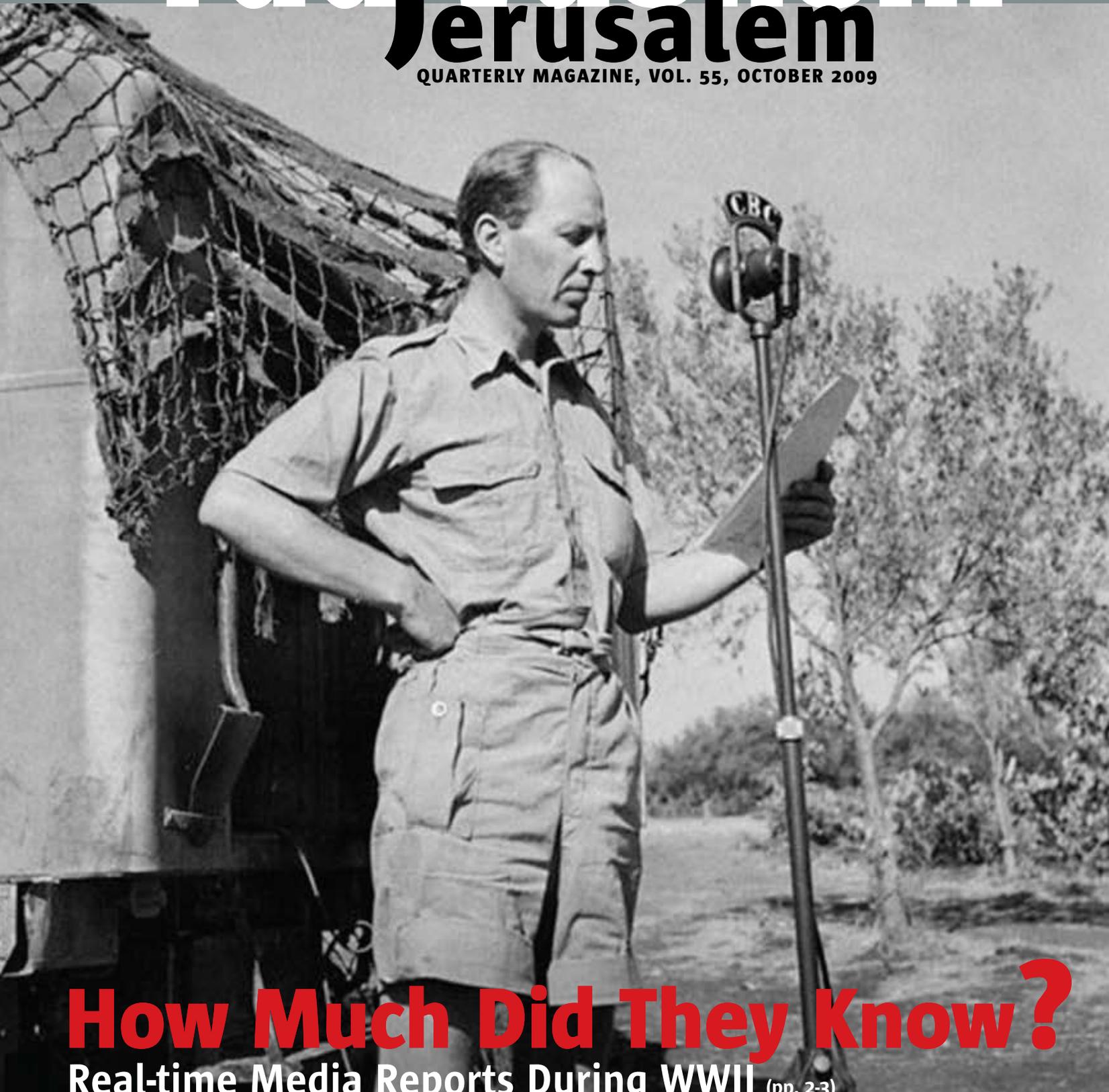


# Yad Vashem Jerusalem

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**How Much Did They Know?**  
Real-time Media Reports During WWII (pp. 2-3)

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# How Much

by **Estee Yaari**

■ One of the most troubling issues about the bystanders' role during the Holocaust has always been what they knew about the Nazis' plans for the Jews – how this information was related to them and, of course, when. Did the average Frenchman in Paris know what was happening to the Jews being deported from his country? What about the Poles, who witnessed trainloads of prisoners being transported across the land? In Europe, was there any way to know what was actually happening? The Allies have come under criticism for not doing enough to rescue European Jewry – but did they actually have enough information that would compel them to act?

These questions and more were tackled at a recent weeklong scholarly workshop held by Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research. Examining how the Holocaust was reported in various media – particularly in Europe – during WWII, researchers from Israel, Canada, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the UK, Hungary, Russia, Holland and the United States came together for in-depth discussions of how the various media reported the Holocaust as it unfolded.

“For the very first time, this workshop brought together serious research on real-time media coverage of the Holocaust,” explains Prof. David Bankier, Head of the International Institute for Holocaust Research at Yad Vashem. “In fact, some of the research presented was undertaken specifically for the event. Looking at a diversity of media as well as geographic areas, the workshop helped clarify what bystanders knew about the Holocaust in real time. It also provided greater insight into the Nazis' use of the media to manipulate public opinion.”

The Germans targeted their propaganda – posters, films, newspapers and newsreels – at specific populations. Dr. Kerstin Stutterheim, who examined newsreels in Germany, and Dr. Roel Winkel, who looked at a cross-section of newsreels in various countries in Europe, pointed to German propaganda strategy, by which the populace was so conditioned to antisemitism in the late 1930s and the war years that by the time Jews were being deported, local populations were already accustomed not to think about Jews at all. Thus in Germany and other areas of Europe, once the war began and the anti-Jewish

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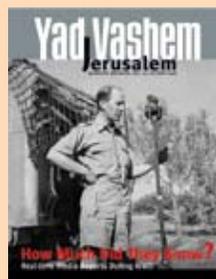
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■ On the cover: Canadian Broadcasting  
Corporation war correspondent  
Matthew Halton reporting  
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# From Rupture to Continuity

## The Third National Teachers' Conference



■ The *Shoah* represents such a rupture in Jewish history – one that destroyed a universe of mind, body and spirit – that it has left generations of scholars and students seeking ways of understanding its magnitude and coping with its legacy. At the Third National Teachers' Conference that took place this July, over 900 educators from across Israel – including Holocaust survivors – gathered at Yad Vashem to formulate ideas and plans for Holocaust education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The first day of the conference was devoted to the topic “Educators and Leaders in the Face of the Catastrophe.” The panel presented different aspects of how Jewish teachers and leaders reacted during the *Shoah* when they understood that the world as they had known it no longer existed. “Abba Kovner defined Judaism as a culture of the community,” noted Prof. Dina Porat, “an expression of which may be seen in the many types of alliances that were made and the attempt to respond to burning social problems.” Teacher trainer Esther Farbstein added, “The greatness of an educator during a catastrophe is the ability to modify his or her opinions and methods to suit the needs of the community.”



■ Chairman of Israel's Secondary Schools Teachers' Association Ran Erez speaks on the first day of the National Teachers' Conference at Yad Vashem.

The second day dealt with “Telling the Story Without Breaking Down: Holocaust Study Today.” Dilemmas regarding how to teach the younger generation about things that happened two generations ago were placed center stage. Among other speakers, the International School's Pedagogic Director Shulamit Imber presented Yad Vashem's educational philosophy, according to which the focus of teaching the Holocaust is learning about the Jewish life that preceded the catastrophe, the coping strategies developed during the *Shoah* itself, and the

enormous effort made by Holocaust survivors to rebuild their lives afterwards. All of this is done to recognize the unique character of each Holocaust victim.

“The Effect of the Holocaust on Society and Thought After the War” was the topic of the conference's third and last day. Philosophers, artists, jurists, religious scholars and intellectuals were invited to take part in the panel and lectures held throughout the day. The artistic and musical dimensions of the conference filled the atmosphere with emotion and intimacy. The

# Palestinian Youths at Yad Vashem

by Rinat Ribak-Wagon

by Jacob Yaniv

clear, pure singing of the Vach family, whose father was the only survivor from among his siblings, left participants filled with hope and enthusiasm to improve their teaching and imbue it with human feeling.

The conference raised many questions and the dozens of workshops held during the afternoons enabled participants to deal with the topics in a more intimate setting. "Beyond the intellectual interest, the teachers underwent an emotional experience," explained Sarit Hoch-Marcovitz, Director of Teacher Training at the School. "I hope that the conference, which was so meaningful for them, will encourage them to continue studying. That, in turn, will lend greater depth to their work with students."

**"The conference proved that the study of the Holocaust is not the exclusive province of history or literature teachers, but is the legacy of all teachers and citizens of Israel"**

Assistant School Principal  
Henya Finkelstein

This feeling of responsibility was apparent in the reactions of teachers at the conference's end. Assistant Principal Henya Finkelstein wrote: "The conference proved that the study of the Holocaust is not the exclusive province of history or literature teachers, but is the legacy of all teachers and citizens of Israel... I left the conference with a feeling of pride I haven't felt in a very long time."

"We set the bar very high," admits Hoch-Marcovitz. "We are always learning from the teachers as well as from new research, and applying what we learn to improve our teaching methods, techniques and materials. We are already preparing for the next conference."

*The author works in the Teacher Training Department at the International School for Holocaust Studies.*

■ **On 17 July 2009, a group of 16 Palestinian youths from the village of Mas'ha in Samaria arrived at Yad Vashem.** The initiative for the visit – the first of its kind – came from Madjihad, a young man from Mas'ha who is studying in the United States. He returned home this summer, and set about organizing various activities for the youngsters in the village.

