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Their Last Voice: Letters and Testaments from Jews in the Holocaust

A Special Issue
for Remembrance Day

The Legacy of Holocaust Survivors: An International Conference (pp. 6-7)

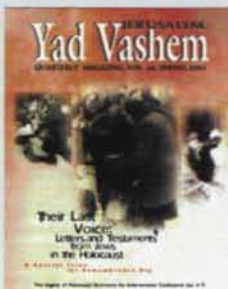
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Editors' Remarks

As we mark Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day 2002 with the theme “Their Last Voice: Letters and Testaments from Jews in the Holocaust” we dedicate this issue of *Yad Vashem Jerusalem* to the power of the written word. In the liminal moment between life and death, Holocaust victims chose to rely on the might of the pen in absence of the sword. By imparting their vital legacies to future generations and personal words of parting to loved ones, the Jews in the Holocaust transmitted their immutable presence into everlasting written monuments. Throughout this edition—with features on artists, diary-writers, torchlighters, and Righteous Among the Nations—we revisit Holocaust victims' and survivors' unique stories, recall their legacies, and revive their final words.



Cover: Pictures from the Holocaust period from the Yad Vashem Photo Archives.

Their Last Voice: Letters and Testaments from Jews in the Holocaust

The Central Theme of H

by Professor Walter Zvi Bacharach

“ We declare that on 7 July 1944, the order for the evacuation of the Siauliai (Shavli) ghetto was issued. We want future generations to know our names: Shmuel Minzberg—the son of Shimon from the city Lodz (Poland); his wife, Reisele née Saks from Vaiguva; her sister, Feigele Saks; and Friedele Niselevitch—the daughter of Nahum Zvi from Vaiguva. We don't know to where we are being deported. Two thousand Jews are in the ghetto awaiting the order to leave. Our destiny is unknown. Our state of mind is dreadful. May the Kingdom of Israel be established speedily in our days.” (Shmuel Minzberg—written on the night before the final liquidation of the ghetto.)

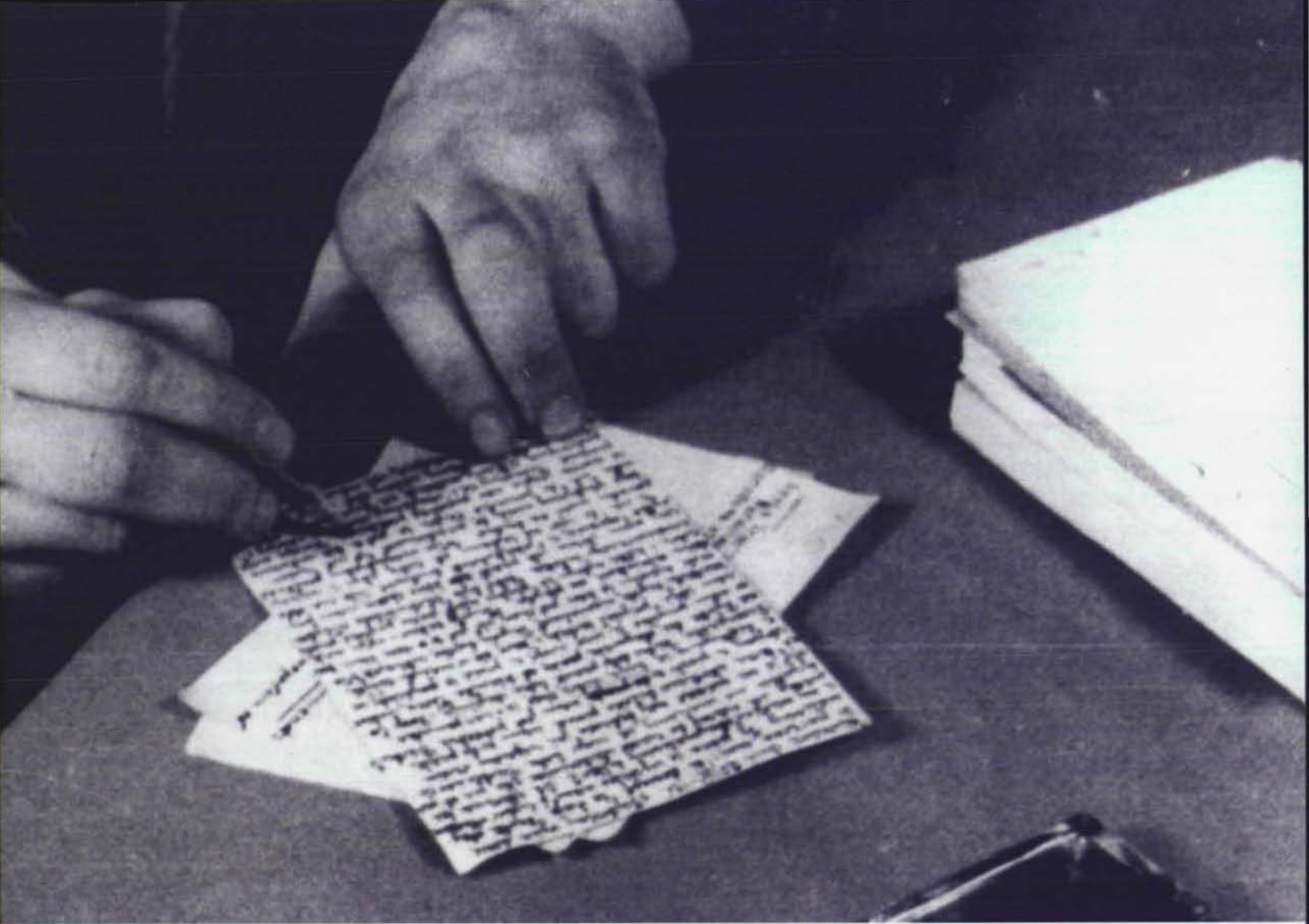
This declaration found on the site of the former Siauliai ghetto—is one of many final letters and testaments penned by Holocaust victims only moments before they were sentenced to their ultimate, premature fate—eternal silence.

From within the camps, ghettos, and prisons, en route to the valley of death, prisoners tried to relay news about their fate and that of their community to relatives and friends. These last testaments were often scribbled on scraps of

paper, relying heavily on code words and hints to bypass strict censorship. Many letters were concealed in hiding places and discovered only after the war; many others were thrown from trains by deportees unaware of their destinations. Still others were sent by official postal service or couriers. In a few cases, decades passed before the letters arrived at their intended destinations.

Some writers focused on dates, names, and events, so future generations would know what had transpired. Others crafted personal messages to family members, relatives, and friends. Some suspected that they were approaching death, while others expressed a terrible sense of uncertainty, coupled with feelings of optimism that perhaps they would ultimately be rescued.

In almost all instances, there was a clear division between references to the writer's individual or personal fate—which was to be decreed and out of the victim's control—and that of future generations of the Jewish people. Many writers believed in the continuity of the Jewish people, expecting their children or the readers of their letters to continue living as Jews according to the precepts of Jewish tradition, at times even requesting that they



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A Jewish postal worker mailing a letter in the ghetto—Warsaw, Poland

immigrate to *Eretz Yisrael*.

Along with expressing their unshaken faith in a future for the Jewish people, many writers understood the importance of imparting their messages to future generations. A father from Slobodka's final message embodies the historical imperative to remember all the victims: "I have decided to leave at least some information for those who remain after us, so that you will know all that has happened to us from a primary source." Another father from eastern Lithuania asked to be individually remembered through the observance of his *yahrzeit* (annual memorial day): "Be healthy, these are my

final words. Today is 21 December 1941, and it should be the date of my *yahrzeit*."

Yahrzeit observance—a Jewish practice dedicated to remembering the dead—is also inexorably linked to the idea of continuity. The fulfillment of this tradition demonstrates a determination to live and an expression of hope for the future, along with a reverence for and commemoration of the dead.

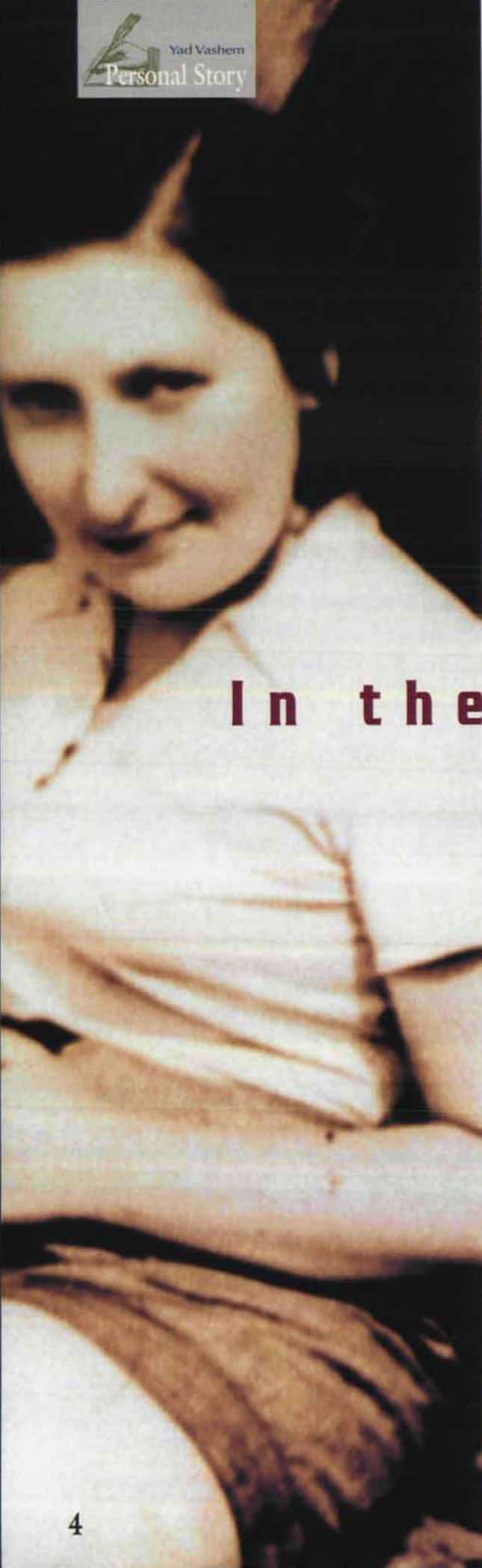
The final plea made by Holocaust victims to remember also incorporates the imperative to avenge. In some cases, rather than seek revenge on the murderers, writers asked for vengeance to be exacted by remembering the victims—those whose lives were taken before their time. Such was the desperate call for revenge of a young girl: "So that she, whose fate was to die when she was nineteen, will not be forgotten."

