



Sharon Bromberg
December 10, 1987
Prof. Roskies

<The following is a service to be held on erev Yom Ha'Shoah. As the participants enter the room, the Brotherhood should pin paper yellow stars onto the people's lapels, in the same manner in which they pin on flowers on Rosh Ha'Shannah. The room should be dark--candles should be the only source of light, and there should be a larger Ner Tamid type fire burning in the front of the room. The people should sit in small circles on the floor around a few yellow yartziot candles--six would be preferable, very much like what is done in Camp Ramah for Eichah readings on Tish'a B'Av. Things written in between <> are notes for the leader.>

The twenty-seventh day of Nissan is the day on which Jews throughout the world formally recall the six million Jews of Europe who were tortured and murdered during the Second World War because they were Jews. It is a time when we recall the splendor of their lives, as well as the terror of their deaths. Countless memoirs and diaries written by the survivors plead and demand that we remember the details of how they were degraded, brutalized, and killed. We recall part of what they witnessed, part of the horrors that they suffered, in order to remember them and to remind others. On this day, and not on this day alone, we perpetuate their testimony, recalling the words of Ignacy Schipper, who perished in Maidanek: "Nobody will want to believe us, because our disaster is the disaster of the entire civilized world....We will have the thankless job of proving to a reluctant world that we are Abel, the murdered brother."

Two Gentlemen in the Snow
Wladyslaw Sziengel

The falling snow is mean, piercing,
The white wool envelops my feet.
A Jew at his work--and a soldier;
Together we stand in the empty street.

You have no home--I have no home.
Time has stopped life's easy flow.
O what a fearful gulf between us,
And yet we're linked by the snow...

I am a captive you must guard,
But aren't you a captive, too?
I wonder who is holding whom;
Doesn't a third one hold us two?

And how can I compare at all?
Your uniform is fine, it's true,
But what's the use, if the snow can't tell
A handsome soldier from a Jew?

The snow falls evenly on us
With a peaceful cloak of white.
Together we watch through its screen
The dawning of a distant light.

Look now, what are we doing here,
Why pointlessly so roam?
Listen, man, it snows so long,
Let's part, let us go home...

Cattle Cars are Here Again

Yitzhak Katzenelson

Horror and fear grip me, hold me tight--
The wagons have returned! Only yesterday at dusk they left--
And today they are here again, standing at the Umschlag.
Do you see their gaping mouths? Their wide and terrible mouths? O
dread!

They want more! They are never sated.
They stand waiting for Jews! When will the Jews be brought here?
They are hungry--as if they never tasted a Jew...
They have! But what of that? They want more, more!

They want more, they stand waiting, as if for a feast,
Ready to devour--Jews! Bring us as many as you can!
The old, the young, the children,
Young grapes from an old vine, and old Jews like old strong wine...

We want more, many more Jews...The train-cars scream
Like cold and hardened criminals: More! There are never enough!
They stand waiting at the Umschlag. They wait for us, they wait,
The wide-gaping cattle-cars, the entire train.

Only a while ago they were crammed, stuffed to suffocation with Jews.
Dead Jews stood among dazed living ones--
Pressed together, the dead stood erect, unable to fall,
No one could tell the living from the dead.

The dead Jew's head swayed as if it were alive,
Cold sweat poured down from the living.
A Jewish child begs his dead mother: Water! Give me a drop of water!
Beating her face with his tiny hands. Put me down, I am hot!

Another little child on his dead father's arm--
Yes, children, though faint and feeble, still persevere!
His father, though big, could not endure--
The innocent child urges: Come daddy! Let's go!

And there on the train, on that side, in that corner,
Something took place. Can it be no one knows?
But the people smile. They guess.
Someone has jumped out...Listen, listen, a shot!

Someone jumped out...Jews smile, laugh quietly.
O dear Jews, O my saintly Jews,
Why are you happy? Listen, the Ukrainian is shooting from the roof.
What of it? Someone got out! Someone is free.