The drive to Yad Vashem lasted three hours, including passing through a checkpoint at

issues they encountered. In conversations during the tour and afterwards, many questions arose regarding current events in the region in the context of the past, which received thoughtful and comprehensive answers. Because of the unique character of the group, it was important to explain that events and concepts from the Holocaust have nothing at all to do with the present, even if the terminology (such as "wall") has its own connotation for them. In



■ *Palestinian youths from Mas'ha tour the Holocaust History Museum with their guide, Jacob Yaniv*

the entrance to Jerusalem. The psychological distance, with its national, social and other barriers that had to be bridged upon arriving at Yad Vashem, was immeasurably greater.

From the opening talk, during which the participants presented their knowledge of the Holocaust, it was clear that it was minimal and even erroneous. For example, the number of Holocaust victims was variously cited as 500, 500,000 and up to six million. The topic of the ghettos was completely unfamiliar. However, the conversation focused mainly on their motivation for coming. Madjihad talked about meeting many Jews as well as non-Jews during his stay in the US, from whom he heard a lot about the Holocaust. As a result, he came to the conclusion that "in order to get to know our neighbors better, we have to become more familiar with the events of WWII and the fate of the Jews. We have to understand the impact of the Holocaust on the Jewish people." The participants agreed wholeheartedly.

During their extended tour of the Holocaust History Museum and presentation of Yad Vashem's Arabic website, the youths showed considerable interest and asked about various

the concluding discussion, the participants stated that they had never been exposed to the scope of the events of the Holocaust and their significance, and stressed the high value they placed on the trip.

"The Holocaust isn't accepted among us, and its existence is denied," said one of the participants. "We are immersed only in our own suffering and problems and pay no attention to the fact that there is suffering on the part of others, too. There are people who suffered even more than we."

A single day is not enough to generate a transformation in the attitude of the Palestinian people to the events of WWII and the topic of the Holocaust. However, it proved that in an open, direct, unmediated dialogue it is possible to bridge tremendous gaps and cross innumerable barriers, opening at least a narrow crack in the seemingly hermetically sealed walls. Director of the International School for Holocaust Studies Dorit Novak called for further groups of Palestinian youths to visit Yad Vashem.

*The author guides in Arabic at the International School for Holocaust Studies.*

## Graduate Spotlight

Every year, the International School for Holocaust Studies holds hundreds of seminars and conferences, in dozens of languages, for educators and students in Israel and around the world. Featured here is one of the School's graduates, and what he has achieved since his visit to Yad Vashem:

## Joachim Wiesner Austria

■ In 2004, long-time history and English teacher Joachim Wiesner from Bregenz, Austria came to Yad Vashem to attend an educational seminar. There he met Holocaust survivor Naftali Fuerst, who had survived Buchenwald and immigrated to Israel in 1949. "After listening to Naftali I was captivated," Wiesner recalls. "I couldn't forget his story." The two became good friends.

For the next five years, the lives of Wiesner and Fuerst became intertwined. Wiesner invited Fuerst to give testimony to students and teachers in several cities throughout Austria, and together they attended a ceremony marking the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Buchenwald. Wiesner also designed and developed a pedagogical resource, "Telling Naftali Fuerst's Story: A Survivor from Buchenwald," that won a European Design Award earlier this year. The educational kit was produced with the cooperation of the International School for Holocaust Studies: Dr. Noa McKayton, head of the German-speaking countries desk in the European Department, gave didactic suggestions, and the School provided Wiesner with a stipend made possible by the generous support of the ICHEIC (International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims) Humanitarian Fund.

In addition to his teaching commitments, Wiesner is a coordinator of the Vorarlberg



■ International School graduate Joachim Wiesner (right) displays part of his educational kit on Holocaust survivor Naftali Fuerst (left)

regional network's successful project, "National Socialism and the Holocaust – Memory and Present" ([www.erinnern.at](http://www.erinnern.at)), supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture. "Joachim Wiesner has shown the curiosity, integrity and determination to learn and then impart the legacy of the *Shoah* to his students – not as foreign history, but rather as a relevant subject that must concern today's young Austrians," says Richelle Budd Caplan, Director of the European Department

at the International School. "Moreover, he represents a larger network of more than 400 Austrian educators who have studied at Yad Vashem over the past nine years – as well as thousands of teachers from across the continent – who recognize that the time has come to grapple with old narratives and incorporate new techniques to teach this complex and difficult subject matter in their respective classrooms. He is a shining example of what our graduates can achieve."

## School Programming Receives Stellar Evaluation by Richelle Budd Caplan

■ In a recent external evaluation, Yad Vashem's educational programming received exceptionally high praise. On a scale of 1-10 (10 being the highest), the overall satisfaction rate of international seminar participants was close to 9. Most of the educators surveyed were extremely positive, noting they had gained a wealth of new knowledge from the School's lectures and pedagogical workshops: "The seminar was invaluable in shaping my thinking about the *Shoah* and has motivated me to teach about it in my history classes," wrote one teacher. Said another, "My time at Yad Vashem was an outstanding educational experience."

The report, conducted by the Henrietta Szold Institute—the National Institute for Research in the Behavioral Sciences, Jerusalem, focused on programs undertaken by the International School for Holocaust Studies in 2008. It examined the extent to which the educational goals of various programs – including courses for educators from abroad, teacher-training seminars for Israeli educators and one-day study seminars for students – had been achieved, and provided qualitative and quantitative feedback for improving future planning.

"With more than 70 seminars for educators from abroad held last year, as well as the largest-

ever international conference on Holocaust education to date, the International School is highly interested in the data compiled by the Szold Institute," said School Director Dorit Novak. "As we seek to build a sustainable and professional dialogue with educators from Israel and around the world, the results of this study provide us with an excellent opportunity for serious assessment. We greatly appreciate all of the efforts and the support of the Adelson Family Foundation and the Claims Conference that made this study possible."

*The author is Director of the European Department at the International School for Holocaust Studies.*

# Educational Activities for the Ultra-Orthodox Community

■ “We have a sacred duty to tell and to remember. We are living at a time of increasing Holocaust denial, when Holocaust survivors are growing fewer, when the verse ‘Remember the days of old, consider the years of ages past’ in *Ha’azinu* (Deuteronomy 32:7) takes on deeper meaning.”

With these words, Rabbi Raphael Auerbach opened the first of three seminars for ultra-Orthodox teachers that took place this summer at the International School for Holocaust Studies. Rabbi Auerbach stressed the two sides of the commandment cited in the verse: the aspect of “remembering” and the aspect of “considering,” by which we are commanded to learn from the past, and to draw conclusions for the future.

The three seminars, held during the period between the fast days of 17 Tammuz and 9 Av, was the culmination of a wide range of educational activities held by the International

School throughout the country. Some 1,000 *Talmud Torah* teachers, educators at Beit Yaakov schools for girls, and teachers in training participated in the seminars, which were held in conjunction with the Division of Ultra-Orthodox Education in the Jerusalem Municipality. Director Rabbi Itamar Barezer was guest of honor at the concluding session of the male teachers’ seminar, which took place in the Yad Vashem Synagogue (pictured).

Topics tackled included the importance of commemorating the Holocaust in the Jewish tradition, the function of the teacher in Holocaust study, and the educational philosophy of the International School. Educators participated in workshops that presented the unique didactic materials developed by Yad Vashem for the ultra-Orthodox community. Participants also toured the Museum Complex, and heard presentations about the *Shoah* Victims’ Names

by Nava Weiss

Collection Project within the ultra-Orthodox community.

*The author is the Director of the Ultra-Orthodox Section at the International School for Holocaust Studies.*



## Activities in Europe – Summer 2009

■ During the summer semester (July to September), 450 educators from Europe attended 18 seminars at the International School for Holocaust Studies.

Educators from Germany, the UK, Austria, Belgium, France, Liechtenstein, Spain, Portugal, Romania and Croatia spent an intense period of study at Yad Vashem, participating in tours of the site and lectures on a variety of Holocaust-related topics. A second group of Christian and Muslim educators from Tatarstan’s capital, Kazan, also attended the seminar, organized by

the School’s Russian-speaking countries desk. A group of lawyers from Northrhine-Westphalia, Germany and representatives of the Grodzka Gate-NN Theater from Lublin, Poland also took part in seminars at Yad Vashem.

Three summer seminars were held for School graduates committed to strengthening their connection to Holocaust teaching and commemoration: one for German educators from Northrhine-Westphalia (Germany); a second international seminar for selected graduates of seminars held over the last few

by Galit Avitan

years; and one following up last November’s International Graduates Seminar on the topic of “The Holocaust and Human Rights,” which was conducted in Vienna in cooperation with the European Union.

During the summer months, European Department staff also taught in seminars and follow-up activities organized by educators in Russia, Lithuania, Germany and Hungary.

*The author works in the European Department at the International School for Holocaust Studies.*

## New in the Virtual School [www1.yadvashem.org/education](http://www1.yadvashem.org/education)

### Holocaust Education and the Arts

■ The Holocaust continues to resonate as a human story, with implications that go far beyond the purely historical. Yad Vashem’s pedagogical philosophy thus encourages an interdisciplinary approach to education, with a special stress on artistic representation and exploration of the Holocaust. In keeping with this principle, the educational section on Yad Vashem’s website now features an expanded segment dedicated to the arts, including lesson plans, teacher’s guides, activities and related

articles. These units span a wide range of perspectives, from prewar culture to wartime and postwar art, literature, poetry and music.

### New Russian Online Course: Introduction to Holocaust History

■ In October 2009, the International School launched a new Russian online course, providing an overview of the Holocaust, with a focus on areas of the FSU. The course, developed with the assistance of the Genesis Philanthropy Group, is part of the Russian-language Internet portal

by Naama Shik  
and Jonathan Clapsaddle

and is intended for teachers and educators in formal and informal education. It features ten lessons on a variety of topics, including the Nazi rise to power, the ghettos, Operation Barbarossa, the Nazi camp system and the “Final Solution,” bystanders, and resistance. The lessons are accompanied by a large range of articles, photographs, documents, testimonies and more.

