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Yad Vashem
Editors’ Remarks

With the High Holy Days recent in our minds, the *Yad Vashem Jerusalem* staff would like to wish all of our readers a happy and healthy new year. May the coming year bring renewed hope, good fortune, and calm in Israel and the world.



Cover: Pre-war Rosh Hashana greeting card with a photo of Pinhas and Moshe, two children who perished in the Holocaust.

by Michal Berman

The precarious security situation in Israel since September 2000 has compelled Israeli society to rethink its priorities. Israel’s security apparatus, and above all the Israel Defense Force (IDF), has had to channel the greater part of its energies into defending Israeli citizens. Because of the tremendous pressure placed upon IDF military units, one might expect a dramatic decrease in the number of army groups visiting Yad Vashem. However, an assessment of the International School for Holocaust Studies’ data shows an increase of visiting soldiers, totaling tens of thousands annually—from all military units and all army ranks.

In order to accommodate the many IDF visits to Yad Vashem, an education unit for the military was created as an offshoot of the

Yad Vashem in the Front

International School for Holocaust Studies’ Study Seminars Department in February 2000. Formed at the initiative of IDF Chief Education Officer, Colonel Elazar Stern, and Dr. Motti Shalem, Director of the International School for Holocaust Studies, the unit’s main objective is to foster the relationship between the army and Yad Vashem. This is achieved by “applying Holocaust lessons to the values of the IDF and the State of Israel,” according to education unit head, Deputy Commander Bat-El Edery.

According to IDF Chief of General Staff, Lt. Gen. Moshe Ya’alon: “The Holocaust marks a pivotal point in the history of the Jewish nation and in the formation of our identity as Jews and Israelis. The memory of the Holocaust and those who were murdered serve as



Colonel Elazar Stern speaks at Yad Vashem’s IDF preparatory session to Poland

cornerstones in the training and education of IDF soldiers and commanders.”

The Spirit of the IDF—the army’s ethical code outlining operational guiding values—is centered upon four sources, the latter three of which Yad Vashem mirrors in its approach to the Holocaust:

1. The IDF tradition and military heritage;
2. The democratic principles, laws, and institutions of the State of Israel;
3. The tradition of the Jewish people throughout the generations;
4. Universal moral values based on the value and dignity of human life.

During a preparatory session at Yad Vashem for an IDF emissary to Poland, Colonel Elazar Stern discussed the importance of fostering the



Soldiers at Yad Vashem’s “No Child’s Play” exhibit



FOSTERING A MORAL FOUNDATION

Lines of IDF Education

third guiding principle—and more specifically, the lessons of the Holocaust: “Dealing with the Holocaust strengthens the soldiers’ connection to the citizens of Israel, further emphasizing the importance of the existence of an independent Jewish state, with a strong and moral army. This relationship need not be unique to Jewish soldiers, but can also apply to Druze and Bedouin soldiers, as well as all those who defend the State. Part of the aim of studying the Holocaust at Yad Vashem and visiting Poland is for IDF soldiers and commanders to apply the moral lessons they learn from that period to their own conduct. This is especially important with regards to their behavior toward Israeli society, in all its facets and also in the way in which they treat their enemies.”



Soldiers in front of the Wall of Remembrance in the Warsaw Ghetto Square

While the IDF elite see great importance in educating soldiers about the Holocaust and facilitating visits to Yad Vashem, is this sentiment shared among young recruits and commanders—those who at times determine policy in the field and are directly responsible for soldiers’ education and training?

Ro’i Lichtenfeld, Deputy Battalion Commander in a Golani brigade, believes that the visit to Yad Vashem is critical. According to him, many of his soldiers visit the site for the first time with the army and in some instances it is their first real encounter with the subject of the Holocaust.

For Eran Cohen, Deputy Battalion Commander in the Oketz unit, the visit is equally important: “In my everyday life I can



Soldier in front of the International School for Holocaust Studies

easily identify with my immediate circles—my military unit, my family. The visit to Yad Vashem helps me extend this identification to the Jewish people and Zionism. Especially at our age, when individualism is such a core value, it is easy to forget higher goals when conducting routine activities. By visiting Yad Vashem, I gain a deeper understanding of the Holocaust, which helps me set higher goals for myself that fit within the framework of my Jewish and Zionist identity.

“These Jewish and Zionist ideals find expression in my combat missions. Being at Yad Vashem helps you understand the significance of the Jewish state for the Jewish people. And it gives purpose to the difficult tasks you must carry out, while helping you understand why you are doing them.”

In an army based upon ethical ideals, IDF soldiers are taught to face such dilemmas in a professional manner. Guy Halevi, Deputy Battalion Commander in a Golani brigade, says of his Yad Vashem visit: “It helps me explain to my soldiers why the State of Israel needs a strong army. Simultaneously, though, it strengthens the value of morality I seek to nurture in my soldiers, reminding them of the moral low to which people have descended in the past. Serving in the Territories, they regularly face such moral dilemmas.

“While the Golani soldiers are not always interested in the IDF’s cultural enrichment activities, the visit to Yad Vashem and the discussion about the Holocaust always greatly affect them. I know that as a commander it is not always possible to integrate cultural enrichment into our daily routine, however visiting Yad Vashem is a top priority for the army and for me, as well. I would not give up this visit.”

The author is the Coordinator of Outreach Programs, Study Seminars Department at the International School for Holocaust Studies



Soldiers at Yad Vashem’s Art Museum

Glaring Evidence: The Auschwitz Album

Yad Vashem Releases Original Photograph Collection

by Shachar Leven

In WWII, between 1 million and 1.35 million Jews (approximately 20 percent of all Jews killed during the Holocaust) were murdered in the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration/extermination camp. In addition to existing written documentation about the camp's operations, Yad Vashem's *Auschwitz Album*—an original collection of 197 captioned photographs—visually depicts the deportation of Jews from Hungary's Carpatho-Ruthenia region to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The *Auschwitz Album* was released this September in a new English-edition by Yad Vashem in conjunction with the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. It was originally discovered by Auschwitz survivor Lili

Jacob (ז"ל) in early April 1945 during the liberation of Dora camp (near Nordhausen). According to Jacob's testimony, she came across the album inadvertently, while searching for warm clothes in a cupboard of an abandoned SS barracks. Upon opening it, she was astonished to recognize photographs of her family and community who had traveled with her on the same transport from Hungary to Auschwitz-Birkenau in May 1944; most of the 3,500-person transport—about 90%—were murdered in the gas chambers within hours of arriving.

The 56-page album is encased in a beige-brown linen hard cover and measures 33 (length) by 25 centimeters (width). The photographs are arranged chronologically, from the deportees' disembarkation from the cattle cars onto the Auschwitz-Birkenau platform, to the subsequent stages of the "final solution of the Jewish question": separation according to sex, *selektion* (for slave-labor or death), final moments prior to extermination, and the sorting of the victims' belongings (by the "Canada" commando). The mass murder itself is not photographed. The title page displays two typical Nazi propaganda style shots of Jews with the handwritten caption "Resettlement of Jews from Hungary" penned underneath.

Who photographed these pictures—unparalleled in terms of their historical import—and for what apparent reason? In most cases, photography was strictly prohibited in Nazi occupied areas—especially in ghettos, camps and places which could be used as evidence against the Nazi regime. This photographic restriction makes the pictures contained in the *Auschwitz Album* all the more unique and puzzling. Not only are the photographs of a professional quality, but the technique used, as well as the multiple locations from which the pictures were shot—on

the Jews' evenhanded treatment. Whatever the reasons, the *Auschwitz Album* photos provide the only known evidence confirming their subjects' arrival at Auschwitz-Birkenau; the Nazi documents, prisoner lists, and statistics from the camp do not include the majority of names of those murdered immediately upon arrival.

Over the years, survivors have used the *Auschwitz Album* to identify relatives who perished. It has also been used as corroborating evidence in war crime trials and to identify Nazi war criminals. In 1980, Lili Jacob donated the



German soldiers await the transport



Disembarkation



Selektion



"Canada" commando sorts victims' belongings

the camp's platform, watchtowers, and cattle-car roofs—indicate the photographer's wide range of mobility within the camp. Further, the public nature of the photographer's work confirms that the photos were taken overtly and with the knowledge of camp officials.

From the time of the album's discovery until the 1963 Frankfurt trials—when Lili Jacob referenced the *Auschwitz Album* while testifying against 22 Nazi criminals who had served in Auschwitz—the photographer's identity remained unknown. The trials however, revealed the photos were not taken by a single photographer, but by two members of the SS: Bernhard Walter, head of Auschwitz's "Identification Service," and his assistant, Ernst Hoffmann. The two were official photographers, responsible for taking portrait shots of all prisoners in the main Auschwitz camp (with the exception of Jews and Gypsies). Walter and Hoffmann were the only two authorized to photograph within the Auschwitz compound.

The rationale behind the photographs was never fully ascertained. They may have been taken for Nazi public relations—documenting the efficient "resettlement" of Jews in the east—or they may have been commissioned as Nazi camouflage—providing deceptive "evidence" of

original album to the Yad Vashem Archives for permanent safekeeping. Prior to the release of the new English edition by Yad Vashem and the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, three previous versions of the album were printed: the first at renowned Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld's initiative in 1980, the second edited by Peter Hellman in 1981, and the third in Germany in 1995.