According to the *Jerusalem Talmud*: "As long as a person is alive, he has hope. When he is dead—his hope is lost" (*Tractate Brachot* 63:2). Even when at odds with reality, the capacity to hope helped victims keep desperation at bay and accompanied them in various ways throughout the hellish torment of the Holocaust. At times hope stemmed from a sense of confidence, as expressed

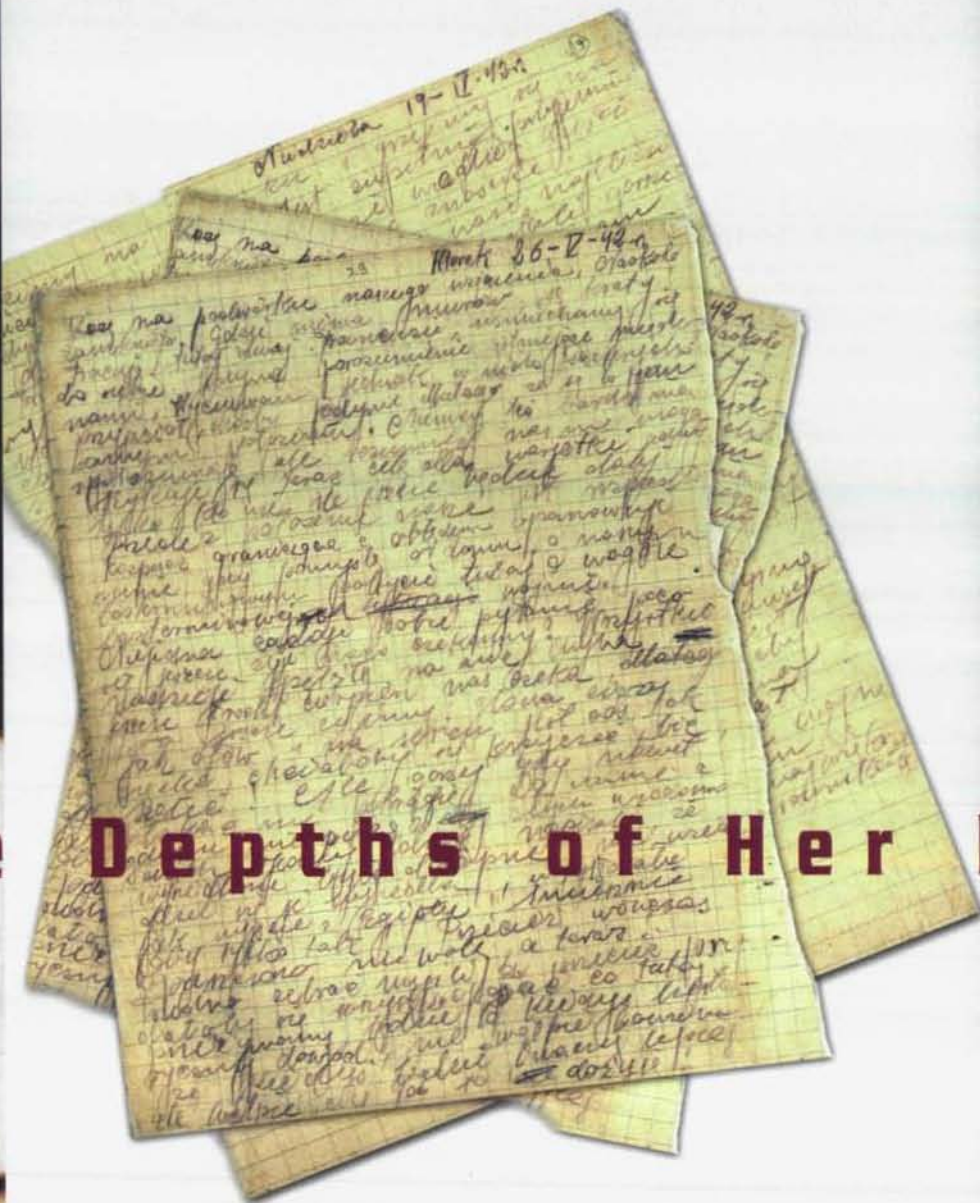
in an anonymous letter thrown from a train declaring that whoever found the letter could be certain the writer would return. In other instances, hope derived from feelings of love: the love of one's neighbor or partner, the love of children, humankind, and *Eretz Yisrael*—as expressed in final writings—empowered the victims and helped them endure their suffering. Regina Kandt, a native of Belgrade, wrote in a letter to her husband, Maks: "I have suffered greatly, but I endured it because I believed in the good Lord and because my great love for you, Mutzek, kept me going... I did not love anybody in the whole world as much as I loved you. Therefore you too, must be strong and patient, for one day an end will come to this too... I am writing this just in case I do not survive. But I do have the feeling that we shall see one another again..."

Whether written out of hope, a need for vengeance, or the desire to bequeath a vital message, the last letters and testaments of the condemned serve as eternal monuments for remembrance, continuity, and hope.

The author is the editor of These are My Final Words to be released in Hebrew in the near future by Yad Vashem



In the Depths of Her



by Dr. Bella Gutterman

When attempting to gain knowledge about the tragedies of the Holocaust, researchers base their investigations on a variety of source materials. Original Nazi documents describe the regime and its strategies; lists prepared by Jewish institutions illustrate the lives of the Jews persecuted by the Nazis and their collaborators; letters, photographs, underground newspapers, witness reports, and survivor testimonies enable researchers to construct a relatively reliable picture of the era.

Nonetheless, there is one type of source material that surpasses all others in its unique capacity to describe the unspeakable realities of those who endured the Holocaust—personal diaries. These historical records—secretly recorded on hard-to-obtain pieces of paper—illustrate the emotional resources utilized by Jews and other victims during the terror of the Nazi regime. Diary authors were driven by internal drives, sacrificing precious sleeping hours to write and food portions to obtain a pencil. In their determination to “bequeath something to those who would survive...” they contemplated the future in writing, even as their present remained hopeless. These diaries, stockpiled in archives and sitting untouched in homes of Holocaust survivors, desperately warrant publication. Such is the diary of Fela Szepe.

Fela was born in 1918 in Dąbrowa Gornicza, a city in Zagłębie, Poland—the

eldest daughter of Avraham and Chava Szeps, sister to Batsheva and Moshe. As a teenager, she joined the Gordonia youth movement and was appointed head of the movement's local branch. After graduating high school she began studying psychology and philosophy at the university in Warsaw and started training for *Hagshama* (Zionist fulfillment) and immigration to Palestine. The war put an abrupt end to her plans.

In February 1942, Fela and Batsheva—accompanied by their father—arrived at the *Judenrat* offices in Dąbrowa Gornicza following the *Judenrat's* decree requiring youngsters to sign up for work in labor camps. (The Schmeldt Organization—a financial organization directly subordinate to Heinrich Himmler—intended to utilize the local Jewish work force, one stage before the Jews were deported and murdered in the East.) To their astonishment, the young girls were forbidden to return home, despite having no appropriate clothing or equipment with them. They were

sent by truck to a transit camp in Sosnowiec where they remained for a few days awaiting deportation.

On the day of their deportation, the sisters' mother waited outside the camp, and threw them a small suitcase over the fence with essential personal items. As SS guards led the girls to the train station, they heard their mother cry: "Children, remember, remember." From that moment on, Fela struggled with her mother's final words, trying to decipher their meaning.

Fela and Batsheva were deported with some 200 other young women to a textile factory at the forced labor camp for Jews in Grünberg, Germany (today in Poland). While there, Fela greatly influenced hundreds of young female prisoners, serving as an enlivening spirit in the camp's cultural activities, initiating in-depth discussions and lectures, writing satirical essays on camp life, and attempting to maintain a degree of normalcy under anything but normal conditions. It was there, as well, where she started

affected the lives of the Jewish prisoners, dissipating any remaining element of hope and making previously harsh conditions intolerable: "Will we survive in order to continue weaving the thread of life?" Fela wondered in her diary. "Life goes on and repeats itself at a steady pace. There is no answer. When will an answer finally come?"

At the end of January 1945, the prisoners of the Grünberg camp were led on a death march that lasted for over three months, spanning thousands of kilometers. One group was led through the Flossenbürg camp to Bergen-Belsen and a second group was sent towards Bavaria and Czechoslovakia. Fela and Batsheva were in the second group. In the little backpack she prepared prior to her departure, Fela concealed her greatest treasure and most valuable record for future generations—her diary. Through her diary, she would tell the world of the suffering forced upon millions by a dictatorship and would sound a warning for the future.

art a Flame was Burning

The Diary of Fela Szeps

"They talk a lot here about keeping a diary. Everyone agrees that there are so many things that must be documented, things that do not occur in normal life... One often feels like picking up a pencil and doing something with it, writing some of that which is buried in the depths of the heart, that chips away beneath the level of consciousness without respite... I will do my best to write everything down chronologically, although I do not remember exact dates. Anyway, we live here unaware of the passing time... I want to write today... to bequeath [my writings] to those who survive."

—from the diary of Fela Szeps

to keep a diary detailing the tremendous transformation her life and the lives of others had undergone.

Fela began her diary with an account of her deportation and first days in the camp, when there was still hope that the course of history and human morality would overcome evil. Soon, the gravity of her situation and her growing desperation became apparent in her writing: "We have not performed any miracle of rebellion, although they have oppressed and abused us relentlessly. Only in the depths of our hearts is the flame still burning." She described the pain of the terrible moment she realized she no longer had a home or family and was alone in a cruel world marked by exploitation and death. By the last page of the diary (at which point she was unable to continue writing due to the start of the death march), Fela was already extremely ill, weak, despairing, and hopeless.

