ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

Annual Report 2016, Jerusalem
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Annual Report 2016
INTRODUCTION

Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, is the leading source for Holocaust education, documentation and research. From the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem, Yad Vashem’s integrated approach incorporates meaningful educational initiatives, groundbreaking research and inspirational exhibits. Its use of innovative technological platforms maximizes accessibility to the vast information in the Yad Vashem archival collections to an expanding global audience. Yad Vashem works tirelessly to safeguard and impart the memory of the victims and the events of the Shoah period; to document accurately one of the darkest chapters in the history of humanity; and to contend with the ongoing challenges of keeping the Holocaust relevant today and for future generations.

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE DIRECTORATE

Dear Friends,

After the Holocaust, it was widely hoped that the enormity of its horrors, and their searing significance, would be recalled forever as deeply relevant to all of humanity. Shoah remembrance was intended, from the start, to serve as an eternally meaningful buttress against the evils that facilitated the murder of millions of Jews and the annihilation of their civilization. At Yad Vashem, we have always been inspired by that hope, and faithfully pursued this institution’s mission in order to realize it. Much has been achieved to that end, in the vital contexts of documentation, research, education and commemoration.

Yet, as we embark upon the eighth decade of Holocaust remembrance, new realities challenge us to find innovative responses. Even the memory of an event as awful and as unprecedented, as the Holocaust is not immune to the erosive effect of time and the changes it brings in human consciousness. Many young people no longer connect automatically with the heritage of the Holocaust or the Shoah. Furthermore, in addition to explicit Holocaust denial, as evidenced in some extremist Islamic contexts, numerous circles in the Western world engage in distortion and abuse of Holocaust history, to serve their own purposes, including antisemitic and anti-Israel agendas.

Yad Vashem faces and fights these threats to our core mission. As this 2016 Annual Report illustrates, we are an integral part of the worldwide battle against Shoah denial, distortion and manipulation. Simultaneously, we continuously update the contexts and formats in which we deliver our message, in order to ensure their relevance to our constituencies. The vast and varied data that we locate and make accessible, the innovative educational materials that we develop and teach, the frameworks of commemoration that we devise and sustain – all these constitute an arsenal of engagement, by which Yad Vashem seeks to counteract forces and processes that threaten moral memory.

Among the array of activities detailed in this Report, you will note Yad Vashem’s pioneering online course in Holocaust history, with over 60,000 students worldwide; our “Video Toolbox” clips for US teachers in the “Echoes and Reflections” national curriculum; our initiation and hosting of the first-ever Holocaust education conference for principals and leaders of Jewish day schools from all over the world; our scholarly discourse on the contemporary implications of the fate of Jewish refugees during the Holocaust; and concluding a comprehensive, equitable reform of our labor relations and agreements.

Yad Vashem’s accomplishments during 2016 underscore the empowering potential of accurate, ethical Holocaust remembrance. In a world torn by bitter rivalries and conflicting narratives, our principles path is more crucial and relevant than ever before. So, too, is your involvement and partnership, which help ensure the vigor and success of our efforts.

Avner Shalev
Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate

FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

Dear Friends,

Each year, around the Pesach holiday period, I reflect upon my many Pesach celebrations, from those as a young child at my father’s Seder table in Poland, to the meaningful Seder I have been blessed to lead here in the State of Israel, the eternal homeland of the Jewish people. Traditionally, Pesach is a time when Jewish families gather to recount the narrative of the redemption our nation from slavery in Egypt. Focal to the Pesach celebration is the retelling of the Hagaddah. Year after year, we retell the same story, read the same words. Why? What is gained by repeating the tale over and over again?

Our sages teach us that every Jew is to view him- or herself as if they themselves came out of Egypt. The Hagaddah is not a dry history textbook; rather it is designed to be an encounter for every reader, in every new generation, to come to terms with the events of the past on a personal level. Each Pesach, we meet the story anew and internalize the meanings and legacy of our history. The same is true for the Holocaust narrative: It is fundamental that we continue to remember and connect with the unprecedented tragedy that befell our people over half a century ago. Today, more than ever, the world must heed the relevance of the Holocaust in our tumultuous society. It is incumbent upon humanity to listen humbly to the voices of those whose lives were so cruelly cut down, as well as those who survived to tell their tales.

As we go forward to an era where Holocaust survivors will no longer be alive to relay their stories, we cannot allow the Holocaust to recede as just another chapter in the annals of Jewish history. The students and young leaders of the new generations want to know how the Shoah is pertinent to their lives. Teaching the universally significant topic of the Holocaust and transmitting the stories, responses and challenges that evolved from such a dark period in human history to an ever-growing global audience are of primary importance to Yad Vashem. As the World Center for Holocaust Remembrance, we believe that education is the key to a better, more hopeful future.

Rabbi Israel Meir Lau
Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council
HIGHLIGHTS OF YAD VASHEM’S ACTIVITIES IN 2016

HOLOCAUST EDUCATION
• 300,000 Israeli students, soldiers and security force members attended educational programs
• 30,000 worldwide participants in new Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) on the Holocaust; 60,000 total since launched in the fall of 2015
• 7,000 US teachers received training in the “Echoes and Reflections” multimedia program
• 230 participants at the International Conference for Jewish Educators, “The Shoah and Jewish Identity”
• 884 seminars at Yad Vashem for 28,885 Israeli educators
• 101 training days for 4,935 educators throughout Israel
• 71 long-term seminars for 1,519 educators from abroad and 51 short seminars for 1,036 overseas participants

RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS
• 36 international research workshops and symposia
• 22 fellowships and awards granted to scholars
• 30 new publications
• 6th annual International Holocaust Research Book Prize

ARTIFACTS & ARTWORK
• 1,087 new artifacts; 30,870 total
• 174 new works of art; 10,400 total

RIGHTOUS AMONG THE NATIONS
• 390 individuals recognized as Righteous Among the Nations; 26,500 total

VISITS AND COMMEMORATIVE EVENTS
• 800,000 visitors
• 850 world leaders, dignitaries and official visitors
• 270 memorial services
• 70 events

INTERNET ACTIVITY
• 18.6 million visits to the website in 7 languages
• 12.8 million video views on YouTube channels in 7 languages since their launch
• 21,000 new Facebook members; 137,600 total
• 8,200 new followers on Twitter; 23,800 total
• 7,000 new followers on Instagram; 11,200 total

COLLECTIONS
• 11 million new pages of documentation added to the Archives; 201 million pages total
• 1 million pages of documentation digitized
• 4.7 million names now in the Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names
• 41,000 Holocaust-era items donated for safekeeping by 1,360 individuals
• 12,000 photographs added to the Photo Archive; 477,000 images total
• 1,100 new Holocaust survivor testimonies filmed and 1,400 acquired; 129,000 video, audio and written testimonies total
• 28,000 public inquiries for archival information answered
• 161,000 publications in 60 languages now in the Library
• 800 Holocaust-related films acquired; 7,900 total
• 10,800 films now searchable in the online Film Catalogue
• 11th annual Award for Artistic Achievement in a Holocaust-Related Film
The International School for Holocaust Studies of Yad Vashem serves as a hub for Holocaust education, attracting students and educators from around the globe. Each year, the International School engages with some 300,000 students and Israeli soldiers, as well as thousands of educators from Israel and abroad. Guided by its unique pedagogical philosophy, the International School develops innovative educational materials, teaching tools and teacher-training activities in order to develop programs suitable for diverse age groups and cultures. Teachers who graduate from the International School’s programs form a dedicated cadre of educational professionals, who continue to disseminate Yad Vashem’s educational methodology throughout the world.
In December 2016, over 230 Jewish day school principals and senior Jewish Studies educators representing 34 countries and six continents around the world gathered at Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Studies for a four-day conference, entitled “The Shoah and Jewish Identity: Challenges in Jewish Education.” The conference – the largest and most prestigious gathering of worldwide leaders in Jewish education – presented Holocaust education as a compelling, engaging and inspirational topic, which remains relevant to Jewish students in Israel and the Diaspora. Participants were buoyed by the networking opportunities with fellow top-level educators, as well as a wealth of practical ideas to use in their schools.