The updated version contains photographs that did not appear in previous publications, as well as additional information on the deportees' identities and fates. The album includes a foreword by Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, Avner Shalev; a preface by the album's editors, Professor Israel Gutman and Dr. Bella Gutterman; and four scholarly articles: "The Auschwitz Concentration Camp: An Historical Outline" by Dr. Franciszek Piper, "The Annihilation of Hungarian Jewry" by Professor Israel Gutman, "The Story of Lili Jacob" by Dr. Gideon Greif, and "Photographs as Historical Documents" by Nina Springer-Aharoni. Yad Vashem will release a Hebrew edition of the album in 2003.

Information appearing in this article can be found in greater detail in *Yad Vashem's Auschwitz Album* and on the Yad Vashem website: www.yadvashem.org

"See You in Eretz Yisrael..."

Recalling the Life of Aron Menczer

by Malka Tor

"See you in *Eretz Yisrael*..." were the parting words of Aron Menczer—a young man who served as the Director of Youth *Aliyah* in Vienna from 1939-1941. With this phrase he bid farewell to his youth movement activists—youngsters who managed to leave Austria before the war's outbreak, as well as those who remained in Austria and were later deported to the ghettos and death camps.

Who was Aron Menczer, whose name, character, and deeds are firmly ingrained in the memories of the activists who were saved?

At the initiative of Yad Vashem employee, Margalit Shlain, Yad Vashem's Oral History Section of the Archives Division probed this question, documenting Menczer's life through the eyes of his followers who survived. Through near-detective work, an impressive group of former youth movement members was located—30 of whom assembled at Yad Vashem for a day-long session in late June. Together with Menczer's family (who reside in Israel), former activists related stories and memories, viewed a photo exhibit prepared specially for the event, and participated in a memorial ceremony in the Valley of the Communities.

Nicknamed "Dolfi" by family members, Menczer was born in Vienna in April 1917, the youngest of six children. He was a classic believer in his ideological homeland (Israel), his love for which was fostered first at his parents' home and then at the Zionist-pioneer youth movement, Gordonia (where he led the youngest age group). From fall 1939, as Director of Youth *Aliyah* in Vienna, he transformed the house on 5 Mark Ural Street into a support network for youth as well as a fortress of spiritual resistance to the Nazis.

Ora Kedem who immigrated to Israel in 1940 (and was later awarded the Israel Prize in Chemistry) recalls that, "my last years in Vienna were a time rich in humanity, despite the troubles..."



Former youth movement members document Aron Menczer's life at the Yad Vashem reunion

Our lives took place amidst an insular world held together by the principles of mutual help and true friendship."

Paul Gross, President of Vienna's Jewish community, remembers Menczer as someone who gave the despairing youth hope and purpose: "At school I received... preliminary knowledge of Jewish history, literature, and the religion of the people of Israel... He succeeded in providing me with a contribution crucial to my understanding of myself as a Jew." Later Gross added, "Menczer educated us to cope with the challenges of our time, view *Eretz Yisrael* as our true homeland, and actively express our connection to the Jewish people by helping to build a new homeland in *Eretz Yisrael* as proud Jews."

In early 1939, Menczer accompanied a Youth *Aliyah* group to Palestine. His family—already living in Palestine—urged him to stay, but he refused, saying that there were still children who needed his help in Vienna.

In June 1940, the standing order was received for Jewish youth to report for forced labor. Menczer volunteered to join the youth in the Doppel camp, where he remained for a few weeks. In 1941, he was sent there again, this time by order. Alongside the forced labor, Menczer made supreme efforts to maintain the youths' educational activities while in the camp.

In September 1942, Menczer received an order to return to Vienna, signaling his imminent deportation. On the night of his deportation to Theresienstadt, Menczer conducted his final meeting of the Council of Youth Movement Activists in Vienna. Martin Vogel, a friend and young counselor who arrived at Yad Vashem from Vienna to commemorate Menczer's life, documented this sad, yet hopeful event: "At the end of the council meeting, Aron turned to all of us urging us to take upon ourselves, through declaration and under oath, a commitment: 'Whoever thinks he is incapable should refrain without further doubt... I do not wish to place a burden upon anyone that he cannot withstand,' Aron said.

"All the members raised their hand in oath and repeated after Aron: 'I swear on my honor to take action everywhere for the existence of my people, to be of assistance, to be faithful to Yehudah and Zion and to do my best to strengthen the people around me with faith in our Jewish homeland.'"

In Theresienstadt, Menczer easily integrated into the camp's educational and cultural activities. When a group of 1,260 children from Bialystok arrived in August 1943 and were held in separate quarters, Menczer was among the counselors who volunteered to take care of them.

On 6 October, the children and their appointed staff were deported by train from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz. The following day, with their arrival in Auschwitz, the children and their escorts—including Aron Menczer—were murdered.

Reflecting on Menczer's tragic death Ora Kedem concludes: "For me, Aron Menczer symbolizes all that was lost to the Jewish people and to humanity... In my mind I see him in one of our last meetings, with a serious expression on his face, and someone in the background singing a heart-rending song in Yiddish: 'I'm standing here amid the flames/ Surrounded by the fire/ So sing with me everyone/ Indeed the body tired/ Still the soul did not expire.'"

The author is Director of the Oral History Section, Archives Division



Aron Menczer upon arrival to Palestine, 1939

We Came To Learn

The Jewish Educators' Seminar

by David Metzler

In spite of the security situation in Israel, Jewish educators from English-speaking countries participated in a first-of-its-kind two-week Holocaust seminar at the International School for Holocaust Studies. From 23 July – 7 August, participants attended lectures by leading scholars from Yad Vashem and Israeli universities, gaining the historical and pedagogical knowledge necessary to become Jewish leaders in the field of Holocaust education. The seminar was sponsored by the Joint Program for Jewish Education at the Jewish Agency, the Ministry of Education and Culture of the State of Israel, and Yad Vashem's Asper International Holocaust Studies Program.

As the bus carrying 28 Jewish educators approaches Yad Vashem's gates early one morning, another day of this unique seminar begins...

25 July, 8:15 a.m.

The participants gather in room 16 in the International School. Coffee... small talk. Last-minute phone calls are made before the morning session starts. At exactly 8:30 a.m. Ephraim Kaye, Director of Yad Vashem's Seminars for Educators from Abroad, introduces the day's program and updates participants about the arrangements for the upcoming *Shabbat*.

The room darkens and the film *The Longest Hatred Part III* (about Islam and antisemitism) begins. After an hour, Professor Robert S. Wistrich from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem begins his lecture about the present-day escalation of antisemitism in the Arab world. He speaks about the failure of the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance in Durban; the United Nations' one-sidedness; and foremost, the Arab media which portrays Israel and the Jewish people as inhumanely cruel and bloodthirsty. Reflecting on the current situation in Israel, one senses that seminar content and everyday life have merged into one...

Moving along, the educators split into three groups to discuss strategies for teaching past and present-day antisemitism in the classroom.

29 July, 4:00 p.m.

Participants are given the opportunity to present their personal educational experiences in relation to the Holocaust. Ann Weiss from Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, Founder and Director of Eyes from the Ashes Educational Foundation, shares her experiences with the group. Her work deals with the impact of Holocaust images on school children. While visiting Auschwitz in 1986, Ann discovered a rare collection of personal family photos that had been confiscated from its owners at the camp. For the past 16 years, she has traveled the world trying to connect names and stories to the faces in the pictures. Her book *The Last Album: Eyes from the Ashes of Auschwitz-Birkenau* was published in 2001, and is available for viewing at Yad Vashem.

Yad Vashem's Academic Advisor, Professor Yehuda Bauer, and Head of the International Institute for Holocaust Research, Professor David Bankier, as well as Dr. Zeev Mankowitz from the Melton Center (among others) address seminar participants on their respective fields of expertise, such as: Nazi racial ideology, the educational approach to Holocaust history and memory, and dilemmas of Jewish leadership during the Holocaust.

Sarah Blumenthal from Boca Raton, Florida, explains why she is attending the seminar: "I wanted to improve my knowledge and skills in order to develop age-appropriate Holocaust curricula. I am especially interested in how to teach the Holocaust to younger children, even first graders." Sarah works at the Hillel Day School in her community. "Being a child of survivors," she continues, "I had a certain impression of things. This seminar has been very enlightening. The most essential lesson I am bringing back with me is the utter importance of teaching children the magnitude of what was lost. Only after knowing what was lost does the rest become truly meaningful. We must humanize the story."

6 August, 12:00 p.m.

Scattered around the International School, the group eats lunch. Ann voices her disbelief that the three-week seminar is almost over. The trip to northern Israel and the visit to Beit Lohamei Hagetaot have united the group. Very inspired, Ann is returning to the US, "feeling as if an ambassador of Yad Vashem," she explains.

3:00 p.m.

The bus leaves Yad Vashem, heading toward the top of Mount Zion. The participants are going to visit the grave of Oskar Schindler and meet with two Schindler survivors. Tomorrow they will have a discussion session with Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, followed in the evening by a farewell dinner. At the closing of the Jewish Educators' Seminar there is a firm conviction in its success, along with tremendous hope for similar future educative initiatives. At the International School for Holocaust Studies, the staff is delighted to have so many new partners to work with worldwide in order to promote Yad Vashem's founding principles: Holocaust education and remembrance.