Hit by a bullet? Everyone's prayer--
No one can escape it! It's better to be hit in the escaping field,
Than...Where? Where are they taking us? Who recites Vidui loudly?
Repeat after him! Let everyone repeat! It makes you shudder.

Empty train cars! You were just full, and now you are empty again.
What did you do with the Jews? What has happened to them?
Ten thousand counted and sealed--and here you are again!
O tell me you empty cattle cars, tell me where you have been!

You come back from the other world, I know. It cannot be very far.
Only yesterday you left loaded, and today--you are back!
Why this rush? Why such haste?
You will soon be old and broken like me.

From mere watching, observing, hearing everything--Gevald!
Though you are iron and wood, how can you endure it?
O iron, you came from deep in the earth.
O wood, you were once a tall, proud tree.

And now? Now you are freight cars watching in silence,
Silent witnesses to such human cargo, such pain and misery.
You watched, closely, silently. O tell me, wagons, where
Did you carry them? Where did you carry the Jewish people to death?

It's not your fault, they load you and tell you: Go!
They send you out full and drive you back empty--
You come from the other world, tell me, say a word.
O rolling wheels, tell me and I will shed a tear...

The Sun Shines Above
Elizabeth Berkun

Laughter, singing and playing,
Smiling children, happy families,
Free to roam, free to love, free to feel,
The sun shines above

Later, locked behind the gates,
Closeness and togetherness remains,
Pushed to a much smaller world,
The sun shines above

Boxed in trains,
Gasping for air,
Hold on tight to all that is left,
The sun shines above

Work, starvation, loneliness,
Heat, cold, disease,
No love, no friends, no hope,
The sun shines above

Torture, gas, ashes,
Lost family, lost generations,
Six million lives gone up in flames,
The sun shines above

Forty years later, hatred remains,
Death covered up,
The memory of death still lingers,
How can the sun shine above?

O The Chimneys
Nelly Sachs

And though after my skin worms destroy this
body, yet in my flesh shall I see G-d.--Job, 19:26

O the chimneys
On the ingeniously devised habitations of death
When Israel's body drifted as smoke
Through the air--
Was welcomed by a star, a chimney sweep,
A star that turned black
Or was it a ray of sun?

O the chimneys!
Freedomway for Jeremiah and Job's dust--
Who devised you and laid stone upon stone
The road for refugees of smoke?

O the habitations of death,
Invitingly appointed
For the host who used to be a guest--
O you fingers
Laying the threshold
Like a knife between life and death--

O you chimneys,
O you fingers
And Israel's body as smoke through the air!

Kernels of Wheat
Abraham Sutzkever

Caves, crack asunder.
Split open under my blow!
Before a bullet can get me--
I bring you a sack full of gifts.

Aged purposeful pages
With purple on silvery hair,
Words on parchment, created
Through thousands of torturous years.

Like a hen sheltering its chick--
I run with the Jewish word,
Rummaging in every courtyard,
So its spirit won't be extinguished.

Stretch your arms into the bonfire
And rejoice: The main thing is this:
I still have Amsterdam, Worms,
Livorno, Madrid, and YIVO...

Oh, how I am tormented by a sacred page
Tossed about in a smoky wind!
Secret songs are choking me:
Conceal us in you labyrinth.

I dig holes and plant manuscripts...
And when despair overwhelms me
My mind turns to Egypt, to
A story about kernels of wheat.

I tell it to the stars:
Once upon a time, a king
Built his pyramid beside the Nile
So he could rule there after his death.

He ordered his servants
To pour wheat
Into his coffin--as a memorial
Of our earthly world.

Nine thousand years did suns
Rise and set in the desert
Before the kernels were discovered
In the pyramid.

Nine thousand years had passed!
But when the kernels were planted,--
They blossomed in gardens
Of sunny stalks.

Maybe the words, too, will wait patiently
To see the light.
That unpredestined hour
When they, too, burst into flower.