*Naama Shik is Director of the Internet Department at the International School for Holocaust Studies. Jonathan Clapsaddle heads the English Division of the Internet Department.*

# “I Never Forgot Him”

## Rabbi Lau’s Rescuer Honored as Righteous Among the Nations

by Irena Steinfeldt



■ Rabbi Israel Meir Lau with his family and the daughters of his rescuer in the Garden of the Righteous

■ “Nothing has ever shocked me as much as this sight,” wrote Dwight D. Eisenhower after American forces liberated the Buchenwald concentration camp in April 1945. It is estimated that some 240,000 inmates had passed through the camp in its eight years of existence. They suffered deprivation, and were subjected to brutal treatment and a system that sought to dehumanize them completely. Yet, even within the horrors of the camp, there were people who maintained their humanity and who demonstrated awe-inspiring solidarity and courage. Some of them were non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jewish inmates.

On 4 August 2009, Yad Vashem posthumously honored Feodor Mikhailichenko as Righteous Among the Nations for having rescued Israel Meir (“Lolek”) Lau – an eight-year-old Jewish



■ Feodor Mikhailichenko

boy who had been brought to Buchenwald in January 1945. Mikhailichenko, an 18-year-old Russian prisoner in the same block as the little boy, became Lolek’s protector: stealing potatoes and cooking them for him, knitting earmuffs to protect him from the biting cold, and taking full responsibility for the child’s survival. After the war, Lolek was reunited with his older brother Naftali and came to Israel, where he later became Chief Rabbi of Israel and is now Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council.

Other inmates from Buchenwald – Walter Kraemer, Walter Sonntag, Willi Bleicher and Wilhelm Hammann – have been recognized as Righteous by Yad Vashem for rescuing Jews and risking their lives in their attempts to subvert the orders of the SS. They were German Communists who had been incarcerated in Buchenwald as political prisoners. Even though they and the Russian youngster who saved Rabbi Lau were themselves victims of the Nazi system – all of them had been camp inmates for several years – they preserved their human dignity and their

commitment to their ideology, and remembered that no matter how difficult their own situation was, they had a moral obligation towards others less fortunate than themselves.

“Feodor was my only protector during my time in Buchenwald,” said Rabbi Lau at the ceremony held in the Yad Vashem Synagogue, in the presence of Minister of Public Diplomacy Yuli Edelstein and Russian Ambassador to Israel, H.E. Mr. Piotr Vladimirovich Stegniy. “My life depended upon him.... Every night he would pass by my bunk to make sure that I didn’t forget to put on my earmuffs. I searched for him my entire life. I never forgot him, not even for a day.” Mikhailichenko too had searched for the little boy after the war. His daughter, Yulia Selutina, recalled that her father remembered little Lolek until the day of his death. Only more than six decades after the end of the war, with the help of American researcher Kenneth Waltzer, was Yad Vashem able to identify Mikhailichenko as Rabbi Lau’s rescuer. Accepting the award on behalf of her late father along with her sister Yelena Belayaeva, Selutina said, “Thank you to the State of Israel and the Jewish people for commemorating the memory of our father.”

*The author is Director of the Righteous Among the Nations Department.*

## From the Depths of the Ghetto: Recognizing the Rescuers by Dr. Lea Prais

■ Anton Schmidt (1900-1942) was a proud Austrian with a zest for life. He detested Hitler and Nazism, and when, as a *Wehrmacht* serviceman in Vilna, he became aware of the mass murders in Ponary, he resolved to dedicate himself to rescuing the persecuted. Schmidt helped many people forced into labor in his unit, as well as Polish prostitutes who were closely watched, but was particularly captivated by the members of the pioneering Zionist youth groups. On the eve of the civil New Year, 1942, he invited them, including their leader Mordechai Tenenbaum, to his apartment, and amid the wine drinking and doughnut eating he wished them success in fulfilling their dreams. However, he stressed that first and foremost they must leave the ghetto. To make this happen, Schmidt called on all the resources at his disposal and, taking severe personal risks, smuggled most of them to locations where they would be safe, at least for the time being. Some remained

in Vilna; Tenenbaum and his circle were moved to Bialystok, where they led the Underground; others fled to Voronovo and Lida; and a few made it to Warsaw. Schmidt himself was arrested in January 1942 and executed for his actions.

In the middle of 1942, members of the Dror youth movement in Warsaw found out what had happened to their benefactor, and decided to commemorate him in some way. In his memoirs, Yitzhak (Antek) Zuckerman wrote that Lonka Kodzhibrotzka, Dror’s liaison officer, had passed on a report about Schmidt to the ghetto’s underground *Oneg Shabbat* archives. In a note written in Yiddish over five pages, was a description of the “figure of the German philosemite, who risked his life to rescue the Jews of Vilna from their murderers.” The title was “Anton Schmidt – From the Series: The Righteous Among the Nations.” Thus it turns out that the pioneers and *Oneg Shabbat* archivists were the first to apply the Talmudic term “Righteous

Among the Nations” (Tractate Baba Batra, 15b) to non-Jews who had put their lives at risk to save Jews during the Nazi occupation. In time, this term became universally known.

In 1945, in Mandatory Palestine, Mordechai Shenhavi defined the rescuers as “Righteous Among the Nations.” In 1953, the Knesset passed the Yad Vashem Law, containing a special clause defining non-Jews who risked their lives to rescue Jews as Righteous Among the Nations. Eleven years earlier, in Vilna, Tenenbaum had told Schmidt that in the Land of Israel he would receive a gold Star of David. Schmidt replied, “I will wear it with pride.” In 1964, Yad Vashem posthumously recognized Anton Schmidt as a Righteous Among the Nations. And thus, Schmidt earned the prestigious recognition for a second time.

*The author is a Project Manager at the International Institute for Holocaust Research.*

# A Prayer Book's Journey

## Sefer Kinot Returned to Its Owner's Brother

by Deborah Berman



■ This is the story of a prayer book and the souls it touched as it journeyed across the borders of war-ravaged Europe to new beginnings in Brazil, and then, decades later, finally brought comfort and closure to a bereaved brother in the United States.

The book is a *sefer kinot*, a prayer book containing liturgical prayers for recitation on Tisha B'Av – the Jewish day of fasting and mourning for the destroyed Temples. It was originally published in 1836 in Rödelheim, Germany. While a Yiddish inscription names the original owner, by the 1930s the prayer book was owned by the young Heinz Eschwege, who took it with him when he and his brother Alfred were forced to flee their hometown of Mannheim, Germany as the Nazi occupation took hold.

Immediately following liberation, the *sefer kinot* found itself up for sale at a Brussels market, among other books left behind by their Jewish owners. It became one of several Jewish titles bought for 10-year-old Samuel Rozenberg by his father. Samuel had been in hiding in the village of Quaregnon under the assumed identity of Paul Allain, and survived the war thanks to the kindness of Maurice and Lea Piérart (honored by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations in 1994). His father bought the books to bolster

his son's knowledge of Jewish customs and rituals after spending such a long time with a non-Jewish family.

The books made a tremendous impact on Samuel; he cherished them and kept them with him as he began a new life in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1950, where he studied medicine and became a respected member of the Jewish community. Year after year Rozenberg used the *sefer kinot*, read the name inscribed and wondered about the identity of its previous owner. "As I became older, the shadow of Heinz Eschwege followed me," Rozenberg explained. "Every Tisha B'Av eve I would read from the prayer book my father bought me, and wonder: 'What happened to the owner of this book?'"

In 2005, after returning from Tisha B'Av services, Rozenberg decided to try to find out more about Heinz Eschwege. Searching on Yad Vashem's Central Database of *Shoah* Victims' Names, he found that a Page of Testimony had been submitted for Eschwege in 1990 by his brother, Alfred. Surprised and delighted, Rozenberg decided to contact Alfred, currently residing in New York. Through him, Rozenberg finally learned what had happened to the prayer book's owner.

After the war ended, Alfred succeeded in finding out the details of his brother's tragic

fate. Heinz was first taken to the Malines (Mechelen) concentration camp, situated in a former barracks by the river in the Belgian city. On 4 April 1944, he was sent on transport number 24 to Auschwitz. With the Allied forces closing in, Heinz died on 29 January 1945 in the Mittelbau concentration camp during a death march.

"I had no choice but to send Alfred the prayer book, which I had kept in my possession for



■ Heinz Eschwege

60 years," explained Rozenberg. "I did so with pride and deep satisfaction, but also filled with sorrow to have finally discovered the sad fate of Heinz Eschwege."

Alfred Eschwege has recently submitted a photograph of his brother, which he had

received from another *Shoah* survivor, to Yad Vashem. The photograph has been attached to

Year after year Rozenberg used the *sefer kinot*, read the name inscribed and wondered about the identity of its previous owner

the Page of Testimony, and completes Alfred's efforts to preserve the memory of Heinz Eschwege, whose life was cut short by Nazi brutality at such a young age.

When Alfred Eschwege received the book from Rozenberg, he was deeply moved. "I was at a loss for words," he recalled. "The book is the only remaining tangible object I have that belonged to my brother." In an emotionally charged e-mail to Rozenberg, Eschwege wrote: "I cherish Heinz's prayer book above all my other possessions. Thank you again, from the bottom of my heart. It's not very often that you find people with a kindness like yours."

# Preserving Their Memories

## Survivor Testimony Over the Years

by Lital Beer



■ Holocaust survivor Fanya Lavi Ariyon (right) is interviewed at her home by Dina Shafet.

