. We are their voice, the Vancouver Holocaust

Education Centre is their voice. Our partners and allies from across faiths, elected officials and organizations are their voice, and when our voices are joined together they drown out the hate and together we make the words of the promise handed down from the survivor generation to our generation ring true, “Never Again!”.

It is my privilege to share with you words from our Premier, the Honourable David Eby (Eee - Bee)

*With this year’s event also marking the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, I have no doubt that the stories that will be shared, particularly by Janos Benisz, will be incredibly moving. Over the past few years, we’ve unfortunately seen a rise in anti-Semitism, and events like this are more important than ever to increase awareness and education while remembering and honouring those who were lost as well as those who survived.*

*Regrettably, due to prior commitments, I am unable to attend, but I want to assure you that our government is*

*continuing to work to address racism and discrimination in all its forms to ensure that BC is an inclusive province where everyone is safe and the horrors of the past are never repeated.*

It's my pleasure now to introduce an incredible leader, partner and supporter of our Jewish community, one of those voices that joins with ours time and again against hate, Councillor Sarah Kirby-Yung. Councillor Kirby-Yung was instrumental in helping to pass the IHRA definition of antisemitism in our city council, staying with the important ask through two administrations; she has been a frequent and powerful ally in not only our work together to combat hate and anti semitism but also the good and transformative things faith communities can do for our city when we come together in the name of Tikkun Olam. Councillor Kirby-Yung, thank you for being here this evening.