January 2006 marks a new level in Holocaust remembrance: for the first time, the United Nations has passed a resolution calling for worldwide commemoration and education about the Holocaust, highlighted by an International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January. This occasion is being marked in the UN by a commemorative event and the display of a Yad Vashem exhibition; in Israel, Yad Vashem is organizing a range of events (see “Committed to Memory,” pp. 2-3). Yad Vashem has always stressed the importance of education, and our efforts in Europe especially continue to expand with the opening of the Virtual School for Holocaust Studies (see “Global Teaching: Dynamic Learning,” p. 8).

Other aspects of international remembrance are also highlighted in this issue: opening this month is a new exhibition, focusing on the art—and fate—of L’Ecole de Paris (see “Montparnasse Déporté,” pp. 6-7); a recent seminar was held in Yad Vashem’s International School of Holocaust Studies for survivors of the Rwandan genocide to learn how to deal with the enormity of their tragedy (see “Shaping Remembrance,” p. 9); and we review the first year of the online Names Database, which undoubtedly has taken awareness of the Shoah and its victims to a universal plane (see “The Names Database: A Year Online,” pp. 10-11).

Other new publications mentioned in this issue include: the new exhibition “Montparnasse Déporté” at L’Ecole de Paris, and the New Virtual School for Holocaust Studies.

This is the first time the UN has explicitly addressed the issue of the Holocaust in a resolution. It is the culmination of a long process that began in the late 1970s and gathered momentum with the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the establishment of newly democratic states. The late 1990s heralded a global upsurge in Holocaust research, awareness and education that continues today. It also led to a growing recognition of the need to strengthen those values that foster co-existence—basic rights that were undermined during the Holocaust and in subsequent genocides around the world.

Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate Avner Shalev congratulated Secretary General Kofi Annan on the resolution, noting that it is the latest in a chain of Holocaust remembrance events in which the UN has participated. These include Yad Vashem’s exhibition on Auschwitz at the UN in January 2005, and the opening of Yad Vashem’s new Holocaust History Museum last March, attended by Secretary General Annan and 40 heads of state and foreign delegations.

“Gradual process of confronting the Holocaust and recognizing it as a watershed event in the 20th century really deepened at the turn of the new century,” Shalev said after the resolution was adopted. “In recent years we have witnessed the opening of many new Holocaust memorials, centers and educational programs, as well as initiatives to address the problems of antisemitism, xenophobia, and other forms of intolerance. The long process of confrontation with the past propelled key countries in Europe and the
Committed to Memory

International Holocaust Remembrance Day

A number of countries already mark Holocaust Remembrance Day on dates with particular national significance. Others mark 27 January, the date the Soviet Army arrived at Auschwitz. “Auschwitz has become the symbol of the Holocaust, and of the destruction of Europe’s Jews,” explains Shalev. “Although 27 January certainly was not the end of the war, the fact that over one million Jews from all over Europe—as well as other victims of the Nazi regime—were killed in Auschwitz makes it a point of connection and solidarity with the memory of the victims. But beyond memorializing those who died, this resolution also serves as a warning against the erosion of values that can lead to war crimes, and highlights the need to nurture universal human principles.”

However, Shalev stresses, the resolution must not only result in theoretical talk; concrete steps must be taken to implement these ideals. “Beyond the ceremonial and symbolic significance of marking Holocaust Memorial Days, the resolution recognizes the need for supporting ongoing education about the Holocaust—that is the crux of the matter.”

Academic Advisor to Yad Vashem Professor Israel Gutman concurs: “The decision proves the widespread awareness of what happened during the Holocaust, and is an achievement for the promotion of memory and education for society as a whole. But the importance of the resolution will depend on how it is implemented. It is crucial that this initiative also finds expression in education, public information, and political culture today—turning 27 January into an international day of learning from the Holocaust in an attempt to prevent future genocides.”

Yad Vashem helps mark 27 January at the UN and worldwide

Marking the first International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yad Vashem’s “No Child’s Play” exhibition will be displayed at the UN and in Spain, as part of the official commemorative events. This exhibition opens a window into the world of children during the Holocaust. The exhibition tells the story of survival during the Holocaust—the struggle of children to hold on to life.

In addition, Yad Vashem Academic Advisor Prof. Yehuda Bauer will deliver the first in a series of addresses to the UN under the title “Beyond Remembrance.” The session will include the screening of names and photographs from the Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names.

To help schools and other bodies plan for 27 January, Yad Vashem has built a mini-site on its website focusing on the significance of the date in the greater context of the Holocaust. The site includes links to educational resources and workshops on the Holocaust and antisemitism, as well as links to art exhibits, relevant documents, 18 video testimonies, and a map of Holocaust commemoration around the world. In addition, the International School for Holocaust Studies has prepared a lesson plan to be distributed by the Ministry of Education to schools throughout Israel, as well as on the Ministry’s and Yad Vashem’s websites.

In advance of 27 January, the International Institute for Holocaust Research will hold a seminar on Karl Jaspers’ book, The Question of German Guilt, recently published in Hebrew by Yad Vashem. On 26 January, members of the diplomatic corps will attend the opening of Yad Vashem’s new exhibition “Montparnasse Déporté,” displaying the art—and fate—of L’Ecole de Paris (see pp. 6-7). On the day itself, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate Avner Shalev will attend the launch of the new Holocaust Memorial Day Guidelines, prepared by the OSCE and Yad Vashem, at the official commemorative event in Belgium (see p. 8).

www.yadvashem.org for a mini-site marking 27 January and for the “No Child’s Play” exhibition online

A girl and her doll photographed on the way to the Treblinka death camp, displayed in the “No Child’s Play” Exhibition

Shalev remarked that by adopting the resolution, “the United Nations expressed its recognition of the importance of Holocaust remembrance as well as the role that Holocaust education plays in safeguarding basic human values.”

The timing of the resolution is also significant, as the world commemorates 60 years since the liberation of the camps and the Nuremberg Trials.

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One of the main principles in planning the new Holocaust History Museum was to weave individual accounts into the historical narrative, thus personalizing the story of the Holocaust. Over the years, Yad Vashem has undertaken an intensive collection of personal artifacts, resulting in the display of some 1,200 artifacts in the new Museum, alongside original documents, photographs and film clips.

