

The Memory Keepers. Congregation B'nai Tikvah, Thursday June 25, 2026

Good evening, and thank you all for being here. My name is Liesbeth Heenk, founder of Amsterdam Publishers, a publishing house (based in The Netherlands), which is exclusively focusing on Holocaust stories written by survivors, their children and grandchildren. I am a Van Gogh scholar who discovered the magic of publishing in 2012 and started dedicating myself to the genre of the Shoah some years later.

Tonight we honor eight AP authors who have made the journey from all over the US to be here at Congregation B'nai Tikvah (in Deerfield) to share the stories of their parents and grandparents. The survivors themselves whose testimonies I published are no longer able to travel.

Without important and unique events like these, the memory of the Shoah would fade faster than it already does, and we cannot allow that to happen. Antisemitism is at an alarmingly high level, and learning about the past is how we recognize what is happening in the present.

It warms me to the core to see that over 250 people here tonight want to hear and learn about the Shoah and its aftermath. I want to thank Rabbi Fine for hosting us this evening, plus a big thank you to all partners who made this possible!

Holocaust testimonies are not a popular genre nowadays. Since October 7th it has even become more niche. So why keep rowing upstream? Why not change to a lighter gene? Remembering the victims of the Holocaust is a duty. It is an ongoing act, carried forward each time a survivor's story is read, shared, and preserved. Every memoir we publish keeps a name, a voice, and a life from being lost to silence. To remember is to ensure that those who were taken, and those who survived to bear witness, continue to be heard.

Also, to me these books are so much more than sad and horrific stories about the camps, the hiding, the betrayal and the loss. What strikes me each and every time is the incredible resilience, the will to live, the search for purpose, the capacity to rebuild a life, a family. (That all transcends the purely personal.)

This evening, eight of my brilliant authors will give voice to exactly that: Janet Bond Brill, Alexa Morris, Janet Horvath, Mark Prelas, Jonathan Schloss, Grace Feuerverger, Anne Hand, and Martin Bodek.

I am not Jewish, but feel that what I am now doing, together with my wonderful, gifted group of authors – now some 130 in total – is meant to be. I am on a mission, a mission which is not complete until all six million stories are told.