June 1945 witnessed organizational changes in the Grünberg camp. The Schmeldt Organization was disbanded and its tens of forced labor camps were converted into sub-camps under the administration of the Gross-Rosen concentration camp. This change immediately

Under heavy guard, the prisoners plodded along icy roads, slept in barns and under the stars, and were denied food and drink. They were constantly beaten, and those who did not keep pace were shot. In the beginning of May 1945, the few surviving prisoners were abandoned near the former Czechoslovakian city, Volary. A unit of the American fifth division found them and brought them to a makeshift hospital. Seventy-five percent of the 118 women were severely fatigued and ill, and in the days following, 26 women died. On 9 May, the day the war officially ended, Fela Szeps perished. Her sister, Batsheva, eulogized her: "My sister, dearer to me than anything, with the arrival of the personal freedom we have awaited so long, your young, short life has tragically ended—alas—at this moment."

Fela's original diary was donated to the Yad Vashem Archives by Batsheva Admoni (*née* Szeps) and Moshe Szeps and will soon be published by Yad Vashem. The photograph is courtesy of Bernard Robinson in the memory of Emily Mary Reichman Robinson.

The author is the Director and Senior Editor of the Publications Department

The Legacy of Holocaust Survivors

In The Words of the

Yad Vashem, together with the Centre of Organizations of Holocaust Survivors in Israel and the Claims Conference is holding an international conference “The Legacy of Holocaust Survivors—the Moral and Ethical Implications for Humanity” from 8-11 April. The conference—devised to honor the many achievements of Holocaust survivors while providing them a platform to bequeath their final messages—was initiated by Holocaust survivors themselves. *Yad Vashem Jerusalem* spoke with several of the conference’s architects, guest speakers, and prominent figures about the main impetus for the conference and its significance at this point in human history.

Avner Shalev—Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate:



“The unique, historical international conference in Jerusalem ‘The Legacy of Holocaust Survivors’ will honor not only the survivors’ many achievements, but enable them to bequeath an important legacy of the Holocaust to future generations—their post-war morality and virtue.”

“Unlike any others, survivors speak with the moral authority of eyewitnesses. Their remarkable contributions to Holocaust education remain unparalleled; their words recalling first-hand experiences—moments of human anguish and triumph. In the post-Holocaust era survivors continue to address complex issues like how is it possible to rebuild a world based on ethical values and human hopes. Who better to raise their voices in an emphatic response against hatred and inhumanity than Holocaust survivors? Their dedication to society in spite of humanity’s past failures best illustrates how justice and morality can prevail. Their message will resonate to the world at large, reinforcing the imperative that we not only continue to explore the lessons of the past, but educate the leaders of the future.”

Zvi Gil—Chairman of the Public Affairs Committee, Centre of Organizations of Holocaust Survivors in Israel, Journalist, Author:



“The lessons of the Holocaust are all the more relevant today. All the same human defects that served as a breeding ground for the *Shoah*—racism, discrimination, the trouncing of human dignity, the persecution of minorities, antisemitism, domination, and the absence of tolerance—still exist today. Now, like then, they are not negligible factors but are actively at work in the most developed and sophisticated nations. In the spirit and words of the Passover *Haggada*: ‘In every generation one must see himself as if he was there.’ With one exception: here we are not speaking about the Exodus of Egypt, but of events that occurred only 60 years ago. The lessons of the Holocaust are not pertinent to other nations alone, but should be heeded first and foremost by us from within.”

“As the one who conceived of this conference, I see its primary importance in ensuring that the survivors impart their message before their time on life’s stage expires. In doing so they draw the world’s attention to their final ‘will and testament’—the bequeathing of a moral and value-based mandate for humankind. Since their arrival to Israel, Holocaust survivors have busied themselves with resettlement and the development of the country, abstaining from focusing on themselves as ‘survivors’ and allowing others to speak on their behalves. This time they are asking to speak in their own voices.”

Moshe Sanbar—Chairman, Centre of Organizations of Holocaust Survivors in Israel:



“The *Shoah* is not relevant to Jews alone; it has universal applications. These include acting against racism and all forms of oppression—whether emerging from prejudices such as ethnic

background, skin color, or religion—and countering the slogan ‘the end justifies the means.’ If we do not act against these phenomena at an early stage they will become a growing trend ending up as a political power that is hard to counteract.”

“It is essential that the conference be held at this particular moment in time because this is the last chance for this generation of survivors to voice their message to future generations. Also, after what we witnessed at the UN conference in Durban—where a conference targeting human rights was misused for political purposes and platforms of racism and hatred—this conference became all the more necessary. We, the survivors of the *Shoah*, would like to emphasize at this conference our wish for less hatred among human beings and our hope for a better life for everyone everywhere without any political considerations.”

An International Conference

Architects, Guest Speakers, and Prominent Figures

Aleksander Kwaśniewski—President of the Republic of Poland:



“When we look at this past century, we see how deeply it was marked by violence and crime. The two world conflicts left countless victims of ethnic and religious persecution and were a tragic experience for people on all continents. Among these horrific events was the tragedy of the Jewish people—a people doomed by the Nazis for final extermination. For me as a Pole, the legacy of the Holocaust is even much

clearer—half of all Polish citizens who perished during WWII were Polish Jews. In the words of my great compatriot Pope John Paul II, the Holocaust is a ‘non-removable stain of our century.’”

“The experience of the Holocaust should not, and cannot be forgotten. The Holocaust was the greatest crime ever—a crime committed not only against the Jews, but also against humanity. This tragic experience binds all nations of the world to fight for peace and human rights, for freedom and democracy, for solidarity of human beings. We must not allow a rebirth of racism and xenophobia; we cannot tolerate antisemitism. The whole world owes it to the Jews, but also to the future generations. I’m full of hope that this conference will lead us in this direction.”

“Today, Holocaust remembrance and the comprehension thereof are the hardest intellectual and moral challenges humanity must face in order to advance into the future with dignity and the sense of security. It is up to us to prepare future generations so they can responsibly judge those catastrophic events. To do so we need to intensify our efforts in Holocaust education and educate our youth in the spirit of mutual respect and open-mindedness. It is especially important now, when the last witnesses guarding the memory of Holocaust are passing away. This is our responsibility, from which we cannot escape. I deeply believe that the conference ‘The Legacy of Holocaust Survivors’ will help us forge our will into action.”

Rabbi Israel Meir Lau—Chief Rabbi of Israel:



“In my opinion, the central message of the Survivors’ Conference—taking place 57 years after the Holocaust at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, the Nation’s eternal capital—is the Jewish people’s capacity to survive, and the realization of the prophecy of the dry bones with the establishment of the State of Israel. ‘...Thus saith the Lord God: Behold... I will bring you into the land of Israel (*Ezekiel 37:12*).’”

“This stage in human history indicates an increase in antisemitic phenomenon throughout the world, including neo-Nazism and even Holocaust denial. ‘The Legacy of Holocaust Survivors Conference’ in Jerusalem is a response to the antisemitism evidenced at the Durban Conference. It also undoubtedly provides final evidence of the Holocaust as a lesson to humankind of our duty to do everything possible to prevent a repetition of such appalling events.”

Professor Elie Wiesel—Holocaust Survivor, Nobel Prize Laureate, Author:



“There have been and still are many people writing on the Holocaust. With some exceptions, most of them are commentators, analysts and interpreters. But only survivors could tell the tale whose authenticity remains unequalled. And their numbers are dwindling. Our moral message must carry the weight of a warning. We owe it to the dead and to the children yet unborn.”

“The tragedy that befell the Jewish people affected all people. It is true that not all victims were Jews, but all Jews were victims.”

Per Ahlmark—Former Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden, Author:



“The survivors have seen things that the rest of us cannot even imagine. What are they telling us? First, we must remember what so many of them have achieved. I admit I cannot understand how survivors of the Nazi horrors could speak, teach, build, create, and make other people strong, wise, and happy. But that is exactly what thousands and thousands of them have done. Also, I have tried to grasp two of their messages. Always fight antisemitism! Always resist dictatorships! By giving humanity both these commandments, the survivors have probably saved us from many disasters and follies. My life was changed when I started to understand what they meant. In short, we have to listen to the survivors in order to survive.”

Mordechai (Motke) Eldar



Mordechai (Motke) Eldar was born in 1929 in Campulung la Tisa, Transylvania to a Spinka Chassidic family of six children. In 1940, with the Hungarian occupation of the city, racial laws were inflicted on the Jews. On 16 April 1944, the Jews were forced to assemble in the local school, where their valuables were confiscated. The following day, they were taken to the Slatina ghetto. Motke remembers the hunger and torture in the ghetto and Hungarian fascist youth tearing off his father's beard.

On 23 May, the Jews were instructed to report to the town's soccer field, where they were beaten and marched to the train station while dogs ran alongside them, biting them. They were then forced into overcrowded cattle-cars. Motke was placed mainly with family members who prayed incessantly throughout the journey.

When they reached Auschwitz, members of the *Sonderkommando* threw them out of the cattle-cars. In the midst of the turmoil that ensued, Motke rushed to stay with his older brother who had been sent to the right. The two were then undressed, disinfected, given striped uniforms, and led to one of the barracks. The next morning, veteran prisoners informed them that their parents had been sent straight to the crematoria. The camp routine of beatings, tortures, public executions, hunger, and suicides on the electrified fence caused Motke to question God's existence.

Following a selection on *Rosh Hashana*, Motke was led to barrack 11—where those sentenced to death were held. As night fell, Motke noticed an open window from which he escaped and hid inside the latrines. When the first prisoners arrived in the morning, Motke blended in with them and returned to his barrack. On *Yom Kippur*, Motke was again selected for death and again escaped through the window in barrack 11. During a selection on *Shmini Atzeret* (the day preceding *Simhat Torah*) Motke and his friends were taken directly to the gas chambers. The men were pushed into the gas chambers, crying, screaming, and reciting the *Shema*. Suddenly, Nazi officers burst inside and removed some 40 men, including Motke. The following day Motke was sent to work as a forced laborer.

In November 1944, Motke was sent to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, and from there to Mauthausen, where the harsh living conditions resulted in many fatalities. Survivors were sent to hard labor at the quarry and Motke was transferred to work in a mine. After three months, in March 1945, the prisoners were marched to Gunskirchen and were abandoned in shacks in the middle of the forest. For the next month until his liberation, Motke remained starved and exhausted in the shack as the floor filled with piles of frozen corpses. Sick with typhus, he dragged himself towards Wels and once there, American soldiers took him to a refugee camp where he was reunited with his uncle. When he recovered enough to leave, he returned home to Transylvania, where he found his two sisters and his aunt.