The author is the Coordinator of Overseas Programming at the International School for Holocaust Studies



Participants attend an afternoon session during the Jewish Educators' Seminar

Shever Bat-Ami

The First in a Four-Volume Series

Yad Vashem recently published the first of a four-volume Hebrew series entitled *Shever Bat-Ami (The Destruction of My People): Chapters in the History of Religious Jewry During the Holocaust*. The series examines the plight of religious/ultra-Orthodox



Jewry during the Holocaust within both a general and a Jewish historical framework. Since the story of religious Jewry during the Holocaust has often been overlooked in

textbooks and research, this series marks a significant breakthrough.

The series also presented one of the first opportunities for Yad Vashem to work closely with the ultra-Orthodox population. This collaboration resulted in educational volumes that are sensitive to ultra-Orthodox needs while simultaneously fulfilling the criteria of academic historiographic writing. The series was inspired by a dialogue between a group of ultra-Orthodox researchers and rabbis, and a team of Yad Vashem historians and educators supervised by Yad Vashem Chief Historian, Professor Dan Michman.

The first volume, *Orthodoxy in Germany Under Nazi Rule*, deals with various aspects of the history of Orthodox Jews in Germany in the 1930s ending with their wartime liquidation. Topics in the book include: the unique characteristics and not-so-well-known ideology of *Torah im Derech Eretz*; observant Jewry's attempts to cope with the forbidding of kosher slaughtering in Germany (beginning on 21 April 1933); the change in the status of synagogues in Germany; the institutional destruction of Orthodoxy, etc. Topics are presented with the aid of excerpts from original sources, among them some that have never before been published (i.e. recipes for meatless dishes that were printed in the Jewish press following the banning of ritual slaughter).

The four-volume series is designed for the general public as well as for educative purposes. For that reason in addition to the book itself a teachers' guide, designed to aid teachers execute lesson-plans and a videotape, containing excerpts of survivor testimonies are also available.

The series was made possible due to the generosity of Rudolph and Edith Tessler in memory of the children of Shlomo and Esther Tessler and the children of David and Fradel Hoffmann.

Recent Highlights at the International School for Holocaust Studies

- 30 June – 3 July:** Preparatory course for teachers accompanying youth trips to Poland sponsored by Israel's Ministry of Education.
- 1-8 July:** Preparatory course for educators visiting Poland sponsored by the Israel Teachers' Union.
- 11 July:** Workshop on "Man in the Holocaust" for 200 air-force officers from the Palmachim Air Force Base.
- 14-29 July:** Tour Guide Training Course—annual course for guides intending to work for the International School for Holocaust Studies' Studies Seminars Department.
- 18 July:** Training session for 70 religious teachers from the Diaspora sponsored by the Jewish Agency.
- 18 July:** Workshop for a youth delegation from Poland in conjunction with Israel's Ministry of Education.
- 21-26 July:** Hillel Seminar—Holocaust instruction course for Jewish students from the Former Soviet Union (FSU).
- 22 July:** Workshop for 200 teachers from Israeli elementary schools in conjunction with Kfar Chabad.
- 24 July:** Workshop for members of the Israel Defense Force's (IDF) delegation to Poland.
- 24 July – 4 August:** Study Tour in Poland—participants of the tour guide training course visit Poland as the culmination of their year of studies.
- 25 July:** Course for emissaries to the United States, France, Australia, and Canada in conjunction with the Jewish National Fund.
- 31 July:** Workshop for members of the IDF's delegation to Poland.
- 1 August:** Course for 200 members of the B'nai Moshavim non-profit youth organization.
- 4-21 August:** Seminar for educators from the FSU—one component of the joint project of Yad Vashem, the Jewish Agency, and Beit Lohamei Hagetaot with the assistance of the Claims Conference.
- 5 August:** Workshop marking the 60-year memorial of Janusz Korczak and the children of his orphanage for members of the National Youth and Student Council.
- 5 August:** Workshop for volunteers from Sarel (a military unit of volunteers from abroad) in Hebrew, English, Italian, French, Russian, and Hungarian.
- 5 August:** Workshop for Hamahanot Ha'olim and HaShomer HaTza'ir youth movements.
- 11-23 August:** Teacher-training course for Russian-speaking Israeli educators who will instruct in the FSU and guide in Yad Vashem and Beit Lohamei Hagetaot as part of a joint venture between Yad Vashem, the Jewish Agency, and Beit Lohamei Hagetaot with the assistance of the Claims Conference.
- 28 August:** Workshop for teachers from Israel's Alumim School for special education.
- 29 August – 6 September:** The seventh seminar at Yad Vashem for educators from Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany, organized by Theodor Schwedmann.
- 10 September – 15 October:** Seminar for employees of Israel's Ministry of Labor and Welfare on "Basic Concepts in the History of the Holocaust."
- Throughout July and August groups of students from Poland, Hungary, Latin America, and the United States visited Yad Vashem within the framework of Project Birthright in Israel. The project aims to strengthen youth ties to their Jewish heritage and Israel.

Paul Koroluk, an American living in Tokyo, sent the following email to Yad Vashem: "Earlier this year I learned for the first time that my mother who passed away in 1993 was born Jewish... I would be grateful if you would allow me to request a search for my grandfather and grandmother: Schneider Joseph, born 21 November 1893, Schneider Regina, born 14 April 1894. My grandparents ran a delicatessen at 47 Sapichy Street in Lvov."

In a follow-up email Koroluk added: "My mother was born in about 1923 and her original name was Louise or Lusia Schneider. Her brother was older than her and may have been named Zygmunt."

Upon receiving Koroluk's emails, Rimma Lerman, a Yad Vashem Reference and Information Services' employee,

A New Approach to Public Inquiries

began searching the Hall of Names database. She was pleased to find Pages of Testimony for Joseph, Regina, and Sigmund Schneider of Lvov. The Pages had been submitted in 1956 by Gizela Weber of Hadera, in memory of her uncle, aunt, and cousin. Weber re-sent Pages in 1999 during Yad Vashem's International Campaign for the Collection and Commemoration of Holocaust Victims' Names (in which over 400,000 new Pages of Testimony were collected, and nearly two million Pages scanned and computerized). This time, she included a Page of Testimony for her cousin, Lusia, whom by then she assumed had also perished. The information Lerman found matched that which Koroluk provided, down to the address of the delicatessen.

Sensitive both to issues of privacy as well as the emotional impact of the discovery, Lerman contacted Weber to give her the news. In a moving conversation, Lerman informed Weber that her cousin, Lusia, had survived the Holocaust, and that Lusia's children were living in Japan and the United States. Lerman then contacted Koroluk, giving him Weber's address and phone number so he could contact his Israeli

"I cried when I read your message. May you and all those who work with you be rewarded for what you do."

cousins.

"Dear Ms. Lerman," Koroluk replied. "I cried when I read your message. May you and all those who work with you be rewarded for what you do."

Koroluk's case is typical of the hundreds of email, post, and fax queries received by Yad

Vashem's Reference and Information Services each month since it was launched for this purpose in 2000. Previously, public requests were made directly to individual departments, including: the Library, Archives, Photo Archives, and Hall of Names. This prior system often resulted in confusion for the public who didn't know which department to approach and duplicated efforts on the part of the Yad Vashem staff. Today, an advisor sitting at the reading room desk (a librarian, archivist, photo-archivist or names specialist) uses the combined resources of all four departments to meet visitor needs, providing faster and more efficient service.

Most often, people contact Yad Vashem hoping to piece together a family puzzle in which individuals have been scattered by

the far-reaching effects of the Holocaust.

Sometimes—as in Koroluk's case—the puzzle is easily assembled, or the missing link supplied.

Other times, Yad Vashem employees are able to supply one critical piece, such as a date of death, enabling colleagues in other institutions to complete the picture.

Nearly 60 years after the Holocaust, few hope to find relatives who may have survived; rather, as a recent letter indicates, they seek closure: "For many years our family has talked about the fate of our uncle who perished in the Holocaust... For many years I have been searching for his grave... Recently, through the diligent and conscientious efforts of Yad Vashem employee, Shaul Ferrero, we

have located his grave in Poland. I would like to commend and thank Ferrero and all the staff at Yad Vashem whose work has made it possible to finally have some closure. We have organized a *minyán* and are traveling to Poland today in order to be at my uncle's gravesite for his *yahrzeit* tomorrow. It will be the first time in 57 years

that *kaddish* will be recited at his grave..."

In other instances, it is historic or academic information the public seeks: "An organization approached us asking for information on chess in the Holocaust," recalls employee, Valerie Ben-Or. Ben-Or began searching for information in Yad Vashem's Archives, where she found notices about chess games from the Westerbork transit camp, a photograph of a tournament in the Landsberg DP camp, and a listing of famous Jewish chess players from before the war. In the Hall of Names she found a Page of Testimony memorializing well-known chess player, Dawid Przepiorka, and in the Library, a novel on chess playing.

The types of questions repeat themselves: searches for lost relatives, second and third generation people trying to piece together stories

their parents and grandparents could not tell, research for exhibitions and films, high school

At Your Service



Chess tournament in the Landsberg DP camp

and university papers. However, each query is a story unto itself, a puzzle enjoining various sources from Yad Vashem's vast collections, using the different abilities and expertise of staff members. Each answer forms part of a larger puzzle—the spectrum of experiences of Holocaust victims, survivors, and communities.

