

Dear March of the Living Participants,

It is now over 2 years since the horrific attacks on Southern Israel. Yet those tragic events that took place on that morning, which shattered our belief that we lived in a relatively protected and safe world, continue to impact everything around us.

Our homes, our schools, our campuses and our streets are no longer safe places, where we felt free to walk wearing anything that identified us as Jews. Antisemitism, the age-old hatred has once again reared its vile head, in a different guise maybe, but ultimately the same.

And as I now write this, we are over one month into another war, with fierce fighting in the North and our Israeli colleagues spending many hours each day in and out of shelters. We all ask ourselves, how and when can we all live in peace, and when can we treasure life ?

I look back 81 years to the Holocaust, and I ask, what lessons have we learnt? How can hatred and violence fill the streets of London, Paris and Chicago? How is it that people sit and watch and do nothing when hate fills our streets?

As a student of the Holocaust for over 30 years, I can safely say that what we are seeing today is not comparable to the period you are about to explore. The Holocaust was an unprecedented event in history. It was a multitude of complexities, involving millions of people across the entire planet. However long you spend learning, it will never be enough to even grasp the tiniest of fragments.

My own journey began in Tokyo over 30 years ago. A story of a survivor, a Japanese diplomat who saved Jews and a chance meeting ignited within me the desire to learn more about the history of my people.

It is impossible to fathom the sheer enormity of the Shoah. How can one think of 6 million people? That is 6 million individuals: fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, children. 6 million hopes and dreams; shattered, destroyed! 6 million murdered for the crime of being a Jew. Others too, who did not fit into a Nazi ideology. Homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Roma and disabled, amongst others all murdered because they did not fit into a Master Race.

Our journey explores the rich and diverse history of Polish Jewry, spanning almost 1000 years. We cannot understand what was lost until we know what was there before. Every time I return, the experience changes, just as each group changes. We collectively take one trip, but we are each on our own journey.

While on this journey, I ask all of you to open your minds, to challenge and ask, to be prepared to listen, and to open your eyes to see. The complexity of the Holocaust is far more than Auschwitz. It is the forests of Eastern Europe; it is the Operation Reinhard Reinhold Death Camps, and it is the Ghettos across Poland and beyond. It

is the stories of those who died and how they lived, the heroes of the resistance, the child smugglers, the bystanders, the collaborators, the Righteous, the great Rabbis and scholars murdered, the Nazi ideologues and the ordinary men who became murderers.

This year like previous ones, we will focus on passing the torch, as more than 40 Holocaust survivors from across the world, will join our groups and be charged with passing the torch to younger generations. Not only do we learn their first-hand testimony, but we also learn their spirit at how they rebuilt their lives. It is important for us to honour those who bear witness, and remember the words of Elie Wiesel "When you listen to a witness, you become a witness."

Along with our survivors are the amazing educators who will challenge you. Each year they inspire, and they help you look both inward and outwardly at the stories. There are a host of volunteers that need our thanks, from our operational managers, and the entire medical team, and of course all of our staff who this year have worked double shifts to overcome the challenges presented by the war. The team that has worked tirelessly, Revital, Monise, Ariana, Michel, Shirley, Avi, Brooke, Liron, Liora, Greg, David, Eli, Pawel, Robyn, Naomi, Tamar and of course a special thanks for Liz, who does not miss a single issue.

A special thank you to our directors, Shmuel our Chairman, Phyllis our President, Baruch, Avi, Shlomo, Moishe, Shimon and Mark. I would also like to thank all our partners who help make this journey work. Our land providers, the airlines we work with, the production teams, all our local guides and of course the security teams that we work so closely with.

I wish to thank our donors. For many of you, the March would not be possible without their generosity.

As each year passes, we move closer to changing the story from memory to history. As this happens, it becomes more imperative that we be true to our history, as never before have so many looked to deny it. This year, despite the fact that our Israeli brethren were unable to travel, we are still marching with almost 7000 participants, from over 70 delegations across the world. It is up to all of us to carry the torch of memory and hold it bright for future generations so that they will overcome hate whenever and wherever it raises its head. We must proclaim it stronger than ever, no more anti-Semitism or hate of any kind. There must be no room for racism, and we must say 'Never Means Never'.

Ladies and gentlemen of the 2026 March of the Living, thank you for joining us on our mission and for being a part of this special programme. I hope it inspires you, educates you and that you get as much from this journey as I have from all of mine.

Thank you.

Scott Saunders MBE
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