After the war, Motke tried to immigrate to Palestine with his sisters aboard the *Exodus* ship. On 17 July 1947, they arrived at the Haifa port, but were immediately sent back to Hamburg. In June 1948, after a year in Germany, Motke arrived at the Tel Aviv port aboard the *Kedmah* ship, and continued from there to an immigrant camp in Hadera. He served in the IDF for 30 years, suffering a head injury during one of the battles in Hulda and achieving the rank of lieutenant general. Motke has two sons and six grandchildren.



Mordechai Eldar's document proving his passage aboard the *Exodus* ship

Torchlight

by Ossi Kupfer

Esther Zamri



Esther Zamri *née* Hazan was born (most probably) in 1936 in Ciechanowiec, Poland—the youngest daughter to an affluent family of five children.

In 1939/40, her father was taken from their house, either by communists or rioters and never returned. In 1941, a ghetto was established in the city. Esther's two older brothers fled the ghetto, but were shot and killed. Her mother escaped with the three youngest children to the Bialy's home—a family of farmers who agreed to hide them.

Initially Esther and her family lived in the barn, lying silently in the hay during the day and stretching their legs and eating their meager food rations (provided by the father, Kazimierz) at night. After a few months, when rumors circulated that the Germans were beginning to search for Jews in the village, Kazimierz hid the family members in various places including a pigsty and the woods.

When the situation worsened, Kazimierz took the family to the fields, put them in sacks, and covered them with cow manure. They remained there for two months with minimal food. Starving and desperate, Esther's mother took her eldest son, Itche, to beg for food—an act that cost them their lives. Esther heard her mother scream: "Don't kill me—I have young children..." and the sound of two gunshots. That night, Esther's other brother, Arieh, ventured outside and found the two bodies.

Esther tempered her reaction to their deaths following her mother's orders to survive: "Do not talk. Lie silently during the day and hide." They were always to stick together and share the little they had.

For the next few months, Esther and Arieh remained in the field, hidden under sheaves of wheat, with Kazimierz's help. Following the Russian liberation of the area, Kazimierz took the two children home to Ciechanowiec, where they were reunited with their

uncle and his family, who had also been hidden by farmers. The devoted Bialy family had hidden Esther and Arieh for three years.

After the war, intent on living in a "Jewish state," Esther and her brother joined a *Hashomer Hatzair* group, and arrived in Palestine in 1945. Arieh went to Kibbutz Gan Shmuel and Esther to Kibbutz Merchavia, where she still lives today.

About ten years ago, Esther and Arieh went to their hometown to visit their rescuers. In 1991, Kazimierz and Janina Bialy were recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations. Esther has four children and nine grandchildren.



Esther Zamri (left) with her mother in front of their house in Ciechanowiec pre WWII

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O v a d i a B a r u c h



Ovadia Baruch was born in Salonika in 1922 to a family of seven children. They lived in the Jewish neighborhood of the Baron Hirsch and he and his sisters studied at a Hebrew school.

In June 1942, Hitler's racial laws were applied to the Greek Jews and the Baron Hirsch neighborhood was transformed into a ghetto. On 15 March 1943, the ghetto residents were ordered to buy one-way train tickets to an unknown destination. The following morning they were loaded onto cattle-cars—100 per compartment, without food, water, or amenities.

When they finally arrived at their destination seven days later, the cattle-car doors were flung open, and search lights were thrust into their faces. SS soldiers awaited the passengers shouting, whipping them, and throwing them onto the platform. In the confusion, Ovadia lost his family members and never saw them again. Initially—due to the language barrier and the uniforms worn by the inmates—the Salonika Jews thought they had been taken to a mental asylum, not Auschwitz.

Following their arrival, Ovadia was among a group of Greek young men who passed Mengele's selection and were taken to Auschwitz I. They were immediately sent to work. Not knowing German, they had difficulty understanding instructions and were constantly beaten.

After a while, due to the hard labor, harsh conditions, and constant torture, only five of the group survived. It was decided the remaining five should be murdered. However a young, German-speaking Greek prisoner, Ya'akov Maestro, saved them, insisting their professional skills could be utilized. The lie was quickly exposed and Ovadia was beaten.

During one of his most terrible beatings—having been caught for stealing food—Ovadia screamed out in his mother-tongue Ladino: "*Ho, Madre,*" (Oh, Mother). A young prisoner from Salonika, Aliza Tzarfati, heard his screams and recognized the language. Ovadia fell in love with the beautiful young woman immediately and for the next three months they exchanged notes. In his final note Ovadia wrote: "If by chance we are released, we will marry."

In January 1945, Ovadia was sent on a death march to Germany via Dachau, Mauthausen, Gusen I, Gusen II, and Melk. On 5 May 1945, Ovadia was liberated by two American soldiers who brought him to a hospital. When he recovered, he was taken to Mauthausen and placed with other Greek former prisoners. In the summer of 1945, Ovadia returned to Greece.

Since his family's house in Salonika had been bombed, he set up temporary home in the synagogue with other survivors. As other Jews began to return to the city, lists of survivors were compiled and posted. One day, when checking the list, he found Aliza's name and was overjoyed. Ovadia wished to marry Aliza immediately, but she had reservations, as in Auschwitz she had been subjected to medical experiments leaving her sterile. This did not dissuade Ovadia. After agreeing to Aliza's condition that they immigrate to Palestine, they married and immigrated illegally to Palestine in a fishing boat.

They settled in Hod Hasharon and after some time—to their delight and utter surprise—Aliza conceived. The Jewish doctor who had operated on her in Auschwitz had mercifully left her with one ovary—an act that cost him his life. Aliza gave birth to a boy, and after some time, a girl.

Aliza died eight years ago. Ovadia has five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.



Prisoner's uniform worn by Ovadia Baruch

Loti (Nomi) Lang



Loti (Nomi) Lang *née* Zaler was born in 1933 in Sarajevo, to a family of three children. In 1941, following the German shelling of the city and rumors of an imminent German invasion, Loti's father paid a Muslim acquaintance to take 8-year-old Loti and her brother, 12-year-old Miko to his parents' home in the village. Loti remembers leaving her mother crying at the train station while her father ran frantically buying fruit to shove through the train-car window. That was the last

time she saw her parents and eldest brother.

Mid-way through the journey, the family acquaintance let the children off the train and disappeared. Alone, the children agreed to look for their grandparents when daylight broke. Yet to their bitter disappointment, when they finally found the village, their grandmother turned them away, sending Miko to a nearby village to shepherd and Loti to a monastery to be cared for by nuns.

After three months, Loti was sent back to the village where she wandered around offering shepherding and sock-mending services for food and board. She maintained contact with Miko, sometimes meeting him in the fields. One day Miko announced he was joining the partisans: "When the war is over, I will come back for you. If



Girls play chess at the Belgrade orphanage where Loti (Nomi) Lang resided at the end of the war

I do not return—it means I did not succeed." Despite being left alone, Loti was a strong girl, and under her leadership the village children collected ammunition from a German guard's post for the partisans.

In 1944, a letter affixed to a photo of Miko was tossed at Loti from a passing truck. In the letter, Miko promised to arrive in two weeks—a promise he kept.

At the war's end, Loti was sent to a Belgrade orphanage and Miko to a dormitory for orphaned students in Breso, Czechoslovakia, to learn a profession. On one of Miko's visits, he told Loti about their family's fate: their parents had perished and their older brother's fate remained unknown.

At the age of 13, Loti returned to Sarajevo and from there continued on to her grandparents' village. Her grandmother had died but her grandfather welcomed her warmly.

Three years later, in 1948, Miko, Loti, the siblings' grandfather, his daughter, and Erwin Lang—who had been with Loti in the orphanage and who later married her—illegally immigrated to Palestine. Loti and Erwin joined Kibbutz Mishmar Ha'Emek and Miko went to Sha'ar HaAmakim. Following her army service at the nursing school in Tel Hashomer, she dedicated herself to the profession for some 40 years. Erwin and Loti have two daughters and five grandchildren. Miko died five years ago.

Torchlighters

Professor Kalman Perk

2002



Professor Kalman Perk was born in 1930 in Kovno, Lithuania to an affluent Zionist family. He and his sister attended the Hebrew Gymnasium, and their home was filled with talk about immigration to Palestine.

In 1940, the Soviets entered Kovno, confiscating all "Capitalist" property and arresting the bourgeoisie. Kalman's father was not arrested because at the time he was ill and was therefore hospitalized.

In June-July 1941, following the Soviet retreat, the Lithuanians killed around 10,000 Jews. The Germans

then entered Kovno and in August 1941 the city's 30,000 Jews were sent to a ghetto in the Slobodka neighborhood. During this time, the young Kalman adopted his sick father's identity, working as a forced laborer in the Kovno airport in exchange for a morsel of bread. In the following months, many *aktions* were carried out in the ghetto and thousands of people were sent to the Ninth Fort and murdered.

In 1944, Kalman's sister left to join the partisans; she was never heard from again. In July 1944—with rumors of the ghetto's impending liquidation—the Perks hid in the cellar. They were soon forced to abandon their hiding place due to German-ignited fires which spread from house to house.



Kalman Perk's family pre-WWII

The family was taken to the train station, and placed in a packed cattle-car. Their compartment had a small opening in the barbed-wire window. One passenger managed to enlarge the opening enabling Arka, Kalman's skinny cousin, to jump to his death. Kalman's mother pleaded for her son to escape: "He looks like a gentile, he is mischievous—he will stay alive." His father scooped him up and before throwing him out told him: "Kalman, *du zolst zein a mensch*" (Kalman, be a good person). The message—to survive, to be someone, and to tell his story—has remained with Kalman to this day.

Kalman continued eastward to the Russian front, adopting a Lithuanian identity. He traveled through many villages, staying with families unaware of his Jewish identity. A female farmer guessed his origins but helped him nonetheless, promising not to betray him. He also encountered Russian soldiers who treated him as a prisoner of war until his identity was clarified. They then handed him over to a Jewish officer who sent him to a boarding school near Moscow.