Nadia Kahan is Director of Reference and Information Services and Zvi Bernhardt is the Deputy Director of Reference and Information Services and Head of Data Processing in the Hall of Names

“Jews, Save Yourselves!”

The Precarious Liberation of the Janiszów Forced-Labor Camp

by David Silberklang

On Friday 6 November 1942, at 6:00 p.m., when the 600 prisoners of the Janiszów forced-labor camp were nearly asleep, 18 partisans—most of them Jews—burst into the camp calling out “*Yidn, ratevet zich!*” (“Jews, save yourselves!”). At their head stood Yehoshua Pintel, a Janiszów escapee who had returned to rescue his comrades and exact his revenge.

The prisoner population of the small Janiszów camp had increased significantly only three weeks earlier, during the liquidation of the Annopol-Rachów Jewish community on 15 October. Commandants of three forced-labor camps had arrived in Annopol-Rachów that day to select able-bodied workers for their camps, while the remaining 2,000 Jews were loaded onto trains and deported to the Sobibor death camp. Approximately 100 Jews were taken to the Goscieradów camp, and a similar number to Budzyn. The largest group was taken to Janiszów, which was commanded by the brutal local ethnic German, Peter Ignor. Ignor maintained a severe regime, continuously beating Jews, and confiscating their valuables, personal belongings, and food.

The liquidation of Annopol and the deportations of its Jews to surrounding camps were two small facets of the largest and most sustained murder operation of the Holocaust. During the last five months of 1942, an average of nearly 9,500 Jews were murdered daily in the German *Generalgouvernement* (the area of Poland occupied, but not annexed by Germany), which comprised the districts of Warsaw, Krakow, Radom, Lublin, and Galicia (Lvov). These months saw systematic ghetto sweeps designed to seize and murder all Jews, save a small number that was to be left behind for slave labor. In January 1942, there were

more than two million Jews in the *Generalgouvernement*. By the end of the year, fewer than 300,000 remained.

As they stormed Janiszów, the partisans shot the German guards, and forced Ignor to hand over weapons, gold, and other valuables. They then dragged him to the camp square, and calling the inmates to take revenge, killed him. Following orders from their parent organization, the Gwardia Ludowa (a Polish-communist underground), the partisans took only 10-15 prisoners with them to the forest. On leaving the camp at 8:30 p.m., they urged the remaining Jews to flee. There stood nearly 600 people, unguarded, “free,” and near a forest. How did they respond to their sudden liberation?

Hurried and panicked, the local Jews who knew the area, attempted to flee to Polish friends; others, at a loss for where to go or to whom to turn, tried to hide in the surrounding forest or in other forced-labor camps. Many non-locals stood immobilized in the camp, unfamiliar with the nearby region. Some prisoners began taking supplies from the storerooms to sustain themselves. Others, sensing they were trapped by their surroundings, sent a delegation to report the incident to the nearest police station, hoping for the best; the police relayed the instruction for all Jews to wait at the camp. Meanwhile, later that night, a number of escapees returned to the camp, bringing the number of prisoners there to 160.

The following morning of 7 November, 20 Jews arrived at the Goscieradów camp hopeful that the 100 Jewish forced-laborers there would hide them. However, those Jews could not conceal a 20 percent increase in their prisoner population, and so the 20 Janiszów escapees were turned away, left to the sanctuary of the forest. That same morning, at 7:00 a.m.,

SS men, firefighters, and Ukrainian auxiliaries surrounded Janiszów. By afternoon they had already taken roll call and were beginning to march the Jews by foot to Annopol. Some 50 Jews were shot en route, their bodies loaded onto a cart. From Annopol the remaining Jews were loaded onto freight cars and sent to Budzyn.

Nearly all the Jews who escaped from Janiszów during the night of 6 November—including the Jewish-led partisans—were hunted and killed by the German police, SS, and local Poles within months, and most within days. When the Poles found them they either murdered them or turned them in to the Germans for a reward of several kilograms of sugar.

Leibl Muzykant was among those who fled Janiszów. Together with some 30 others, he hid in an underground bunker in the woods. One night Muzykant left on an errand for the group. Upon returning the next morning, he found the whole group dead, stripped, and hacked to pieces. Given the crude and seemingly uncalculated method of murder, he concluded that local Poles had killed his fellow Jews. With nowhere to go, he found his way to the Budzyn forced-labor camp, where he turned himself in. Muzykant survived, not because he escaped to the forest, but rather because he surrendered himself at a Nazi forced-labor camp, working in the hope of surviving.

At that bleak moment in human history Jewish existence hung by a thread. In the daily struggle for survival, no single act could secure a predictable outcome. As Budzyn survivor Daniel Freiberg later reflected on the arrival in Budzyn of two other Janiszów escapees: “In their eyes we were free and they were imprisoned.”

The author is Editor of Yad Vashem Studies

Brethren in Misery and Endurance

Religious Life Reflected in Holocaust Art

by Yehudit Shendar

Despite infinite risks and prohibitions, Jewish belief and practice persisted during the Holocaust, the dialogue with the Creator of the Universe never ceasing. Jewish observance was expressed in a myriad of ways—reflecting a variety of attitudes and approaches—and was tailored to meet the conditions imposed upon the Jews during that period. “Even in that inferno,” wrote Israeli author Aaron Appelfeld, “those of perfect faith remained steadfast in the beliefs of their ancestors.”

Likened with these true believers are those artists who continued to create despite, and at times in response to, the inherent dangers and adverse conditions they encountered during the Holocaust. Both the pious and the artists adhered to their faith—in God or in creativity—in the most hard to fathom circumstances. By immersing themselves in the spiritual realm, they strove to rise above the horrors of their times, and withstand—both physically and mentally—the destruction of flesh and spirit.

Brethren in misery and endurance, it is little wonder the works of Holocaust artists frequently depict the religiously devout and their practices in the ghettos and camps. The Yad Vashem Art Museum collection contains many such Holocaust-era works. These unique renderings of prayer and festival rituals testify to the fortitude of both Holocaust artists and true believers, simultaneously corroborating the many survivor accounts pertaining

to religious observance.

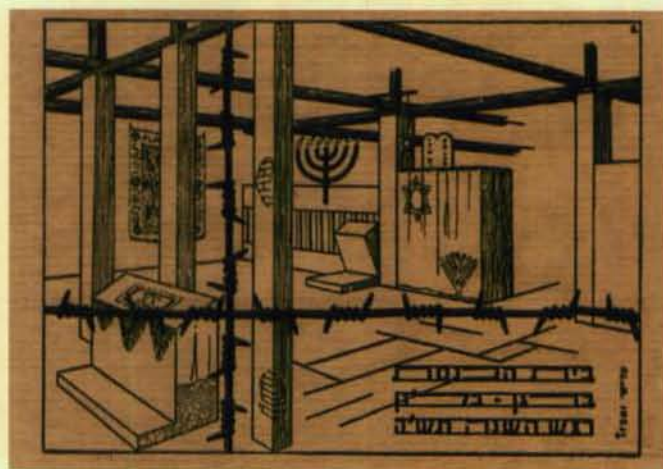
Graphic artist Pesach Irsai was typical of these artists. In July 1944, Irsai arrived at the “Hungarian sub-camp” in Bergen-Belsen—one of 1,684 Hungarian Jews brought in a special convoy that was destined to be freed by the SS as a sign of goodwill pertaining to negotiations between Zionist leader, Rezsó (Israel) Kasztner, and Adolf Eichmann. Some of these Jews spent about five months at Bergen-Belsen and celebrated the High Holidays there: “On *Rosh Hashana* [the Jewish new year] the kitchen workers managed to get a *shofar* [ram’s horn],” recalled Riva Abramowitz in her testimony given at Yad Vashem. “The Satmar *Rebbe* decided to blow the *shofar* in the courtyard, despite the strict prohibition against convening there... People crowded up against the fence. They didn’t

know where the sound of the *shofar* was coming from.”

Realizing the courtyard could not be used habitually as a place of worship, the detainees—many of whom were observant—erected a makeshift synagogue at the far end of the men’s infirmary barrack. Irsai’s print (see bottom right, page 10) shows the well-appointed synagogue, with the Holy Ark, a cantor’s lectern, and various ornaments, including a seven-branched candelabrum, the Tablets of the Covenant, and a Star of David. Irsai, well aware of the capacity of art to beautify stark reality, left no room for error as to the location of the synagogue. The barbed wire that divides the sketch into four quadrants is not a decorative element; it is a clear illustration of reality in the camp—a place where Jews preserved their



Asher (Arthur) Berlinger (1889-1944), Page from a Calendar for the Year 5704 (1943/1944), Theresienstadt, 1943, heliograph



Pesach Irsai (1898-1968), *The Synagogue at Bergen Belsen*, 1944, soft-ground print on paper. Gift of Haim Resbef

tradition even behind barbed wire.

Following the arrival of the first deportees to the Theresienstadt ghetto in Czechoslovakia in late November 1941, extensive artistic activity began to take place. Among the deportees were several artists who were consigned into a department instructed to provide ghetto authorities with plans, drawings, and graphs favorably depicting ghetto life. These illustrations were commissioned to enable the Nazis to conceal the reality of deprivation and annihilation rampant in the camp. While most of these artists' works were created at the orders of the Nazi commanders, others were done in secret defiance—attesting to the reality of the prisoners' conditions and their adherence to Jewish tradition.

