

Dear students and colleagues from Israel,

Dear guests and friends,

This is a quiet place in the woods. This is an assembly of brothers and sisters united in mutual respect. This is a moment of commemoration and celebration.

We celebrate the 19th visit of a group from our partner school in Israel and the future we build together. And we are very grateful for you being here and very hopeful about all the things we share and will share in the time to come. But a future needs a firm ground to build upon. And especially our future has a past.

We commemorate here what happened more than seventy years ago. This seems like a very long time. Very few of us here today were alive then, most of our parents weren't alive then either, I guess. But still, this cemetery stands for our history.

There is no village nearby, the Jews in the area were supposed to bury their dead far off the community. Jewish life was kept separate.

Then, about 200 years ago, Jewish neighbours started to become citizens, they became neighbours who attended a different place of worship, had some distinct customs but basically were German citizens like everybody else. This is, when this cemetery became such a beautiful place with its proud monuments of life when we had a large Synagogue in Bruchsal and everywhere else in Germany.

All this changed. Within five years, from 1933 to 1938, the Jewish fellow citizens were excluded, step by step, insult by insult, incident by incident. In 1933 Germany was one of the most civilized, most cultured countries in the world. In 1938 nobody dared to interfere when Jewish neighbours were beaten up by Nazi rogues and led to trains, when Synagogues were destroyed and Jewish life disappeared from Germany. What happened to the Jews in Germany happened to truth and honesty among Germans at the same time. Lies and false pretence destroyed first Jewish life and then everything else.

That is the reason why we all were shocked when there was an attack on a synagogue in Halle at Yom Kippur. We know our history and we see the signs. Dishonesty and lies lead to terror and destruction. Only respect and truth can give us a perspective. The truth about what happened and happens, the respect for each other, only this can lead to a world where you don't have to go to the woods to find peace, even though this here is a particularly peaceful place which I wouldn't want to miss.

Shalom. [20.10.2019, Han]