■ *“I just wanted to thank you deeply for the interview you conducted with me here at home about my memories of the Holocaust. Beside the fact that the interview allowed me to unburden myself of the heavy load I carried for over 60 years, the interview with you opened up additional, deep layers of complex, charged emotions.*

*...You steered the questions sensitively and delicately, so that I never felt threatened or criticized. I want to express my great appreciation for your ability and sensitivity in guiding the course of the interview.”*

From a letter written by survivor Aharon Kaplan to Yad Vashem interviewer Nava Gibori

Collecting testimony from Holocaust survivors is one of the most important ways of preserving the memory of the Holocaust. By means of first-hand testimony, youth, educators and scholars are able to familiarize themselves with the many individual stories that together comprise the broader picture of the *Shoah*, and transmit its legacy for generations to come.

In an interview for *Yad Vashem Jerusalem*, Director of the Oral History Section Malka Tor described the history – and future – of this vital project:

### **When did the project of collecting testimony from Holocaust survivors begin?**

The importance of survivor testimony was clear even during the Holocaust itself, when underground archives in places such as Warsaw and Bialystok were established to document what was happening, so that the horrors could never

be forgotten or denied. The testimony of the first survivors to reach *Eretz Israel* was collected by the Jewish Agency at the end of 1942.

By the time Yad Vashem was established in 1953, 15,000 testimonies had already been collected – mostly in specially established centers across Europe – which served as the basis for future research, education and documentation. One of the first divisions of the Yad Vashem Archives was the Oral History Section.

### **How many interviews have been carried out to date?**

The number of videotaped interviews collected by professionally trained staff at Yad Vashem stands today at over 10,000, and there are tens of thousands more audio and written testimonies. In addition, copies of over 50,000 video interviews, conducted by Steven Spielberg’s USC Shoah Foundation Institute, were recently transferred to Yad Vashem, bringing the total figure of testimonies in our Archives to more than 100,000.

### **Why did Yad Vashem decide to record survivors’ testimonies in their homes?**

With the survivor generation growing older, most now find it physically difficult to come to the professional recording studios established in recent years across Israel. In an attempt to answer this challenge, Yad Vashem trained teams of interviewers and photographers to go to survivors’ residences and record their testimony there. Every year, more than 1,000 survivors now tell their stories, at their convenience and comfort, in their own homes.

In recent years, Yad Vashem has also started to videotape group testimonies and survivor reunions. These interviews have unique benefits: they examine issues common to all the members of the group, such as the special features of a particular ghetto or orphanage; and, since such testimonies are usually given in the presence of family members, they strengthen the connection between the generations, and their commitment to remember the Holocaust in the future.

### **How does the survivors’ age affect the interviews?**

The interviewer has to grapple with two very different problems: the general loss of memory and of details – names, dates and events – as well as the fact that most of the survivors today were very young during the Holocaust, and thus their experiences were generally connected only to the home and the family. Many witnesses also tend to dwell considerably on life after the war. Their testimonies often relate to sensitive issues such as orphanhood, the quest for identity, acclimatizing in youth homes in Israel, and other postwar traumas.

Eliciting testimony is a very complex task, requiring extensive knowledge of the period as well as the ability to conduct open, sensitive interviews. A combination of openness and honesty by the survivor, and compassion and expertise by the interviewer creates meaningful testimony, and a positive, sometimes cathartic experience for all present.

### **What remains to be done?**

Many Holocaust survivors have not yet documented what happened to them during the war. Right now, it is a race against the clock. The next few years will really be the last in which it will be possible to collect testimony from survivors. Yad Vashem therefore calls on every Holocaust survivor who has not yet done so to submit their important testimony, thus ensuring that their personal recollections become part of the collective memory of the Jewish people, and the world.

For further information, please contact the Oral History Section: Tel. +972-2-644-3753; [testimonies@yadvashem.org.il](mailto:testimonies@yadvashem.org.il)

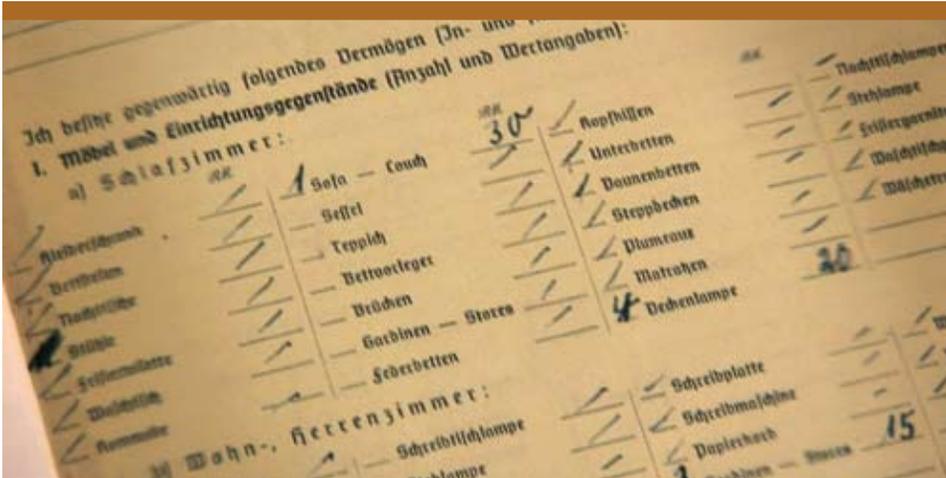
*The author is Head of the Outreach Section in the Archives Division.*

# “Human Failure”

Winner of the 2009 Avner Shalev Award

by Liat Benhabib and Mimi Ash

Director Michael Verhoeven set out to face Germany’s collective amnesia about its past: “My high school history teachers never covered the Third Reich”



■ Lists detailing Jewish property, from the film *Human Failure*

■ **“Where were you in ’39-’45? Where are you now?”** At the beginning of Michael Verhoeven’s award-winning and Oscar-nominated *Nasty Girl* (1989), two youths try to erase a message scrawled in graffiti on the wall of a building. Verhoeven’s ongoing fascination with this very question went on to influence many of his films, which focused on “ordinary people who happened to be there.”

Michael Verhoeven was born into a family of artists in Berlin in 1938. Although his actor/director father, Paul Verhoeven (no relation to the Dutch director of the same name in Hollywood) and his mother, the actress Doris Kiesow, did not sympathize with Nazi ideology, they were able to work during the Nazi period. Paul Verhoeven directed Goebbels’ mistress in frivolous musical comedies, and received the Reich’s seal of approval. However, he avoided having to make explicit propaganda films, and never joined the Nazi Party. This relative integrity made it possible for him to continue to churn out escapist films in postwar Germany.

Michael Verhoeven also started out as a stage and film actor, which enabled him to pay for his medical studies. He married the well-known actress Senta Berger, and together the couple founded their production company Sentana Filmproduktion. In 1973, he decided to devote himself to filmmaking. He wrote screenplays and directed and produced programs for television on a variety of topics, including the war in Vietnam, unemployment and other social issues. However, Verhoeven continued to be haunted by his father’s passive collaboration

with the Nazi regime, as he viewed it. “My father and I argued bitterly about his having made films at all during the Nazi period, even though they were light-hearted comedies. It was only after he was able to admit that that, too, was going along with the Nazis, that we became friends again.”

Verhoeven set out to face Germany’s collective amnesia about its past. “What I knew about crimes against the Jews I knew from my parents,” Verhoeven explains. “But my interest in our Nazi history was very limited, since my high school history teachers never covered the Third Reich.”

Verhoeven’s films on WWII and the Holocaust raise questions of personal choice, storytelling, memory and representation. They include the documentaries *Sunday Children* (1980), *The White Rose* (1982) and *Mother’s Courage* (1995), portraying, respectively, the stories of schoolgirls in a typical German village during the war, the urban student underground whose members were executed for anti-Nazi protests, and an adaptation of George Tabori’s play about his Hungarian-Jewish mother’s escape from deportation to Auschwitz.

His 2006 documentary, *The Unknown Soldier*, premiered in Israel at the Jerusalem Jewish Film Festival, where Verhoeven received the Jerusalem Cinematheque’s Achievement Award. The film was inspired by the controversial German exhibitions displayed between 1999–2004, which revealed war crimes committed by rank-and-file members of the *Wehrmacht*, exploding the myth that common German

soldiers did not know about or participate in the extermination of the Jews.

On 17 July, Verhoeven’s most recent film, *Human Failure*, was awarded the Avner Shalev Yad Vashem Chairman’s Award, endowed by Michaela and Leon Constantiner, at the 2009 Jerusalem International Film Festival. In this documentary, Verhoeven further exposes what he calls “the widespread human failure that encompassed the entire German nation at the time.” Once more, his point of departure was an historical exhibition; this time one that presented precise documentation of the expropriation of Jewish-owned assets from which scores



■ Jewish professionals turned chefs, from the film *Human Failure*

of German citizens derived great benefit in Nazi Germany. “The total dispossession or ‘Aryanization’ of Jewish families was completely new to most Germans, especially since the files were kept closed until recently,” Verhoeven reveals. “*Human Failure* poses painful questions about guilt and opportunism during WWII on the part of ordinary Germans. That’s why it was so important for me to make this film now, and to do so in a direct, but understated way, in order to reach young people.”

Verhoeven’s Holocaust-related oeuvre has now been deposited in the digital film library at the Visual Center, courtesy of the director and the films’ distributors: Sentana Filmproduktion, Filmverleih Kinowelt and The National Center for Jewish Film. On 5 November 2009, marking 71 years since the *Kristallnacht* Pogrom, Verhoeven will be the guest of honor at a special screening of *Human Failure*, co-sponsored by the Visual Center, the Goethe Institute in Jerusalem and the Jerusalem Cinematheque.

Liat Benhabib is Director of the Visual Center. Mimi Ash is the Center’s Acquisition and Special Projects Coordinator.