And like the age-old seed
That unravelled itself in the stalk,--
So the words, too, will nourish,
And will belong
To the people in its eternal journey.

I Saw a Butterfly in Auschwitz
Elizabeth Berkun

I saw a butterfly in Auschwitz,
And I wondered how it flew so freely,
Up above the barracks,
Up above the gas chambers,

Up above the death,
 I watched it flap its wings,
 And thought of the beauty it brought,
 I walked towards it and saw it fly away,
 It soared through the air,
 It escaped.
 Why couldn't they?

4580

Yehoshue Perle

Under my number lie three times a hundred thousand Jewish martyrs. Three times a hundred thousand Jewish lives, that Amalek slaughtered with the consent of the head of the Kehillah and his servants. From under my fortunate number leaps out the cry of tens of thousands of poisoned, strangled Jewish children. In the dark nights I hear the great weeping of the mother of all mothers, our Mother Rachel. She walks across the desolate fields and wraps her dead children in burial sheets. With her beautiful, delicate hands she washes the blood off her sons and daughters. But can she wrap all of them in burial sheets? Can she wash them all? Blood cries out; and the earth, in all its length and breadth, is dissolved in lamentation.

<say: "Ani Ma'amin is a prayer of affirmation in the coming of the Messiah, which became a hymn of faith for many Jews on their way to the Nazi crematoria" Have the people sing Ani Ma'amin softly as a small group in front reads off the list of camps. One person reads one name and the next person reads the next name.>

Ani ma'amin(3x)
 Be'emunah shelaimah
 Beviyat Ha'Mashiyach(2x)
 Ani ma'amin...
 Ve-af al pi sheyitmahmaiha
 Im kol zeh ani ma'amin...

Concentration and Mass Detention Camps

Jungfernhof	Maly Trostihec
Chelmno	Belzec
Gross Rosen	Kulmhof
Bergen-Belsen	Lieberose
Sonnenstein	Papenburg
Landsberg	Flossenburg
Plaszow	Dora-Nordhausen
Natzweiler	Hartheim
Sobibor	Treblinka
Neuengamme	Alderney
Gurs	Drancy
Mechelen	Herzogenbusch
Westerbork	Theresienstadt
Lublin-Majdanek	Auschwitz
Birkenau	Mauthausen
Stutthof	Trawniki
Poniatowa	Dachau

Oranienburg
Sachsenburg
Berlin Columbia Haus
Buchenwald

Esterwegen
Lichtenburg
Sachsenhausen
Ravenbrueck

A Cartload of Shoes
Abraham Sutzkever

The wheels hurry onward;
What do they carry?
They carry a cartload
Of shivering shoes.

The wagon like a canopy
In the evening light;
The shoes--clustered
Like people in a dance.

A wedding, a holiday?
Has something blinded my eyes?
The shoes--I seem
to recognize them.

The heels go tapping
With a clatter and a din,
From our old Vilna streets
They drive us to Berlin.

I should not ask,
But something tears at my tongue.
Shoes, tell me the truth:
Where are they, the feet?

The feet from those boots
With buttons like dew--
And her, where is the body
And there, where is the bride?

Where is the child
To fill those shoes?
Why has the bride
Gone barefoot?

Through those slippers and the boots
I see those my mother used to wear.
She kept them for the Sabbath
Her favorite pair.

And the heels go tapping:
With a clatter and a din,
From our old Vilna streets
They drive us to Berlin.

It's All Over
Yitzhak Katzenelson

...And Jewish children will never wake in the morning from bright
dreams,
Never go to heder, never watch birds, never tease, never play in the
sand.
O little Jewish boys! O bright Jewish eyes! Little angels! From where?
From here, yet not from here.
O beautiful little girls. O you bright pure faces, smudged and
disheveled.