"When we reached Theresienstadt we were astonished to see that on the one hand work continued on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays, and on the other hand no restrictions were placed on holding prayer services," testified former ghetto residents. According to other survivor reports, services were held in several places in the ghetto (i.e. attics or basements), with each community congregating around a rabbi from its native district. In some of the makeshift synagogues services were quite lively, and during the holidays most were packed.

Artist Ferdinand (Felix) Bloch captures the observance of the *Sukkot* holiday (according to one testimony) in his illustration *Prayer* (see bottom left, page 11), depicting a mass prayer service at Theresienstadt. The *Torah* scroll is carried by one of the congregants, with the cantor and rabbi standing on either side of the pulpit adorned with prayer shawls and wearing hats typical of German Jewry cantors and rabbis.

Everything is sheathed in attic fog. Only the ark and the *Torah* scroll bask in light—the light of faith that strengthens those who take refuge in its rays.

An austere drawing by artist Jan Burka illustrates a weekday service in a similar attic that was converted into a prayer house. Burka was sent to Theresienstadt in 1942, at the age of 18. Although he was not observant, he was drawn to documenting the observance of Jewish rituals in the ghetto.

In Theresienstadt, religiously observant Jews were permitted—in most instances—to lay *tefillin*. This integral rite linking Jews to the traditions of their ancestors is illustrated in the sketch *Praying with Tefillin* (see bottom right, page 11) by Otto Ungar. "All my thoughts were focused on my *tefillin*," notes Rabbi Ehrlich in his memoirs.

"The *tefillin* were all I had left and through them I could serve the Holy One Blessed Be He."

Theresienstadt artist Asher (Arthur) Berlinger created a small, intimate drawing (see bottom left, page 10), illustrating the determination of those of perfect faith. These devout carried in their hearts and etched on their synagogue walls the words of the prophet Malachi, who

promises redemption to the observant: "Remember the teachings of my servant Moses" (*Malachi 3:22*). In the adornment on the upper part of the pulpit "Therezin 1940" is inscribed, indicating not only the location of the prayer house, but that the redemption that was so desperately sought after did not arrive for many who were deported from Therezin to the death camps.

Despite their spiritual devotion, Holocaust artists and the religiously observant suffered the same fate, their affinity not outweighing the circumstance of the time. Alas, in the bleakest hour of *Shoah* "the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof [did] not give their light" (*Isaiah 13:10*) even to the truest of artists and those of perfect faith.

The author is the Senior Art Curator, Museums Division



Felix Bloch (1898-1944), *Prayer, Theresienstadt, 1943*, watercolor on paper. Gift of Aliza Shek



Otto Ungar (1901-1945), *Praying with Tefillin, 1942-1944*, pencil on paper

“The role of the Young Leadership Associates (YLA) is to ensure that history remembers what happened during the horrible period in Jewish and world history known as the *Shoah*. Our primary mission is to find a way to integrate that experience into our present lives, and never forget. As well, we seek to provide otherwise uninformed audiences with educational resources necessary to make a difference,” says YLA member, Dr. Rachel Goodman Aspler.

The Young Leadership Associates of the American Society for Yad Vashem was founded in 1997 by a group of Jewish adults ages 20-40 determined to promote Holocaust education and commemoration with the same commitment evident among Holocaust



Mark Klein, Esq.

survivors, the Holocaust was never far from my mind. It is something I have thought about on a regular basis, possibly more than my peers.”

Although personal considerations are a significant motivating factor for those involved in the YLA, direct contact with the Holocaust is not always needed to generate interest in the subject: “Jewish youth can find significance by becoming active in the mission of Holocaust remembrance, particularly through involvement in Yad Vashem. The resources that are available and the energetic individuals

BEARING THE TORCH OF REMEMBRANCE THE YOUNG LEADERSHIP ASSOCIATES



Dr. Rachel Goodman Aspler

survivors. Since its establishment, the group’s numbers have swelled and its initiatives have expanded to include numerous educational and social programs annually. Many of the YLA’s projects are co-sponsored by the American Society’s Education Department, established in 1999 to address the increasing demand for Holocaust educational programs in the US.

Representatives of the YLA also serve as members of the American Society’s new Executive Committee established this year, and comprised entirely of people from the younger generations. Executive Committee members include: Melvin Bukiet, Ira Drukier, David Halpern, Harry Karten, Murray Kushner, Cheryl Lifshitz, Caroline Massel, Michael S. Miller, Dr. Romana Primus, Elie Singer, Axel Stawski, Mark Wilf, and Zygmunt Wilf.

Caroline Massel and Elie Singer co-chair the 500 member-strong YLA. Massel, whose grandparents were Holocaust survivors, notes that: “In becoming involved with the YLA, I wanted people my age to know how the victims of the *Shoah* lived, how they died, and about their eternal dream for the continuation of the Jewish spirit. I hoped the legacy of the Holocaust would teach the world a vital lesson for the future.”

YLA member Mark Klein, Esq. adds, “The Young Leadership Associates are in a unique position. Implicit in our status is our responsibility to bear the torch of remembrance and pass it on from the survivors to the coming generations.”

Many YLA members, like Massel, cite personal motives behind their involvement in the organization. According to Goodman Aspler: “My family history played an important role. My mother was a hidden child in Belgium, and her parents were concentration camp survivors.” For Klein, “As a child of Holocaust

committed to this important cause provide the link for those otherwise uninformed,” observes Goodman Aspler.

“If we do not impart the significance of Holocaust education and develop outreach programs for those not directly aware, then in approximately 20 years, there will be no survivors left to serve as witnesses to this tragedy,” cautions Klein.

In ensuring that the generation of “non-witnesses” internalizes Holocaust lessons and transmits its legacy, YLA members believe certain guidelines must be followed: “The Jewish people must remember what we went through, the heritage that was lost, and that in the end, we prevailed. Simultaneously, we must preserve the legacy of those who were killed. We must also be empathetic to other unfortunate groups and historical tragedies and confront the ongoing challenge of Holocaust deniers,” says Goodman Aspler.

Continuing its wide scale activities in the 2002-2003 academic year, the Education Department of the American Society, together with the Young Leadership Associates, will host its fifth professional development conference on Holocaust education—“Facts and FAQs on the Holocaust: An Educational Update.”

“The programs generated by the enthusiasm and energy of the Education Department and Young Leadership Associates of the American Society are helping us bring the lessons of the Holocaust into the 21st century,” says Chairman of the American Society and Holocaust survivor, Eli Zborowski. “We are accustomed to thinking that memory fades slowly over time, in linear fashion, but with Holocaust remembrance, I see just the opposite. The commitment and dedication of our younger members is very inspiring. This is what gives me confidence about the future of Yad Vashem and Holocaust remembrance.”

The author is Education Director of the American Society for Yad Vashem. Dr. Rachel Goodman Aspler is a clinical psychologist at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, whose patients include Holocaust survivors and their families. Mark Klein is an attorney at UBS PaineWebber, Inc. For additional information on the events and programs of the Education Department and the Young Leadership Associates, contact marlency@aol.com

REVISITING AN ALL BUT LOST WORLD THE VALLEY OF THE COMMUNITIES

by Shachar Leven and Dana Porat

In order to understand the significance of the Holocaust and all that the Jews endured, it is essential to understand exactly what was destroyed.

In 1992, in response to the call to commemorate that which was destroyed so as to better comprehend the horrors of the Holocaust, Yad Vashem created the Valley of the Communities. Now, a decade later—in September 2002—Israel’s Minister of Education Limor Livnat, American Society for Yad Vashem executive and members, Yad Vashem friends worldwide, Holocaust survivors, and Yad Vashem Directorate and staff, returned to the Valley to reflect upon its important message and mark 20 years of partnership between Yad Vashem and the American Society.

Excavated out of natural bedrock in the southern side of *Har HaZikaron*, the Valley of the Communities is a striking 2.5-acre memorial that pays tribute to the thousands of Jewish communities destroyed in the Holocaust and the few that were



Official ceremony in the Valley of the Communities

damaged but survived. It was established in accordance with the Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance (Yad Vashem) Law of 1953 that affirms Yad Vashem’s commitment to commemorate communities, synagogues, movements, organizations, as well as public, cultural, educational, religious, and charitable institutions. The idea to create the Valley emerged following a meeting between former Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, Dr. Yitzhak Arad, and Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem, Eli Zborowski. It was created with the support of the International Society for Yad Vashem, as well as contributions from the *Landsmannschaften*.

Within the Valley, *Beit Hakehilot* (the House of the Communities)—donated by Eli Zborowski and his wife, Diana—houses temporary exhibits on pre-war Jewish life and an 18-minute audio-visual presentation on the role of the community in Jewish life. Numerous events commemorating Jewish culture and tradition are held in the Valley, as well as educational activities for teachers, students, and soldiers, and memorial ceremonies and assemblies for Holocaust survivors and survivor organizations.

Over 5,000 names of lost Jewish communities are engraved on 107 towering slabs of Jerusalem stone, geographically positioned according to the map of Europe and North Africa. The 30-foot-high stone slabs wind like a labyrinth throughout the Valley, forming courtyards and walls, openings and dead ends. Seen in its entirety from above, the site resembles a maze of ruins, recalling a world that has all but disappeared. Walking through the courtyards, one feels dwarfed by the sheer size of the monument and awed by the enormity of what was lost; simultaneously, the open sky above and the surrounding flora express the continuity of life.