International Symposium:

# The 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Outbreak and Its Significance for the Fate



■ On 2 September 2009, the International Institute for Holocaust Research held a unique symposium marking 70 years since the start of WWII. The symposium, held in cooperation with the Polish embassy in Israel, was attended by senior scholars from Israel and abroad, and aroused a great deal of interest and discussion. Following are some of the major points made by the esteemed panel:

**Prof. David Bankier**, Head of the International Institute, opened the conference: "Precisely 64 years ago, on September 2, 1945, representatives of Japan, the US, China, the UK, the USSR, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, the temporary government



of France and the Dutch kingdom, stood on the deck of the USS *Missouri* anchored in the Bay of Tokyo and signed the document ending WWII. This unprecedented war, leaving 50 million dead and hundreds of millions wounded, was the consequence of the delusions of one man, Hitler, regarding *lebensraum* and the destruction of the Jewish people."

Prof. Bankier pointed out that the coining of the term "genocide" by Raphael Lemkin in 1944 was a direct response to Nazi crimes, and became the basis for the international treaty banning genocide and allowing for the prosecution of the perpetrators.

**Avner Shalev**, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, stressed the utopian, racial-biological concept that characterized this war. The vision of "racist ethnic cleansing carried out by a nation that believed it was naturally superior" was a new idea, he explained.



To reinforce his words, Shalev quoted the historian Ian Kershaw, from his book, *Fateful Choices*: "Dominating, in Nazi imagery, both the capitalism behind Great Britain and the United States, and the Bolshevism behind the Soviet enemy, the Jew posed the ultimate threat to Germany's very existence. In fact the Jew stood for a world which was totally anathema to Nazism, a set of moral values which... formed the foundations of the civilization that, as he repeatedly made plain, Hitler wanted to eradicate. ... It was no less than a fundamental attempt to change the course of history, to attain national redemption by eliminating not only all Jewish

influence, but the Jews themselves."

Shalev also warned of a problematic new political wave seeking to recognize 23 August 1939 (the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact) as a significant date for the suffering caused by WWII in Europe. In his opinion, this view would generate a superficial view of the war, liable to blur its unique and historically important character as a war of genocide against the Jewish people.

**H.E. Ms. Agnieszka Magdziak-Miszewska**, the Polish ambassador to Israel, remarked: "The war that began on Polish soil changed and reshaped Poland forever. After six years of war, we understood that the social landscape of Poland was empty, and a thousand years



of Jewish history and culture in our country had come to an end. This had far-reaching implications for us."

# Break of World War II of the Jews

by Aviv Shashar

The ambassador noted that “to remember means to learn the lessons of history and, through them, change the future.” Therefore, she requested that the leaders of the world take current threats seriously.

**Prof. Saul Friedländer**, the keynote speaker, pointed out that the “Jewish question” became central in Europe’s consciousness already in the 1930s, and by the eve of the war there was not a single country unaware of it. For the first two years of the war, Hitler



made very few references to Jews or Judaism in his public speeches, but from the fall of 1941 until the end of the war, when the collapse of the German campaign drew closer, the fervor to get rid of the Jews increased. The turning

The “Jewish question” became central in Europe’s consciousness already in the 1930s, and by the eve of the war there was not a single country unaware of it

point came when Hitler began to realize that the war would be more complicated than he thought, that Stalin was not caving in and that the Americans were about to enter the fray. Together with his perception that the Jews had “stuck a knife” in Germany’s back and were thus responsible for its defeat during WWI, he now claimed that if the Germans wanted to win this war, that enemy had to be destroyed.

At the same time, the German people understood that the end of the Jews had come, and concrete information started to arrive home, in particular through the soldiers on the front. One of them wrote: “Yesterday in Bereza Kartuska 1,300 Jews, women, men and children, were shot into a pit. Their clothes will be recycled. I foresee that if the war continues much longer,

the Jews will be turned into sausage meat and distributed among the Russian POWs and Jewish skilled laborers.”

Prof. Friedländer pointed to a paradoxical phenomenon: as news of the destruction of the Jews was spreading all over the world, antisemitism actually rose rather than declined, even in the US, while the Jews themselves, according to Prof. Friedländer, “were the only ones on the wider scene who did not grasp what was happening around them.” They were, of course, aware of the great disaster that was befalling them, but had no way to comprehend the totality of the destruction.

**Prof. Marek Kornat** described prewar



Poland as a country in a no-win situation, as two totalitarian regimes, the USSR and Germany, sought to swallow it up. In 1939, the negotiations for a comprehensive treaty between England, France and the USSR against

Germany failed because Poland refused to allow the Soviet army to enter Poland should the latter be attacked by Germany, as demanded by the Russians.

The attempt of Poland to forge closer relations with Germany, he posited, was the result of the overly cautious and appeasing policy adopted by the western powers towards Germany, and the attempt to evade the open jaws of the USSR. Given the realpolitik of 1939, all other solutions seemed impossible. Even today, Polish historians agree that it was unthinkable to let the Soviets into Poland even at the risk of leaving Poland defenseless. It was simply contrary to Poland’s foreign policy.

**Prof. Yehuda Bauer** presented his theory that



WWII was an ideological war, not an economic, political or military one, and that antisemitism stood at the center of this ideology. However, for the USSR and the West it was a war against imperialism, and the genocide of the

Jews was an ancillary matter. For Nazi Germany, destroying the Jewish people was very central indeed, but the Allies did not understand this, not even at the end of the war.

Prof. Bauer also expressed his opposition to the attempt to equate Stalin’s totalitarian regime with Hitler’s. While there were remarkable similarities between the two dictatorships – brutal terror, internment camps, and the murders of millions – there was no genocide in the USSR. By contrast, Hitler’s plans left no room for the Polish or Baltic peoples. To compare Nazism to the Soviet regime, he claimed, is an historical distortion. One should also not forget that the Red Army was a liberator thanks to which some Jews survived.

**Prof. Shlomo Avineri** pointed out the



difference between the peace arrangements following both world wars. The First World War ended with a list of peace agreements – Versailles, Trianon, St. Germain, Sèvres – but these lasted less than 20 years. By contrast, WWII ended

without any peace treaties or peace conferences, yet since then no major war has broken out in Europe. What can we learn from this?

The Treaty of Versailles, he stated, was a treaty of the victors, forced upon Germany. It was based on new ideological principles, including the right of self-determination of nations and minorities. These led to the establishment of an independent Poland and the Baltic states. However, it also forbade Germany to unite with Austria. On one hand, the treaty spoke in the name of lofty universal principles, but on the other it created a reality that did not express these ideas and ideals. This sowed the seeds of WWII. In 1945, however, the Cold War prevented any official peace treaty, but a “system of balance” emerged that has maintained a peace in Europe for the last 65 years.

*The author is a Project Coordinator at the International Institute for Holocaust Research.*

## Original Auschwitz Plans to be Displayed at Yad Vashem

■ On 27 August 2009, at a special ceremony in Berlin, the German newspaper *Bild* presented original architectural plans of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for safekeeping at Yad Vashem. Discovered last year in Berlin, and acquired by *Bild*, the architectural plans, drawn on a scale of 1:100, show details for expanding the camp, including the addition of a crematorium and a gas chamber. They will be displayed at Yad Vashem in January 2010, marking 65 years since the liberation of Auschwitz.

The sketches, authenticated by experts from Germany's Federal Archives, are dated between 1941 and 1943. They include plans for a purification building with a gas chamber; Crematorium II + III from November 1941; a

plan for a building to hold corpses; a two-dimensional sketch of the now-iconic entryway to the Birkenau death camp; a sketch for plans to expand Auschwitz I (partially completed); an initial plan for Birkenau from October 1941; and a plan for a huge headquarters building that was never carried out. Some of the documents bear notes in the margins or signatures by senior Nazis, including Heinrich Himmler.

Shortly after the blueprints were uncovered in 2008, the editor-in-chief of *Bild*, Kai Diekmann, decided that Yad Vashem was the most appropriate venue for their safeguarding. All 29 documents, together for the first time as a complete package, will be housed in the Yad Vashem Archives, which currently holds

over 125 million pages of documentation about the Holocaust.

Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev and Director of the Archives Dr. Haim Gertner participated in the event. "As original plans detailing the construction of Auschwitz, where some 1.1 million Jews were murdered, these documents have great historical significance," said Shalev. "They constitute concrete illustration of the Germans' systematic effort to carry out the 'Final Solution.' The decision of Mr. Diekmann, and the leadership of the *Bild*, to ensure their preservation at Yad Vashem carries special significance. Here, on the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem, they will be available to researchers for years to come."



■ Left to right: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, *Bild* Editor-in-Chief Kai Diekmann and Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev view the original plans for Auschwitz-Birkenau.



■ General plan of Auschwitz I, including the massive headquarters that were never built, 30 April 1942

## A Tribute to Their Memory: New Calendar for 5770

■ A new desk calendar marking the Jewish New Year 5770 (2009/2010) is based on the works of Jewish artists from *l'Ecole de Paris*.

From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until the outbreak of WWII, Paris was a vital cultural center, attracting artists from all corners of Europe. Seeking equal civil rights and the liberal atmosphere in France denied them in their home countries, many Jewish artists headed for its capital city. In the studios and cafés of Montparnasse, the newly arrived could meet and exchange ideas with influential personalities of the art world, such as Picasso, Chagall, Brancusi and Modigliani. Thus, more

than a style or a movement, *l'Ecole de Paris* was the meeting of artists from different origins, in the same place and time, with one common objective: creating art.

With the Nazi occupation of France in 1940, the persecution of Jewish artists began in earnest. Some artists managed to emigrate or go

into hiding, but most were sent to concentration and death camps. As a result, the fascinating cultural phenomenon that was *l'École de Paris* came to an abrupt end.