A Family Connection

In addition to collecting new artifacts and documenting their owners' stories, the Museum also conducted background research on objects gathered by Yad Vashem since its establishment. Recent technological developments have allowed additional documentation—housed in other departments of Yad Vashem and elsewhere around the world—to be more easily accessed. The stories surrounding many of the collected artifacts have thus been expanded and, by renewing contact with the original donors and their families, further objects added to the collection.

Occasionally, these investigations led to unexpected developments, as in the following story—one that not only contributed significantly to the Museum's exhibition, but also had significant personal ramifications:

by Sarah Shor

In recent years, Yad Vashem received a number of artifacts from two separate women: Fanny Korman and Francine Levy. All the objects are associated with family members who perished during the war, among them a doll's cradle made at the Beaune-la-Rolande transit camp; a postcard written and sent from a train bound for Auschwitz; personal letters; and family pictures. Background work carried out on the artifacts disclosed a connection between the two donors, resulting in the heartbreaking account of the Horonczyk family. Their story, told in the new Museum, represents the tragic fate of many Jewish immigrant families in France.

In 1926, widower Shimon Horonczyk emigrated with his five children—Ycek-Josef, Simcha, Chaja-Dwojra, Leah and Esther—from Lodz, Poland, to Paris. There they made a living selling textile products. Ycek-Josef and the three girls married other Polish Jewish émigrés and settled down to live near their father.

When Germany invaded France in 1940, Shimon's sons (Ycek-Josef and Simcha) and sons-in-law were drafted into the Foreign Legion. They were discharged following France’s surrender: the certificate of commendation issued to Shimon's son-in-law Salomon Friedheim upon his discharge is exhibited in the Museum in the section describing the progress of the war in France, representing the stage at which many Jews living in France enlisted in the Foreign Legion.

In May 1941, however, the young men were imprisoned in transit camps in France: Ycek-Josef and his brothers-in-law Nissan Frenkel and Froim Korman in Beaune-la-Rolande; and Simcha and his brother-in-law Salomon Friedheim in Pithiviers.

Believing they would eventually be sent home, the men found ways to occupy themselves, passing their time optimistically. Ignorant of their fate, and hopeful of an early release, they led an active cultural life, and even fabricated souvenirs, which they sent to their relatives in Paris. Two
of these are exhibited in the Museum: a doll’s cradle sent by Ycek-Josef to his daughter Francine, and a letter opener made by Nissan Frenkel for his son Richard. Only Salomon Friedheim fled the camp. He collected his wife Leah and their son Raphael, and escaped to a village in the south of France. In 1943, the couple gave birth to twins—Nelly and Solange.

Meanwhile, the situation for the Jews remaining in Paris worsened. The Nazi regime’s required designation of businesses as “Aryan” is illustrated in the sign from the family store (which was transferred to “Aryan” hands), also displayed in the Museum. In mid-1942, Esther Frenkel and her two-year-old son Richard were sent to the Pithiviers camp. The family members still in Paris realized they were living on borrowed time, and dispersed. Chaja-Dwojra Korman sent her daughter Fanny to her sister Leah in the Vichy area, where they were hidden in a village until the war’s end. Chaja-Dwojra hid in Paris, as did her sister-in-law Paula, Ycek-Josef’s wife. Paula’s daughter Francine was hidden just outside Paris.

Exhibited next to the train carriage in the Museum is a heartrending illustration of the family’s tragic end. In the summer of 1942, when Esther Frenkel was sent from Pithiviers via Drancy to Auschwitz-Birkenau, she threw a postcard addressed to her relatives in Paris from the train carriage. Brought to its destination by unknown means, the postcard reads:

My dear family, Friday [date illegible]

I am on the train. I do not know what has become of my Richard. He is still in Pithiviers. Save my child, my innocent baby!!! He must be crying horribly. Our suffering is nothing. Save my Richard, my little darling. I can’t write. My heart, my Richard, my soul, are far away and no one is protecting my little two-year-old boy. To die, quickly, oh, my child! Give me back my Richard.

Esther

Richard was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau a number of weeks after his mother, where they were both murdered. His father Nissan Frenkel, and uncles Ycek-Josef Horonczyk and Froim Korman, were all deported in June 1942 from Beaune-la-Rolande to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where they too met their death. Simcha Horonczyk was sent from the Pithiviers camp to Auschwitz-Birkenau in July 1942, and was also killed. The last to be deported, in February 1943, was the father of the family, Shimon Horonczyk; he was sent from Drancy to Sobibor, where he, too, was murdered.

Thus in the space of a few terrible years, the extended Horonczyk family went from adjusting well to life in France, with a thriving business and growing family, to destruction beyond their imagination. The end of the war found the family’s survivors broken and dispersed, with only the immediate family of Leah and Salomon Friedheim remaining intact. Chaja-Dwojra Korman and her sister-in-law Paula Horonczyk were widowed, while of the youngest generation only their two daughters and the three Friedheim children survived.

The Museum Division’s extensive investigation, however, meant that fortunately the story did not end there. Unaware that Francine (Horonczyk) Levy was living in Israel, contact between her and her cousins was established soon after the war. The reunification of the cousins—a direct result of the research conducted by Museum staff—was a special source of gratification for everyone involved.
New Exhibition: Montparnasse Déporté

The End of L’Ecole de Paris

by Yehudit Shendar and Eliad Moreh Rosenberg

Marking the historic UN resolution declaring 27 January as International Holocaust Remembrance Day, this January Yad Vashem’s new Exhibitions Pavilion is opening its second exhibition, “Montparnasse Déporté” (Montparnasse Deported).

The exhibition opened last May at the Montparnasse Museum, Paris, in the presence of French President Jacques Chirac. Portraying for the first time in France the fate of artists of l’Ecole de Paris (School of Paris), it focuses on the lives and oeuvre of Jewish painters and sculptors who were persecuted and ultimately murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators.