Architects Lipa Yahalom and Dan Tsur—who received the prestigious Israel Prize in 1998 for lifetime achievement, including their design of the Valley of the Communities—explain: “We decided not to go for a regular stone monument or garden; instead we wanted to portray a destroyed world, but parallel with the ruins, there would be resurrection... When we embarked on the design, we remembered the prophet Ezekiel’s vision of the Valley of Dry Bones: ‘The hand of the Lord was upon me... and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones... and lo, they were very dry... Thus says the Lord God: Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel (37: 1, 12).’”

As with the design of the Valley, much thought was invested in the over 100,000 Hebrew and Latin characters used to form the names of the individual communities. The Jews commonly used the names that appear in Hebrew characters, whereas the non-Jews used those written in Latin pre-WWII. The different font sizes correlate to the different sized Jewish communities.

Graphic artists David Grossman and Yaki

Molcho recall: “We developed a form of lettering based on ancient Hebrew engravings over 2,000 years old... For the Latin characters, we chose classical and neutral letters. We tried to find a particular position for each name—a small, special place for each so that no community would be overshadowed by another... These names are signatures inscribed on stone for future generations—a historical testimony.”

At the entrance to the Valley is the inscription: “This memorial commemorates the Jewish communities destroyed by Nazi Germany and its collaborators, and the few which suffered but survived in the shadow of the Holocaust. For more than one thousand years, Jews lived in Europe, organizing communities to preserve their distinct identity. In periods of relative tranquility, Jewish culture flourished, but in periods of unrest, Jews were forced to flee. Wherever they settled, they endowed the people amongst whom they lived with their talents. Here their stories will be told...”

The stories of the communities memorialized in the Valley include settlements founded less than a century before their demise, and those whose reputation was firmly anchored in Jewish tradition. Some communities housed hundreds of thousands of Jews, others only a few dozen. Prior to its annihilation, each Jewish community brimmed with creativity and culture, religion and tradition, politics and commerce. Today, in most instances, nothing remains of these communities but a memorial and their names—*Yad Vashem*.

Dana Porat is Manager of the Yad Vashem website. An exhibit on the Valley of the Communities can be found on the Yad Vashem website: www.yadvashem.org



The Valley of the Communities

The Powerless

New Research on the Conception of “Self” in Holocaust Diaries

by Kobi Rivlin

Perhaps the most prolific genre of Jewish writing to emerge from the Holocaust was personal diaries. Such journals were composed despite prohibitions punishable by penalty or at times even death in a variety of circumstances and locations: the ghettos, forests, monasteries, and even extermination camps. In many cases, diaries were destroyed in the course of the *Shoah*. In other instances, due to fear of discovery, writers concealed their diaries; consequently, some remain undiscovered to this very day.



Amos Goldberg

Amos Goldberg, an honors student from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, is currently completing his Ph.D. dissertation

on “Jewish Diary Writing during the Holocaust.” Goldberg, who in the past received Yad Vashem’s Nachum, Sarah, and the late Baruch Eizenstein research grant was awarded the Gertner grant for the support and encouragement of research in this area towards the completion of his thesis.

Through a psychoanalytic/literature-based approach to Holocaust diaries, he confronts one of the earliest enigmas in historical research on the Holocaust: the human image (or as Primo Levi termed it “*Se Questo è un Uomo?*” [If This is a Man?]). While historical research characteristically focuses on the collective, processes, and institutions, abstract concepts, such as the human image are often overlooked. As Goldberg points out: “In addition to people having been murdered during the Holocaust, the Holocaust represents an internal, cultural, and religious rift which undermined the most basic human concepts. It is especially important to examine this schism from the victim’s point of view. Therefore, when reading the diaries, I try to understand what motivated the authors, what function the diaries had in their lives, and most importantly what type of human image emerges.”

To do this, Goldberg employs a model for defining man known as “Life Story,” most common in the literary and social science fields. With this model, the author recounts his story in first person

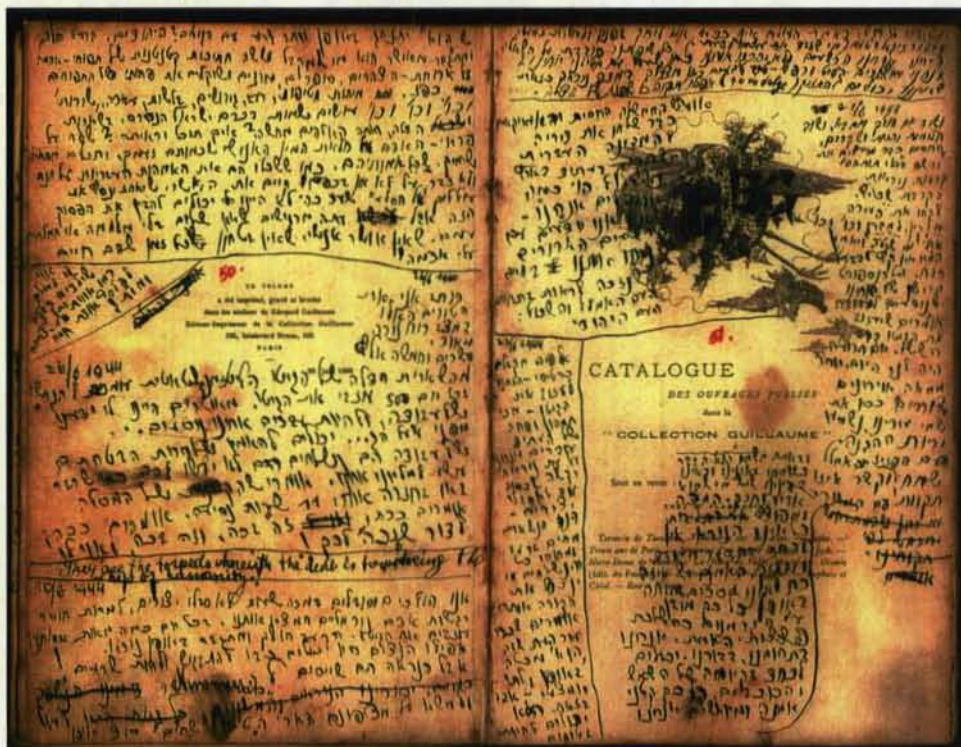
narrative, redefining himself by choosing which details to include, which themes to focus on, and how to organize and present the information. According to Goldberg, Holocaust diaries reveal highly atypical life stories: “The conditions under Nazi rule generated such pressure that it penetrated the individual, seeping into his language and self-image. Thus, sometimes only few traces of normal human traits were found in the diaries. Alongside hope and resistance, one can also sense despair and the collapse of the story structure as well as the fragmentation of the writer.”

Authors of Holocaust diaries wrote mainly from an overwhelming desire to record what happened. Goldberg feels “this focus represents a change in how the individual perceived himself and the concept of time. The writer was not focused on his present situation, in the sense that he was not able to assimilate the events that were occurring around him. Therefore, he directed his writing to future generations, hoping that they would better comprehend the events and their contexts.”

This phenomenon is illustrated in Chaim Kaplan’s diary from the Warsaw ghetto. When compared to

his pre-war diary, his writing style changes significantly during the Holocaust, substituting the autobiographical and deeply personal for the documentary and highly impersonal. He explains this shift as a result of the absence of the personal story during the Holocaust; everybody’s story became one and the same. While many diary writers shared this sentiment, still they attempted to tell their personal stories—indicating, however, that their former selves were fundamentally shattered.

The Holocaust attests to the fragility of man and the way he can be trampled at times to the point of mental, physical and spiritual collapse. Research into the human image during the Holocaust is not only of high historical value, but is also important for an understanding of man in general. Goldberg views the grants from Yad Vashem as “a great honor and real recognition for this type of interdisciplinary research, which results in a more complex and realistic view of the concept of man and of future moral imperatives: to never again arrive at situations where the human image may be diminished as it was at times during the Holocaust and as evidenced through the many diaries of the period.”



Anonymous diary from the Lodz ghetto written in Hebrew, Polish, English, and Yiddish on the pages of the book *Les Vrais Riches*

Allocation of Yad Vashem Research Scholarships

by Lilach Shtadler

Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research granted 15 scholarships to M.A. students from Israeli universities who are writing dissertations on Holocaust-related subjects at an award ceremony on 5 June. The scholarships were provided from funds established mainly by Holocaust survivors to perpetuate the memory of their loved ones, encourage research on the Holocaust, and bequeath the memory of the *Shtetl* to future generations.

The ceremony opened with greetings from Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, and Professor Dan Michman, Yad Vashem's Chief Historian. Two scholarships were allocated on behalf of the Institute of Contemporary Judaism of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem—a close cohort of the International Institute for Holocaust Research.

Among the varied dissertation topics recognized were: "The Representation of the Holocaust in Egyptian Public Discourse, 1945-1962"; "Joint Relations Between the SS and I.G. Farben in Auschwitz"; "The Holocaust in Krym and the Caucasus"; "Poland and Polish People in the Eyes of Polish Jewry During WWII."

Three Yad Vashem scholarship recipients are completing their Ph.D. dissertations during the 2002-2003 academic year:

Michael Balf from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem was awarded a scholarship from the Ida Lemberg *nie* Scherer (z"l) and Dov Lemberg (z"l) fund in 2001. His dissertation is entitled "A Respite from Outrage and a Refuge for Hope: Commemoration and Memory of the Holocaust in the Kibbutz Movements."

