

## Torch Award Submission: TA11- 095

- Full Title of Entry (80 char max): Adat Shalom Yom haShoah Program
- Entry Category (You can select up to 2, although you will only win in one):
  - Men's Club Shabbat     Yom HaShoah / Yellow Candle     Israel / Masorti     Hebrew Literacy / Ritual Literacy
  - Hearing Men's Voices     Men's Health     Youth Programming     Programs for Young Men (21-40)
  - World Wide Wrap     Shomrei Ha'aretz     Club Administration     Non-FJMC Program
  - Best Overall Programming\* [\*Best Overall Programming is not on the basis of a single program, but your club's entire year. A single program submitted in this category will be re-categorized.]
  - I'm not sure, so please select for our club's submission.
- Contact Person: Marshall Rubin
- Email address for Contact Person: tim@saububis.com
- Club number & Club name: [#1015] Adat Shalom Men's Club  
[Is it a Men's Club or a Brotherhood? Please specify]
- Number of club members: 46
- Synagogue name, city and state: Adat Shalom Synagogue, Los Angeles CA
- Club President name (at time of entry): Marshall Rubin
- Club President name (at time of convention): Marshall Rubin
- Person preparing entry: Kate Ferreri
- Email address of person preparing: caeristhiona@gmail.com

### Part II. Summary Information ( 2 – 3 sentences):

**This is our Yom HaShoah Torch Award submission. I think you will find it quite interesting. Any Men's Club can put this program on, and you will be amazed at what questions you ask and more amazed with the answers to those questions.**

**Part III. By submitting this document, I certify, on behalf of the club, that this submission has not been submitted by our club for a Torch Award in a previous year.**

### Part IV. Entry Documentation

Looking for an interesting and thought-provoking Yom haShoah program has always been a difficult task. We have had in the past professional lecturers with an expertise in the shoah to come to Adat Shalom and speak about different aspects of the shoah and how it was one sick man, Adolf Hitler's dream and desire to exterminate a race of people, the Jewish people, as well as non-Jews in his quest for world domination and a sick desire to create what he called the perfect race: a blond-haired, blue-eyed Germanic people. We also have had Holocaust survivors and children of Holocaust survivors who have shared their grandparents' Holocaust experiences with us. However, this time we wanted to do something different, something to draw people in, even in the outside community.

Before I proceed any further, here is some FYI. We know that Adolf Hitler killed, murdered, and exterminated six million Jewish people plus. How many non-Jewish people – Serbs, gypsies, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians did Adolf Hitler kill, murder and exterminate? The answer is 19.7 million non-Jews. This is a total of 25.7 million Jews and non-Jews exterminated in the shoah.

I wanted to involve the outside community in our Yom haShoah program. Therefore, I proposed to my board that I would like to invite the Presbyterian Church down the road from us to participate in our Yom haShoah program. The board liked the idea and agreed to extend an invitation to them.

All names are kept confidential. All names used in this submission are fictitious unless otherwise stated.

I called Reverend Joe and briefly discussed this program with him for Yom haShoah. He liked it; therefore, we picked a day and time to meet and discuss the Yom haShoah program in more detail.

### The Yom ha-Shoah Program:

We needed a film to set the stage and the tone for this program, a film that would be informative, thought-provoking, non-graphic (because all of us at one time or another have seen films like this before), educational, and most of all, something that would keep you thinking and questioning as you walked out the door for a long time and even longer. We solicited ideas or names of films from our congregation, but drew a blank there. Therefore, I called the educational director at the Museum of Tolerance and told him what we were planning for Yom haShoah, and that it must be age-appropriate because I wanted to involve our Hebrew School students and USYers in this program we I had the Religious School director buy into this program as well as the USY director, youth commissioner, and our Early Childhood Center director. The ECC program we will think about a little further into this submission. The educational director recommended a film that was aired on PBS Masterpiece Theater a couple of years ago. It was still available, and it was age-appropriate. Men's Club purchased the film on DVD. The title of the film is "G-d on Trial." Now before we get into the program, we'll talk about our ECC program.