The conference also allowed Yad Vashem to develop new contacts within the Jewish day school community. Currently Yad Vashem staff are planning various outreach activities in Jewish communities throughout the world, including future seminars and study days at Yad Vashem, and developing educational materials tailored to meet the needs of Jewish day school educators.

"You brought meaningful content into ultra-Orthodox education in a formal and organized manner, directed towards continuity.”
Moshe B. Participant in 10th Annual conference for ultra-Orthodox educators

The tenth annual conference for teachers from the ultra-Orthodox sector in Israel, held in July 2016, convened close to 2,000 ultra-Orthodox teachers, educators, principals and school inspectors. This year, the conference dealt with “Continuity Within the Rupture” – with the sessions and workshops investigating aspects of the struggle of Jews to continue their religious faith and practices despite the terrible physical and spiritual cruelties imposed upon them by the Nazi Germans. Participants were provided with key educational concepts and pedagogical tools to help guide them in their Holocaust teaching. Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council, who has accompanied the activities of the International School’s Ultra-Orthodox Section for many years, was visibly moved when he addressed participants, highlighting the dilemmas and challenges faced by educators in teaching about the Holocaust.
Unique Educational Initiative Confronts Contemporary Antisemitism

An increasing number of educators from Europe, the US and other locales who participate in teacher-training seminars at Yad Vashem have shared their encounters with expressions of contemporary antisemitism in their classrooms. While most students understand the danger of traditional antisemitism and openly oppose it, the lines between antisemitism and political statements are often blurred in debates about the Arab-Israeli conflict and Israeli policies.

In response, the International School for Holocaust Studies has recently developed a unique educational initiative to confront contemporary antisemitism in the classroom and on college campuses. In an intense two-hour workshop, teachers and educators discuss examples from print and social media, YouTube and other sources. These hands-on sessions are embedded in a moderated study process, supporting the educators in establishing criteria to delineate red lines for whether or not a statement is antisemitic. Using a method of knowledge-based discussions allows the participants to set criteria that still permit them to disagree about specific examples. After piloting the program throughout 2016, Yad Vashem staff members are working to translate and adapt it into various European languages.

New Educational Video Addresses Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust

During the unprecedented evil of the Holocaust, there were Jews who found the strength and the courage, both physical and spiritual, to retain their humanity and resist hopelessness and dehumanization. The story of their resistance is a human story that shows the heights that human beings can reach even in the depths of despair.

A new video has been created especially for ‘Echoes and Reflections’, a comprehensive multimedia program that combines the expertise of the Anti-Defamation League, the USC Shoah Foundation and Yad Vashem to help secondary-school educators in the United States engage students in Holocaust education. The video discusses different forms and types of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust, complementing content already present in the program.

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New Lesson Plan for Israeli National Holocaust Curriculum: Jews Rescuing Jews

As part of a program created in 2014, the International School for Holocaust Studies and the Israeli Ministry of Education developed a new curriculum to help teachers in Israel understand which Holocaust-related themes are most appropriate for their classroom, according to their students’ emotional and cognitive development. In order to implement this program, educators from the International School have developed new educational materials, including a study unit for 11th-12th graders. The unit, dedicated to the subject of Jews rescuing other Jews during the Holocaust, is one of the themes central to high school study of the Holocaust, alongside topics such as Jewish solidarity and Jewish leadership.

The program for younger students is being implemented via teacher-training sessions in elementary schools across the country led by educators from the International School. Among the new pedagogical tools the International School has produced specifically for younger pupils is a short animated film. The film tells the story of Simon Holtzberg, a Holocaust survivor who dedicated his postwar life to visiting wounded Israeli soldiers and has already received positive feedback from teachers using it as an educational resource. This program represents the first nationwide cooperation regarding Holocaust studies for younger grades in Israel.

Flagship Teacher-Training Program for Australian Educators

The Gandel Holocaust Studies Program for Australian Educators provides expert programming to teachers across Australia. Since its inception in 2008, the program has become an example of best practices in professional training in Holocaust education. In 2016, the program was professionally evaluated; the results, which were extremely encouraging, proved valuable in appraising the progress of the program, as well as providing scope for professional improvement. The program addresses the lack of formal training for Australian teachers on Holocaust issues, as well as a troubling persistence of documented antisemitic incidents across the country. The presence of a large and renowned Holocaust survivor community was another factor in the exclusive challenge in formulating such an endeavor for the multi-cultural, largely tolerant Australian society. Intensive training at Yad Vashem lasts approximately three weeks, with participants undergoing an online training course, undertaking to design and implement a comprehensive Holocaust education project, and attending a follow-up seminar in Australia.

“I received tools and instructions on how to teach this complicated subject to young pupils in elementary school. I now feel less hesitant to teach about the Holocaust.”

Sarah R., Participant in a Yad Vashem Teacher-Training Day

“As a history teacher, my goal, I thought, was to know just about the facts of the Shoah. But this seminar taught me much more than that. I now realize that behind the facts, there is a human story.”

George Davis, Participant in the Gandel Holocaust Studies Program for Australian Educators
Creative Use of the Arts Bolsters Holocaust Commemoration

Prior to and during Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Studies coordinated diverse educational activities for thousands of high-school and college students from Israel and abroad. In one such program students from the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance met Holocaust survivors at the Siegfried Moses Senior Residence in Jerusalem, where they recorded the lyrics to melodies from the survivors’ childhoods. In a joint endeavor with LEAD, an Israeli youth leadership development organization, the students also took part in workshops at their school and at Yad Vashem, resulting in the performance of their own interpretations of the songs at Yad Vashem during Holocaust Remembrance Day, in the presence of the survivors and their families.

A second activity in Yad Vashem’s Family Plaza featured a gallery of photos of Holocaust survivors with their written recollections of the end of WWII and their present-day lives. The exhibition comprised the work of students from ORT schools across Israel, who gathered photographic and written documentation of Holocaust survivors living in their communities. In preparation for the project, the youths studied historical aspects of the Holocaust at Yad Vashem, acquired tools to conduct interviews with survivors, and discussed the meaning of preserving memory in modern times.

Insights into Commemoration Shared with Rwandan Memorial Leadership

In July 2016, the leadership of the Kigali Genocide Memorial in Rwanda led a delegation, including survivors of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, on a two-day seminar at Yad Vashem. The seminar, held in cooperation with the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the International School for Holocaust Studies, provided the Rwandan delegates with an opportunity to learn how Yad Vashem commemorates, documents, researches and educates about the Holocaust. The connection between Yad Vashem and Rwanda began in 2005, when the International School hosted Rwandan intellectuals including survivors of the Rwandan genocide – judges, journalists and academics – for an educational seminar on Holocaust remembrance and education. Since then, scholars from Yad Vashem have traveled to Rwanda in cooperation with Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, generating fruitful dialogue and offering insights that are relevant to the commemoration of the Rwandan national tragedy.

In addition to the seminar for the Rwandan delegation, the School held 59 international seminars at Yad Vashem during 2016, including programs for educators from Morocco, Bulgaria, South America, South Korea and China.
Dedicated Christian Leaders Continue to Support Yad Vashem Efforts

In August 2016, 100 graduates of Yad Vashem’s Christian Leadership Seminars attended a special graduate meeting and training session in Washington, DC. The meeting, a unique gathering of dedicated Christian leaders from North America, the UK and Africa, took place as the ChristianFriends of Yad Vashem’s tenth anniversary. During the event, a special Declaration of Cooperation was signed with Museum of the Bible, cementing the museum’s support for Yad Vashem’s activities as well as its desire to participate in outreach efforts within the greater Christian community. Earlier in the summer, fledgling Christian mentors from across the globe gathered at Yad Vashem for its first-ever Young International Christian Leadership Seminar. The seminar provided participants with the basic history of the Holocaust and its aftermath, as well as elements of antisemitism throughout the centuries. Participants heard Holocaust survivors tell their personal stories, and visited various sites of both Christian and Jewish significance in Jerusalem and the north of Israel.

Follow-up Seminar for Educators at Site of Forced Labor Camp

In late November 2016, 45 teachers from across the European Union who attended Yad Vashem educational seminars in the past gathered for a two-day follow-up seminar. The seminar took place in Sered, Slovakia, the site of a labor camp during WWII, and marked Yad Vashem’s second experience organizing a pan-European graduate seminar under the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union. During the seminar, organizers modeled how to use newly developed resources for teaching the Holocaust and human rights. Slovak Justice Minister Lucia Žitňanská and Holocaust survivor Naftali Fürst addressed participants. Mr. Fürst, a native of Slovakia who was interned as a child in Sered for two years, emotionally recounted his story to the participants as they trod upon the very places he described.