In the exhibition are some 150 works of art accompanied by photographs, original documents and biographies. These pay tribute to the personal annals of more than 60 artists on display, including Chaim Soutine, Rudolf Levy, Adolphe Feder, Otto Freundlich, Max Jacob and Leon Weissberg.

From the beginning of the 20th century until the outbreak of WWII, Paris was a vital cultural center, attracting many artists who converged from all corners of Europe. Seeking the equal civil rights and liberal atmosphere in France denied them in their home countries, many of these artists headed for Paris, the arts capital. They settled in the Montparnasse Quarter, a lively center of activity for artists from all over the world. In the studios and cafés of Montparnasse, these newly arrived artists could meet and exchange ideas with the most influential personalities of the art world, such as Picasso, Chagall, Brancusi, Modigliani, Fujita and Diego Rivera. Thus, more than a style or a movement, l’Ecole de Paris refers to the meeting of artists from different origins, in the same place, at the same time, with one common objective: creating art.

With the Nazi occupation of France in 1940, the persecution of Jewish artists began in earnest. Some artists managed to emigrate or go into hiding, but most were sent to concentration and death camps. As a result, the fascinating cultural phenomenon that was l’Ecole de Paris came to an abrupt end.

The artists of l’Ecole de Paris were not only physically murdered, their legacy was also fatally reduced to silence; their art burnt or plundered. One could say that these artists were thus “twice assassinated.” This exhibition provides a rare glimpse into the vibrant and pulsating world of Jewish artists on the precipice of the Holocaust, and its display at Yad Vashem is another link in the museum’s persistent efforts to honor the memory of artists murdered in the Holocaust.

At the exhibition’s opening in Paris, Simone Veil, Auschwitz survivor and President of the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah, emphasized the importance and meaning of the exhibition: “The exhibition enables us to estimate the artistic wealth and diversity we have been deprived of by the Nazi enterprise. By becoming aware not only of their accomplished work, but also of the work that might have been accomplished, we can measure to what extent the destruction of all these artists has been an irreparable loss to mankind.”

The Montparnasse exhibition was augmented with works from Yad Vashem’s extensive art collection, as well as photographs and documents from its archives, shedding new light on the artists’ lives. A wall-size collage of photographs greeting visitors at the entrance personalize the rather amorphous official name école de Paris, thus allowing visitors to meet the artists at the crossroads of life and death—a period when art works survived even after their creators were murdered by the Nazis.

The exhibition was brought to Yad Vashem in cooperation with le Musée du Montparnasse, Paris, under the auspices of the French Embassy in Israel, and was made possible by the generous contribution of: Groupe Segula Technologies, France; Sylvia and Boris Samujlovic z’l, Brazil and Israel; Le Comité Français pour Yad Vashem; Leumi, Israel; and Buchman Foundation representative Rosine Bron, France.

Yehudit Shendar is Art Department Director and Senior Art Curator and Eliad Moreh Rosenberg is Associate Curator, Museums Division.
George Ascher (Warsaw 1884-Majdanek 1943)
Garden, oil on canvas
Loan of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem
Gift of Caroline and Joseph Gruss, New York
Global Teaching; Dynamic Learning

Division and Website Department, the Virtual School (www.yadvashem.org/education) is set to be the largest and most important interactive Holocaust education and learning center on the Internet today. The site will allow students and teachers—as well as the public at large—to access the latest information and teaching tools, and to create online learning and teaching communities across the globe.

The aim of the site is to provide concrete solutions to meet users’ needs, together with simple and clear orientation. As such, the site was built with portals that provide the user with knowledge and information immediately on entering the site. As a dynamic site, materials in several languages—including German, Romanian, Hungarian, Czech and Polish—and uploading teaching materials prepared by ICHIEIC course graduates and their students. Online graduate and student communities across Europe are also being forged, helping them maintain an ongoing relationship with the School.

“Phase Two” of the Virtual School will entail a dramatic transformation: merging the site with the entire Yad Vashem website. This important step will see the integration of all materials on the two sites as well as their web design, enabling advanced search options and direct links to other Yad Vashem databases. It will also include the uploading of new educational projects, as well as the expansion of online audio-visual materials such as testimonies, musical clips and videoconferences. Expanded use of Internet-based tools—such as forums and distance learning—will be reflected in the introduction of two online courses, the translation of the online magazine into different languages, and the creation of online educational communities and virtual encounters between graduates, public opinion-makers, students and the general public worldwide.

A significant part of this work has been, and will continue to be, ensuring that the site remains dynamic and innovative. As such, the status of the Virtual School for Holocaust Studies as a major center for online Holocaust learning and teaching will be ensured for decades to come.

The writer is the Director of the Internet Department at the International School for Holocaust Studies.

Focusing on Europe

With the support of the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims (ICHIEIC) Humanitarian Fund, the International School for Holocaust Studies recently held a number of seminars for educators from across Europe—Russia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Austria and Germany. In addition, directors from the Auschwitz Holocaust Educational Center visited Yad Vashem.

The ICHIEIC Humanitarian Fund also supported a two-day seminar for Belgian parliamentarians in November. Held in conjunction with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this was the first seminar specifically geared towards politicians and opinion shapers.

Among the seminar participants were Didier Reynders, Chairman of the Reformist Movement Party, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance; Viviane Teitelbaum, a Member of Parliament and a key supporter of the initiative; members of both houses of Parliament; and journalists. Participants toured the new Holocaust History Museum, met with Holocaust survivors and heard lectures on various aspects of the Holocaust. Yad Vashem hopes this seminar will be followed by many similar events for politicians throughout the world.

New OSCE-Yad Vashem Guidelines for Educators

Some 20 experts in Holocaust education and remembrance, as well as tolerance education, gathered at the International School for Holocaust Studies in October for an international forum, coordinated in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR). Participants came from 12 countries across Europe—Austria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Sweden, Ukraine and the United Kingdom—and represented non-governmental organizations, ministries of education and various educational frameworks.

The purpose of the meeting was two-fold: to compose guidelines for educators on combating contemporary antisemitism and developing activities connected with Holocaust memorial days; and to establish a working relationship between the experts for future projects. Unlike previous seminars, this forum placed a strong emphasis on small group work, after which participants presented suggestions for a new structure of the document as well as additional points pertaining to its content. They were also able to tour the new Holocaust History Museum as well as visit the newly opened interactive Learning Center to explore the “major questions” related to the Holocaust.