The selection of works from Yad Vashem's art collection featured in the calendar gives a rare glimpse into the vibrant and pulsating world of Jewish artists on the precipice of destruction. The calendar, produced with the support of Dr. h.c. Andre Bollag (Co-President of the Jewish Community of Zürich, Switzerland) and Carolyn Bollag, provides another link in Yad Vashem's persistent efforts to honor the memory of artists murdered in the Holocaust.

The new desk calendar is available at Yad Vashem's Book and Resource Center.



## New on www.yadvashem.org

by Dana Porath

### New Look for Website

■ The Yad Vashem website has recently undergone redesign and rebuilding, giving it a new, more user-friendly look and feel. The clear navigational structure, along with improved search technology, ensures that Yad Vashem's vast online resources may be more easily accessed and used by the the website's millions of annual visitors.

### “Marking the New Year” – Now in Spanish

■ The holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are traditionally a time for introspection, asking for and granting forgiveness, and praying for a healthy and happy year to come.

Through video testimony, artifacts, photos, cards and prayer books from Yad Vashem's collections, this online exhibition, already available in English and recently uploaded to the Spanish website, offers a glimpse into some of the ways that Jews before, during and immediately after the Holocaust marked these special days.

### Through the Lens of History

■ The Yad Vashem website now features mini-exhibitions from its Archives and Museum collections, focusing on a particular subject or event in Holocaust history. Topics include: child survivors at the liberation of Auschwitz; aerial evidence for *Schindler's List*; and the personal accounts of families and individuals before, during and after the *Shoah*.

*Dana Porath is Yad Vashem's Website Content Manager.*



## Website wins Webi2009 for “Unique Excellence”

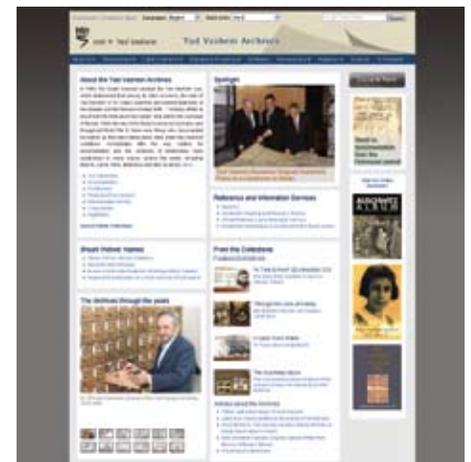
■ For the fourth year in a row, the Yad Vashem website has won the *People and Computers Magazine* Special Category WebiAward. At the awards ceremony held in Tel Aviv on 9 September, Website Project Coordinator Mark Ginsberg and Website Designer Karina Pasternak accepted a certificate on behalf of the website staff singling out the Yad Vashem website for its “unique excellence” regarding the information it provides online.



by Lital Beer

### Yad Vashem Archives – Online

■ At the beginning of August, Yad Vashem added a new section to its website, documenting the history of its Archives, the largest repository of Holocaust-related information in the world. The section describes the many different kinds of original documentation the Archives



holds, as well as the processes of preservation and digitalization aimed at protecting the materials and making them more accessible to the public.

A significant portion of the documentation and photographs amassed by the Archives and the Hall of Names may also be accessed and studied online. In addition, the site includes information about how to submit materials for preservation as well as requests for information about victims from the Holocaust era.

*Lital Beer is Head of the Outreach Department in the Archives Division.*

“The Yad Vashem website is a leading example for websites in Israel,” remarked the panel of judges. “It contains an enormous range of content, organized in an exemplary manner. Moreover, the website serves millions of people from hundreds of countries around the world.”

■ *Left to right: Karina Pasternak and Mark Ginsberg with Chairman of the Webi2009 Awards, Ido Levy*

**15 July** ■ Ceremony posthumously honoring Righteous Among the Nations Dragoljub Trajković of Serbia who rescued Margita Ungar and her children, Olga and Tihomir. Pictured, left to right: Miriam Aviezer, member of the Righteous Among the Nations Commission who worked on the case; the son-in-law of Tihomir and his daughters, Myrna and Olga Unger; Nada Djurasević-Trajković, who accepted the award and the medal on behalf of her late father; Chargé d'Affaires of the Serbian Embassy in Israel, Biljana Vučković-Lear; Trajković's granddaughter, Oli Carmel



**4 August** ■ At the annual memorial service for the Jews of Rhodes and Kos who perished in the Holocaust, survivor Dora Shmaryahu (left) lit a candle in memory of Holocaust victims alongside Chairman of the National Association for the Heritage of the Jews of Rhodes Mario Soriano (center). Maggie Cohen (right) conducted the ceremony.



**6 August** ■ Painter Yitzhak Belfer, who was a pupil in the orphanage headed by Janusz Korczak, spoke to members of the *Mahanot*



*Olim* youth group at the annual ceremony honoring Janusz Korczak, Stefa Wilczynska and the children in their care.

**7 August** ■ Hundreds of Holocaust survivors filled the Wohlin Community Hall in Givatayim for a concert of "History, Music and Memory," featuring music by composers in the Theresienstadt ghetto who perished in the Holocaust as well as those whose works were banned by the Nazis. The pieces were played by students of the ninth seminar of international master classes held at Beit Terezin led by musical director Dr. Dudu Sella. Composer Prof. Michael Wolpe hosted the evening.



**25 August** ■ "Mashiv Haruach: From Safed to Jerusalem – A Concert of Jewish Soul Music" – ancient melodies that have accompanied the Jewish people through the generations were played by klezmer artists, young and old, from Israel and around the world, with the participation of students of Safed's weeklong International Clarinet and Klezmer Seminar under the musical direction of maestro Giora Feidman. Pictured, left to right: Hanan Bar Sela, Helmut Eisel, Giora Feidman, Prof. Jozsef Balogh



**2 September** ■ Evening of commemoration and remembrance of the Jewish communities of the Wohlin region that perished in the Holocaust: Rokitno, Sarny, Dabrowica, Bereznica, Antonowka, Horodec and the surrounding areas.

**2 September** ■ Memorial ceremony of the Association of Former Zdunska-Wola Residents in Israel and the Diaspora.

**15 September** ■ Annual meeting commemorating 65 years since the liquidation of the Lodz ghetto at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art.

**22 September** ■ Memorial service for the Jews of Lithuania who were murdered in the Holocaust and a commemoration marking 66 years since the liquidation of the Vilna ghetto, with the participation of Minister of Public Affairs and the Diaspora Yuli Edelstein (pictured, speaking), Lithuania's Ambassador to Israel H.E. Mr Darius Degutis, Director General of Yad Vashem Nathan Eitan, Chairman of the Association of Jews from Vilna and Vicinity in Israel Michael Shemievitze and Holocaust survivors from Vilna and Lithuania.



**24 September** ■ Annual memorial service marking 68 years since the murder of the Jews by the Nazis on Ukrainian soil: the victims of the Babi Yar massacre, Bogdanovka, Drobitzki Yar and the surrounding areas. Pictured, front, left to right: Chairman of the Association of Ukrainian Immigrants in Israel David Levin; Chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel Natan Sharansky; Marina Solodkin MK; Ukrainian Ambassador to Israel, H.E. Mr. Igor Timofeyev



## Names Database:

### Families of Jewish actor Zisha Katz reunite, thanks to Page of Testimony

■ This summer, the discovery of a Page of Testimony in memory of Zisha Katz, a well-known actor in *The Yiddishe Bande* of Warsaw, enabled his great-granddaughter Penny Glaser (USA) to locate her cousin, Gerald Schor, in Israel. As a child living in New York in 1939, Schor got to know his cousin well when Katz stayed with Schor's family for the summer while he performed there in the Jewish Theatre. For Glaser's mother, Naomi Shlomovitz, a child Holocaust survivor and granddaughter of Zisha Katz, this discovery led to her union with dozens of relatives around the world that she never knew existed.



■ The Schor, Shlomovitz (née Katz), Glaser and Silbermincz families reunite at the Yad Vashem Synagogue



■ Zisha Katz (center, seated) in a production of *The Poor Little Tailor*, 1930s

### Rabbi Lau's New Year Message: Submit Pages of Testimony Now

■ Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council, recently delivered an inspirational *drasha* (homily) marking Rosh Hashanah – the Jewish New Year 5770. Drawing on biblical sources relating to personal and communal remembrance, Rabbi Lau stressed the importance of commemorating Jewish relatives and friends who perished during the Holocaust. Himself a child survivor of Buchenwald, Rabbi Lau called upon Jews across the world to join Yad Vashem's efforts to recover the names of each individual *Shoah* victim by filling out Pages of Testimony in their memory and submitting them to Yad Vashem. This, he said, is the only way to ensure

that every individual victim is remembered by the entire Jewish people.

Rabbi Lau's powerful message is now viewable on the Yad Vashem website and YouTube: "This is the final hour," he explains. "It is not enough that you memorialized the names of your father and mother, grandfather and grandmother, in diaries, albums and memorial books... Even though your grandchild is named after your grandfather who perished in the *Shoah*... in order that they not be forgotten, we are pleading with you: Fill in Pages of Testimony!"

Search for information or submit names of people you know who perished



during the *Shoah* on Yad Vashem's Central Database of *Shoah* Victims' Names at [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org)

### Volunteer Translators Honor Joseph Karmin

by Dr. Gideon Greif and Riki Bodenheimer

■ On Monday 7 September, at the branch of the International School for Holocaust Studies in Givatayim, a ceremony was held marking the completion of the translation of the 0.2 section of testimonies in the Yad Vashem Archives – the Weiner Collection. Dozens of volunteer translators attended the event, which also marked the retirement of the project's coordinator Joseph (Yosele) Karmin.