Suzanna Kokkonen, a 2002 scholarship recipient from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, researched "Jewish Refugees in Italy 1945-1951," and received her scholarship from the Norbert (z"l) and Liza Schechter (z"l) fund.

Boaz Cohen from Bar Ilan University received a scholarship in 1999 from the Nachum, Sarah, (z"l) and Baruch Eisenstein (z"l) fund and a second scholarship in 2001 from the Norbert (z"l) and Liza Schechter (z"l) fund for his study on "The Historical Research of the Holocaust in Israel—Characteristics, Trends and Developments."

Holocaust Education Project in the Former Soviet Union

As part of the continued effort to create a support system for the Jewish educational network in the Former Soviet Union (FSU), Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies launched a course in Russian for FSU educators and conducted a seminar for Russian-speaking Israeli instructors in early August.

The two educational initiatives formed part of a wide framework of activities aimed at increasing Holocaust awareness, strengthening Jewish identity, and improving ties to Israel within FSU Jewish communities. The project is a joint venture between Yad Vashem, the Jewish Agency, and Beit Lohamei Hagetaot in conjunction with local Jewish organizations in the FSU and with the assistance of the Claims Conference.

Other scheduled activities within the program's agenda include: instructional activities for Jewish teachers and educational coordinators in the FSU (conducted by Yad Vashem and Beit Lohamei Hagetaot employees); wide-ranging activities for youth in the FSU; and the preparation of educational materials in Russian.

According to Dr. Motti Shalem, Director of the International School for Holocaust Studies: "This is the first joint effort of its kind with the capacity to create strong educational and content-based infrastructures in the FSU connected to the Holocaust."

In Commemoration of Korczak and the Children

This past August marked the 60-year anniversary of the deportation and murders of renowned Polish-Jewish doctor, author, and educator Henryk Goldszmit, his assistant, Stephania (Stefa) Wilczynska, and the children of their orphanage.

Born in Warsaw to an assimilated Jewish family, Goldszmit (best known by his pseudonym Janusz Korczak) dedicated his life to caring for children. His foremost educational belief was that children should always be heard and respected. In 1912 he was appointed Director of the new Jewish orphanage on Krochmalna Street, Warsaw.

Following the Jewish ghettoization in Warsaw, Korczak's commitment to the orphans persisted; he declined offers from Polish friends to hide him in the "Aryan" side of the city, refusing to abandon the children. On 5 August 1942, during a two-month wave of deportations from the ghetto, the Nazis seized Korczak and his children and marched them to the Umschlagplatz. From there, they were sent to Treblinka where they perished.

Yad Vashem in conjunction with the Janusz Korczak Society in Israel, held a memorial ceremony on 5 August 2002, marking 60 years since the deportation and deaths of Korczak and his children. Members of the Janusz Korczak Society in Israel (including several of the children of his orphanage who survived the war), participants of Israel's Ministry of Education Youth and Society Administration young leaders course, and members of Hamahanot Ha'olim socialist, Zionist youth movement attended the annual ceremony. Dr. Gideon Greif moderated the event; remarks were delivered by Shulamit Imber—Pedagogic Director of Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies, Yardena Hadas—author and member of the Janusz Korczak Society in Israel Directorate, and Ravid Ben Zeev—Chairman of the National Youth and Student Council. Following the ceremony, participants heard the testimony of Shlomo Nadal, who had been under Korczak's charge.



Janusz Korczak with children from his orphanage

New on the Yad Vashem Website: Shoah Resource Center

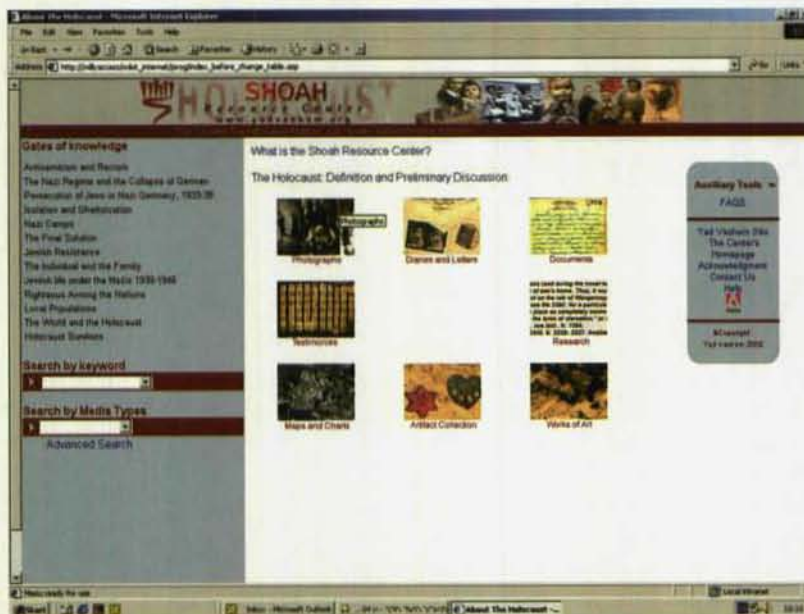
A new *Shoah* Resource Center was launched on the Yad Vashem website in August. The center enables visitors to enrich their knowledge and deepen their understanding of this incomprehensible period in history through encounters with firsthand sources from Holocaust victims and survivors.

Based on a unique program developed by Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies and Information and Communications System Division, the center comprises thousands of original sources of documentation and materials from Yad Vashem's databases including: letters, diary excerpts, testimonies, memoirs, photographs, works of art, authentic objects, articles, maps, and charts.

The information is presented according to 13 main issues, "The Gates of Knowledge": racism and antisemitism, the Nazi state and the collapse of democracy, the persecution of the Jews under Nazism from 1939-1945, Jews in Germany from 1933-1939, ghettos and isolation, the Nazi camps, the Final Solution, Jewish resistance, the individual and the family, the Righteous Among the Nations, local populations, the world and the Holocaust, and Holocaust survivors.

Each of the "Gates of Knowledge" contains a brief introduction and a list of sub-topics, enabling users to search by subject matter. Information can also be accessed according to the type of medium required (i.e. diaries, photographs, letters, etc...), through a list of 130 key words, or by cross-referencing subject matters with media-types. The *Shoah* Resource Center also includes answers to frequently asked questions about the Holocaust.

Following the successful launching of the *Shoah* Resource Center on the Yad Vashem website, the International School for Holocaust Studies' Program and Development Department is continuing to add and prepare additional materials for the center, ensuring the continuous expansion of online Holocaust resources for the public. To access the center, visit the Yad Vashem website: www.yadvashem.org



New Visitors' Center to Open in Coming Months

In December, Yad Vashem will inaugurate its new Visitors' Center (*Mevoah*)—an integral part of the new Entrance Complex and a component in the ongoing "Yad Vashem 2001" masterplan. Designed by internationally renowned architect Moshe Safdie, the Visitors' Center will bridge the everyday world with the memorial site, preparing visitors for the emotional experience they will undergo during their Yad Vashem tour.

The center was established through the generous support of David and Fela Shapell. It will comprise: the Resource and Book Center donated by Israeli architect David J. Azrieli, under the management of Steimatzky Group Ltd. and a cafeteria under the management of Yotvata Inc.

Cooperation Between Yad Vashem and the USHMM by David Metzler

An important educational exchange between Yad Vashem and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) senior educational staff took place in recent months. Designed to enhance cooperation between the two institutions and create a joint work schedule for 2003, the conference entitled "Exploring Common Ground" consisted of an initial meeting in Washington DC from 29 April-2 May. A future meeting is planned for the upcoming year in Jerusalem.

In Washington, USHMM staff familiarized Yad Vashem delegates with their institution's founding principles as well as the various departments, staff members, and museum exhibits. A series of workshops were held, in which Yad Vashem and USHMM staff defined common goals and discussed their emphases and approaches to Holocaust education. Formal comparisons and evaluations were made between the educational and pedagogic programs of the two institutions.

The Yad Vashem delegation to Washington DC was led by International School for Holocaust Studies Director, Dr. Motti Shalem, and included School senior staff members: Shulamit Imber, Daniel Perek, Inbal Kvity, and David Metzler. The delegation was hosted by USHMM Educational Division Director, Sarah Ogilvie; Mandel Teacher Fellowship Programs Coordinator, Daniel Napoliano; and USHMM educational senior staff: Stephen Feinberg, Warren Marcus, William Meinecke, Dawn Warfle, Shari Werb, and Lynn Williams.

The future meeting in Jerusalem will comprise a tour of the Yad Vashem campus, as well as a wide range of educational activities, lectures, and seminars aimed at acquainting USHMM staff with Yad Vashem and the educational-based operations of the International School for Holocaust Studies.

In a similar vein of expanding cooperative ventures between the two institutions, newly elected Chairman of the USHMM Council, Fred Zeidman, visited Yad Vashem in late July. During his visit, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, Avner Shalev, accompanied him on a comprehensive tour of the site and introduced him to the objectives and progress of the "Yad Vashem 2001" masterplan. Zeidman also met with Yad Vashem senior staff.

Mexico City's Shem Banner Memorializing Names of Holocaust Victims

by Alexander Avraham

According to the precept "Never Again" and in line with Yad Vashem's international campaign "Unto Every Person There Is a Name," youngsters of Mexico City's *Shem* (Name) project led their community in memorializing names of Holocaust victims and perpetuating the memory of the Holocaust for generations.