In November, Dr. Kathrin Meyer, Advisor on Antisemitism Issues of the OSCE/ODIHR, and Richelle Budd Caplan, Director of the Asper International Holocaust Studies Program at the International School for Holocaust Studies, organized follow-up meetings in Krakow, Poland, to formulate the guidelines. These are due to be translated into a number of languages, and made available in print as well as online, on the OSCE and Yad Vashem websites. The guidelines will be officially launched in Belgium on 27 January at the commemorative event attended by Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate Avner Shalev.

The international forum is generously funded by the Asper International Holocaust Studies Program, supported by an initiative of the Asper Foundation, Winnipeg, Canada.
On 6 April 1994, Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana, a member of the Hutu ethnic group, was killed when his plane was shot down. Responsibility for the attack remains a mystery, but Habyarimana’s murder signaled the beginning of the three-month Rwandan genocide, during which at least 800,000 members of the Tutsi ethnic group were murdered.

Since the genocide ended, Rwandan society has been undergoing a process of rehabilitation, and survivors of the massacre are still trying to overcome their sense of trauma and loss. Many survivors see an affinity between their tragedy and that of the Holocaust, and attach great importance to establishing interpersonal contact with the Jewish people and the State of Israel. Mukagasana asked if members of different organizations involved in memorializing the Rwandan genocide could come to Yad Vashem to learn about Holocaust remembrance in Israel, as well as educational activities related to the Holocaust and its consequences worldwide that might serve as a model for similar efforts on the part of the Tutsis.

The seminar, held in November at the International School for Holocaust Studies, brought together Rwandan intellectuals, judges, journalists, academics and others—all of whom are involved on a daily basis in perpetuating the memory of those massacred and in rebuilding Rwandan society. “Our aim was to expose the participants to Yad Vashem’s educational activities and other ways we memorialize the Holocaust,” Yad Vashem’s educational approach and teaching methods. “The Rwandan victims’ situation is problematic for two reasons,” explains Dr. Doron Avraham, Head of the School’s European Department. “First, they are all still overwhelmed by the experience of the catastrophe and so it is difficult to work toward shaping memory. Second, the murderers and the victims belong to the same nation and are both responsible for rehabilitating the country. This situation is not at all similar to what took place in Israel, nor the efforts invested in shaping the collective memory of the Holocaust.”

A particularly moving meeting took place between the participants—survivors of the Rwandan genocide—and Holocaust survivors. On this occasion, the latter came more to listen than to talk; in turn, their attentiveness encouraged the Tutsis to tell their personal stories, in some cases for the first time. “The meeting with Holocaust survivors helped me more than anything to cope with the trauma I experienced,” says Yolande Mukagasana. “Other people, even psychologists, only know how to pity. These meetings helped me understand what I really feel.” Holocaust survivor Dr. Ehud Loeb participated in the encounter: “I sat across from a beautiful young woman, who spoke quietly and calmly,” he recalls. “I lost my husband and all of my children,’ she told me. I looked at her and suddenly saw myself—it left an indelible impression on me.”

A panel discussion was also held on: “The Genocide in Rwanda — Have We Learned Anything from the Holocaust?” in cooperation with the Open University. Participants included Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate Avner Shalev, Yolande Mukagasana, Yad Vashem Academic Advisor Prof. Yehuda Bauer, and the Open University’s Prof. Binyamin Neiberger and Prof. Yair Oron.

Dr. Avraham plans to take the newfound contact further. “We hope the seminar created the basis for ongoing cooperation, in the areas of remembrance and education. We have already held preliminary discussions regarding a follow-up seminar to take place in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda, with the participation of Yad Vashem staff.”
The Names Database ➤ A Year Online

by Cynthia Wrocławski

"I waited 60 years for this miracle to happen!" exclaimed 84-year-old Giselle Rosenfeld after reunited with her cousin Isaac Sacks, 78. Both survived the Holocaust; neither knew of any surviving family—until now. Rosenfeld and Sacks are just two of the hundreds of survivors and their descendents who have discovered and reunited with long-lost family since the Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names was uploaded to the Internet in November 2004.

To date, over seven million people worldwide have visited the site of the online Names Database (www.yadvashem.org). The advanced search capability allows visitors to search for names of family or friends who were murdered in the Holocaust, and then either check details already given or submit new Pages of Testimony. Over 150,000 additional names with biographical details have been added to the Names Database in the past year.

A Public Mission

A paramount objective of Yad Vashem in uploading the Database is to raise awareness of its mission to recover as many names as possible. "Time is running out," points out Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate. "There is still a tremendous amount of work to be done and we are counting on the assistance of the public to take part in this vital mission: to ensure no Holocaust victim will be forgotten to future generations."

The greatest challenge in reaching out to the public is the fact that survivors and other people who can bear witness are reaching the ends of their lives. A large segment of this population may be not be computer literate; others believe that in order to bear witness one needs to be a blood relative, or know the entire life story of the victim, or even be Jewish. Some survivors even think that testimony they gave to other organizations is automatically incorporated in the Names Database. None of this is true.

Recognizing that a majority of the survivors need assistance in submitting names, Yad Vashem is counting on Jewish agencies, students, Holocaust centers, synagogues, survivor and next generation groups to spearhead names recovery programs in their communities and schools. A resource guide with a comprehensive toolkit of practical materials for promoting and implementing grass-roots campaigns has been created and will soon be available online.

A Work in Progress

Parallel with its outreach efforts, Yad Vashem plans to accelerate the retrieval of names from archival lists. This mostly untapped—but immense—source of names has been gathered over the years from various lists of pre-war Jewish communities, as well as Nazi-era accounts of property confiscations, deportations, camp and ghetto inmates and (rarely) deaths, located at Yad Vashem and other archives. Over the next six years, staff will scrutinize these millions of documents for names of Shoah victims. Relevant information will then be entered into the Database.

