YOM HASHOAH 5786/2026
RABBI DAN MOSKOVITZ

Erev Tov and Good Evening.

I want to begin by welcoming all of you to Temple Sholom on this sacred night of remembrance. We are deeply honored to host this important community gathering and to be joined by children of survivors, by community leaders, and by friends from across the Jewish and broader community. Your presence here matters. It is an act of memory, of bearing witness and for our non-Jewish friends, in these challenging and frightening times to be a Jew in Canada it's an act of allyship we are deeply grateful for and will never forget.

It shouldn't be hard or controversial to show up with survivors and children of survivors to commemorate the systematic slaughter and genocide of the Jewish

people, but some chose to stay away this year, you did not and that means more to us than I have words to express. Thank you.

This evening is not only about looking back. It is about protecting the truth of what we remember.

Because memory, if we are not careful, can be distorted.

We live in a time when the language of the Holocaust is being used in ways that empty it of meaning. Words like “genocide” are invoked casually, detached from their historical grounding. Comparisons are made that collapse moral distinctions rather than clarify them. And perhaps most painfully, there are those who invert the Holocaust itself, portraying Jews not as its victims, but as its perpetrators.

This is not just inaccurate. It is dangerous.

The Holocaust was not a metaphor. It was not a slogan. It was the systematic, industrialized attempt to annihilate the Jewish people. Six million Jews were murdered. Families were erased. Entire communities were destroyed. That reality demands precision, honesty and reverence.
When that truth is blurred, something else is lost as well. Empathy is lost. Understanding is lost.

And the moral clarity that the Holocaust calls us to carry into the world begins to fade.

There is a temptation in our time to measure antisemitism against the Holocaust and to say: if it is not death camps and gas chambers then it is not so serious. But hatred rarely begins at its most extreme.

It begins with words. With distortions. With the erosion of truth.

And so tonight, as we remember, we also recommit.

We recommit to telling the story as it was.

We recommit to listening to those who carry that memory in their very lives.

We recommit to ensuring that the next generation inherits not confusion, but clarity.

A healthy society depends on its ability to distinguish truth from falsehood. To resist the pull of easy narratives. To honor memory without manipulating it. And yet, if we stop there, we have only told part of the story.

Jewish memory has never been only about what was lost. It has also been about what was rebuilt.

Here in Canada, that rebuilding is not abstract. It is the very community we are part of tonight. Survivors came to this country with little more than what they could carry, and they built institutions that still sustain us. They helped establish synagogues, schools, community centres, social services. They strengthened Jewish life in cities like Vancouver, across this country, and ensured that Judaism would not only survive, but flourish.

Many of them did this quietly. Without fanfare. Carrying unimaginable loss, and at the same time choosing to build a future.

That is part of what we remember tonight as well.

Not instead of the suffering. Not in place of the grief. But alongside it.

To remember the Holocaust truthfully is to remember and bear witness that the Jewish people did not disappear. That Jewish life did not end. That even in the shadow of destruction, there remained a fierce commitment to faith, to life, to hope. The children, grandchildren and great grandchildren of survivors here tonight are the living embodiment of that covenant with the 6 million murdered.

Am Yisrael Chai is not a slogan of triumph. It is a stubborn declaration of existence. A refusal to let those who sought our destruction have the final word.

The survivors taught us that remembering is a responsibility. Now that responsibility is ours.

May this evening deepen our commitment to truth.

May it strengthen our resolve to stand against distortion and hatred in all its forms.

And may the memories of those we honor tonight always be a blessing, and a call to conscience.

Am Yisrael Chai

(PAUSE)

It is now my great honour to introduce the candle-lighting ceremony.

We light candles in memory of the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust, including one and a half million children, as well as the millions of others who were persecuted and killed.

These candle represents lives stolen and families destroyed—mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, aunts and uncles, cousins, husbands, wives, and children—murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators.

As we bear witness through this act of remembrance, let us reaffirm our commitment to memory, to education, and to standing against hatred in all its forms.

Let us vow never to forget.