“The seminar’s international character facilitated opportunities to exchange perspectives and network across borders.”

Participant in Yad Vashem Graduate Seminar
Impacting Holocaust Education Curriculum in Spanish-Speaking Countries

A Letter of Intent recently signed by Yad Vashem, the Guatemalan Ministry of Education and the Jewish Community of Guatemala will soon lead to a new educational online platform on Holocaust education for Guatemalan teachers. The platform will be part of the Guatemalan Ministry of Education curriculum, and will include educational and pedagogical materials on the Holocaust. The agreement also includes teacher-training programs in Guatemala and Israel. This important agreement allows Yad Vashem to directly impact the curriculum at the national level in Spanish-speaking countries. Costa Rica and El Salvador, among others, have already expressed an interest in developing a similar model in their own countries.

This curricular program initiative was borne out of a joint training seminar between Yad Vashem and UNESCO in October 2015, for officials of ministries of education involved with the UNESCO Latin American Network for Education on the Holocaust and Other Genocides.

Increasing Spheres of Influence: Seminars for Public-Opinion Shapers

In May 2016, senior-level German newspaper editors attended a tailor-made seminar at Yad Vashem. Participants were provided with a range of lectures, tours and behind-the-scenes presentations, as well as meetings with top-level politicians and historians.

Although the overwhelming majority of participants of Yad Vashem’s seminars are educators, professionals from other sectors in society are regularly invited to attend specially customized programs aimed at providing deeper historical context and strengthening knowledge of the diverse prewar Jewish communities – citizens of European society murdered by Nazi Germany and their collaborators. By working with a broad spectrum of civil society, Yad Vashem’s experts ensure that opinion leaders and civil servants own their responsibility to support Holocaust education and understand its relevance to today’s multicultural societies.
"Man, Identity and Memory": New Mobile Education Unit for IDF Officers

As part of Yad Vashem’s ongoing activities with the IDF, a new mobile education unit, entitled “Man, Identity and Memory,” was created especially for the IDF Officer’s training course. The unit incorporates a wide array of visual aids that provide a backdrop for the themes of the course, including the nature of memory, the role of memory in contemporary Israeli society, and the meaning and relevance of the memory of the Holocaust to the identity and values that shape IDF leadership. In 2017, the unit will be implemented on a larger scale and will be offered to all IDF officer cadets. In addition, the International School for Holocaust Studies has developed an educational series combining lectures and tours suited to the needs of the ultra-Orthodox population serving in the IDF. The series includes central themes of WWII, heroism during the Holocaust and the 800-year history of Polish Jewry.

Opening Pathways to Holocaust Education for Russian-Speaking Youth and Educators

Since 2008, Yad Vashem has implemented comprehensive programs focused on promoting awareness regarding the unique nature of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union. "The Phoenix Program," a joint endeavor of Yad Vashem, the Jewish Agency, the JDC, Hillel, and the Israel Experience, is aimed at strengthening Jewish identity among young people from the FSU and Israel as well as their readiness to volunteer within their communities, through educational trips to the areas of the FSU and Poland. During 2016, three trips took place, with 120 Jewish-Russian-speaking young participants from the FSU along with 30 Russian-speaking student leaders active in Hillel centers on Israeli campuses. In total, some 540 young people took part in Yad Vashem activities aimed at Russian-speaking youth throughout the year designed to open pathways for contending with the subject of the Holocaust in a deep and meaningful manner, and to influence the direction of commemoration in the 21st Century.

In December 2016, 40 formal and informal educators from the FSU joined the International Educators’ Conference at Yad Vashem. A special program was created for them, addressing the challenges unique to the post-Soviet era and granting participants specialized methodological tools for Holocaust education.
New Online Film Series on Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archive

Five new short films, dedicated to the “Oneg Shabbat” underground archive in the Warsaw ghetto that was run by historian and socio-political activist Dr. Emanuel Ringelblum, were recently uploaded to the Holocaust Education Video Toolbox (an online resource designed to help educators teach the Holocaust). The films are based on the writings of the archivists and recount in the first-person the historical and personal events of some of the central facets of life in the ghetto. These films include compelling narratives depicting the archivists’ evolving role as their writing glides from the personal and familial into the public and communal, and laments the fate of the Jews of Poland as part of the destruction of all the Jews of Europe. The Video Toolbox now includes video clips on 29 different topics providing teachers with a wealth of easily accessible filmed resources.

THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Yad Vashem’s Virtual School stands at the forefront of educational technology, offering innovative digital materials that are increasingly integrated into the educational system. By providing educators with relevant ideas to appropriately and accessibly broach the important and serious subject of the Holocaust in their classrooms, the School offers educators an abundance of advanced online educational tools.

Tens of Thousands Learn about the Holocaust via Massive Open Online Courses

Yad Vashem’s foray into the world of massive open online course (MOOC) platforms has prompted a monumental breakthrough in exposing the subject of the Holocaust to a wider international audience, with enormous numbers of people studying the subject via the Internet. Some 30,000 people participated in the courses during 2016, and a total of 60,000 since their inception in the fall of 2015. The participants’ diverse profiles reflect how the subject of the Holocaust is a watershed topic of historic and universal proportions for all humanity. Participants in the courses hail from a wide variety of professions, age ranges and destinations across the globe, including the Far East and Arab countries. Tens of thousands of discussions and comments on the course forums contend with the universal dilemmas raised by the subject of the Holocaust.

Currently, a new MOOC entitled “Antisemitism: From Its Origins to the Present” is being developed. The course will provide an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of antisemitism since its inception until today. The course seeks to define antisemitism and convey the fact that while antisemitism is a historical phenomenon, it still exists and is prevalent today. Participants will be encouraged to confront questions pertaining to modern antisemitism, as well as to judge its scope and its expressions.

“Tens of Thousands Learn about the Holocaust via Massive Open Online Courses”

Patricia Henderson, Participant in Yad Vashem MOOC

“A thought-provoking, unbiased and at times unnerving course on the most horrific period in human history. This course, although answering many questions I had on the Holocaust, has opened up even more queries.”

Patricia Henderson, Participant in Yad Vashem MOOC
During 2016, some 800,000 people came to the Mount of Remembrance to learn about the devastating events of the Holocaust, commemorate the victims and pay tribute to the survivors. Over one-third of the visitors, including heads of state, participants on more than 850 official visits for dignitaries, and delegations from a variety of cultures and nationalities, toured the campus, led by Yad Vashem’s expert guides. This year, Yad Vashem also held approximately 70 events in conjunction with Holocaust survivor and next-generation organizations, as well as over 270 memorial services.
“My dedication to this fight against every form of hate, racism and Holocaust denial has been reinforced by today’s visit.”

Prime Minister of Croatia
Mr. Andrej Plenkovic
Elie Wiesel Remembered as Messenger of Holocaust Remembrance

Yad Vashem hosted a symposium entitled “We Must Become the Messengers’ Messengers: The Legacy of Prof. Elie Wiesel, z”l,” in November 2016. The event included a panel discussion on survivors and the memory of the Holocaust. Israel’s President Mr. Reuven Rivlin recalled Prof. Wiesel’s words at the opening of Yad Vashem’s Holocaust History Museum in March 2005. There, Wiesel charged future generations to become the “messengers’ messengers,” not just to remember what happened, but also “in order to change the world for the better.” Additional speakers, including Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev, spoke about the unique qualities of Elie Wiesel as both a witness and a messenger of Holocaust remembrance.

“[It is] no longer enough for us to sear into the consciousness of our children, our future, the images, the voices and the names. Remembrance must become a moral, social and ethical code. To pass on the message... To repair the world a little more.”