"The importance of these lists as complementary information to the Pages of Testimony cannot be underestimated," asserts Dr. Yaacov Lozowick, Director of the Archives at Yad Vashem. "There are many Shoah victims for whom no-one remains to bear witness to their story—either due to the passage of time or because entire communities were wiped out. In these circumstances—and many others—the only evidence of their existence lies hidden within these millions of pieces of archival information."

The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names was created and uploaded to the Internet with the vision and generous support of the following individuals and organizations: the Victim List Project of the Swiss Banks Settlement, under the direction of Chief Judge Edward R. Korman of the United States District Court; Hi Tech Entrepreneur Yossie Hollander; the Noaber Foundation; and the Claims Conference.

To learn about how you can help the outreach effort, please contact: names.outreach@yadvashem.org.il.

To ensure the continuation of Yad Vashem's Names Recovery Project by providing financial assistance, please contact: international_relations@yadvashem.org.il

The author is Marketing Manager for the Online Names Database.
John Wald, 59, from Belgium and his maternal aunt, Evgenya (Gitel) Kotyarskaya, 82.

John's mother, Basia Fischer, and two sisters left their parents, brother and Gitel in Kornalowice in 1938 for Belgium; after the war, the three sisters were told the rest of the family had perished. However, while searching the Names Database last year, John found a Page of Testimony submitted by Gitel (now Evgenya) at Yad Vashem a few years earlier. After a four-month search, he finally found her, and flew to Moscow last November for an emotional reunion with his aunt, two cousins and their children. "It was wonderful," John wrote. "It is a new family for me."

"It was an extremely moving experience to see my family history located in the Database... It is a wonderful thing you have done—not only keeping the memories alive, but also allowing those of us far away to look back into those memories that are quickly fading."

Orie H. Niedzviecki, Toronto, Canada

"Thank you so much for your enormous work with the Database, and thousands of thanks for the memory of all these victims."

Susanne Hooge, Denmark

"Within 48 hours after the Database had gone online, a close friend of mine discovered a family relative living in Tel Aviv. She provided my friend with information on what had happened to her father and her aunts. Most of all, she provided her with a living link to the past. No other historical instrument I know of can do that."

Prof. Deborah E. Lipstadt, Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish and Holocaust Studies, Emory University, and author of History on Trial: My Day in Court with David Irving."
On 10 January 1945, eight days before the evacuation of Auschwitz, Paula Elon (then Rosenberg), turned 14. At that time, Paula and her mother Zusha, both Warsaw natives, were prisoners in the women's camp at Auschwitz. Despite the harsh reality in which she was living, Paula nevertheless harbored a glimmer of hope that she and her mother would live to see the day of liberation. The female prisoners had been transferred from Birkenua to the Auschwitz parent camp several weeks earlier, resulting in a slight improvement in their living conditions.

Today a widowed mother of three living in Israel, Paula remembers the day vividly. “It was a day of such optimism,” she recalls. “We were in our block early one evening, having returned from working at the Union factory, when three older women—good friends of my mother—suddenly approached me. ‘It’s your birthday, Paula,’ they said, ‘and we have a little surprise for you.’ I was completely astounded. They handed me a lovely, colorful postcard, with warm ‘Happy Birthday’ wishes written in German. My joy was boundless, especially since the postcard was so colorful. Of course the optimistic message written on it—the hope that we would stay alive—filled me and my mother with the desire to struggle until the end, up to the very last moment.”

Paula clearly remembers the women who gave her the present, but their fate remains unknown to her. She cherished the postcard more dearly than gold, and managed to preserve it from harm during the odyssey upon which she and her mother embarked after leaving Auschwitz on 18 January 1945: the Malkow camp, the “Death March,” the return to Poland after the war to search for Paula’s father, and the tortuous path to Eretz Yisrael.

The colorful postcard stayed in her possession for many years, accompanying her through all stages of her life’s journey. Occasionally she removed it from its album, showing it to astonished family and close friends. But it remained in Paula’s hands until last year, when the author of this article interviewed her as part of his research on the Majdanek concentration camp. At the end of the interview, almost as an afterthought, Paula mentioned the postcard and retrieved it from one of her drawers. Immediately after the interview, the author contacted staff at Yad Vashem’s Archives.

“At first it was hard for me to believe the postcard was an original,” recalls Naomi Halpern, the Archives’ Deputy Director. “This is because of the varied colors and the unusual way in which the date 10 January 1945 was recorded—with the numbers written the opposite way to what we are used to seeing.”

Paula is content with her decision to place her rare and special birthday gift in the care of Yad Vashem: “I am happy that the postcard is in Yad Vashem,” she says with a broad smile. “Now many more people can see the object that gave me and my mother so much hope during the final days of the Auschwitz death camp.”

The author is a historian and an educator at the International School for Holocaust Studies.
Inauguration of the new Visual Center

On 1 November, Yad Vashem’s new Visual Center was inaugurated in the presence of Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Minister of Industry, Trade and Employment Ehud Olmert, Benefactors Daniella and Daniel Steinmetz (Israel), President and CEO of the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation (established by Steven Spielberg) Douglas Greenberg, and Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate Avner Shalev.

Part of the new Museum Complex, the Visual Center is dedicated to creating the world’s most comprehensive resource center of films related to the Holocaust, adding a unique dimension to Holocaust remembrance. The Center—established through the generosity of Daniella and Daniel Steinmetz and The Righteous Persons Foundation headed by Steven Spielberg (USA)—collects, catalogues and offers viewing facilities for Holocaust-related films of all genres. It also provides access to survivor testimonies as well as Yad Vashem’s extensive online resources. In addition, the Center will conduct seminars, conferences, symposia and special events, focusing on the role that film plays in Holocaust remembrance and awareness.

In remarks taped especially for the inauguration, Steven Spielberg said: “The new Visual Center compliments the remarkable new Museum and all the various components at Yad Vashem that provide a complete picture of the Holocaust and remembrance. The Center has an ambitious and remarkable goal that inspired my own support of this project: to be the primary portal for viewing films and testimonies related to the Holocaust.”