Kalman eventually returned to Kovno, determined to immigrate to Palestine. He traveled through Vilna, Bialystok, Warsaw, Lublin, and Venice, all the time corresponding with an uncle living in Jerusalem. His uncle managed to obtain an immigration certificate for Kalman and Kalman arrived in Palestine in 1945.

Following service in the *Lehi* and the IDF, Kalman studied to be a veterinarian in Switzerland. Back in Israel, he founded the Department of Anatomy and Physiology and the Koret School of Veterinary Medicine at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Today he researches viruses and cancer. He is married and has two sons and five grandchildren.

Michael Urich



Michael Urich was born in 1934 in Tarnopol, Poland—the only son of a well-established family. Following his birth, the family moved to Warsaw. In 1940, all Warsaw Jews were transferred to a ghetto. Frightened and anxious, Michael was left at home alone unsure whether his parents would return each day from work.

In 1942, matters worsened prompting Michael's parents to escape and send him to live with a Polish family in order to save him. At the moment of his departure Michael's father told him: "They say the

situation will get worse. There is no food here, nothing. Perhaps with this family you will survive." Michael's mother sewed his name, his origins, and his date of birth into his coat hem and then sent him to live with an elderly Polish woman, Helena Stachowicz, as one of her relatives. Stachowicz already had a son, seven years Michael's senior who knew of Michael's origins but kept them a secret. Still, Michael always knew who he was and that he was forbidden to reveal his identity to anyone.

In 1944, following the Polish Uprising in Warsaw, Polish citizens—including the Stachowicz family—were sent to Buchenwald.

Helena's husband was murdered, leaving her alone with the two children. Michael remembers the hunger, the search for coal for heating, the wagons carrying the dead, and the crematoria. They witnessed a number of *aktions* and constantly feared for their lives.

After the liberation of the camp, Helena searched for Jews to raise Michael and found a Polish Jewish officer, Rabbi Dr. Ya'acov Avigdor. Avigdor took Michael to Switzerland and placed him in a *Poalei Agudat Israel* orphanage. Young survivors from Auschwitz and Buchenwald studied at the institution, where Michael remained for a year. He attempted to trace his parents' fate but was unsuccessful.

In June 1946, Michael immigrated to Israel with the help of the Jewish Agency. He studied at an institution for Holocaust survivors in B'nei Brak and at various yeshivas, ultimately being ordained as a rabbi. In 1965, his uncle, also a Holocaust survivor, visited him in Israel only to die a few months later.

Twenty years ago, Michael received a letter from Poland detailing his father's fate: he had joined the partisans in Sterdin and was killed along with 70 other Jews during a German pursuit aimed at avenging the murder of a German soldier killed by the partisans. To this day his mother's fate remains unknown. Michael corresponded with Helena Stachowicz frequently by mail until her death in 1958. Around six months ago, Helena Stachowicz was recognized by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Among the Nations.

Michael founded an information center for Holocaust survivors in B'nei Brak to aid them with daily problems and provide information on compensation procedures. Michael has three children and eight grandchildren.



Michael Urich in front of the former Buchenwald camp

“ My loved ones; my dear Zanecko, sweet Genius, dear Henio! I am writing to you in the most difficult and tragic circumstances imaginable. I am alive (still!) in the territories occupied by Hitler. I don't know if this letter will ever reach you; I hope it will. The man to



Walenty Laxander

A Last Letter and a Precious “Bundle”

whom I give it, is reliable and worthy of honor, love, and consideration... If indeed there is a merciful God whom we were taught to love and trust but who has disappointed me, then this letter will reach you.”

Thus begins Szymek (Shimon) Ginsberg's last will and testament, written only days before the liquidation of the Czystylow labor camp, near Tarnopol (today part of the Ukraine), June 1943. This



Gizela Zeissel (née Ginsberg)

letter, along with a “bundle” of inestimable value, was entrusted to Walenty Laxander—a Polish engineer—to deliver to Shimon's sister and brother in far-away Haifa at the war's end. Shimon had become acquainted with Laxander during the war years when Laxander served as the office manager of the labor site outside the Czystylow camp where Shimon worked.

The “bundle” accompanying this letter, was none other than two-month-old Gizela Anna Zofia Darmont—Shimon and Zofia Distelfeld's only child. Shimon had met Zofia (a refugee from Jaroslaw) during the war. On 17 April 1943, she gave birth to their daughter under the worst imaginable circumstances

“The life of Jews under German rule, is a series of tortures, suffering, and horrors—one big pogrom,” wrote Shimon. “Whatever history tells us about the affliction of Jews in Egypt, Spain, or Russia—is nothing compared with what we are experiencing now... Our parents, do you remember our sweet mother and our father? They were deported to Belzec and murdered... Iko, Berta, Pola... all murdered in a pogrom in Zbaraz. Right now we are alive... As I write these lines, a mass murder of Jews has

begun. Soon, there will be no-one left...”

Realizing the increasing danger, the couple arrived at the painful decision to give up their child, hoping that by doing so, she would be saved. According to their plan, Walenty Laxander would enlist the help of a local doctor to smuggle the baby out of the labor camp in a hand-made crib and leave her on a pre-designated street in Tarnopol. At a set time, Laxander would collect the child and register her with the authorities.

True to his word, Walenty Laxander had Gizela smuggled out of the camp and retrieved her from Tarnopol. Having registered her as an abandoned child, he took her home and raised her as his own.

In his letter, Shimon refrains from providing Laxander's name “in order not to jeopardize him,” yet assures his relations that they will certainly “recognize this angel in human dress... Thanks to him, my wife and I are still alive; thanks to him our daughter is alive and will live. One day, you'll hear the truth from him...”

After the war, Laxander tried unsuccessfully to find the girl's relatives in Israel in accordance with Shimon's parting request to his siblings that: “should someone ever contact you... I ask you—with one foot already in the next world—I

The Rescue of a Two-Month-Old Child

Handwritten Polish text from Shimon Ginsberg's final letter, dated June 1943. The text discusses the author's situation in the Czystylow labor camp and his decision to entrust his two-month-old daughter to Walenty Laxander for safe passage to Haifa.

Excerpt from Szymek (Shimon) Ginsberg's final letter

ask with all my heart to search and find this infant and give her all that I was unable to give her—parenthood... Believe me, my dear ones, the worst possible description is nothing compared to our sad reality. Stay healthy. I part forever from you in my name and in my Zofia's name... Yours, from one dying a slow death, although healthy and strong and wishing so much to live... Your brother, Szymek (Shimon), and your sister-in-law, Zofia.”

Contact was finally established between Laxander and Gizela Zeissel's (née Ginsberg) relatives in Haifa, culminating in her visit to Israel in 1957. Having lived so many years under Laxander's care, Gizela had become extremely attached to her adoptive father, and following the visit with her relatives, decided to remain under his guardianship.

Following Walenty Laxander's death, Gizela gave Yad Vashem her natural father's final letter, requesting that Laxander's memory be honored for his righteous deeds. In 1996, Yad Vashem recognized Walenty Laxander as a Righteous Among the Nations.

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

by Shachar Leven

Artist and musician, Isaac Schoenberg (1907-1942), lived in an inner world of beauty, color, and music intensified by an immense love for his “*grand amour*, Chanuszi”—Chana Zilberman. From their very first meeting until Schoenberg’s tragic death, the couple shared an idyllic union, enjoying much happiness and sustaining themselves in times of despair with their mutual love.

In 1933, with the rise of Nazism, Isaac Schoenberg left Frankfurt—where he had been studying engraving, miniature painting, and silk painting—and went to Paris to discover the thriving world of art. Several years later he met Chana Zilberman, an amateur painter who had just relocated to France from Poland. For nearly two years the couple’s relationship flourished, culminating in their engagement.

1st Letter Written in Yiddish

16 May 1941

Chanuszi, love of my life

It is already a week since I saw you, and I have received no sign of life from you; I dare to hope that there is no serious reason for this. I have already written five letters to you... Today I am writing to you for the first time in Yiddish. My darling Chanuszi, you cannot imagine how much comfort a few words from you would bring me; I wait for a letter from you as a thirsty man waits to quench his thirst... My darling Chanuszi, if I can stay in touch with you, I will survive this difficult period; as long as I hear nothing from you, I am on

Mon Grand Amour, Chanuszi

A Story of 2

edge day and night... I can only think of you, wondering what you are doing, how you are. In the evening, when I lie in the barracks, unable to sleep, I call you softly, breathing your name into the straw on which I sleep. Perhaps you hear me; there is no distance between our souls, and I always feel you close to me...

Outside it is raining; here, in my barracks, there are another 180 people. The feverish agitation is indescribable; they call out to each other, discuss things loudly, and try to make themselves heard by shouting louder than each other. There are however more reserved persons among us, and I already have some good friends here; I have become their secretary and I carry out all sorts of works of writing and drawing for them...

If you need money for your personal needs, please don't make a fuss, because I cannot live with the idea that, heaven forbid, you lack for anything. Go out often, get some fresh air, try to entertain yourself pleasantly; go to see your aunt often, because I sense that there you feel more at ease. Let me have news of everything: how you spend your time, what is happening with your documents, and above all your health... Do not worry about a thing; everything will be fine if we keep up our morale. For that have faith; do not lose courage and remember always that there is someone who loves you with a love stronger than any other that exists, and who is ready to do anything to see you joyful and to make you happy.

I have to sign off unfortunately; I love you very much and in my mind I kiss your sweet eyes and a thousand other marvelous places.

Your ever-faithful Iso

My regards to everyone

On 14 May 1941, Isaac and Chana’s world was shattered. During the first of three collective arrests of foreign-born Jews in occupied France that year, Schoenberg was captured from his hotel room and was taken to Pithiviers camp. There he was interned with 1,700 other Jewish prisoners until 25 June 1942. During this period, Schoenberg made two sketches of Chana and composed more than 140 letters detailing life in the camp, his hopes for the future, and above all, his overpowering love for her. Despite the ban on the use of Yiddish at the time, he nonetheless wrote most of his letters in his mother-tongue to ensure privacy. These letters were smuggled out of the camp, while the few he wrote in near-perfect French were sent legally, but passed through strict censors.