In 1995 Holocaust survivor Joseph Karmin initiated a unique and original project: translating the postwar testimonies collected by Yad Vashem. Many important testimonies, especially those gathered immediately after the war in the DP camps in Germany, were recorded in foreign languages such as Polish, Yiddish, Russian, Slovak and Czech. Their

translation has made these historically significant accounts much more accessible to the wider public.

In the first years of the project, the testimonies were translated by a group of kibbutz members – friends of Karmin's – but later he began to recruit translators from all over Israel. The 100 volunteer translators are retired, educated and committed women and men who contribute their time and efforts out of a deep dedication to their important task.

"The power behind my project is the belief that I am contributing to the national memory of the Jewish people," explains Karmin. "Thanks to my wonderful team of devoted translators and the encouragement of Yad Vashem, I have been able to fulfill this holy mission."

The translation project continues under the guidance of Limor Levi, Eva Lotem and Dan Philip.

*Gideon Greif is an historian and an educator. Riki Bodenheimer coordinates the Volunteer Translators Project in the Archives Division.*

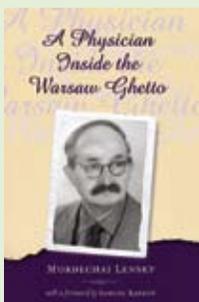


■ Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev (left) with Joseph Karmin

## New Publication:

**Mordechai Lensky,  
A Physician Inside the  
Warsaw Ghetto, 1939-1943**

■ “Warsaw’s Jews lost their lives in three ways: as martyrs of faith, as martyrs of their nationhood and as martyrs for their families,” says Mordechai



Lensky. “Most were of the last sort – martyrs for their families, whom they would not abandon.”

Lensky’s new memoir is the gripping account of a Jewish doctor in the Warsaw ghetto, struggling against all odds to provide medical care to a community condemned by the Germans to squalor, disease and death. His observations on the ghetto are both sympathetic and sober. Tackling even the most difficult subjects, such as the corrupt and callous nature of some of his colleagues, Lensky keenly felt the tension between his moral obligations as a respected professional and his human desire to provide for his family and survive the war.

The Lensky family escaped the ghetto in March 1943 and hid on the Aryan side of Warsaw under assumed identities with the help of two Polish women whom Yad Vashem later recognized as Righteous Among the Nations.

The book provides singular insights into many aspects of ghetto life, including an important account of a hitherto neglected aspect of Jewish resistance – the massive building of bunkers in late 1942 and early 1943. There is also an insightful, moving epilogue by Lensky’s son Yaacov, who relates his own fascinating story in the Warsaw ghetto, as a participant in the Polish Uprising in August 1944, and more.

## Dedicated Friends: Editha and Dr. Heinz E. Samson

■ Yad Vashem mourns the passing of a dear friend and benefactor, Dr. Heinz E. Samson of Lausanne, Switzerland.

Heinz Samson was born in Norden, Germany on 28 September 1920, the descendant of a Jewish family that had fled to the town in 1630 during the Spanish Inquisition. The Samson family had settled in Norden along with 17 other families, where they traded in grains and spices.

In 1935, shortly after the promulgation of the Nuremberg Race Laws, Heinz was expelled from school and was thus unable to complete his studies. On 28 November 1938, following *Kristallnacht*, Heinz’s mother, Paula, was detained and physically abused by the SA, the Nazi Party militia. Shortly afterwards she suffered a stroke.

In 1939, Heinz left his family home and, with ten Reichsmarks in his pocket, made his way to London, where he waited for his family to join him. Sadly, they never arrived. Heinrich and Paula Samson were deported to Minsk on 10 November 1941, and never returned. Their daughter Gerda was deported to Auschwitz on 24 October 1942.

In London, Heinz apprenticed as a press toolmaker at Vickers Engineering Works. During the war, he joined a small dedicated group that helped supply the goggles and oxygen masks for the pilots of the Spitfire aircraft – the legendary fighter plane of the Battle of Britain. From these meager but sincere beginnings he rose to become a giant in the British steel industry.

On 9 March 1983 Dr. Samson was awarded the “Freedom of the City of London,” in



■ Left to right: Dr. Heinz Samson z”l, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, Editha Samson

recognition of his tireless efforts and endeavors on behalf of humanity.

In 2005, Dr. Samson established a trust fund for the preservation of the Norden Jewish cemetery, which dates back to the year 1569. The aim of the trust fund is to preserve and perpetuate the Jewish cultural heritage of Norden as well as the surrounding area. Dr. Samson supported numerous causes in Israel, Great Britain and Switzerland, perpetuating the name of his parents and sister who were murdered during the Holocaust.

In 2009, Editha and Dr. Heinz E. Samson became Yad Vashem Benefactors through their munificent donation endowing the Museum Gateway. They also donated Heinz’s personal family memoirs to the Yad Vashem Archives. Heinz Samson will be greatly missed by all those honored to have known him. Yad Vashem extends its deepest condolences to Heinz’s wife Editha, his daughters Karen Lewis and Debra Ziff, and their families.

## Unique “Witness-Historian” Collection Donated to Library

■ Among the witnesses of the Nazi period, a select group decided to acquire for themselves the skills required of professional historians. Many of these witness-historians have been able to seamlessly combine perspectives, applying their personal insights to their historical writing without harming the high quality of their scholarship. Given the importance of these witness-historians, Yad Vashem has embarked on a project to gather all the writings by and about one of the most prolific of this group, Prof. Dov Levin, author of some 700 scholarly articles and books. In addition to his books, the Library recently received from Levin over 200 articles penned in English over the years. This material has been collated and made available to

**by Dr. Robert Rozett**

the Library readership. In the near future, all of Levin’s writings in Hebrew will also be deposited in the Library, as well as scores of articles written about his research and his life.

Today a member of the Yad Vashem Council, Levin is an expert on the Holocaust in the Baltic States. Among his numerous publications are two volumes of the *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities: Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia*, published by Yad Vashem. The Dov Levin Collection, like the man and his contemporaries, constitutes a vital link in the bridge between the generation of witness-historians and those who follow them in their commitment to engage in scholarly inquiry into the Holocaust.

*The author is Director of Yad Vashem’s Libraries.*

## RECENT VISITS TO YAD VASHEM

Over the months of July, August and September 2009, Yad Vashem conducted more than 100 guided tours for over 1,500 official visitors from Israel and abroad. These guests included heads of government, business leaders, directors of non-profit organizations, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, the head of a Supreme Court and a noted sports personality. Following are some of our honored guests over the past three months:



■ **Czech Prime Minister Jan Fischer** (front, left) toured the Holocaust History Museum on 22 July, guided by Director of the Yad Vashem Libraries Dr. Robert Rozett (front, right). Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic Jan Kohout visited Yad Vashem on 25 June.



■ **Foreign Minister of Germany Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier** (left) visited Yad Vashem on 6 July accompanied by Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev. Dr. Steinmeier also visited Yad Vashem in 2006 and 2008.



■ **Australian Deputy Prime Minister The Hon. Julia Gillard** (center) visited Yad Vashem on 23 June, and laid a wreath in the Hall of Remembrance. She was accompanied by (left to right) the founder and Chairman of the Australia Israel Cultural Exchange Albert Dadon AM; Ambassador of Australia to Israel H.E. Mr. James Larsen; The Hon. Peter Costello MP; and Director of Yad Vashem's English Desk David Metzler.



■ **President of the Dominican Republic Leonel Fernandez Reyna** visited Yad Vashem on 13 July. He was accompanied by First Lady Margarita Cedeño de Fernandez and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Carlos Morales Troncoso.



■ On 3 August, a group of **Sudanese refugees** who arrived in Israel in wake of the genocide in Darfur visited Yad Vashem. The visit took place at the initiative of organizations dedicated to assisting refugees who have arrived in the country since the crisis in Darfur began.

During the visit, the group toured the Holocaust History Museum, guided by Director of the Yad Vashem Libraries Dr. Robert Rozett (left). They also met with Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Directorate, and heard the story of Sara Pechanac, daughter of a Muslim Righteous Among the Nations from Sarajevo, who found refuge in Israel during the war there, converted to Judaism, and today works at Yad Vashem.



■ During their visit to Yad Vashem on 27 July, **Jerusalem Mayor Nir Birkat** and the chief of staff of the Jerusalem municipality **Michal Shalem** toured the "My Homeland" Exhibition.



■ **Colombian Vice President Francisco Stantos Calderon** visited Yad Vashem on 22 July. He toured the Holocaust History Museum and the Children's Memorial, and took part in a memorial ceremony in the Hall of Remembrance.



■ **Foreign Minister of Ethiopia Seyoum Mesfin** toured the Holocaust History Museum on 12 July. He also visited the Children's Memorial, and laid a wreath in the Hall of Remembrance.

# Friends Worldwide

## USA

■ Yad Vashem Benefactors **Marilyn and Barry Rubenstein** have decided to fund seminars for IDF soldiers and officers at Yad Vashem. In 2005, the Rubenstein family from New York dedicated Yad Vashem's Synagogue, which is also a memorial to the synagogues in Eastern Europe destroyed in the Holocaust.



■ Yad Vashem Builders **Jan and Andy Groveman** (right) enjoyed a personalized tour of the Museum of Holocaust Art during their visit to Yad Vashem. They were guided by art curator **Eliad Moreh-Rosenberg** (left).



■ On 24 July, Yad Vashem was honored to host its dear Friend **Sid Ferenc** (second from right), together with his fiancée and cousin. During their visit, Managing Director of the International Relations Division **Shaya Ben Yehuda** (right) showed them several documents and artifacts that shed light on the personal story of the *Shoah*.



■ Yad Vashem Supporters **Mark Moskowitz** and his mother **Rose Moskowitz** came with their extended family for a special tour of the campus. The family was marking the first yearzeit of Rose's husband and Mark's father **Henry**, a Holocaust survivor who passed away last year aged 102.