Warsaw Ghetto Square to connect to new Museum Complex

lying at the heart of Yad Vashem, Warsaw Ghetto Square has become a key site in Holocaust commemoration. The 4,000-sq. meter Square is dominated by the Wall of Remembrance bearing the bronze monument sculpted by Nathan Rapoport in memory of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising—where the official opening ceremony of Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day is held each year.

As part of the multyear development plan, Warsaw Ghetto Square is currently undergoing renovation and reconstruction in order to add to its utility as well as its appearance. Aided by the generous support of Benefactors David and Ruth Mitzner, Ira and Mindy Mitzner and families (USA), and Phyllis and William Mack Family (USA), the Square is being widened on the northern side, facilitating access to the new Museum Complex—including the new Visual Center, Learning Center, Museum for Holocaust Art and Exhibitions Pavilion—and the Hall of Remembrance. The current entrance to the Square from the Avenue of the Righteous Among the Nations is also being enhanced by the addition of several rows of trees, and the paving upgraded. The renovation work is due to be completed by Holocaust Remembrance Day 2006.

Yad Vashem wins four prizes for technical excellence

Yad Vashem’s Information and Communications Systems Division has been awarded four prizes in Israel’s “People and Computers Magazine Annual IT Awards 2005.”

In the Special Projects Category for Outstanding Achievements, Yad Vashem won two awards: for the uploading of the Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names to the Internet; and for the establishment of the Digitization Center. A third prize was awarded for the project to protect information in the Names Database. Michael Lieber, CIO of Yad Vashem’s Information and Communications Systems Division, won the prize in the personal category of Outstanding Director of Information Systems. The Division also took second place in the “Champion of the Champions” competition for the total number of awards.

Lieber spoke of the “long distance traveled by Yad Vashem over the past seven years,” during which it has vastly increased its server capacity, established an advanced digital network that can absorb two to four million new documents each year and, using state-of-the-art technology, merged documents, testimonies and photographs for presentation in the new Museum. “However, the Division’s flagship project was, without doubt, the uploading of the Names’ Database to Yad Vashem’s website, for easy access by users worldwide.”

Competition judges commented: “One of the challenges of fulfilling the precept ‘to remember, and not to forget’ is the backup of historical testimonies regarding the Holocaust of the Jewish people—both against physical deterioration and against any other kind of damage. Preservation of these testimonies has a further value: against the phenomenon of Holocaust denial which is only increasing over the years.”
Whoever Saves One Life...

On 7 November 2005, a ceremony was held at Yad Vashem honoring the late Hipolit, Wiktoria and Robert Ropelewski (Poland), and Elizabeth Bol (Holland) as Righteous Among the Nations. Retired Supreme Court Judge, Judge Jacob Turkel, Chairman of the Commission of Designation for the Righteous Among the Nations, presented certificates and medals to Robert Ropelewski’s daughter, Wiktoria Bogdan, and to Elizabeth Bol in the presence of survivors Dr. Mordechai Menat and Miroslava Arditi, the Cultural Attaché of the Embassy of the Netherlands Dick Wentink, and family members of the rescuers and the survivors.

The Rescue Stories

On 7 February 1942, Leah Cheskelberg gave birth to a daughter, Miroslava. At that time, Leah and her husband Nathan were living in the Warsaw ghetto, and over the following months were witness to the dramatic decline in living conditions. In November 1942, Nathan handed his baby daughter to his Polish friend Hipolit Ropelewski, in the hope of saving her life. Miroslava lived with the Ropelewski family in the Warsaw suburb of Mlociny, where she was taken care of by the mother of the family, Wiktoria, and her teenage son Robert. The family claimed the baby was a daughter of a relative who had been killed during the German invasion of Poland, and treated her as such, protecting her and caring for all her needs. They also hid other Jews in their basement as well as in additional hiding places in Mlociny at great risk to their lives, particularly since a Gestapo watchtower was positioned close to their house and some neighbors suspected that the child was Jewish.

Nathan Cheskelberg was killed during the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto, but Leah managed to escape and join her daughter in the Ropelewski’s house, where they both remained until the liberation of Warsaw.

Despite her young age, Elizabeth Bol, 15, assisted her parents—members of a local underground movement in Holland, and later recognized as Righteous Among the Nations—in hiding and caring for Jews in their house during WWII. Elizabeth warned them of imminent Nazi searches, bought them food with forged coupons, and encouraged them with news about their families and the outside world. When her parents were absent, Elizabeth was responsible for looking after the Jews hiding in her home—at times up to 10 extra people.

In July 1943, after informers endangered those hiding in the Bol household (including Mordechai Menat), Elizabeth found alternate refuge for four of the eight Jews they were hiding, and her parents for the remaining four. When Germans later searched the Bol’s house, they found no one. They arrested Elizabeth’s parents, releasing her mother after two weeks but deporting her father to transit and concentration camps, where he remained until a week before liberation in May 1945.

Events October-December 2005

10 October Assembly marking 64 years since the murder of Ukrainian Jews, in cooperation with the Association of Ukrainian Jews in Israel and the participation of hundreds of Ukrainian Holocaust survivors. Participants toured the new Museum and placed wreaths in the Hall of Remembrance. Speeches were made by Deputy Minister of Immigrant Absorption Marina Solodkin MK, Acting Ukrainian Ambassador to Israel Alexander Khomia, Jewish Agency Treasurer Shai Hermesh, Yad Vashem Council Chairman Prof. Szewach Weiss, and Chairman of the Association of Ukrainian Immigrants in Israel David Levine.

16 October Annual ceremony and assembly marking the deportation of Italian Jews, in cooperation with the Association of Italian Immigrants in Israel and the Italian Jewish Cultural Society. Participants toured the new Museum and gathered in the new Synagogue for a ceremonial presentation of the last letter written by Luigia Levi Mali to her, prior to her deportation to Auschwitz, as well as the suitcase of Giuseppe de Porto, inscribed with the various stops he made until his liberation. The event concluded with a memorial ceremony in the Hall of Remembrance in the presence of the Italian Ambassador to Israel H.E. Mr. Sandro De Bernardin.

