

January_____ - ____ Tevet 57_____

Chanukah ended two weeks ago. The Festival of Light, Hag Urim, is a minor holiday with no basis in Torah. Even so, more Jewish people celebrate Chanukah (including intermarried families) than any other Jewish holiday on our calendar, major, minor, halakhic or secular.

Yom Hashoah is another special day on our calendar – but it is not a celebration. Like Chanukah, it too has no basis in Torah. Not all Jews observe it. Some object to Yom Hashoah on the basis that the Rabbis created another central day of mourning, Tisha b'Av. These fundamentalists believe that the Jewish calendar cannot be changed.

On the other hand (as Tevye might say), Israel's Chief Rabbinate recently made a change to Asara b' Tevet – the fast of the 10th of Tevet, which occurs today. For ages, this minor fast has commemorated the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 588 BCE. Only two years later, the First Temple was destroyed and the Babylonian Captivity began.

In Israel, Asara b'Tevet is also now called Yom HaKaddish HaKlali – General Kaddish Day. It is date set aside by the Rabbis for everyone to say Kaddish for all of the unknown victims of the Shoah.

We, as Conservative Jews, understand that change is embedded in tradition. In FJMC, we promote the observance of Yom Hashoah and dates like Yom HaKaddish HaKlali, because remembrance is a tradition, and because so many victims of the Shoah have no family left to observe Yahrzeits. We are their family. We carry their memories. We must remember.

As Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel stated, "To us, recollection is a holy act; we sanctify the present by remembering the past. To us Jews, the essence of faith is memory. To believe is to remember."

FJMC's Yellow Candle is the light that enables us to remember. With this program, we can spread that light. All of us have a personal responsibility to NEVER FORGET. With this little candle, and with this simple home remembrance, we are the "Or I' Goyim".

ZACHOR! REMEMBER!