They are no more! Don't ask overseas about Kasrilevke, Yehupetz.
Don't.
Don't look for Menachem Mendels, Tevye the dairyman, Nogids, Motke
thieves. Don't look--
They will, like the prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea and
Amos from the bible,
Cry to you from Bialik, speak to you from Sholem Aleichem and Sholem
Asch's books.

In the Disrobing Room
Zalmen Gradowski

Several new trucks arrived and more victims entered the big
room. Many broke from the line and fall wildly, weeping and crying;
naked children recognized their mothers and kissed, embraced, rejoiced
that they had been reunited here. And a child felt lucky to have a
mother, a mother's heart, accompany him to the grave.

A Dead Child Speaks
Nelly Sachs

My mother held me by my hand.
Then someone raised the knife of parting:
So that it should not strike me,
My mother loosed her hand from mine.
But she lightly touched my thighs once more
And her hand was bleeding--

After that the knife of parting
Cut in two each bite I swallowed--
It rose before me with the sun at dawn
And began to sharpen itself in my eyes
Wind and water ground in my ear
And every voice of of comfort pierced my heart--

As I was led to death
I still felt in the last moment
The unsheathing of the great knife of parting.

O the night of the weeping children!
O the night of the children branded for death!
Sleep may not enter here.
Terrible nursemaids
Have usurped the place of mothers....
Instead of mother's milk, panic suckles those little ones....

Yesterday Mother still drew
Sleep towards them like a white moon.
There was the doll with cheeks derouged by kisses
In one arm,
The stuffed pet, already
Brought to life by love,
In the other--
Now blows the wind of dying,
Blows the shift over the hair
That no one will comb again.

Never

Elie Wiesel

Auschwitz, 1944. Not far from us, flames were leaping up from a ditch, gigantic flames. They were burning something. A lorry drew up at the pit and delivered its load--little children. Babies!...Around us, everyone was weeping. Someone began to recite the Kaddish. I do not know if it has ever happened before, in the long history of the Jews, that people have ever recited the prayer for the dead for themselves....

Never shall I forget that night,
the first night in camp,
which has turned my life into one long night,
seven times cursed and seven times sealed,
Never shall I forget that smoke.
Never shall I forget the little faces of the children,
whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky,

Never shall I forget those flames
which consumed my Faith forever.
Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence
which deprived me, for all eternity,
of the desire to live.
Never shall I forget those moments
which murdered my G-d and my soul
and turned my dreams to dust.
Never shall I forget these things,
even if I am condemned to live as long as G-d Himself.
Never.

In Memory to My Father
Sonia Schreiber Weitz

Did the suffering
Drive you wild?
Did you think of me
Your child,
Did you cry?
I know, you'd rather
Spare me the gory truth...
Oh, father!

No, the details
matter not!
But, dear G-d
You forgot
A man who wept...
And begged for life,
Not for himself--
But for his wife...

You saw a father's
Tear-stained face,
But showed no mercy!
Not a trace
Of compassion...
You watched the pain,
'till his brothers
Were all slain...

And still my faith
In You is great,
And still I trust You--
Without hate;
For when he prayed
His dying word:
To save his daughters
--You heard!

Modern Day Hymn
Joel Gerwin

Praise the Lord!
Bless His saving power!
He turned His back while children burned
He closed His eyes while peoples perished.
Happy is the man who trusts in the Lord,
For no one will help when he is in need.
G-d is enthroned in the heavens
He has no patience for the dealings of our lives.
Who is man that you care for him?
What are we that we may praise You?
We are nothing but blood and ashes, G-d,
And in our death, You too have disappeared.

Where Was Man?
Sonia Schreiber Weitz

You know I hated You oh Lord
I cursed Your blessed name
I needed help a sign a word
And there was no one else to blame

Because Your silence drove me mad
I climbed the walls and tore my hair
My lungs were spitting blood and yet
You wouldn't listen to my prayer

I called on You in torment wild
And desparately cursed Your name
Then I was nothing but a child
And there was no one else to blame

But now I feel G-d wasn't dead
And WHERE WAS MAN I ask instead

Contrasts in the Present
Sharon Bromberg

...And the Lord said to Abraham: "Look to the sky and count the stars...and this will be the number of your descendants."...YET NOW the only numbers left are those imprinted on our arms...and the unimaginable number--six million mass murdered.