President of Israel Mr. Reuven Rivlin

Concert in Memory of Jewish Composers Murdered in the Holocaust

In November 2016, Yad Vashem held a special event marking the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the Terezin ghetto. The evening began with a musical guided tour of the Holocaust History Museum, during which participants heard live music with brief explanations at six points throughout the museum. The event concluded with a special concert in the Yad Vashem Auditorium, featuring pieces written in the Terezin ghetto by Jewish composers who were murdered in Auschwitz, along with additional compositions by Holocaust victims.
Yad Vashem Mission Deepens Commitment to Holocaust Remembrance

In July 2016, Yad Vashem led 50 of its most dedicated supporters on an exclusive Leadership Mission to Poland and Israel to explore the history of the Shoah and deepen their understanding of, and commitment to, Yad Vashem’s mission of Holocaust remembrance and education. Participants included a wide range of intergenerational, international and interfaith leaders. In Poland, the itinerary included Wroclaw (Breslau), the Wolfson labor camp and Auschwitz-Birkenau. The group spent a moving Shabbat in Kraków with Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council Rabbi Israel Meir Lau. In Israel, mission participants were greeted by the President of the State of Israel, Mr. Reuven Rivlin, chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate Avner Halevy and director general Dorit Novak at the President’s Residence where they had a private gathering and presented the President with a special memento. On the Mount of Remembrance, they experienced exclusive behind-the-scenes visits. Additionally, they were addressed by Israel’s Minister of Education Naftali Bennett, visited an IDF army base, enjoyed private performances by top Israeli artists and attended a Righteous Among the Nations recognition ceremony as well as an intimate gallery talk with a Holocaust survivor.

“"This Leadership Mission has connected us. It has connected us to our past, to our heritage, to Yad Vashem and to one another.”

Mark Moskowitz, USA
Yad Vashem Leadership Mission 2016

"We are fulfilling our obligation never to forget and to keep in mind that every victim had a story, a family, a childhood, a future cut short, and as you go through these halls at Yad Vashem you see these individual stories."

Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu

Israeli Prime Minister and Diplomatic Corps Attend International Holocaust Remembrance Day Event

Yad Vashem held its annual symposium for the members of the international diplomatic corps on the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust. Ambassadors and representatives from over 50 countries attended the event, including France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Spain, the United States, Canada and Russia. Following a keynote address by Israel’s Prime Minister Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, the audience heard a lecture from the Director of Yad Vashem’s International Institute for Holocaust Research Dr. Iael Nidam-Orvieto. Dr. Nidam-Orvieto told the assembled diplomats the story of Ruth and Meir Kalka, a young Jewish couple who fled the Częstochowa ghetto and wandered for some two years from refuge to refuge, until they were finally liberated. During their travels, Ruth wrote a diary on a small metal-bound notebook. Dr. Nidam-Orvieto displayed the original diary, which was donated to Yad Vashem by Ruth and Meir’s children, to the participants.
Marking 78 Years Since Kristallnacht

Yad Vashem held a public symposium marking 78 years since the Kristallnacht pogrom in November 2016. Dr. Nā‘ama Shik, Director of the E-Learning Department in the International School for Holocaust Studies, addressed the audience on “How Do You Tell a Child Goodbye? Mother, Father and Child: The Kindertransport,” and actress, playwright and director Sarah von Schwarze gave a presentation entitled “Between Two Worlds.” On an annual basis, Yad Vashem holds hundreds of events and memorial services in conjunction with Holocaust survivor and next-generation organizations.

“Shaping Memory” - Commemorative Poster Competition

Yad Vashem held the seventh annual “Shaping Memory” competition to create an official poster to mark Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day, an ongoing Yad Vashem initiative. The winning poster was submitted by an Italian student: 24-year-old Giulia De Benedetti, from Torino, Italy. De Benedetti has visited Israel many times, most recently participating in an exchange program with the Holon Institute for Technology, where she learned about the contest and decided to submit her artwork for consideration. It was chosen by an esteemed panel of judges, comprising leaders of Israeli design schools and Yad Vashem senior staff, headed by Israel Prize laureate in the field of design David Tarkover. A lesson plan based on the winning poster, developed by the International School for Holocaust Studies, was posted on the Yad Vashem website.
Yad Vashem’s unique collections of original artifacts and artworks belonging to Holocaust victims and survivors provide the cornerstone for the displays in the Museums Complex—the Holocaust History Museum, the Museum of Holocaust Art and the Synagogue—as well as its temporary and traveling exhibitions. These authentic items are essential tools that help convey the narrative of the Holocaust in a broad, historical context while focusing on individual and personal stories from the period.

New: “ready2print” Exhibitions

Yad Vashem has created a new and innovative format for its exhibitions that allow a glimpse into its unrivalled collections: “ready2print” exhibitions. This format greatly reduces the cost of the production and display of Yad Vashem exhibitions at venues in Israel and abroad, including synagogues and churches, schools, universities, libraries, municipal buildings and community centers. The exhibitions are distributed as high-resolution graphic-digital files, accompanied by instructions for printing and display, as well as an educational kit and guiding materials. The exhibitions serve to promote meaningful dialogue about the Shoah, universal human values and the relevance of Holocaust commemoration today.

THE ART COLLECTION

Yad Vashem’s Art Collection, the largest and most wide-ranging collection of its kind in the world, includes over 10,400 pieces, most of which were created during the Holocaust. These works, which give testimony to the spirit of the individual under the harshest of circumstances, represent a living testimony of Jews during the Holocaust while demonstrating an awesome creative power. The artists who produced them, in ghettos, in camps and in hiding, used their tools as instruments of expression and defiance during the most cataclysmic period in their lives in order to leave a trace of their existence for posterity.

Rare Artwork of Artist Murdered in Auschwitz

Alicja Hohermann was born in Warsaw in 1902. She studied at the Fine Arts School in Warsaw and relocated to Paris in 1921 to continue her art studies. There, her work was widely exhibited in galleries and art salons. After the outbreak of WW II, Hohermann sent packages with food and money to her parents and sisters who were trapped in the Warsaw ghetto, where they later met their deaths. Realizing that she had to flee Europe, Hohermann managed to secure visas to Brussels, Mexico and Spain, but they were all cancelled at the last minute. In the spring of 1943, she was arrested near the Spanish border and her Jewish identity was revealed. She was transferred to Drancy and on 18 July 1943, she was sent to Auschwitz on Transport #57, where she was murdered. In her artworks, Hohermann depicted flowers, women, cabaret scenes and dancers. Few of Hohermann’s works survived.
When young Gabriel Horowitz marked his eighth birthday on Yom Kippur in 1942 in the Czestochowa Ghetto, he received a wallet as a gift from his cousins, Oleg and Hannah Zandberg. In the wake of rumors of an impending action on Yom Kippur, his family decided to flee the ghetto. From among his possessions, Gabriel decided to take the wallet he had just received for his birthday. The family managed to find a bunker to hide in belonging to a local resident. Conditions in the bunker were difficult: They were plagued with intense hunger and found it difficult to maintain their sanity. Ultimately, the family sold all of their possessions for food. Gabriel refused to part with his wallet - his only reminder of his dear cousins trapped in the ghetto. Gabriel later learned that on the day after his birthday Hannah was deported to Treblinka, where she was murdered, and Oleg was murdered at a later date. In April 1946, Gabriel arrived in Israel with a group of children, where he was reunited with his parents.

The Birthday Gift that Survived the Czestochowa Ghetto
Upgrade to Yad Vashem Website Optimizes User Experience

Yad Vashem recently began the complex and challenging task of moving the thousands of pages that comprise the Yad Vashem website to a CMS (content management system). The upgrade of the website was necessary in order to create a responsive web design for an optimal viewing experience – easy reading and navigation with a minimum of resizing, panning and scrolling – across a wide range of devices, from desktop computer monitors to mobile phones. In addition, the upgrade ensures that the website meets international accessibility standards; improves the information architecture within the site, thus ensuring a more meaningful user experience; optimizes the extensive online content for improved SEO (search engine optimization); enhances the ability to understand and monitor user behavior; and ensures maximum integration and interaction throughout the website with all of the various social media platforms. Large segments of the website have already been moved to the CMS. The upgrade will continue throughout 2017, with supplemental features and functions to be added.

 Thousands Join Online Remembrance Activity

Marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day, more than 5,000 individuals joined Yad Vashem’s annual commemorative Facebook event, the iRemember Wall. By joining the wall, the user’s Facebook profile was randomly linked to the name of a Holocaust victim from Yad Vashem’s Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names and then posted to the wall together with the photo and name of the Holocaust victim. Participants shared their posts, reaching thousands more. Tens of thousands of people from around the world have participated in this unique remembrance project since it was launched six years ago, with increasing numbers joining each year.