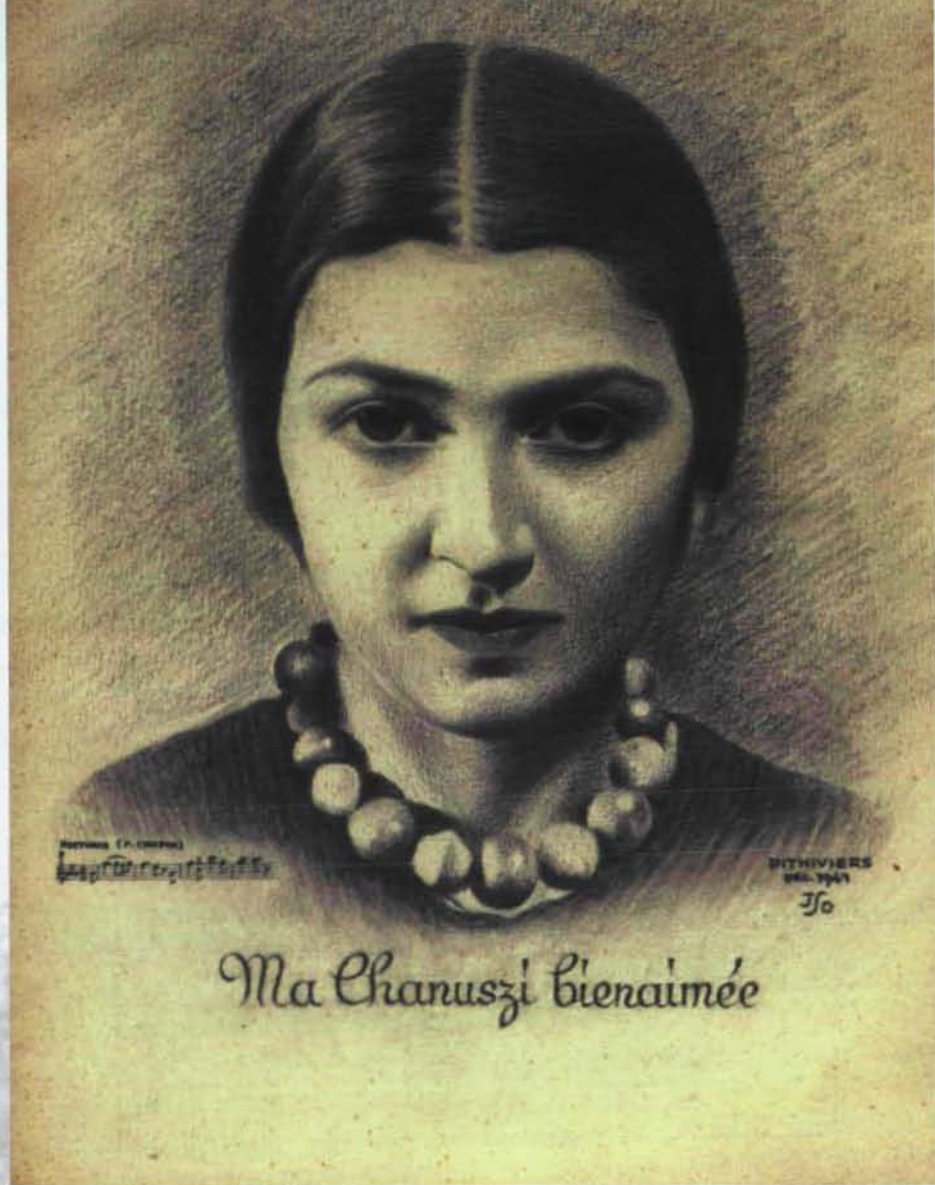
Schoenberg suffered tremendously from the separation from his fiancée, along with the pervasive fear that Chana would also be captured and imprisoned. His greatest solace came from receiving

the letters and parcels she sent him to Pithiviers. He also found some comfort by immersing himself in Beethoven symphonies, which recalled memories of prior, joyful times with Chana. They renewed his hope that the brutality and demoralization he was experiencing would soon be abated, as the world—humane as he believed it to be—would not tolerate such injustice.

On 25 June 1942, Schoenberg was sent to Auschwitz (aboard convoy no. 4) where he perished on 5 August 1942, only five weeks after his arrival. Chana, who was only 28-years-old at the time, survived the Holocaust heartbroken at the loss of her beloved fiancée.

Following the cessation of the war she married Schoenberg’s best friend, Moïse Morgensztern. Throughout the years of her loving marriage she never forgot her first love, Isaac Schoenberg.

Information in this article was based upon *Isaac Schoenberg Lettres à Chana, Orléans: CERCIL, 1995.*



Isaac Schoenberg (1907-1942), *Ma Chanuszi Bienaimée*, Pithiviers, December 1941, pencil on paper. Gift of Chana Morgensztern

Letter 67

15 December 1941

Chanuszi, my everything,

You have surely received my last three letters, and I hope to receive—today or tomorrow—a little letter from you in French. Now I am sending you by registered mail the little portrait I promised I would make during my stay here... (It's a small portrait of you), I hope you like it... I showed it to the best portrait painter in the camp... and he liked it very much too; he said that it is rare to be able to attach so much expression to a likeness modeled after a photograph. "You must love your fiancée very much," he said to me. "Without a doubt," I replied to him and my eyes began to overflow, and I must have blushed...

...Chanuszi, the truly excellent portrait will be the one I intend to make under your warm gripping gaze and within the familiar calm and comfort of my bliss. That is what I felt with perfect certainty while I was drawing your little portrait. It is due to that hope, Chanuszi, that I hold morally upright during this difficult period, the sure and certain hope, the happiness of having been able to realize the usefulness of beautiful works [of art], under the warm light of my sun, that is you my Chanuszi...

Sketches, More than 140 Letters and Immeasurable Love

Letter 144: Last Letter Written in Yiddish

24 June 1942

Chanuszi, my Chanuszi

I must write a few words to you, because it seems that it is final; we are leaving Pithiviers today.

Three hundred privileged persons will remain. These include men with French wives, those who have many children, some permanent camp workers, and those who are listed as sick.

We do not know exactly where we are being sent. There is much talk about sending us to farms: in France or abroad; we do not know yet. The first selection of those fit for work will be carried out in the place to which we are sent.

My Chanuszi, this is the most difficult ordeal of our lives... Wherever I am, thousands of kilometers away from you, I will feel you near, very near to me, and will hold on to the sole idea of being reunited with you as soon as possible...

Please stay in touch with the other wives of those who are leaving...

Remain in good health and strong, my Chanuszi, my everything, my hope... We must overcome this blow; a hard-fought victory will be our reward.

I send you all my love, my Chanuszi, from your ever-loving Iso who loves you with all his strength, forever and without boundaries ...

Projects Aided by the Claims Conference

In addition to the continuous support provided by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany for the “Yad Vashem 2001” masterplan, the Claims Conference is supporting a variety of important projects at Yad Vashem beginning in 2002.

Thanks to Claims Conference aid, Yad Vashem will continue to carry out its multi-year archival cataloguing project, but at a more rapid pace—cataloguing 160,000 files of Eastern European Holocaust documentation.

Yad Vashem will gather archival information from local, small-town collections in Poland. This documentation will further detail the destruction of thousands of small Jewish communities during the Holocaust.

The Lexicon of the Righteous Among the Nations—a five-volume set paying tribute to the courageous acts of the Righteous Among the Nations—will be published in English over the next two years. Each volume will contain a comprehensive introduction, a summary of stories of rescue, an index for cross-references, maps, a short glossary, and pictures. The volumes will be divided according to geographical location: Holland, France, Poland, Central and Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and the rest of the world.

The comprehensive *History of the Holocaust*—a research project initiated by Yad Vashem and historians from several universities and research institutes—will be published in Hebrew by Yad Vashem and in English in conjunction with the University of Nebraska. The 23-volume-set provides a thorough history of the Holocaust period, focusing on both geographical regions and core issues relating to the *Shoah*, including German and regional policy toward the Jews and the inner Jewish life. A prominent authority in the field will author each volume, with outside experts contributing specialized chapters.

Yad Vashem will embark on a wide-scope project this year, training tour guides to lead youth trips to Poland. This project—supported by the Claims Conference—will include a support system and preparatory aid for youth traveling to Poland in the form of a mobile training unit that will operate at schools throughout Israel.

The Claims Conference will support future seminars for Jewish educators from abroad and teacher training programs for Israeli educators organized by Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Studies. Additionally, the Claims Conference will sponsor a series of two-day seminars that will be conducted in different communities worldwide by International School staff.

Yad Vashem, the Jewish Agency, the Ghetto Fighters’ House, and local Jewish institutions in the former Soviet Union will launch a large-scale project to establish a support system for the Jewish educational network for Holocaust Studies in the FSU. The project will be implemented with aid from the Claims Conference.

During the current year, the possibility of additional aid from the Claims Conference will be considered towards Yad Vashem’s project to launch the names of Holocaust victims on the Internet.

New Exhibit at Yad Vashem: Private Tolkatchev at the Gates of Hell

On 24 February, a new temporary exhibition opened at the Yad Vashem Art Museum displaying the works of Zinovii Tolkatchev’s Majdanek and Auschwitz series. Tolkatchev—a Jew born in White Russia—served as an official illustrator for the Red Army in its documentation unit. In the summer of 1944, he was sent to the city of Lublin, adjacent to the Majdanek death camp. For 35 days, Tolkatchev devoted himself, with virtually no food or sleep, to the Majdanek series. “Hatred guided my brush, urged me on; the brutal reality inflamed my imagination,” he recalled. He worked speedily to complete the series before the trial case of the Majdanek death camp commanders in November 1944; the exhibit opened in the art museum building in Lublin one day before the trial began.



Zinovii Tolkatchev, *Lisa*, 1945, pencil on paper. Gift of Anel Tolkatcheva and Ilya Tolkatchev

Majdanek’s barbed wire fences did not prepare Tolkatchev for his next assignment. At the end of January 1945, he accompanied the Special Committee for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes to Auschwitz, only hours after the Red Army entered the camp. Again, Tolkatchev felt the need to rapidly sketch the sights he witnessed. Finding himself without paper, he entered one of the camp’s former headquarters’ rooms where he found a supply of Nazi stationery. The Nazi letterhead became an integral part of his compositions in the Auschwitz series, giving a symbolic voice

and form to the Nazi soldiers whose figures Tolkatchev refrained from depicting. Almost possessed, Tolkatchev augmented the black and white sketches of all he saw, with lines of literal testimony from the few survivors he met and persuaded to speak.