On the shores of the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept when we remembered our glory--and always, our Mother Rachel would look down and cry for us...AND NOW "the whole house of Israel will cry for those that the Lord has destroyed by fire." (Leviticus 10:3)

The Lord was my shepherd, and I did not want. He protected me as a shepherd guards his sheep, keeping them secure...BUT NOW alone we are led as sheep to the slaughterhouse without the safety of His protection.

I was the chosen people--Am Kadosh, betrothed to my Loved One...YET NOW I am barren, alone, and my Lord has left me to Amalek.

On the Yamim Nora'im, we would supplicate Him to have mercy "as a father pities his children"...AND NOW no one has pity on even the children--they are driven to the gas chambers and are cut down like grass.

We heard promises of being gathered from the four corners of the earth...YET NOW our ashes are scattered to the ends of the earth

It is written: "Jacob shall be a fire, Joseph, a flame, and the House of Esau, stubble." BUT NOW the stubble has quenched the fire.

Ten righteous men were killed for Your name, and Kiddush Hashem has continued throughout the ages--the Crusade, the pogroms...BUT NOW we continue to be martyred, STILL NOW we don't give up on Your name.

Sing
Yitzhak Katzenelson

Show yourself, my people. Emerge, reach out
From the miles-long, dense, deep ditches,
Covered with lime and burned, layer upon layer,
Rise up! up! from the deepest, bottommost layer!

Come from Treblinka, Sobibor, Auschwitz,
Come from Belzec, Ponari, from all the other camps,
With wide open eyes, frozen cries and soundless screams.
Come from marshes, deep sunken swamps, foul moss--

Come, you dried, ground, crushed Jewish bones.
Come, form a big circle around me, one great ring--
Grandfathers, grandmothers, fathers, mothers carrying babies.
Come, Jewish bones, out of powder and soup.

Emerge, reveal yourselves to me. Come, all of you, come.
I want to see you. I want to look at you. I want
Silently and mutely to behold my murdered people--

The Exchange
Sharon Bromberg

<Have two people read this out loud>

Weary old man's voice:

I am the wandering Jew--
survivor of death.

Alone I walk--searching
for the people whom
the ash-clouds

covered--whose outcomes have eluded me...

Stoic woman's voice:

...I am the wandering Jew
grappling with what I've seen
collector of visions--
images of extinction,
distributing them to the needy...

...I've a roster I've made
of all of the names of
people who...were
close to me--many I've realized are now
dead and gone, yet I need to know the truth

read and I shall tell you...

-my parents--Avrohom and Miriam
Shorenstein

-murdered--Chelmno March Nineteen
hundred and forty-two

-my brother--Dovid Shorenstein--
son of Avrohom and Miriam Shorenstein

-murdered--Auschwitz December
Nineteen hundred and forty-four

-Anja Lipsky Shorenstein--wife
of Dovid Shorenstein

murdered--Treblinka August
Nineteen Hundred and forty-four

-Wolfe and Nachum Shorenstein--
sons of Dovid and Anja Shorenstein

-murdered--Treblinka August and
September Nineteen hundred and
forty-four

-my sister--Esther Shorenstein Bacnik--
daughter of Avrohom and Miriam

-murdered--Belzec May Nineteen
hundred and forty-two

-her husband--Franz Bacnik

-murdered--Sobibor February
Nineteen hundred and forty-three

-my wife--Frieda Wasserman Shorenstein

-murdered--Auschwitz July
Nineteen hundred and forty-three

-my children--Eber, Rivke, and Sophie
Shorenstein

-murdered--Eber--Majdanek
November Nineteen hundred and
forty-four, the girls--Auschwitz
June Nineteen hundred and forty-
three

Otto Shorenstein...
sole survivor of a family.