Daniel Winner This is a great way of keeping the Holocaust victims relevant. They should forever be linked with the living, lest we forget.

Joe Lara It is a testament to the Jewish people that we remember all of the victims of the Holocaust, whether they are related to us or not. We must remind ourselves that many entire families were murdered and that they have no family members left to mourn or remember them.

Maria Teresa Herrera Caicedo Thank you for allowing us the honor of remembering the victims of the Shoah, with a name, a face, with whom we can establish a direct bond, identifying with that special person.

Dayna Shong It is very meaningful to me to be a part of the iRemember Wall. I didn’t know Trude Stock, her husband Adolf, or their two children Hans and Marianne, but they are special to me.
Olympic Games Inspire Online Exhibitions

The lives of Jews in prewar Europe were rich in culture and tradition. Jews excelled in practically every part of society. Not only were they scholars and teachers, doctors and lawyers, but many were renowned athletes as well. Jews competed in the most coveted sporting competitions throughout Europe, including the Olympics.

During the summer of 2016, with world attention on the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Yad Vashem’s website featured two unique online exhibitions commemorating both Jewish and non-Jewish athletes. The exhibition “Jews and Sport Before the Holocaust: A Visual Retrospective,” displayed rare photographs and artifacts portraying Jews who participated in different sporting events and competitions prior to WWII. “The Game of Their Lives” exhibition featured the inspiring accounts of a dozen of brave non-Jewish sportstmen and women who were later recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations. As the two exhibitions were particularly timely and relevant, they were promoted in Yad Vashem’s Facebook, Twitter and Instagram channels. Content from the exhibitions, which appeared in English, Hebrew, German and Spanish was shared with over 2.5 million people around the world.

New Online Exhibition Features Children’s Homes in France during the Holocaust

A new online exhibition focuses on one of the unique phenomena of the Holocaust period: the rescue of Jewish children in France. During the war, a network of protective homes was established by different organizations, both Jewish and Christian, whose members rescued children and brought them to remote places, in order to protect them from persecution and enable them to live a normal life under abnormal circumstances. Many of the rescuers tried to take Jewish children and even babies out of detention camps and other dangerous areas in France to safety in children’s homes. From these homes, a number of Jewish children were eventually smuggled out of France. This unique online exhibition focuses on three such children’s homes in France during the Holocaust: in Chamonix, in Izieu, and in Chabannes, telling stories of courage and determination, stories of sacrifice, loyalty and dedication. Thanks to this rescue endeavor, thousands of Jewish children were saved.
Since Yad Vashem first embarked upon the worldwide project to recognize non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust, some 26,500 individuals have been granted the title of Righteous Among the Nations. The honor is a unique and unprecedented attempt by the Jewish people to pay tribute to people who stood by their side at a time of persecution and great tragedy.

"The Gift of Life": Belgian Couple Recognized as Righteous Among the Nations

Benno and Anni Gershonowitz were young children when their family fled Germany for Belgium following the Kristallnacht pogrom in November 1938. In 1942, their parents, Ludwig and Pepi, bravely entrusted their son and daughter to a non-Jewish family in order to save the children’s lives. Seven-year-old Anni and five-year-old Benno were brought to the home of Joseph and Marie Andries to be cared for and protected. On 24 September 1942, Ludwig and Pepi were arrested and deported to Auschwitz, where they were murdered. The children stayed with the Andries family until the end of the war and then contact was established with a relative of the Gershonowitz family in the United States. In 1947, Anni and Benno left Belgium and sailed to New York, unaware of the existence of any additional family. When Benno Gerson (né Gershonowitz) turned to Yad Vashem to have his rescuers recognized, a Page of Testimony in memory of his parents was uncovered. It had been filled out by relatives on his mother’s side in Israel. In November 2016, Joseph and Marie Andries were honored in a ceremony recognizing the Belgian couple as Righteous Among the Nations. The Singer family, newly discovered relatives in Israel, came to the ceremony and a tearful reunion took place.

"It’s so important that we continue to educate and remember what happened, so that such a tragedy can never occur again… That’s my hope - that people will never have to experience what my sister and I did with the loss of our parents.”

Benno Gerson, Holocaust Survivor
The Yad Vashem Archives house the most comprehensive collection of Holocaust-era documentation in the world. Ongoing efforts, including the yearly scanning of some one million pages of documentation have made much of the archival collections accessible to the public – thus exposing the wealth of information gathered by Yad Vashem to an ever-growing worldwide audience. Recent agreements facilitating the sharing of information with various international archives have further propelled the growth of the Archives’ holdings, which now include some 201 million pages of documentation.
During 2016, a collection of documentation regarding life in the Displaced Persons (DP) camps was uploaded to Yad Vashem’s Online Documents Archive. The documentation was originally gathered by the Central Committee of the Liberated Jews, an organization which represented Jewish displaced persons in the American Zone of post-World War II Germany. The Commission, founded in 1945, closed after three years of intensive activity and all of its valuable documentation was given to the Yad Vashem Archives. The collection, one of the first received by Yad Vashem, includes newspapers of different factions and youth groups in the DP camps, as well as posters depicting the rich communal life in the camps – cultural, artistic and religious life, sports and elections. Also included are copies of letters regarding daily life in the DP camps.

Yad Vashem’s Online Documents Archive includes over 2.8 million scanned pages of documentation that are readily available to the public. Each year, additional documents are added to the online collection on a quarterly basis – on average, some 500,000 pages a year.

Best Practices for Serving the Public: Professionalism Meets Empathy

In today’s world of fast response and instant answers, how can Yad Vashem and other Holocaust-based institutions provide factual, in-depth information to a family searching for the fate of a loved one? How is it possible to give both professional and empathetic service to the growing number of people seeking evidence on Holocaust victims? These questions were at the crux of a European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI) sponsored seminar, entitled “Reference Services: Best Practices and Innovative Use of Materials,” held at Yad Vashem in November 2016. EHRI is a transnational project aimed at supporting and promoting improved access to Holocaust documentation scattered across the globe, and Yad Vashem is one of its leading partners. Participants from 15 institutions worldwide who provide reference services on Holocaust-related collections gathered to discuss how best to serve the public who seek information from events that occurred over seventy years ago. Many discussed the deep satisfaction they felt at being able to present a family with information that provided closure on their loved one’s fate, as well as disappointment when they were unable to complete the research.

Building a Visual Memory of the Holocaust

The Yad Vashem Archives house hundreds of Holocaust-related films, including raw footage, newssheets, amateur films, propaganda and feature films, and postwar trials. The footage contains layers of information beyond the recorded data – the personal backgrounds of the subjects, the historical context of the events depicted, and even the motivation and ideology of the photographer – all of which may be revealed through painstaking research.

A groundbreaking workshop on the subject, entitled “Holocaust Archival Footage as Historical Source: Methodology and Ethics in the Digital Era,” took place at Yad Vashem in September 2016, under the auspices of the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI). The workshop convened some 30 top-level professionals, providing tools and tips for researchers and historians from Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the US and other countries in utilizing Holocaust-era footage as a historical source. Sessions included the unique challenges entailed in locating, collecting as well as restoring these rare films and technical and methodological dilemmas of using source movies.
Agreement with Albanian National Archives Expands Collection

In early 2016, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Studies and the Albanian Ministry of Education, supporting educational seminars at Yad Vashem on how to educate future generations about the Holocaust. Following this landmark agreement, a second MOU was signed later in the year between Yad Vashem and the Albanian National Archives. Albanian history during WWII was unique: A mostly Muslim country, Albania was the only European state whose Jewish population was higher at the end of the Holocaust than when it began. This was thanks to the initiative of the Albanian people who, in accordance with their core values and pan-Albanian culture, valued human life and thus came to aid, shelter and rescue many Jewish refugees fleeing from the German Nazis and their collaborators. These heroic stories are highlighted in a Yad Vashem exhibition, entitled “BESA: A Code of Honor – Muslim Albanians Who Rescued Jews During the Holocaust.” The Albanian Archives contains, among others, documents that will shed further light on the unique rescue of Jews in Albania during the Shoah.