27 October Memorial assembly for the Jews of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, in cooperation with the Jerusalem branch of the Association of Lithuanian Immigrants headed by David Hain. After a memorial ceremony in the Hall of Remembrance, participants heard speeches by Hall of Names Director Alexander Avraham and Chairman of the Association of Lithuanian Immigrants in Israel Yosef Melamed.

7 November Memorial ceremony and general assembly of the Association to Memorialize the Victims of Landsberg-Kaufering-Dachau. Participants toured the new Museum, heard a lecture on the camps by Dr. David Dauber, and viewed a photo exhibit from a tour of the campsite taken by members of the Association and the second generation. At the ceremony, Executive Assistant to the Chairman Irena Steinfeldt welcomed the participants and presented a copy of the Museum album To Bear Witness to the Mayor of Gauting (Germany).

8 November Memorial ceremony and general assembly of the Alliance Association—children who lived under assumed identities in France during WWII. After a ceremony in the French courtyard of the Valley of the Communities, the 150 participants heard brief lectures about the late Simon Wiesenthal, and on underground member Andree Salomon.
Two more books in the new series of memoirs edited by Dr. David Silberklang are now available:

**Yesterday: My Story**

Yad Vashem in association with The Holocaust Survivors’ Memoirs Project, 2005, 210 pages, $21 (airmail included) / NIS 69

Widely regarded by Holocaust survivors as one of their matriarchs, Dr. Hadassah Rosensaft (1912-1997) was imprisoned in Auschwitz-Birkenau and Bergen-Belsen. Together with other inmates, she kept 149 Jewish children alive in Bergen-Belsen from December 1944 until their liberation on 15 April 1945, and then served as administrator of the camp’s hospital. Rosensaft was one of the leaders of the Jewish Displaced Persons in the British zone of Germany, served as a principal witness for the prosecution at the first trial of Nazi war criminals in 1945, and played a pivotal role in the creation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

**By the Grace of Strangers: Two Boys’ Rescue During the Holocaust**

Yad Vashem in association with The Holocaust Survivors’ Memoirs Project, 2005, 286 pages, $21 (airmail included) / NIS 69

This memoir comprises two father-son rescue stories. The first—told in the father’s diary—relates the story of Gabor Mermelstein (Gabriel Mermall) as a slave laborer in the Hungarian military’s Labor Service, and his rescue in 1944 with his young son Thomas. Unable to save his wife, who was deported to Auschwitz, Gabor hid with his son in the Ruthenian forests, aided by a poor Hungarian lumberjack, Ivan Gartner, who generously supplied them with food and shelter for more than six months.

The second story is told by the son, Norbert Yasharoff. As a young man, Yasharoff was forced to move with his family to Sofia, an experience that inspired him to write poetry. He was evicted to a number of the authorities, and after the war returned to Sofia, where he lived under communist rule. He assisted his father, an attorney, in the post-war defense of Dimitur Peshev, who had been instrumental in preventing the deportation of Bulgarian Jews. Yasharoff relates his experiences as a student and writer in Sofia University, followed by his immigration to Israel, where he immediately joined the army, finding fulfillment in the land of his dreams.

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9 November Annual memorial ceremony marking 67 years since the Kristallnacht pogrom with the Association of Central European Immigrants. The 250 participants toured the new Museum and heard a lecture entitled “From Humiliation to Genocide” by Prof. Walter Zwi Bacharach. A memorial ceremony was held in the Hall of Remembrance.

17 November Memorial ceremony marking 63 years since the liquidation of the Czestochowa and neighboring communities at Beit Hachayal in Tel Aviv. Some 150 members of the Association of Immigrants from Czestochowa and the second generation participated in the event. Speakers included Association Chairman Arieh Edelst, Adv., Yad Vashem Supporter Sigmund Rolat, Director of the School of Fine Arts in Czestochowa Dr. Anna Maciejowska, and Prof. Szewach Weiss, who lectured on the topic of “Poland: Challenges in the Shadow of the Past.” Performers in the artistic program included Ramat Gan’s Gogol Children’s Harmonica Ensemble and singer Shuli Natan.

29 December Buchman Memorial Prize ceremony 2005: the prize was awarded to author Afton Frankel for her book *Girl*, and to historian Dr. Michal Unger for her book *Lodzi — The Last Ghetto in Poland*, in the presence of Avner Shalev, Prof. David Bankier, Prof. Dan Michman, Academic Advisor to Yad Vashem Prof. Israel Gutman, Professor Dan Laor (Tel Aviv University), and Buchman Memorial Foundation representative Rosine Bron.

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**Dr. Joseph Kermish z”l (1907-2005)**

Yad Vashem mourns the passing of the late Dr. Joseph Kermish, the founder and first Director of the Yad Vashem Archives.

Joseph Kermish was born in the town of Zlotniki in the Tarnopol District in 1907. In 1937, he earned his doctorate on the topic of “Lublin and the Surrounding District from 1788-1794.” With the outbreak of the war, Kermish escaped to Rovno, where he worked as a history teacher, and later as a high school principal. He was hidden by one of the teachers from the school until 1944, when the Russians returned to the region. In 1950 he made aliya and settled in Hadar-Yosef. As a founding member of the “Jewish Historical Commission” established in Poland immediately after the war, Kermish became skilled in collecting documentation and deciphering worn out handwriting. An expert in investigating Nazi war crimes and documenting destroyed communities, he helped establish the ZIH (Jewish Historical Institute) in Lodz and served as its Deputy Director from 1948-1950. With the establishment of Yad Vashem in 1953, Kermish founded the Archives, the Library and the Bibliography Department, together with Nachman Blumenthal.

At Yad Vashem, Kermish helped publish six volumes of *The Underground Press of the Warsaw Ghetto*, and served as Director of the War Criminals Division. In 1958, he began working on Adam Czerniakow’s diary. In 1978, he retired as Director of the Archives and devoted himself to working on the publication of sections of Emanuel Ringelblum’s “Oneg Shabbat” Archives.
Children's Art from Czech Republic

In November, the International School for Holocaust Studies held an exhibition of children's art from the Czech Republic. The works displayed were selected from entries for a high school art and essay competition, which concluded a Holocaust learning program at the Terezin Memorial. The program was originated by Holocaust survivor and former inmate of the Terezin ghetto Hana Greenfield, who also initiated the exhibition in Israel.

