

## Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Yad Vashem, 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁחַיֵּינוּ וְקִיְּמֵנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ  
לְזִמַּן הַזֶּה:

"Blessed be the Lord [...] for allowing me to be here today."

What a grace, what a gift, that I may speak to you here today at Yad Vashem.

Here at Yad Vashem burns the eternal flame of remembrance for the dead of the Shoah.

This place commemorates their suffering by the millions.  
And it commemorates their lives - each and every fate.

This place remembers Samuel Tytelman, an avid swimmer who won competitions at Maccabi Warsaw, and his little sister Rega, who helped her mother cook for Shabbat.

This place remembers Ida Goldiș and her three-year-old son Vili. In October they were deported from the Chișinău ghetto, and in January, in the bitterest cold, Ida wrote to her parents for the last time: "I regret from the depths of my soul that when I said goodbye I did not grasp the meaning of the moment, [...] that I did not hug you tightly without letting go."

Germans took them away. Germans tattooed numbers on their forearms. Germans tried to dehumanize these people, to turn them into numbers, to erase any memory of them in the extermination camp.

They did not succeed.

Samuel and Rega, Ida and Vili were human beings. And human beings they remain in our memory.

Here in Yad Vashem they are given - as it says in the book of the prophet Isaiah - "a memorial and a name".

I also stand before this memorial as a human being - and as a German.

I stand before their monument. I read their names. I hear their stories. And I bow down in deep sorrow.

Samuel and Rega, Ida and Vili were human beings.

And I must also say this here and now: The perpetrators were human beings. They were Germans. The murderers, the guards, the accomplices, the hangers-on: they were Germans.

The industrial mass murder of six million Jews, the greatest crime in human history - it was committed by my compatriots. The cruel war, which was to cost far more than 50 million lives, it started from my country.

75 years after the liberation of Auschwitz, I stand before you all as German President, burdened with great historical guilt. But at the same time, I am filled with gratitude: for the outstretched hand of the survivors, for the new trust of people in Israel and throughout the world, for the renewed flowering of Jewish life in Germany. I am inspired by the spirit of reconciliation that has shown Germany and Israel, Germany, Europe and the states of the world a new, a peaceful path.

The flame of Yad Vashem does not go out. And our German responsibility does not fade. We want to live up to it. By it, dear friends, you shall measure us.

Because I am grateful for the miracle of reconciliation, I stand before you and wish I could say: Our remembering has made us immune to evil.

Yes, we Germans remember. But sometimes it seems to me that we understand the past better than the present.

The evil spirits show themselves today in a new guise. Even more: They present their anti-Semitic, their völkisch, their authoritarian thinking as an answer for the future, as a new solution for the problems of our time. I wish I could say: We Germans have learned from history forever.

But I can't say that when hatred and agitation are spreading. I can't say that when Jewish children are spat at in the schoolyard. I cannot say that when crude anti-Semitism erupts under the guise of alleged criticism of Israeli policies. I cannot say that when only a heavy wooden door prevents a right-wing terrorist from causing a massacre, a bloodbath, in a synagogue in Halle on Yom Kippur.

Of course: our time is not the same time. They are not the same words. It is not the same perpetrators.

But it is the same evil.

And there remains one answer: Never again! Never again!

That is why there must be no end to remembering.

This responsibility has been inscribed in the Federal Republic of Germany from day one.

But it tests us - here and today!

This Germany will only do justice to itself if it lives up to its historical responsibility:

We fight anti-Semitism!

We defy the poison of nationalism!

We protect Jewish life!

We stand by Israel's side!

I renew this promise here in Yad Vashem before the eyes of the world.

And I know I am not alone. Here in Yad Vashem today we say together: No to hatred of Jews! No to hatred of human beings!

In the horror of Auschwitz, the world has already learned lessons and established a peace order, built on human rights and international law. We Germans stand by this order and we want to defend it, with all of you. Because we know: Every peace remains fragile. And as human beings, we remain seducible.

Dear Heads of State and Government, I am grateful that we are joining together today to declare: A world that remembers the Holocaust. A world without genocide.

"Who knows if we will once again be able to hear the magical sound of life? Who knows if we will be able to weave ourselves into eternity - who knows."

Salmen Gradowski wrote these lines as a prisoner in Auschwitz and he buried them in a tin can under a crematorium.

Here at Yad Vashem they are woven into eternity: Salmen Gradowski, the Tytelman siblings, Ida and Vili Goldiş and so many others.

They were all murdered. Their lives were lost in unleashed hatred. But our memory of them defeats nothingness. And our actions defeat hate.

That is what I stand for. This is what I hope for.

"Blessed be the Lord for allowing me to be here today."