Recovering Names of Holocaust Victims Via Social Media

During 2016, Yad Vashem launched a successful digital campaign on social media with an urgent call to action to recover the names of Shoah victims and record them for posterity in Yad Vashem’s online Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names. The campaign was carefully designed to reach anyone who might have information regarding the names of Holocaust victims through social media groups based on geographical data and interests. Videos and social media posts in English, Hebrew and Russian were widely shared around the world. The campaign helped spread the urgency of the message of this historic effort to record the names of each individual Jewish man, woman and child murdered in the Holocaust.
Cousins Separated during the Holocaust Reunite at Yad Vashem

Sisters Henia Moskowitz and Rywka Peczenik went through life believing they were alone. Their parents, Symcha and Jenta Borenstein, had fled Warsaw during WWII with three of their children, Hercz-Lejb, Abram and Rywka; Hana (Henia) was born in Siberia. In 1948, Jenta and Symcha immigrated to Israel together with their two daughters. Before Jenta’s escape from Poland, her brother Nisan Band fled to the USSR. Nisan’s children, Fania Balakai and Genadi Band, immigrated to Israel with their families in the 1990s. Early in 2016, following a trip to Poland, Fania searched Yad Vashem’s Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names, and discovered a Page of Testimony in memory of her father Nisan, filled out by Symcha Borenstein. On the form, Symcha noted that he was Nisan’s brother-in-law. Bewildered and curious, Fania and her son Evgeni came to Yad Vashem to find out who had commemorated Nisan. Searching through Pages of Testimony as well as the ITS (International Tracing Service) database, Yad Vashem staff discovered the family connection and that Rywka and Henia were still living in Israel. In December 2016, the cousins met at Yad Vashem for the very first time.

“Thanks to Yad Vashem we discovered that we are no longer alone.”

Henia Moskowitz

Names of Hundreds of Thousands Evacuees Now Digitized

The Yad Vashem Archives’ Names-Indexing project, which began in 2006, was established in conjunction with the development of the Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names. The Names Database has recently been enriched and expanded by including the names of Jews who were evacuated or escaped during the war from the western regions of the Soviet Union (including Eastern Poland) to the internal territories of the country. It is estimated that the total number of one-time evacuees during the war years was somewhere between 6.6 and 7.3 million individuals; among those evacuated were some 1.5 million Jews. Researchers collected the names from materials in Yad Vashem’s Archives, and to date more than 600,000 listings of evacuees have been added to the Database. During the course of the project, names were gleaned from a great amount of material gathered from archives in Russia, Belorussia and local and state archives in the FSU.
Cooperation with YIVO on Vilna Collections Project

Senior staff at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research visited Yad Vashem during 2016 in order to hold working meetings following the signing of a cooperation agreement with the Yad Vashem Archives. The YIVO Institute was founded in Vilnius in 1925 in order to preserve and cultivate Yiddish culture in Eastern and Central Europe. Upon the outbreak of WWII, the Institute and some of its collections were relocated to New York, but other parts were sequestered in various hiding places around the city of Vilnius. The YIVO Institute currently focuses on researching and providing access to the heritage of the Jews of Eastern Europe, Yiddish language and culture, Holocaust studies and the Eastern European Jewish immigrant experience in the United States. Yad Vashem looks forward to working cooperatively with YIVO as a significant partner on the Vilna Collections Project, the Institute’s multiannual flagship project designed to locate, preserve, digitize and make widely accessible all of the YIVO Institute’s collections dating up until the outbreak of WWII.

“Gathering the Fragments” – A Mosaic of Documentation

Yad Vashem has been gathering Holocaust-era documentation and artifacts in Israel and around the world since its inception. Despite the efforts made to gather these vital echoes, many millions more remain scattered across the globe, in the private possession of Holocaust survivors and their families. Consequently, they may not be preserved in optimal conditions, and are in danger of being lost forever. In response to this critical situation, in April 2011 Yad Vashem launched its “Gathering the Fragments” campaign to rescue personal Holocaust-era items.

The process of collecting the items has also resulted in the documentation of the narratives that lie behind each one, a mosaic of accounts that make up the story of the Shoah. During 2016, the “Gathering the Fragments” Campaign collected some 41,000 personal items, including documents, photographs, letters, artifacts, memoirs, artwork, diaries and films. Since 2011, more than 220,000 Holocaust-era items have been gathered for safekeeping at Yad Vashem.

“I agonized over whether or not to donate the photos, but it was important to me to preserve the memory of the family members who had been murdered. When I left Yad Vashem, I was relieved – I knew that from now on they will be kept in a good place and the family will not be forgotten.”

Ela, who donated her family’s mementos to Yad Vashem
Collecting Holocaust-Era Effects in the FSU

In partnership with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJJDC), Yad Vashem recently conducted a series of collection days in the FSU aimed at locating, preserving and discovering the stories behind Holocaust-era items. The collection days were run by the AJJDC in the Jewish communities of Vinnitsa and Lvov and took place in “Hessed” institutions (Jewish cultural centers). Employees volunteered to collect scanned copies of Holocaust-era materials and register them after being trained, coached and aided by Yad Vashem representatives. Concurrently, Yad Vashem staff visited the homes of Holocaust survivors who could not make the journey to the designated centers, bringing with them digitization equipment to prepare high-quality copies of the documentation.

The collection days held in both communities were impressive in terms of both quantity and content. Over 160 people, including 67 Holocaust survivors, brought more than 1,700 items to be registered and copied. Photographs accounted for approximately half of the material, mostly documenting pre-Holocaust Jewish community life, as well as wartime photos. Copies of the documentation were transferred to Yad Vashem and catalogued, so that they may be made viewable for the general public.

THE LIBRARY

The Yad Vashem Library seeks to collect all material written about the Holocaust and make it available to the reading public. To date, the Library contains some 160,000 titles in 60 languages of published Holocaust-related material – a wealth of information about the Shoah as well as humanity’s attempt to grapple with one of the most traumatic events in human history.
Survivor Memoirs Enrich Library Collection

A noteworthy component of the Yad Vashem Library’s collection is the published memoirs of Holocaust survivors. Today the Library contains nearly 14,000 memoirs. Since the start of the 21st century, close to 9,400 memoirs have been added to the collection. Some 4,000 of them, around 40%, were donated to the Library.

In 2016, 403 new memoirs were added to the collection, of which 240 were received as donations. Often the survivors themselves, accompanied by family, come to the Library to make their donation and almost always, the survivor recounts his or her personal story. Writing their account, having had it published and then being able to present it to Yad Vashem, where it will be available for future generations, is often highly emotional for everyone involved, especially the author.

THE VISUAL CENTER

Yad Vashem’s Visual Center – the world’s digital film library for Holocaust-related films – acquires films of all genres and in all languages concerning Jewish life between two world wars, the Holocaust period, postwar antisemitism and other associated topics. Among the many films attained in 2016 are Israeli feature films, award-winning documentaries, television programs, short films and amateur movies distributed worldwide.
Screening of Academy Award-Winning Film Draws Crowds

Among the special events organized for Holocaust Remembrance Day 2016 was the screening of the Academy Award-winning film Son of Saul (Director: László Nemes, Hungary, 2015) in Yad Vashem’s Edmond J. Safra Lecture Hall. The screening was followed by a discussion between Yad Vashem’s Visual Center Director Liat Benhabib and Israeli actor Amitai Kedar, who performed in the film. The state-of-the-art auditorium was filled to capacity, indicating a considerable interest in Holocaust-related films that provoke thought and discussion. This was the debut feature film of Nemes, who received not only an Academy Award for its direction, but an additional 59 international prizes. The release of Son of Saul was greeted with significant interest and critical acclaim. No Holocaust-related film since Schindler’s List (1995) and The Pianist (2002) has received so many international accolades. It was distributed in 58 countries, indicating the strong influence that cinema today has on historical awareness and on the important role it plays in Holocaust remembrance.