We have five ECC (Early Childhood Center) classes. We are fortunate enough in our congregation to have Holocaust survivors who can tell their stories of those terrible years. We also have in our congregation some children Holocaust survivors who are accomplished speakers, who belong to various Holocaust survivor societies and organizations, and who speak on the Holocaust across the country to adults and children ranging in age from 3 to 70-plus years.

I: There are five classes in our ECC. Each class has a Holocaust survivor assigned to this class.

II: The children sit on a carpet in a semi-circle in their classroom. The speaker sits on the floor with the children if they are able to, or they sit on a chair facing the children. A question is asked (we are working with five-year-olds only): What is a holocaust? Because the children are at an age-appropriate level, they can respond. All the questions are written down on an easel pad by the teacher, including the children's answers. Some of the answers to the question by the children were: the Holocaust was a terrible day when Jewish people got hurt. They were put on a train and sent far away. It was a war. My grandma and grandpa were in the Holocaust. A mean man started the Holocaust because he didn't like Jewish people. A Holocaust is a war where people are fighting. The Jewish people could not live in their house anymore because soldiers took them. Another question was asked: What is a concentration camp? That's a place where my grandma and grandpa had to live. It was not a nice place. The food didn't taste good, and people died there, and it was a very bad place. The questions went for a little while longer. The children were told stories of concentration camps at their level of understanding. They were taught the names of the camps. The idea here was to let them participate in the regular Yom ha-Shoah program. They made signs with the names of camps on them. They learned to pronounce the names of camps. Fourteen signs were made up by the children with the names of the camps on them. They also made 16 signs that said "Never Again" on them. These young children were the beginning of our Yom ha-Shoah program. From our Holocaust survivors they learned at least one thing about each concentration camp that they could remember and repeat well. They also learned four songs: Joy to the World, This Land is Your Land, HaTikvah and Ani Monim.

Monday, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 p.m.: 30 of our kindergarteners assemble in single file across our stage holding their signs. There is total silence. The lights are dimmed. The Yom ha-Shoah candles are lit. A story that children helped to write with their teacher and Holocaust survivor is read aloud in a solemn tone. There are key words in the story that cue the children. Every sign that has the name of a concentration camp on it is intermingled with a sign that says "Never Again." The last two signs say "Never Again."

The story begins with the words "The Holocaust." A child steps out and says "never again." The story continues: "Auschwitz was a work camp where able-bodied Jews were sent." A child steps out and says "never again." "Theresienstadt was a death camp." A child steps out and says "never again." And this exercise and story go on through the names of all fourteen camps. Then, children sing their four songs that they learned. Everyone stands to sing HaTikvah together. Then the last two children, one at a time, step forward and say "never again." Then they walk off slowly, singing Ani Monim. Lastly, before they walk out to their babysitting classroom, they say "never again, never again." This ends their program. It takes three days to prepare children.

Now we get to the heart of our program, "G-d on Trial."

This trial takes place in Auschwitz, a German labor camp, in a dirty, overcrowded barracks. Our audience becomes the imprisoned Jews. The group on the right become inmates, the prisonworking force of the camp. The group on the left becomes the new arrivals to Auschwitz. This group is considered the separated group. When Jews arrived at the camp they were physically and brutally taken off the train. They were marched to a big long barracks. Inside, they were told to take off their clothes and stand in line. At the other end of the barracks was a small table and two chairs. In those two chairs sat the commandant of the camp and the camp doctor. One by one, each Jew was to run down the long corridor to the two German officers, where they were told to stop. Then a quarter turn, a quarter turn, and another quarter turn, two more times. Based on this examination, all of those men who were not able-bodied, had visible physical disabilities, skin problems, not strong enough, not tall enough, etc. were separated again. These men were destined for the gas chambers and they knew it. The other half were destined to join the work force at Auschwitz for the time being, until they became too ill to work, lost their strength, and starved to death or eventually gassed. The work forces became the living dead. After the fates of these men were determined they were all thrown back into a general population until their extermination. After this exercise, these prisoners were taken to the so-called barbers who shaved their heads and cut off their beards. They were then given prison clothes and thrown into a barracks. Our participants actually re-enacted the arrival exercise. Some of our Men's Club members acted the German roles.