■ **Danielle and Harry Karten** and family celebrated the bar mitzvah of their son, **Yonatan**, at Yad Vashem. The ceremony was held at the Partisans' Panorama, which was endowed by Harry's parents **Julia and Isidore Karten z"l**. The Panorama overlooks the Jerusalem forest as well as Yad Vashem's Valley of the Communities.



■ **Alan Levin** of Houston, Texas (right) toured Yad Vashem and met with Chairman of the Directorate **Avner Shalev**.



■ Hollywood Producer **Branko Lustig** (right) viewed Yad Vashem's "No Child's Play" exhibition in Zagreb last April.

Lustig, a Holocaust survivor and a two-time Academy Award winner (for the films *Schindler's List* and *Gladiator*), is the Honorary President of Zagreb's annual Jewish Film Festival. "No Child's Play" was displayed at the Festival last April, at the request of Branko Lustig, who also produced the films *Sophie's Choice*, *Winds of War* and *War and Remembrance*.



■ **Bobbie and Lew Frankfort** took part in an emotional tour of Yad Vashem, together with their daughter **Alana**.



## CANADA

■ On 12 August, the **Canadian Society for Yad Vashem** launched its "Founding Pillars" Campaign at the home of National Chair **Fran Sonshine** (second from left) and her husband, **Ed** (center), the Society's first Founding Pillars. The Founding Pillars are the Canadian Society's top gift division, providing essential leadership in its mission to remember the past and shape a better future in Canada.



Guests of honor at the launch included Deputy Director of Yad Vashem's Museums Division and Senior Art Curator **Yehudit Shendar** (second from right), who enlightened the group about the Carol Deutsch portfolio, and Consul General of Israel in Toronto and Western Canada **Amir R. Gissin** (right), who delivered greetings on behalf of the State of Israel. During the evening, Fran Sonshine presented Yad Vashem's worldwide initiatives and the Society's Mission to over 55 Pillars and guests and, together with Executive Director of the Canadian Society **Yaron Ashkenazi** (left), presented the Society's Founding Pillars with a numbered replica of the Carol Deutsch portfolio.

■ Founding Pillar **Harry J.F. Bloomfield, Q.C.** of Montreal (left) accepted a Carol Deutsch portfolio from Yehudit Shendar and Yaron Ashkenazi, on behalf of the Eldee Foundation and the Bloomfield family.



■ At a parlor meeting in Ottawa, kindly organized by Dr. **Norman Barwin** and hosted by **Tova Clark**, the Carol Deutsch portfolio was exhibited and presented in detail. Ambassador of Israel to Canada **H.E. Mrs. Miriam Ziv** delivered greetings on behalf of the State of Israel. Pictured, left to right: Yaron Ashkenazi, Yehudit Shendar, **Alan Rackow**, **Lilyan Philipp**, Tova Clark, Dr. **Erwin Koranyi**, Dr. Norman Barwin, The Hon. **David Kilgour, J.D.**, H.E. Ambassador **Miriam Ziv**, **Truda Rosenberg**, **Phylis Rackow**



■ Yad Vashem Supporters **Craig Guttman** and **Sean Guttman** came from Toronto with their wives **Esther** and **Julia** for a moving visit in July. During their tour, they visited the Hall of Names with their guide **Hazy Flint**.



## UK

■ **Raymond Dinkin** (left), **Lady Davies** and UK Trade Minister **Lord Mervyn Davies of Abersoch** and **Anita Bruce Dinkin** (right) of London toured Yad Vashem in the early summer.



■ Yad Vashem Builders **Leon Schaller** and his late wife **Freda, z"l**, endowed a classroom in the International School for Holocaust Studies. Leon, his son **Clive Schaller** and other children and grandchildren toured the Yad Vashem campus in July.



■ **Debra** and **Michael Ziff** of West Yorkshire came for a moving tour of Yad Vashem with their two sons in August, which included a special presentation in the Archives. They also viewed the plaque recognizing the generous support of Debra's late father **Dr. Heinz E. Samson, z"l** and his widow **Editha**, new Yad Vashem Benefactors (see p. 18).



■ **Richard Branson** (front left), founder and chairman of the Virgin Group, and **Jeff Skoll** (front right), first president of eBay, toured Yad Vashem in August 2009, accompanied by **David Metzler**, Director of Yad Vashem's English Desk.



## AUSTRALIA

■ In August, **Solomon** and **Rosie Lew** (center) of Melbourne came for a special tour of the Holocaust History Museum, guided by Director of the English Desk **David Metzler** (left). They were greeted by Yad Vashem Chairman **Avner Shalev** (right).



# Friends Worldwide

■ During the visit of the Australia-Israel Leadership forum in June, **Peter Ivany** of Sydney (pictured with his wife, **Sharon**) discovered his own father, **Alexander Israel Ivany**, in this photograph in the Holocaust History Museum. His father was 19 years old when this photo was taken and had recently arrived at Auschwitz. He survived there for ten-and-a-half months without ever having his spirits broken by the perpetrators.



■ The Sydney Jewish Museum Mission to Israel came for a tailor-made two-day visit to Yad Vashem in July after having visited some of the authentic Holocaust sites in Europe.

Left to right: Immediate Past-President of the Sydney Jewish Museum and supporter of Yad Vashem **John Roth**; Resident Historian at the Sydney Jewish Museum and member of the Advisory Committee of Yad Vashem's Gandel Holocaust Studies Program for Australian Educators, Emeritus Professor **Konrad Kwiet**; Deputy Director of the International Relations Division **Sari Granitza**



## Christian Desk

■ **The Christian Friends of Yad Vashem in Germany** made a contribution to the International School for Holocaust Studies, which will enable a seminar for Christian leaders to take place in 2010. The donation was received through the German branch of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ).

Left to right: ICEJ Executive Director **Rev. Malcolm Hedding**; Director of the Christian Friends of Yad Vashem **Dr. Susanna Kokkonen**; ICEJ International Director **Dr. Jurgen Buhler**; Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate **Avner Shalev**; Director of the International School for Holocaust Studies **Dorit Novak**; Managing Director of the International Relations Division **Shaya Ben Yehuda**



■ "Grafted," the young adults' division of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ), spent a full day of activities at Yad Vashem. The group adopted two trees planted in honor of Righteous Among the Nations **Hermann Maas** and **Cornelia Gerhardina Blaauw**.

Pictured: Group leaders **Bram** and **Liesl Maas** and **Rami Lehtola**, with Director of the Christian Friends of Yad Vashem **Dr. Susanna Kokkonen** (bottom, right), and group members



## Diaspora Affairs Desk

■ **Ada Todd** (fourth from left) and **Victoria** and **Alexander Kirzhnev** (fourth and fifth from right) visited Yad Vashem with their friends in June. They attended a wreath-laying ceremony

in the Hall of Remembrance in memory of of Ada Todd's parents, **Yaakov** and **Klara Bekker z"l**.



■ Leaders of the Jewish Community of St. Petersburg, **Mark Grubarg** and **Evgeniy Kupsin**, laid a wreath during the official Holocaust Remembrance Day Ceremony at Yad Vashem.



■ On 21 July, Yad Vashem Friend and member of the **Ukrainian Society for Yad Vashem Leonid Leonov** came for a visit. He was accompanied by **Dina Maslova** of the Diaspora Affairs Desk.



## SPAIN

■ **Clara** and **León Benelbas** (center) and **Belén** and **José Benarroch** (right) were accompanied by Director of the Iberoamerican, Spanish and Portuguese Desk **Perla Hazan** (left) during their visit to Yad Vashem.



## ARGENTINA

■ **Dora Zitno** (center) was accompanied by her family and Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council **Rabbi Israel Meir Lau** (second from right) and Chairman of the Directorate **Avner Shalev** (right) during the unveiling of the plaques in memory of members of her family that perished in the Holocaust.



## VENEZUELA

■ **Alberto Galsky** (center) and his children, **Ashley** and **Eithan** (second and third from right), were accompanied by Director of the Iberoamerican, Spanish and Portuguese Desk **Perla Hazan** (right) during the unveiling of a plaque in their honor.



■ **Roberto Fogel** (third from right) and his family were accompanied by **Perla Hazan** and **Mauricio Hazan** (left) during the unveiling of a plaque in their honor.



■ During her visit to Yad Vashem, **Nira Meir Strasberg** (second from right), her daughter **Mary** and granddaughter **Alexandra** (left) were accompanied by Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate **Avner Shalev** and **Perla Hazan**.



## MEXICO

■ **Sara** and **Rolando Uziel** (second and third from right) visited Yad Vashem with their friends **Elena** and **Roberto Kucinski** (left), accompanied by Director of the Iberoamerican, Spanish and Portuguese Desk **Perla Hazan** (right).



**Ruth** and **Salomón Marcuschamer** (right) attended a ceremony at the Synagogue in their honor with Minister **Yossi Peled** (left), **Perla Hazan** (second from left), and **Avner Shalev** (center).



■ Yad Vashem Benefactors **Jane** and **Isaac Ladelsky** visited Yad Vashem.



## Yad Vashem Needs Your Support!

In these difficult times of financial uncertainty and a worrying rise in antisemitism around the world, Yad Vashem is redoubling its efforts to commemorate the Holocaust, disseminate its universal implications and strengthen Jewish continuity. Yad Vashem is deeply grateful for your generosity in supporting its vital work, and welcomes both new friends and established supporters as partners in our shared mission.

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■ For information on societies in other countries, or to donate online, please visit: [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org) and click on "Donate Now."

Donations may also be sent to: International Relations Division, Yad Vashem, PO Box 3477, Jerusalem 91034, Israel.

# From Rupture to Continuity

The Third National Teachers' Conference (pp. 4-5)



**Yad Vashem**

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