No Home Movie: Winner of the 2016 Yad Vashem Chairman’s Award

The Avner Shalev Yad Vashem Chairman’s Award for Holocaust-related film was granted at the International Jerusalem Film Festival in 2016 to the late Belgian filmmaker Chantal Akerman for her final cinematic work, No Home Movie. Akerman’s film documents her special relationship with her elderly and ailing mother, Shifra-Natalia, an Auschwitz survivor. The mother’s apartment in Brussels is poignantly portrayed as a lonely space, full of objects but almost devoid of life – which is found, in contrast, in the loving dialogue between mother and daughter. Lively Skype chats and face-to-face conversations in the apartment are interspersed with long takes of Natalia as she wanders around her home. Akerman struggles to break her mother’s silence about the dark past, without succeeding. The absence of the Holocaust haunts the film like a specter. The title of the film is not only a warning that Akerman’s creation is more than standard home movie, but, on a deeper level, it also expresses a profoundly existential sense of homelessness: Akerman’s mother passed away shortly after the film was finished, and Chantal died a year later, not long after the film’s premiere.

Diverse Film Collection Preserved and Digitized

The “Jewish Eye” Film Festival recently deposited 67 films of different genres in Yad Vashem’s digital film library located in the Visual Center. The films present stories from diverse points of view, including Henryk Wars Songster of Warsaw, (Wieslaw Dabrowski, 2007, Poland), The Commissar (Aleksandr Askoldov, 1967, USSR), Sigrid & Isaac (Anders Wahlgren, 2005, Sweden) and Under Strange Skies (Daniel Blaufuks, 2002, Portugal). Veteran Israeli producers-directors Gadi Kastel and Oded Guy directed the “Jewish Eye” Film Festival in southern Israel for thirteen years. Motivated by a desire to make international cinema accessible to Israeli audiences, the duo invested in Hebrew translations of films. Recently, the Visual Center undertook a digital preservation project of the translated films.
Yad Vashem’s International Institute for Holocaust Research stands at the forefront of scholarly study on the Holocaust, providing the basic infrastructure for further investigation into this catastrophic period in human history. The Research Institute is dedicated to advancing international research and fostering cooperative projects among academic institutions, as well as encouraging young scholars in their studies.
New Moshe Mirilashvili Center for Research on the Holocaust in the Soviet Union

Following the opening of archives in the Former Soviet Union in the early 1990s, research into the prewar, wartime and postwar fate of the Jews in the USSR began to flourish, including at Yad Vashem. The newly inaugurated Mirilashvili Center for Research on the Holocaust in the Soviet Union at Yad Vashem’s International Institute for Holocaust Research is set to consolidate and augment these endeavors, and lead groundbreaking global academic discourse in this important field.

The Center will launch new areas of investigation such as interethnic relations between Jews and non-Jews in the Soviet Union during the Holocaust, and continue the Research Institute’s ongoing projects in the field, such as “The Untold Stories” – an online investigation of the murder sites of the Jews in the Nazi-occupied territories of the FSU, and “Jews in the Red Army,” an online database of Jewish soldiers who fought in the Soviet Army during WWII.

One of the first endeavors of the Mirilashvili Center was the release of To Pour Out My Bitter Soul: Letters from Jews from the USSR, 1941-45, by the Center’s Director, Dr. Arkadi Zeltser. The publication comprises 700 letters that provide unique insight into the multifaceted Jewish life in the Soviet Union during WWII. Written between 1941 and 1945, these letters open a window into the thoughts and feelings of Soviet Jews from a range of backgrounds and professions.

The Jewish Refugee Problem During the Shoah: Reconsidered

With additional insights gained since the opening of new archives around the world and in light of the acute refugee problem in Europe in recent years, the International Institute for Holocaust Research organized a three-day international conference in late December 2016, entitled “The Jewish Refugee Problem During the Shoah: Reconsidered.” Attended by researchers from Germany, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Austria, the US, Greece, Serbia, Lithuania, the UK and Israel, the conference’s lectures sketched a broad image of waves of refugees that surged during the 1930s and 1940s in Nazi-occupied areas and in free territories in Europe, North and South America, and the Asian territories of the USSR. Among other topics, speakers referred to issues of identity, feelings, and relations between Jewish and non-Jewish refugees on the one hand and between different groups of Jews on the other.
New Methodology Developed for Study of Eastern European Deportations

In 2015, the multiyear project, “Transports to Extinction – Shoah (Holocaust) Deportation Database,” marked the completion of recording the majority of transports to the East that originated from western European countries during the Holocaust. During 2016, the Research Institute extended its investigations to the study of the deportations of Jews carried out in Eastern Europe. Approximately three million Jews were deported from various regions of Eastern Europe to ghettos and death camps. Due to the exceptionally brutal nature of German occupation followed by decades of Soviet oppression, relevant archival sources are often difficult to locate, and many are in diverse languages, including German, Yiddish, Hebrew, Polish, Russian, Hungarian, Slovak and Romanian. As a result, project researchers are engaged in developing a new methodology for examining these transports. The first geo-political region in Eastern Europe selected for research will be “Warthegau” (a German occupied region in Western Poland annexed to the Reich). Based on the results of this test-case, Yad Vashem researchers are currently focusing on both individual transports as well as on deportation waves.

Zborowski Center Examines the Fate of Child Survivors

The Eli and Diana Zborowski Center for the Study of the Holocaust and its Aftermath in the Yad Vashem Research Institute renewed its activities in April 2016. Its flagship project for the coming years will be on the fate and circumstances of child survivors of the Holocaust in the immediate years of the aftermath. In order to shed light on the physical, emotional and social rehabilitation of child survivors, 12 scholars, including both young and established researchers, have been recruited to examine the issue of child survivors in the early years after the war. Israeli scholars involved in this fascinating research have already begun meeting, and an international workshop is planned for 2017. In addition, the Center has hosted various scholars at Yad Vashem, as well as an international symposium in honor of the publication of Yad Vashem’s groundbreaking anthology After So Much Pain and Anguish: First Letters After Liberation, edited by Research Institute Director Dr. Iael Nidam-Orvieto and Director of the Yad Vashem Libraries Dr. Robert Rozett (see p. 71). The symposium included scholarly presentations, a roundtable discussion with the editors, and an interview with celebrated artist and child survivor Yehuda Bacon, by Dr. Sharon Kangisser Cohen, the new Director of the Zborowski Center.
An Intellectual Journey into Poland’s Hidden Past

The 2016 lecture in memory of former Research Institute Head Prof. David Bankier z”l was delivered by Prof. Jan Tomasz Gross, whose book Neighbors set off a debate in Poland 15 years ago that has yet to subside. In his talk, entitled “Making History: Intellectual Journey into the Hidden Polish Past,” Gross brilliantly wove together the past, the present and the personal in his penetrating analysis of the development of Poland’s relationship with its wartime history.

As he researched survivor accounts in the archive of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, Gross came to realize that Jews during the Holocaust had faced repeated betrayal by their Polish Christian neighbors and compatriots, often by friends. When he discovered the story of Jedwabne, wherein the Polish residents murdered their Jewish neighbors of the town, he was stunned. The debate that Neighbors engendered in Poland is unparalleled in the post-communist countries. Today there is a significant cadre of young, highly talented scholars in many disciplines who are forthrightly researching Poland’s past.

The day after his lecture, Gross led a workshop at Yad Vashem for a select group of Israeli doctoral students, providing enriching insights into research and source investigation.

Yad Vashem awarded its 2016 annual International Book Prize for Holocaust Research in memory of Holocaust survivor Abraham Meri Schwarzbaum, and family members murdered in the Holocaust, to Dr. Kim Wünschmann, DAAD Lecturer in Modern European History and Acting Deputy Director of the Centre for German-Jewish Studies at the University of Sussex, for her book, Before Auschwitz: Jewish Prisoners in the Prewar Concentration Camps.

Dr. Wünschmann’s book has provided a broad description of the special treatment of Jewish inmates, offering detailed evidence for an understanding of the place of Jews in the prewar camps, which, until now, was largely based on anecdotal evidence. Her research helps elucidate the quick acculturation of the German public to the idea that the Jewish neighbor was an enemy to be eradicated first from civil society and ultimately from the world. By using the concentration camps as instruments of deterrence, humiliation and expulsion, the Gestapo and the SS helped to transform German Jews from a minority group within cultured society to outsiders perceived as a homogeneous group of enemies to be excluded from German communal life. Thus the treatment of Jews in the prewar concentration camps paved the way for the systematic murder campaign of the Jews that unfolded between 1941 and 1945.