In memory of the six million:

Exalted, compassionate G-d, grant perfect peace in Your
sheltering presence, among the holy and the pure, to the souls of all
our brethren, men, women, and children of the House of Israel who were

slaughtered and suffocated and burned to ashes. May their memory endure, inspiring truth and loyalty in our lives. May their souls thus be bound up in the bond of life. May they rest in peace. And let us say: Amen

<we rise>
Yitgadal
 Auschwitz
ve'yitkadash
 Lodz
sh'mei raba
 Ponar
b'alma di v'ra khir'utei,
 Babi Yar
v'yamlikh malkhutei
 Maidanek
b'haveikhon u-v'yomeikhon
 Birkenau
u-v'havei d'khol beit yisrael,
 Kovno
ba'agala u-vi-z'man kariv,
 Janowska
v'imru amen.
Yehei sh'mei raba m'vorakh l'alam u-l'almei almaya.
Yitbarakh v'yishtabah
 Theresienstadt
v'yitpa'ar v'yitromam
 Buchenwald
v'yitnasei v'yit-hadar
 Treblinka
v'yit'aleh v'yit-halal
 Vilna
sh'mei d'kudsha,
 Bergen-Belsen
brikk hu l'ela
 Mauthausen
min kol birkhata v'shirata,
 Dachau
tush b'hata v'nehemata
 Minsk
da-amiran b'alma,
 Warsaw
v'imru amen.
Yehei sh'lama raba min sh'maya v'hayim aleinu v'al kol Yisrael, v'imru
amen.
Oseh shalom bi-m'rommav, hu ya'aseh shalom aleinu v'al kol yisrael,
v'imru amen

<Tell someone from each group to collect the yellow stars and to come up one by one and place the stars in the fire. As the first one or two people come up, say the following:>

"And so we stride--our souls ablaze!" -Peretz

<During the burning, there should be absolute silence. When the last star has burned, together say:>

Still, Still

Shmerke Kaczerginski

...Like the Viliye freed of its chains
and like the trees renewed in green,
freedom's light will glow
upon your face,
upon your face.

Rejoice, O Jerusalem

Danny Siegel

Rejoice, O Jerusalem,
your streets are filled again
with children! Proud children.
Be joyous, Mother Rachel,
your children have come home!
Home. Such a foreign word
to the refugee from Argentina,
to the Vizhnitzer chossid,
the Jew from Bulgarian cities.
That you are home,
and there is no more need to hide
and steal across the border,
is the stuff of Jewish lullabies.
When the planes at Lod
crowd with long lost sons
and daughters,
truth and freedom blur near disbelief.

Tiberias and Yavneh,
raise your voices!
Massada burst your rocks
with song,
for we are home!

<sing Hatikvah>

Notes

The second paragraph, beginning, "The twenty-seventh day..." is from the Siddur Sim Shalom.

"It's All Over", "Cattle Cars Are Here Again", and "Sing" are from "The Song Of the Murdered Jewish People".

Elizabeth Berkun and Joel Gerwin are both USYers who went on the Poland Israel Pilgrimage, 1986.

Sutzkever joined the "Paper Brigade", a group set up by the Germans to sort the cultural treasures stolen from Vilna's Jewish libraries, so that he could smuggle the most valuable pieces into the ghetto for safe-keeping--this is what "Kernal's of Wheat" is about.

Elie Wiesel's piece is from Night.

Sonia Schreiber Weitz, a writer of Holocaust poetry, and her sister were the only survivors of a very large family.

"The Exchange" is based on a scene from the play Shayna Maidel by Barbara Lebow.

The quote from Peretz is from his play, "The Golden Chain".

"Rejoice O Jerusalem" is from Before Our Very Eyes by Danny Siegel.