Until now, Tolkatchev’s art has never been displayed beyond Eastern Europe. This exhibit gives viewers a rare opportunity to see the horrendous truth of the death camps Majdanek and Auschwitz as experienced by a soldier in the Red Army—an artist and a Jew.

The exhibit opened at Yad Vashem in the presence of Tolkatchev’s two children, Ilya Tolkatchev and Anel Tolkatcheva; Counselor for Political Affairs of the Ukraine in Israel, Alexander Levchenko; and Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, Avner Shalev. Survivor of Auschwitz, Chana Greenfield, and Curator of the exhibition, Yehudit Shendar, gave addresses.

Children of the Holocaust: A New Research Project by Elliot Nidam-Orvieto

The International Institute for Holocaust Research has recently launched a highly topical research project—“The Fate of Jewish Children During and Immediately After the Holocaust.” Through historical inquiry (including the study of children’s diaries and child survivors’ testimonies) the project focuses on the fate of Jewish children during the Holocaust and the suffering of child survivors after the war. The project also addresses the unique hardships encountered by this vulnerable segment of the population in various settings, including: ghettos, camps, partisan units, and in hiding.

To support this academic endeavor, the Institute has assembled an industrious team of researchers, who are currently investigating topics including: “The Attempt to Instill a Jewish Identity in Jewish Children During the Third Reich,” “The Rescue of the Children of Villa Emma 1939-1945,” “The Hiding of Jewish Children in Convents in France,” “Youth in Theresienstadt and the Unique Phenomenon of the Czech Family Camp in Birkenau,” “Jewish Refugee Children in Switzerland,” “The Retrieval of Jewish Children Hidden by Christian Families in Poland,” “Children’s Homes in the American Zone between 1945-1948,” and “Memories of Child Survivors who Immigrated to Israel.” Yad Vashem will publish these and other related subject matters in various formats including books and articles within journals.

The project is being supported by the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, headed by Executive Vice President, Dr. Jerry Hochbaum.

Collaboration with the Jewish Agency Expands

This year, Yad Vashem's longstanding cooperation with the Jewish Agency will extend to include a wide-scope project, culminating in the creation of a support system for the Jewish educational network in the former Soviet Union. The project will be further aided by the involvement of the Ghetto Fighters' House and local Jewish institutions in the FSU and through the assistance of the Claims Conference.

The program will consist of several components including: a teacher training seminar for FSU Jewish educators at Yad Vashem; extended activities with Jewish youth in the FSU; instructional activities for Jewish teachers and educational coordinators in the FSU conducted by Yad Vashem and the Ghetto Fighters' House staff; and the production of specially prepared learning materials in Russian for use in the FSU's Jewish education system. These activities will give educators in the FSU the pedagogical tools needed to teach a subject as complex as the Holocaust to Jewish youth in Russia and will strengthen Jewish identity among FSU Jews.

According to Jewish Agency Treasurer, Chaim Chesler: "With the collapse of the communist regime in the FSU, a great window of opportunity opened to help the Jews there learn about their roots and reconnect with the Jewish world. Yet with that opportunity came a serious responsibility: to help fill in the black holes of knowledge the Jews in the FSU have about their history. Central among these holes is the Holocaust. The Jewish Agency and Yad Vashem will work together, in cooperation with other organizations, to meet that responsibility. It is right and fitting that we do so."

This project is among many Yad Vashem activities enabled by the support of the Jewish Agency. Most of these activities are conducted by Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies in the field of education.

The Jewish Agency is also a supporter of the "Yad Vashem 2001" masterplan.



From left to right: Sallai Meridor and Chaim Chesler

Sallai Meridor, Chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive, notes: "The Jewish Agency as a global Jewish organization is a central partner in imparting the values of the Jewish Nation and its history to Jewish education systems in Israel and worldwide. We view Yad Vashem as an important national and international

institution working towards the understanding of the history of Israel. We attribute great importance to our cooperation with Yad Vashem, because Holocaust awareness is not just an educational or historical mission, but rather an issue that carries a present-day significance in the relationship between Israel and the nations of the world."

Dan Bar-On and Julia Chaitin, *Search and Research—Lectures and Papers: Parenthood and the Holocaust*, Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2001, 74 pages.

The effects of Nazism are usually measured by the damage inflicted on the battlefield and the annihilation of the Jewish people and other groups that "threatened" the purity of Aryan blood. In contrast, this study focuses on an unforeseen impact of the Nazis' actions—the capacity of Jewish families to emotionally cope when subjected to Nazi aggression and destruction. The ongoing, long-term impairment of relationships within families of Nazi victims who survived the persecution is also examined.



JANUARY

- 1933: January 30 Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany.
- 1942: January 20 German government ministries and SS departments coordinate the plan to annihilate the 11 million Jews of Europe at the Wannsee Conference.
- 1943: January 18 First Jewish armed resistance in the Warsaw ghetto led by Mordecai Anielewicz.
- 1945: January 17 Raoul Wallenberg disappears from Budapest. He is later designated a Righteous Among the Nations.
- January 27 The Soviet Red Army liberates Auschwitz.



Policemen and soldiers surrounding the bodies of Jews murdered by the Hungarian forces in Novi-Sad, Yugoslavia on 23 January 1942.

FEBRUARY

- 1933: February 27- March 5 Arson of the Reichstag building leads to a wave of arrests and Nazi terror in Germany.
- 1941: February 25 Anti-Nazi strike in Amsterdam.
- 1943: February 2 Germans surrender at Stalingrad.
- February 25 Jews concentrated in the Baron Hirsch quarter of Salonika, Greece pending their deportation.
- 1945: February 1 Forty thousand prisoners sent on a death march from Gross-Rosen concentration camp.



The "Teheran Children"—a group of Polish Jewish children who reached Palestine via Iran in February 1943 due to an agreement between the Polish Government-in-Exile and the Soviet authorities.

MARCH

- 1933: March 22 First concentration camp—Dachau—established.
- 1936: March 15 Mass anti-Nazi rally in New York.
- 1938: March 13 *Anschluss*: Austria annexed by Third Reich.
- 1942: March 17 "Operation Reinhard" commences; first Jews deported to Belzec extermination camp.
- 1944: March 19 German troops enter Hungary.

Information contained in this column can be found in "This Month in Holocaust History" on the Yad Vashem website: www.yadvashem.org

Highlights of Yad Vashem Activity in 2001

Documentation, Photographs, Books, and Names

- 2,400,600 pages of documentation were received; to date Yad Vashem has received over 58 million pages of documentation.
- 27,050 photos were received, including 2,350 photos of Holocaust victims affixed to Pages of Testimony; to date Yad Vashem holds a total of 260,000 photos (including 100,000 photos affixed to Pages of Testimony) of which over 170,000 have been scanned.
- 23,000 Pages of Testimony were received; to date Yad Vashem has computerized 3.2 million names of Holocaust victims, compiled from approximately 2 million Pages of Testimony and various other lists.
- 3,200 titles of books and 850 periodicals were received; to date Yad Vashem houses a total of 87,000 titles of books and 4,000 periodicals in 50 languages.
- 7,430 e-mail, fax, and postal requests were made to the Reference and Information Services Department (Archives, Hall of Names, and Library).
- 12,770 computer searches for names of Holocaust victims were conducted in the Hall of Names.
- 17,510 members of the public visited the Reading Room of the Reference and Information Services Department.
- 4,530 books were loaned from the library.

Holocaust Education

- 74,140 students from Israel and abroad attended study seminars.
- 50,000 Israeli Defence Force (IDF) soldiers and officers participated in study seminars, visits, and programs.
- 17 seminars in 8 languages for 600 educators from 36 different countries were held.
- 2,580 educators from 9 countries attended Yad Vashem's overseas educational programs.
- 12,000 pupils throughout Israel participated in the programming of the Mobile Education Unit.
- 600 Israeli educators graduated from year-long teacher training courses.
- 12 educational publications in 3 languages were printed.

Artworks and Artifacts

- After receiving hundreds of new artworks and artifacts, Yad Vashem's collection contains approximately 7,500 artworks and 20,740 artifacts.

Research and Publications

- 13 seminars, 5 symposiums, and 2 international conferences were held and 22 books in 3 languages were published.

Righteous Among the Nations

- 879 Righteous Among the Nations were honored; to date a total of 19,141 persons have been recognized as Righteous Among the Nations.

Project Birthright Visits Yad Vashem

by Gilat Shilo

“The visit to Yad Vashem was so moving and significant for me; I now feel a sense of duty to contribute to this important cause,” said a participant of Project Birthright as he made a modest donation to Yad Vashem.

Throughout January, close to 1,000 students visited Yad Vashem with Project Birthright—an initiative of Jewish philanthropists, Charles Bronfman and Michael Steinhart, aimed at bringing Jewish youth from the Diaspora on all-expense-paid, first-time tours to Israel.

For many Birthright students, the visit to Yad Vashem marked their first exposure to the Holocaust. In preparation for this important experience, the International School for Holocaust Studies created unique, day-long programs titled “Jewish Identity and Responsibility,” for the students.

Activities for Birthright participants began with lectures from various Holocaust experts, personal testimonies of Holocaust survivors, and workshops on dilemmas such as Jewish identity during the Holocaust. Participants also received comprehensive tours of the Yad Vashem campus. Workshops and activities were conducted by Yad Vashem's Study Seminars Department in a variety of languages in order to accommodate the various Birthright groups.

Project Birthright is currently supported by Jewish philanthropists from the Diaspora, the Jewish Agency, the Government of the State of Israel, Keren Hayesod (the United Israel Appeal), the American UJC, and local Jewish communities worldwide.



As part of the “Yad Vashem 2001” masterplan, the Entrance Plaza (including the Visitors' Center—*Mevoah*, above) is nearing completion and will open later this year. The new Museum Complex is currently in the construction phase (bottom).

Visits at Yad Vashem



Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, Milos Zeman (right), visited Yad Vashem on 17 February. Pictured on left: Dr. Robert Rozett, Director of the Yad Vashem Library.