“It was an invaluable, inspiring experience, and I returned home armed with renewed energy for my work, new avenues to explore, and having made some good friends and connections.”

Abi McKee, Doctoral student

2016 International Book Prize Winner

“Superbly researched and richly documented… A major contribution to Holocaust scholarship.”

From the Judges’ considerations, 2016 International Book Prizé for Holocaust Research
At the end of November 2016, the International Institute for Holocaust Research hosted a joint workshop for PhD candidates, including fellows of the Claims Conference’s Kagan Fellowship in Advanced Shoah Studies. The workshop, which took place at Yad Vashem in cooperation with the Wiener Library for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide (London) and the University of Tessaly (Greece), included participants from Israel, the UK, Germany, Ukraine, Greece and Israel. Topics included vocal music in the Terezin ghetto, Jewish students in Thessaloniki during WWII, reactions to the deportation of Jews from Thessaloniki; the planning of the implementation of Operation Reinhard; Jewish property in postwar Poland; Second Generation reflections on the Holocaust in Greece; apartheid censorship and Holocaust memory in South Africa; trauma and testimony in the writings of Otto Dov Kulka; and innovative research on the question of collaboration or resistance pertaining to ballet music and performance in Nazi-occupied Paris.

Despite the confusion and extreme mixed emotions of survivors in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust, many of them chose to express their joy, grief and optimism in letters written to relatives and friends abroad. After So Much Pain and Anguish: First Letters After Liberation, edited by Yad Vashem Librarians Director Dr. Robert Rozett and Research Institute Director Dr. Iael Nidam-Orveto, is a unique collection of correspondence from the immediate aftermath of the Shoah. The letters articulate the first signs of life after liberation, giving moving accounts of suffering, loss and destruction, both by survivors and by members of the liberating forces. Sights of relief are interwoven with the anguish of irreversible loss, and even cautious utterances of hope for a better tomorrow. Enriched with background texts on the people, places and events described in the letters, this collection is a raw and powerful body of firsthand testimony of the catastrophe that struck the Jewish people, forming an important record of the most shocking and ignoble period of the twentieth century.

“Don’t be angry with me for writing to you everything. It hurts, but it must be written. It must be known.”

From the anthology, After So Much Pain and Anguish: First Letters After Liberation

Workshop Promotes Young Scholarship

As part of the International Institute for Holocaust Research, Yad Vashem Publications disseminates new and innovative research in the field of the Holocaust that influences Shoah remembrance and academic investigations. Each year, Yad Vashem Publications releases dozens of new titles in a variety of genres and languages, including research studies, archival materials, memoirs of Holocaust survivors, conference proceedings, encyclopedias, catalogues and albums.

New Anthology Reveals Pain and Hope of Holocaust Survivors Upon Liberation
Examining the Fate of Jews Seeking Refuge in the Polish Countryside

Professor Barbara Engelking’s groundbreaking study, Such A Beautiful Sunny Day: Jews Seeking Refuge in the Polish Countryside, 1942-1945, sheds light on an aspect of the Holocaust in Poland that has not been thoroughly discussed. Relatively little is known about the struggle of Jews who managed to escape to the Polish countryside and the threats and challenges they faced. Jewish refugees tried to hide in distant areas, further away from the tightening grip of the occupier. Some of them found shelter, although ultimately many encountered a hostile environment of local Poles ready to denounce them to the Germans or to participate in manhunts for rewards. In cases where they found refuge with Polish families, the dangers for both the Jews and their rescuers grew more acute as time passed.

Based on a large number of survivors’ accounts and never-before cited documents from postwar trials, this important book tells the untold story of Jewish struggle for survival in a complex landscape of fear, betrayal and death.

New Series for Young Readers

A new Hebrew-language series gently introducing young teens to Holocaust stories is currently being developed by Yad Vashem Publications, with the expert guidance of the elementary-school educational team at Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Studies.

The second book in the series was recently published: I Live in a Chickenhouse: A Boy in Hiding in Holland by Max Amichai Heppner. Max Heppner was eight years old when police burst into his home in Amsterdam to deport his father, Albert. Albert succeeded in escaping, but Max’s mother Irena was seized and dragged to the concentration point. Irena managed to flee, and she, Albert and Max went into hiding. Along with the Graumann family, they later found refuge on the Janssen family farm in a far-flung corner of Holland. For three years Max lived in a chickenhouse, which served as the families’ dwelling, finding escape by drawing the life around him. Along with several drawings made by Heinz Graumann and Max’s father, the young boy was able to relate his war experiences and their escape from terror. Words and pictures are woven into a unique and touching story.
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REVENUES

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EXPENDITURES

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Let your estate plans ensure that the memory of the Shoah is passed on to future generations. By including Yad Vashem in your estate plans, you guarantee a future that confronts denial and indifference.
To learn more about legacy giving please visit: www.yadvashem.org/legacy or e-mail: international.relations@yadvashem.org.il
NEW BENEFACTORS

“We continue to be inspired by Yad Vashem’s important work in leading Holocaust commemoration and education, and therefore feel all the more eager to welcome this year’s new Benefactors. In times of growing Holocaust denial, antisemitism and general uncertainty in the world, Yad Vashem's commitment to cultivating moral and ethical values that form the bedrock of a civil society has never been more critical. Keeping this urgent mission in mind, we encourage others to join the circle of Yad Vashem supporters.”

- Dr. Miriam and Sheldon G. Adelson

Sara and Rolando Uziel

Rolando Uziel was born in Casablanca, Morocco in 1936. In 1945, he immigrated with his family to Mexico. After completing his architecture studies at Harvard University in the US, he returned to Mexico in the 1950s and joined the family jewelry business, becoming a pioneer in the field. Parallel to his commercial activity, Uziel is very active in the Jewish Community of Mexico. Between 1974 and 1976, he served as treasurer for the Sephardi Community of Mexico, and between 1976 and 1978 as President of the Sephardi Community. He has been a member of the Sephardi Community Government Board for many years, and sits on the Board of Governors of Hebrew Talmud College. He also generously assists Keren Hayesod, Keren Kayemet and other Israeli institutions.

Rolando and Sara Uziel have four daughters and six grandchildren. The couple’s recent contribution to Yad Vashem endowed “The Garden of Contemplation” and “The Garden Opposite the Children’s Memorial” as well as a classroom in the International Seminars Wing of the International School for Holocaust Studies. Yad Vashem expresses its deep appreciation for the Uziefs’ continuing friendship and support.

Mireille and Harvey Katz

Yad Vashem warmly welcomes Mireille and Harvey Katz to its honored community of dedicated and generous Benefactors.

Harvey (then Chaim) Katz was born in 1931 in Vilna into a comfortable, middle-class Jewish family. Following the German invasion, Chaim’s mother Berta and sister Rose were murdered in nearby Ponary, and his father and uncle were burned to death by Germans and Lithuanian collaborators. Having secured a false identity under a non-Jewish name, Chaim avoided deportation until September 1943, when he escaped a cattle car destined for Sobibor. Arrested the next day, Chaim was processed under his false identity, entering Auschwitz as a twelve-year-old “non-Jewish criminal,” thus avoiding the selections. This did not enable him, however, to elude the horrors of Auschwitz or the other camps in which he was incarcerated.

Following the war, as part of a program to bring orphaned Jewish children out of Germany, Chaim was fostered by a family in St Louis. He changed his name to Harvey, and after studying engineering, became a skilled, respected and successful businessman. He and Mireille have three children, seven grandchildren and are long-time supporters of Yad Vashem’s mission of Holocaust education and commemoration.

International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ)

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ) was established in 1980 to connect churches and millions of Christians worldwide to the nation and people of Israel. Following a meeting between Shaya Ben-Yehuda, Managing Director of Yad Vashem’s International Relations Division, and Reverend Malcolm Hedding, then-Executive Director of ICEJ, the idea of forming a partnership was born.

With this decision, the Christian Friends of Yad Vashem was established in order to educate Christians about the universal meanings of the Holocaust and their relevance today. The partnership has grown over the years so that, among many additional activities, three seminars for Christian leaders are held annually at Yad Vashem’s International/School for Holocaust Studies. ICEJ Executive Director Dr. Juergen Buehler has been, and continues to be, an active partner in all of these endeavors.
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