

Learning the Lessons of the Holocaust

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The Holocaust exemplifies the very worst qualities of humanity. The ruthless cruelty and systematic murder of 6 million Jews took place under the aegis of Germany, thought to be one of the most advanced societies in the Western world. Millions were murdered in cold blood not only by Germans, but by accomplices in many lands throughout Europe and beyond.

How did so many human beings become torturers and murderers of innocent victims? How were blatantly false anti-Jewish stereotypes so readily believed by masses of people, including those who considered themselves to be religious?

When Jews--or any group--are dehumanized, then all humanity is on trial. Either we draw on our humane values and resist the haters and perpetrators; or we ourselves become accomplices to the crimes. Those who do nothing to resist evil are partners in the evil.

If the Holocaust teaches how inhumane people can be, it also sheds light on moral heroism--the heroism of Jews who resisted their enemies; the heroism of Jewish martyrs who died upholding their faith; the heroism of Christians who risked their own lives to save Jews; the heroism of those who spoke out and acted against Nazism and all the evil it represents.

The Jewish motto after the Holocaust is "Never Again." We won't allow this to happen to us again. But the motto goes beyond Jews. It calls on all human beings of all races, religions and nationalities to spurn the ideology of Nazism, to work for a humane and compassionate world, to see each other as fellow human beings and not as stereotypes.

The Holocaust shows how low humanity can sink. It is an eternal warning to all people to promote love, tolerance, mutual respect. Once the humane values are compromised, tragedy ensues. It's not just about Jews; it's about all humanity. Wake up! See what is at stake! Never again means never again...ever!