Hungary's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Janos Martonyi, visited Yad Vashem on 28 January. Following his tour of the site he met with Yad Vashem senior staff to discuss how to advance cooperation in research, education, and archival acquisition.



Speaker of the Austrian Parliament, Dr. Heinz Fischer, visited Yad Vashem on 9 January.



Pierre Saragoussi, General Director of the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah, visited Yad Vashem on 25 February. His visit was prompted by his participation as a guest lecturer at the International Institute for Holocaust Research's symposium "The Holocaust in France—Persecution, Looted Property, and Rescue."



Members of the US police and military forces who heroically participated in the rescue efforts on September 11 in New York and at the Pentagon visited Yad Vashem on 15 February. Pictured on far right: Ephraim Kaye, Director, Seminars for Educators from Abroad.

Recent Highlights at the International School for Holocaust Studies

- January:** English, French, Russian, Hungarian, Spanish, and Portuguese-speaking Birthright groups visit Yad Vashem as part of their two-week tours in Israel.
- January:** Preparation of Israel's Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs' student delegation to Poland.
- 1 January:** Seminar for Israel's Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs' supervisors.
- 2 January:** Israel's Ministry of Education teacher training course on "The Jewish Nation in our Times: Ownership and Commitment."
- 2 January:** Beit Wolyn's evening workshop on "The Fight for Jewish Identity and Survival During the *Shoah*" and screening of the movie *Europa, Europa* at the Tel Aviv Cinematheque.
- 4-14 January:** Seminar for educators from Russia, the Ukraine, and Belarus.
- 8 January:** Teacher training seminar for educators accompanying youth trips to Poland.
- 15 January:** "Adolescents in the Shadow of Persecution Project"—educational activities held in conjunction with the Bimah Theater's production of *Anne Frank*.
- 15 January:** Globus Group Project—educational activities in conjunction with the screening of the movie *Children in the Arms of Strangers* at Globus cinemas throughout Israel.
- 20 January:** Workshop for the Naale directorate (Youth Immigrants without Parents Organization) at Yad Vashem.
- 28 January:** Workshop for members of the Israel Defense Force's (IDF) Office and Staff College.
- 29 January:** Workshop for Education Authority history teachers from the Jerusalem region.
- 31 January:** Seminar for Tel Aviv kindergarten supervisors.
- 4 February:** Tour Guide Training Course for youth trips to Poland.
- 9-14 February:** Workshop at Beit Wolyn for social-education coordinators and coordinators of delegations to Poland from schools in Tel Aviv and the Central region.
- 21 February:** Workshop for school principals from Kiryat Gat and Kiryat Malachi.
- 12 March:** Performance of the Theresienstadt cabaret *Hooray for Life* at Beit Wolyn.
- 13 March:** Training session for kindergarten teachers from the Jerusalem region.
- 14 March:** Conference for librarians from schools in Tel Aviv and the Central region at Beit Wolyn.
- 19 March:** Annual workshop in conjunction with the Fallen Soldiers Department of Israel's Ministry of Defense.
- 20 March:** Workshop for participants of Yad Vashem teacher training seminars in Israel.
- 20 March:** Workshop on the subject of "The Jewish Woman in the Holocaust" for IDF commanders of the women's army corps' main training center (training center 12).
- 7 April:** Workshop for Israel's Chief of Police and General Command Staff.
- 7 April:** Workshop for the Land Force Command of the IDF.
- 8-11 April:** The Legacy of Holocaust Survivors: An International Conference.
- 10 April:** Workshop for the IDF Rabbinate headed by the IDF Chief Rabbi.

W Friends WORLDW



During its 13 February meeting, the Yad Vashem Directorate expressed sincere appreciation to the American Society for Yad Vashem headed by Eli Zborowski (right) and Campaign Chairman of the "Yad Vashem 2001" masterplan, Joseph Wilf (left), for its efforts and activities aimed at generating support for the masterplan during the especially difficult past year.



Major supporters of Yad Vashem, Rudolph and Edith Tessler (left), hosted a brunch for 50 people in Miami Beach in mid-February, at which many new members joined the American Society's Florida Chapter. Guest Speaker was Israel's Consul General to Florida and Puerto Rico, Ambassador Miki Arbel (second from right) and additional speakers included the American Society's Vice Chairman, East Coast, Jack Pechter (right), and Shraga Y. Mekel.

During a visit to Yad Vashem in January, active members of the American Society for Yad Vashem, Rosalie and Teddy Berman of New York (right), pledged to fund the English edition of the Wolfsberg *Rosh Hashana* Prayer Book (*Mahzor*). Rabbi Ari Berman—son of Rosalie and Teddy—visited Yad Vashem in February, as head of a 130-person solidarity mission to Israel from the Jewish Center in Manhattan.



The Education Department of the American Society for Yad Vashem, and the Young Leadership Associates (YLA), held its Fourth Annual Professional Development Conference for New York educators in late January. Addresses and greetings were given by Rochel Berman, Executive Director of the American Society and Dr. Marlene Warshawski-Yahalom, Education Director of the American Society, among others.

Professor Laszlo N. Tauber, a well-known Washington surgeon and philanthropist is establishing the "Fund for Research of the Holocaust in Hungary and Hungarian Jewish History" at the International Institute for Holocaust Research in honor of his daughter, Dr. Ingrid Tauber. One of the fund's aims is to promote research on the role of Jews who saved Jews in Hungary during the Holocaust. Tauber himself saved many Jews in Budapest.



The American Society for Yad Vashem's West Coast Chapter recently held its first Tribute Dinner in Beverly Hills. Four hundred guests participated in the event in honor of Fred Kort, West Coast Chairman and Abraham Spiegel, Chairman Emeritus. Speakers included Avner

Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate; Joseph Wilf, Vice Chairman of the American Society; Mark Palmer, Vice Chairman of the American Society; and Fred Kort.

Among the guests were Barbara Kort and American Society for Yad Vashem members: David and Fela Shapell, Nathan Shapell, Jona and Doretta Goldrich, Max and Anna Webb, Guilford and Diane Glazer, William and Maria Herskovic, Lowell and Sandra Milken, Richard and Ellen Sandler, Dr. Jules and Mickey Lesner, Jack and Gitta Nagel, Stanley and Joyce Black, Jan and Susanne Czucker, Ed and Elissa Czucker, Cheryl Zoller, Kal Berson, William and Rosemary Elperin, Alex and Mira Indich, Sam and Sofia Rotberger, Louis and Trudy Kestenbaum, and Ted and Hedy Orden.

Pictured above: Fred Kort (second from right) receiving the award from Avner Shalev (left), Joseph Wilf (second from left), and Mark Palmer (right).



The second event for the Texas Chapter of the American Society for Yad Vashem was hosted at Bernard Aptaker's (left) home in Houston on 20 January. Speakers included: Houston Mayor, Lee P. Brown; Consul General of Israel, Tzion Evrony (right); and Development Director of the American Society, Shraga Y. Mekel (center). Guests included Bill Morgan, Edith Minberg, Pearl and Meir Monk, Steven Finkelman and many others.

FRANCE



The French Committee for Yad Vashem under the Chairmanship of **Richard Prasquier** (above) held a highly successful reception on 19 March aimed at garnering support for Yad Vashem. The reception was held under the auspices of Israeli Ambassador to Paris, **Elie Barnavi**.

SPAIN



A preparatory meeting for the establishment of the Spanish Society for Yad Vashem took place in Madrid in January. Pictured standing from left to right: **Elias Nir**, **Fernando Olivan**, **Cesar Vidal**, **Isaac Querub**, **Alex Freueck Peck**, **Esther Bendahan**, **Jose David Lefelman**, and **Horacio Kohan**. Seated from left to right: Director of the Ibero-American Desk, **Perla Hazan**; Honorary President, **Max Mazin**; and **Mercedes Chocron**.

GERMANY

At a gathering in Frankfurt on 13 February, **Professor Dr. Rita Süßmuth** (right) was elected Chairman of the **Freundeskreis of Yad Vashem in Germany**. Also elected were first Vice-Chairman, **Prince Albrecht zu Castell-Castell**; Vice-Chairman, **Retired Judge Ines Henn**; Treasurer, **Josef Grotte**; Secretary, **Klaus Peter Becker**; and Members of the Board, **Dr. Frolinde Balsler** and **Charlotte Knobloch**.



ISRAEL

Longtime supporters of Yad Vashem, **Bronia** and **Itzak Kozka**, made an additional donation towards Yad Vashem's commemorative and Holocaust educational activities.

Yad Vashem

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PROGRAM OF EVENTS AT YAD VASHEM

The Eve of Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day

Monday, 8 April 2002

- 20:00 The opening ceremony of Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day, in the presence of Israel's President, Moshe Katsav, and Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon — **Warsaw Ghetto Square**
- 22:00 Symposium: "Years Gone By and the Memory Still Holds Strong... The Memory of the Holocaust from Generation to Generation" with the participation of Roman Frister, Tsippy Gon- Gross, Lizzie Doron, Jacky Levi, and moderator Aharon Barnea — **Lecture Hall, International School for Holocaust Studies**

Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day

Tuesday, 9 April 2002

- 10:00 Siren
- 10:02 Wreath-laying ceremony with the participation of Israel's President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Knesset, President of the Supreme Court, Chairman of the Jewish Agency, Chief of General Staff, Chief of Police, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Mayor of Jerusalem, public figures, representatives of survivors' organizations, school children, and delegations from throughout the country — **Warsaw Ghetto Square**
- 8:30-15:00 Tours, creative workshops, multimedia activities, and meetings with survivors — **International School for Holocaust Studies**
- 10:30-12:50 "Unto Every Person There is a Name"—recitation of Holocaust victims' names by members of the public — **Hall of Remembrance**
- 13:00 Main Memorial Ceremony — **Hall of Remembrance**
- 15:30 Memorial Ceremony for Hungarian Jews who perished in the Holocaust — **Memorial to the Jewish Soldiers and Hall of Remembrance**
- 16:00 Memorial Ceremony for former members of the Jewish Resistance in France — **Auditorium**
- 17:30 Ceremony for youth movements in conjunction with the Israel Information Center, the Youth and Social Administration and the Youth Movement Council of the Ministry of Education — **Valley of the Communities**