A month before Holocaust Remembrance Day 2002, 1,500 families from Mexico City's Jewish community embarked on a mission to copy more than 70,000 names of Holocaust victims onto a massive scroll-like banner. The project was launched by the Centro Deportivo Israelita's (Mexico's major Jewish Sports Center) "Ajarai" youth committee under the leadership of Javier and David Gelbwaser.

The majority of victim's names—some 60,000—were obtained from Yad Vashem's Hall of Names, where the most comprehensive registry of Holocaust victims is currently being assembled and digitalized. The remaining 10,000 were collected from members of Mexico City's Jewish community, and included names of relatives who perished.

To prepare participants for the task at hand, the youth committee of the Centro Deportivo Israelita devised and circulated special kits that included a rationale letter, a short personal story of a Holocaust victim, a list of 50 names to transcribe, and instructions on how to correctly copy victims' names onto a blank grid form. The forms were then scanned into a computer, assembled into a montage, and printed on a huge banner measuring 7 by 3.5 meters. The *Shem* banner was first exhibited during this year's Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony in Mexico City and can be easily transported and used as a background for future commemorative ceremonies.

President of the Centro Deportivo Israelita, Marcos Metta Cohen, presented a smaller copy of the scroll-like banner to Yad Vashem during his recent visit to Jerusalem. The montage was a token of appreciation for Yad Vashem's contribution to the project as well as to Holocaust commemoration and research in general.



Director of Yad Vashem's Hall of Names, Alexander Avraham (left), and Marcos Metta Cohen (right) display miniature "Shem" banner

Noach Flug Recently Elected



Noach Flug—former Secretary General of the Centre of Organizations of Holocaust Survivors in Israel—was recently elected Chairman of the organization. Flug is a member of the Yad Vashem Board of Directors and was also recently nominated President of the International Auschwitz Committee. In the past, Flug served as Economic Advisor to the Knesset's finance committee, among many other notable positions.

Yad Vashem wishes Noach Flug and Moshe Sanbar continued success in their new positions.

Naphtali Stern (z"l), Prayer Book for Rosh Hashana 5705 – English Edition. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2002, 92 pages.

Yad Vashem released the English edition of Naphtali Stern's *machzor* (festival prayer book) to mark *Rosh Hashana* 5763 (2002). Edited by Dr. Bella Gutterman and Naomi Morgenstern, the *machzor* includes a facsimile reproduction of the evening service prayers penciled by Stern in the Wolfsberg labor camp for *Rosh Hashana* 5705 (1944). Stern reconstructed the prayers from memory and jotted them on scraps of a brown paper bag in order to lead fellow prisoners in worship. He also recorded the names of fellow Jews from Satmar who had died in the camp. The *machzor*, which was previously published by Yad Vashem in Spanish and Hebrew, includes scholarly articles, as well as original drawings and sketches from the camp.

The English edition was made possible due to the generosity of Tobias and Rosalie Berman.



A Kindness Repaid by Dr. Mordecai Paldiel

In September 1943, a family of six wandered through a hilly region of Albania. Coming across a stranger by the name of Hassan Hoti, they requested his help, presenting themselves as refugees fleeing the turmoil of the country's recent German invasion. Hoti agreed to assist, but later, upon spotting his wards tasting food during the *Ramadan* period, he (as a practicing Muslim) asked for an explanation. Trusting the goodwill of their hosts, Asher Bechar revealed the truth about his family's origin: they were Jews from Pristina, Kosovo who had fled to Albania, seeking refuge in the then-Italian controlled country. With the Italian withdrawal, they were now on the run from the Germans. From that moment until the eviction of the Germans a year later, the Hotis faithfully sheltered the Bechars, keeping their identity secret.

With the war's end, the Bechar family left Albania for Israel. In 1994, at the request of Rachel Lazar *née* Bechar (one of the Bechar children), Yad Vashem recognized Hassan Hoti, his mother, and two of his children as Righteous Among the Nations.

Recently it became known that a son of the late Hassan Hoti, Birhan Hoti, was in desperate need of an operation that could not be performed in Albania. In 1998, Zeev Nathan, an Israeli tour coordinator, arranged a Yad Vashem-sponsored visit to Israel for a select group of 50 Righteous persons. This group included another of Hassan Hoti's sons. When Zeev learned of the critical situation of Birhan Hoti, he made the necessary arrangements for him to be flown to Israel and approached Yad Vashem for help with Birhan Hoti's hospitalization.

Yad Vashem Director-General, Ishai Amrami, appealed to Professor Nahum Halperin of Assaf Harofeh hospital, Tzrifin. When Halperin heard that the patient was the son of a gentile who had risked his life to save Jews during the Holocaust, the hospital agreed to undertake the complicated surgery—a hip replacement—free of charge. The operation was successfully performed during the last week of July. After recuperating for several days, with Rachel Lazar at his bedside, Birhan Hoti flew back to his native Albania on 7 August, grateful for the generosity extended by Zeev Nathan, Yad Vashem, and Assaf Harofeh hospital.

Moshe Sanbar Receives Nomination



Moshe Sanbar—former Chairman of the Centre of Organizations of Holocaust Survivors in Israel and former Treasurer of the Claims Conference—was recently nominated head of the Executive Committee of the Claims Conference. Among his many positions, Sanbar served as Governor of the Bank of Israel and currently acts as Honorary President of the World Federation of Hungarian Jews.

W Friends WORLDW

U.S.A.



On 30 June, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem, Eli Zborowski (second from right); Vice Chairman, Mark Palmer (left); and Dr. Axel Stawski (right) attended a meeting of the Yad Vashem

Directorate and toured the building site of the new Museum Complex with Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, Avner Shalev (second from left). Pictured in the background: model of Pages of Testimony and images of Holocaust victims that will be stored within the upper cone-like structure of the new Hall of Names.

The American Society for Yad Vashem will mark its 21st Anniversary Tribute Dinner on 3 November at the New York Hilton Hotel. This year's honorees are Eva and Arie Halpern and Audrey and Zygmunt Wilf. General Dinner Chairmen are Dr. Israel Singer and Sam Halpern.

On 25 September, Yad Vashem held a series of celebratory events to mark the 20th anniversary milestone of the American Society for Yad Vashem. Events included an inaugural ceremony for the Commemorators' Path (pictured below) in the presence of Daniel Kurtzer, US Ambassador to Israel, and Ehud Olmert, Mayor of Jerusalem; a festive evening in the Valley of the Communities in the presence of Limor Livnat, Israel's Minister of Education; the awarding of a certificate of honor to the American Society headed by Eli Zborowski; a presentation and guided tour of the developments of the "Yad Vashem 2001" masterplan led by Avner Shalev; and a meeting with a senior member of Israel's security forces.



Architectural illustration by Shalom Kweller

Steve (right) and Sandra Finkelman (left), from Houston, Texas, visited Yad Vashem on 25 July. They toured the construction site of the new Museum Complex and previewed exhibits being prepared for the new Historical Museum. Pictured in center: Yehudit Inbar, Director, Museums Division.



LATIN AMERICA

Yad Vashem's representative in Caracas, Venezuela—Paquita Sitzer—visited Yad Vashem on 6 July for the occasion of her son, Jerome Yoel

Lissman's, *Bar Mitzvah*. A group of 20 family members and friends from Uruguay, the United States, and Israel attended the event. In honor of the occasion, Sitzer donated a plaque to Yad Vashem in memory of her late husband, Juan Sitzer (z"l). Pictured on right: Jerome Yoel Lissman at Yad Vashem.



Miriam Birnbaum (pictured on right), the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, visited Yad Vashem and made a contribution towards Yad Vashem seminars for Israel Defense Force (IDF) soldiers along with her brother, Moises Birnbaum. The donation was made in the memory of their father, Fabel Birnbaum (z"l).



AUSTRIA

Fini Steindling (right) visited Yad Vashem on 29 May, during which she toured the Yad Vashem Art Museum. Pictured on left: Art Museum Collection Manager, Susan Nashman Fraiman.



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IDE

Danek Gertner—a major benefactor of Yad Vashem who donated the new building of the International Institute for Holocaust Research and the Conservation and Restoration Laboratory in the Archives building—visited Yad Vashem on 3 September. During his visit, Gertner toured the Administration and Research Building in its entirety, and expressed his willingness to continue supporting Yad Vashem. Pictured from left to right: Director of Yad Vashem's International Relations Division, Shaya Ben Yehuda; Danek Gertner; and Avner Shalev.



UNITED KINGDOM

On 25 July, representatives of the Conference of European Rabbis, including Executive Director, Rabbi Moshe Rose (second from left); Councilor, Aba M. Dunner (left); and L.L.B. Winston J. Held (right) met with Shaya Ben Yehuda (second from right). The purpose of their visit was to plan a unique seminar on Holocaust education for rabbis serving in various European communities.



ISRAEL

Prominent Israeli businessman, **Motti Zisser** (second from left) and his wife, **Bracha** (third from left), visited Yad Vashem during June and July. Motti Zisser was so moved by his visits that he recorded the following words: "I've found a place that beyond what it reveals about our nation's tragic past, gives us much to think about regarding our future. The Yad Vashem staff is young and charismatic with the capacity to transform such a place into a cradle of reeducation for generations to come."