Our prisoners are made up of white-collar workers, blue-collar workers, doctors, lawyers, businessmen, clergy, and of course, our non-Jewish Presbyterian inmates.

Our cantor acts as our facilitator and judge pro-tem.

After our inmates are returned to the barracks, they discuss how they were treated by the German with the other inmates, the workforce. The comments were brutal and emotional and heated. Our judge, however, kept things on track. He cautioned our participants: You are professionals, working men, educators and clergy. Think on those terms. A working man says "I believe G-d is good and he will take care of us then he brings us home." A businessman says "All of my life, I was told by my father, by my teachers, and by my colleagues, 'Take care of your family, friends, and employees and help those in need, for that is your responsibility as a Jew, and G-d will not abandon you.' Then why does G-d not answer my prayers? Why does He let me walk into the gas chamber?" A doctor says, "I am a healer of many women and children. Where is G-d and does he hear me?" An educator cries out, as well as a non-Jew, "G-d is supposed to be here! Where is G-d? Let's put G-d on trial!"

Here you can have a five-minute coffee break while the judge sets the scene for the trial.

The trial is facilitated by the judge.

The first witness is the businessman. For the sake of brevity we will take one question from each character mentioned above. Why do you think that G-d has abandoned you? G-d has abandoned me because I have not done enough good in my lifetime. I have only thought about how much money I can make, how many things or possessions I have, and how much I still want. I did not know when to stop wanting things. I never stopped to enjoy a blue sky, the gentle rain falling from the heavens, a beautiful rainbow or children playing. Maybe it is I who have abandoned G-d, and G-d wants for me to come home. May this be my redemption. I only know one thing: I sit here in this cold and dusty barracks waiting to die and I do not feel G-d's presence around me. I feel angry and scared and abandoned.

The second witness is the blue-collar worker. Have you been an observant Jew all your life? When I was growing up as a young boy I was going to a yeshiva all day. On Friday nights my mother made Shabbos at home and I went to minyan with my father. When we came home the whole family gathered around the table, my father made kiddush and motzi and we all ate and had a good time, and after dinner I helped my father do the Birkat haMazon and then we sang zemirot. On Saturday our whole family went to schul. When I grew up I married and eventually had children. Because times were very difficult for me, sometimes I found myself working two or three jobs just to put food on the table. Eventually I went to schul less and less until finally no more. I put more time into work, I missed my children growing up, I missed the time with my wife. Maybe that's why G-d has turned away from me and I am sitting here in Auschwitz waiting to die. Maybe it was me who turned away from G-d. And as I walk to my death in a few hours, singing Ani Ma'amin, I will find G-d again. I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, and although he may tarry, I will wait daily for his coming.

The third witness is the doctor. I am a healer. I studied and worked hard to learn my craft. I am a healer of man, woman, and child. This is all I know. I have dedicated my life to healing people and for this G-d has killed my wife and children and has also sentenced me to death. You ask me "Where is G-d?" I don't know where he is. I thought G-d was omnipotent, that He is everywhere for all of us. I am not a schulgoer per se, but I always thought He would be there when I needed Him. I sit here in this filthy death camp and G-d is not here. He has forsaken me.