Thousands of young people from over 60 high schools throughout the Czech Republic participate every year in the Terezin Memorial’s learning program. This year, over three hundred entries were submitted in the concluding art and essay competition, and the prize-winning entries were displayed in the exhibit at Yad Vashem.

The opening ceremony was attended by Ambassador of the Czech Republic in Israel H.E. Mr. Michael Zantovsky, as well as teachers participating in the Czech educational seminar at Yad Vashem. At the event, School Director Dr. Moti Shalem said: “This exhibition presents the fruits of educational activities conducted among youth in the Czech Republic, and is an example of the use of interdisciplinary methods such as art to educate about the Holocaust.”

Hungary honors Yad Vashem

On 14 November, Hungarian Foreign Minister Dr. Ferenc Somogyi (second from left) visited Yad Vashem together with his Deputy Laszlo Vakonyi. During the visit, Dr. Somogyi presented Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate Avner Shalev (left) with the Commander’s Cross with the Star of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary, in recognition of Yad Vashem’s work in promoting Holocaust education and remembrance in Hungary.

Three other Yad Vashem employees also received state decorations: Chava Baruch (right) and Zita Turgegnan (second from right), of the European Department of the International School for Holocaust Studies; and Sari Reuveni, of the International Institute for Holocaust Research and a volunteer on the Commission for the Designation of the Righteous Among the Nations.
The American Society for Yad Vashem held its 21st Annual Tribute Dinner on 20 November at the Sheraton New York Hotel and Towers, with over a thousand guests. Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate Avner Shalev and Chairman of the American Society Eli Zborowski addressed the audience. IAF Commander Major General Elyezer Shkedy, the son of a Shoah survivor, was the guest speaker. The program was presided over by Dinner Chairmen David Halpern and Zygmunt Wilf.

This year’s recipients of the Yad Vashem Young Leadership Award were Mindy and Ira Mitzner. The Mitzner family, together with Phyllis and William Mack, have funded the renovation of Warsaw Ghetto Square. The Yad Vashem Remembrance Award was presented to Marilyn and Barry Rubenstein, who endowed the new Synagogue at Yad Vashem.

On 23 October, the renovated Avenue of the Righteous Among the Nations was dedicated in the presence of Minister for Tourism Avraham Hirschson MK and the donors Gladys and Sam Halpern (pictured here with members of the Halpern family) and Eva and Arie Halpern.

Rochelle and Maks Etingin (second and third from right) visited Yad Vashem in the company of Dr. Dorota (left) and Noah Flug (right), member of the Yad Vashem Directorate and Chairman of the Center of Organizations of Holocaust Survivors in Israel, accompanied by Avner Shalev. The Etingins have endowed a panorama in memory of the Righteous Among the Nations who saved Maks and his brother.

Yad Vashem “Builders” Trudy and Sol Englander in the Square of Hope during a visit in October

Julie (right) and Steve Russo (third from left) and family endowed a garden at Yad Vashem in memory of Steve’s father Albert and in memory of members of the Kastoria and Saloniki communities in Greece who perished in the Shoah.

George Feldenkrais of Miami on a tour of the new Museum during a visit in November

Linda and Murray Laulicht on a tour of the new Museum in November—the Laulichts have recently become Yad Vashem “Builders.”

Yad Vashem “Guardians” Cecile and Ed Mosberg in the Visitors Center
The Canadian Society for Yad Vashem held a Gala Dinner on 20 November, co-chaired by Harry and Dora Kichler, Lou Greenbaum, Barry Zagdanski, Miguel Singer and Shelly Libfeld, at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto. Dinner Honorees were Tony and Elizabeth Comper (the founders of FAST — Fighting Antisemitism Together), new Yad Vashem Benefactors Joe Gottdenker and Ed Sonshine, and Benefactors Anna and Leslie Dan. Winston S. Churchill delivered the keynote address. The Dinner was attended by Director of Yad Vashem’s International Relations Division Shaya Ben Yehuda and Director of the English Desk Solly Kaplinski. Funds were raised in support of scholarships for Canadian teachers attending seminars at Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Studies.

Yad Vashem supporters Zygmunt and Annie Rotter visited Yad Vashem with their daughter Lilian.

Paul Summers of Canada (left), and Jack Smorgon (center) in conversation with Avner Shalev on a recent visit to Yad Vashem with members of the World Presidents’ Organization.

In recognition of his contribution to Holocaust remembrance and education, JNF UK and JNF Leeds honored Holocaust survivor Arek Hersh (left with President of JNF UK Gail Seal) by endowing a classroom in his name in the International School for Holocaust Studies.
Russian-Israeli businessman and the head of the Congress of Jewish Communities in Russia Arkady Gaidamak (right) toured Yad Vashem in November with Special Advisor to the Chairman Arie Zuckerman.

Yad Vashem supporter Esther Querub (right) and Mrs. Borer during a visit to Yad Vashem

Chairman of the Board of the Deutsche Telekom Foundation Dr. Klaus Kinkel (center) and Chairman of the Board of Trustees Dr. Karl-Gerhard Eick (left) toured the new Museum with Senior Advisor to the Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate Irena Steinfeldt.

Salomón Marcuschamer (third from left) with his family, Rabbi Marcelo Rittner (right) and Avner Shalev during their visit to Yad Vashem. The Marcuschamers recently became Benefactors of Yad Vashem.

Yad Vashem appreciates the generosity of its friends in supporting its mission of Shoah commemoration, documentation, education and research. Together we can continue our journey, ensuring Jewish continuity and conveying universal aspirations for understanding, tolerance, and mutual respect between people everywhere. Yad Vashem would be honored to welcome you into its circle of friends and supporters.

To make tax deductible donations:
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For information on societies in other countries, or to donate online, please visit: http://www.yadvashem.org and click on "Friends of Yad Vashem."

Donations may also be sent to: International Relations Division, Yad Vashem, PO Box 3477, Jerusalem 91034, Israel.
A Family Connection - Behind the scenes of the new Museum (pp. 4-5)