The fourth witness is the lawyer. I am also a doctor – a doctor of jurisprudence, of the law. The yeshiva student asks, "Mr. Doctor of Law, where is your G-d?" Number one and foremost, He is everyone's G-d, not just mine. The student: "If G-d is everywhere, then how come we are sitting in this death camp, some separated to march off into the gas chamber or to be shot or have the doctors experiment on us or work us to death?" The lawyer: "My young student, G-d did not do this to us. Man did this to us. A crazy man by the name of Adolf Hitler did this to us, and eventually wants to dominate the world. That will never happen because G-d will not let it happen. This is the beginning but not the end. Sure, I sit here just like you, scared of the unknown, waiting to die. But I do know one thing: Hitler will not succeed because G-d has empowered man to prevent this from happening. Hitler will fail and fall. G-d is with me, I know that."

The fifth witness is the yeshiva student. I have listened and I have spoken and I have heard all that has been said from professional, educated people and hardworking people. I have heard all of you and yet we are sitting here waiting to die, at least most of us. And G-d does nothing to stop such a terrible thing. All through history G-d was there. During the time of Noach he instructed Noach to build an ark and save his family and all the other creatures of the earth. During the Tower of Bavel he prevented our people from ascending to the heavens. During the time of Moshe and the exodus He led over 600 million people through the parting of the Red Sea, and finally after wandering in the desert for 40 years and then crossing over the Jordan River to the land of milk and honey and giving us Jews a homeland and giving us the strength to defeat the Midianites, thus giving us a homeland and the commandments and the five books of the law for us Jews to live by. And G-d can't stop this terrible Holocaust. The killing of all our people and others who do not fit into Hitler's plan. I believe that G-d has made a covenant with another people.

The sixth witness is the rabbi. I cannot believe all that I have heard. G-d created this world. He also created man in His own image. He gave man dominion over the world he created for us. He raised us above all of the creatures of the earth and He gave man free will to do good and bad. Man has created this Holocaust and man must stop it. It may not end in our time, but man will stop Hitler and his quest for world power. G-d has not abandoned us. He is still here. Man will have to stop man.

The seventh witness is the non-Jew. Hitler is killing us also. However, the focus is on the Jewish people right now. History one day will show that we suffered this terrible Holocaust as well. Where is G-d through all of these terrible times? We don't know, but He is somewhere. However, we wish he was here with us.

The jury: People who attended our Yom ha-Shoah program were chosen to be our jury. They listened closely to our Holocaust participants. Then, they were excused to the other side of the room to deliberate. Due to brevity, they were given 15 minutes to reach a verdict. This was a coffee break time. However, our participants and attendees were anxious to hear the verdict. No one wanted to go home. The program became very intense. The jury returned and the judge asked to see their verdict. He looked at the verdict and said, "This jury of seven people finds G-d..."

This is a great movie to view and is readily available from PBS. Watch the film, and then do the role-playing. This program will be quite intense, especially if you have Holocaust survivors in your congregation.

If this program is orchestrated right, it will be very thought-provoking, intense at times and will make you think about man's inhumanity to man and what you can do to make this a better world to live in. This program gets directly involved with social action and tikkun olam.

Midrash says that on the sixth day of creation, G-d said to Adam, "I have created my world for you. Take care of it because after you there will be no one to repair it."

The above is a good metaphor. G-d can only create. He gave man the ability to repair the world through social action, by keeping individuals and factions out of power whose intent is to cause war, social unrest and upheaval, and cause harm to people and prevent world peace. Through greening our planet and using sustainable energy and recycling, thus keeping our planet healthy.

Yom ha-Shoah takes on a very different meaning today, because the history of the Shoah can affect our future. If we as Jews forget what happened to the Jews, then Hitler exterminated them. It can happen again, only much worse, because our technology is far more advanced today. We must teach our children and keep the Shoah alive and the words "never again" must be ingrained into our younger generation and all of us as well. This is our burden to bear and to educate others and also remind them of the non-Jews who died in the Shoah. It must never happen again.

I respectfully submit this program for a Torch Award. Every program is a mini-education.

Respectfully,  
Marshall Rubin, Adat Shalom Men's Club President #1015