The Human Spirit in the Shadow of Death

Central Theme for Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day 2006
A Wake-Up Call

Much too frequently in our world people cry "Holocaust!" They do so for its rhetorical effect: lacking a deep understanding of the Holocaust, they wield what is really an extraordinarily weighty term with incredible lightness and aplomb. However, the confluence of the ranting and raving of Iran's President Ahmadinejad, his country's nuclear gambit and the events following the publication of insulting Danish cartoons about the prophet Mohammed should make it crystal clear that today, for the first time since the end of the Second World War, we are facing a situation that could plausibly lead to a new version of the Holocaust.

For those who believe Ahmadinejad's opinions are relatively harmless, the outburst of violence and incitement worldwide is an unmistakable signal that the danger far exceeds the borders of his state. Radical Islamic Fundamentalists have demonstrated time and again dangerous levels of hate and intolerance brooding over with unfettered violence and self-righteousness. Given the slightest opportunity, this breaks forth with a virulence and scope wholly disproportionate to the catalyst.

Antisemitism lies at the core of this worldview. This can be seen not just through Ahmadinejad and his cronies, but by innumerable statements, articles, cartoons and television shows featuring regularly in the media at the hive of Radical Islamic Fundamentalism. The competition of cartoons that satirize the Holocaust launched by Iran's newspaper Hamshari was justified by Iran as a commensurate response to the Danish cartoons. Of course "the Jews" had nothing to do with the original cartoons, and certainly there is no logical connection between the Holocaust and the pain the Danish cartoons caused among Islamic believers. Nevertheless, like the Nazis before them, Radical Islamic Fundamentalists believe Jews and Israel are the source of all society's ills; therefore, according to their logic, Jews must be behind the cartoons, and if the Prophet can be ridiculed, so can the Holocaust.

Hitler and his accomplices carried out the Holocaust, because they had an ideology overflowing with hate and self-righteousness that sought to create a utopian society. Although he had no clear plan for the extermination of the Jews when he came to power, the possibility was there, and within several years the course of events led to the evolution of a policy for the systematic mass murder of all the Jews under his dominion. Ultimately, Hitler was able to carry out the annihilation because he believed he had the reason, and he certainly had the means and the opportunity. The Radical Islamic Fundamentalist world today believes it has all the reasons it needs to embark upon a new Holocaust, focused on the destruction of the State of Israel, but not necessarily ending there. If Ahmadinejad and his ilk are not checked, they will soon have the means, and if the world does not stop them, they will certainly create the opportunity. Given the arsenal they are trying to build, the conflagration may be worse than the event we now rightly consider the measure of humanity's ability to perpetrate evil.

On the heels of a visit to Yad Vashem in February, newly elected German Chancellor Angela Merkel compared the threat posed by Iran and its president Ahmadinejad to Hitler's Germany. Ms. Merkel heard Ahmadinejad's threats to wipe out the State of Israel, his denial of the Holocaust and his nearly-consumed plan to achieve nuclear capabilities, and drew her conclusions. Unlike most who use the term Holocaust lightly, she got it right. The leaders of the world must follow Merkel, and pull no punches in recognizing that a new Hitler-like force with a huge following has arrived on the scene. It must be prevented from trying to destroy Israel and devastating the world.

The author is Director of the Yad Vashem Libraries.

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Cover, clockwise from upper left: Ninth grade student fold on iron wire, taken at great personal risk; Headscarf made by Ravensbruck prisoner Yehudit Arfrichtig from remnants of a Nazi flag, embroidered with prisoners' names, songs and illustrations from camp life; 'Recipe book' made by Yehudit Arfrichtig and her fellow women laborers in Ravensbruck from scraps of paper.
During WWII, European Jewry faced a constant fight for its very survival. At a time when murder had become the norm, and power endorsed unprecedented atrocities, many were swept away, unable to endure the perpetual struggle or adhere to the moral code of human society. Yet even under such dire conditions there were those who risked their lives—deliberately and intentionally—for higher values, including educating children, maintaining religious values and traditions, and sustaining centuries-old cultural activities. An examination of the human responses in the face of the Holocaust, while understanding the reality in which they took place, emphasizes the spiritual fortitude individuals and communities had to find in order to maintain their human spirit in the shadow of death.

One phenomenon that testifies to an impressive level of spiritual survival was the efforts made by Jews to document their lives in the ghettos and camps. Artists, intellectuals, children and ordinary people wrote and drew, documenting the fear and crisis that pervaded Jewish society. This enabled them not only to rise above the humiliations and injuries they suffered, but also sometimes to alert the free world to the reality of their lives.

Even in the camps, one finds evidence of activity through which the prisoners could—if only in their imaginations—transcend the barriers of their status and the surrounding camp environment. While only a few participated in these activities, their importance lies not in their quantity but in the strength of character needed for their fulfillment amid a reality of persecution and humiliation.

The predatory conditions in Eastern and Western Europe naturally resulted in most people withdrawing from society, concentrating on their own needs and those of their immediate families. Yet many Jews mobilized to assist those weaker than them, establishing mutual aid and welfare organizations. In the camps, helping others often became a matter of life and death, accompanied by difficult moral dilemmas. By assisting another person—whether with food, clothing or work—one potentially jeopardized one’s own chance of survival. However, many Jews placed themselves in grave danger in order to save the lives of others, among them Jewish partisan units, who rescued non-combatants, women and the elderly, and those who tried to protect the children and their special world in ghettos and camps. Similarly, despite their obvious powerlessness against the German military might, the armed underground still mustered the strength to act and rebel. Unfortunately, not all those who succeeded survived the hell that was the Holocaust, but their actions nonetheless bear witness to the power of the human spirit.

It is important to stress that the Holocaust took place in the heart of Christian Europe and before the eyes of millions of others. In many cases, hatred and persecution of the Jews became the accepted norm; those who tried to aid the Jews had to behave in opposition to the expectations of their surrounding society. The capability of a single individual to behave according to moral principles even when public norms had completely collapsed should not be underestimated. Non-Jews who endangered their own lives—and at times the lives of those closest to them—are an impressive exception to the behavior exhibited by so many others. The actions of these Righteous Among the Nations is a constant and exalted testament to human courage.

Our knowledge of the atrocities committed by the Nazis and their collaborators also raises serious questions concerning the depths to which human behavior can sink. At the same time, these horrors shed light on the highest peaks of action and self-sacrifice reached by the victims and others in the midst of those darkest of days. Today, 60 years after the end of the Shoah, we are obliged to grapple with expressions of humanity demonstrated then, their moral influence on people and societies, and the strength of spirit of those who lived in an inhumane world—and prevailed.

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In the face of the terrible atrocities occurring around them, many Jews during the Holocaust were determined to maintain their humanity, clinging fast to their acknowledged priorities—maintaining their religious, social and cultural interests, documenting their experiences, and educating their children.

These accounts are told in the new Holocaust History Museum, through the thousands of artifacts and hundreds of testimonies presented throughout the chronological narrative. One of the keystones of the new Museum, the personal perspective gives visitors a window into the daily reality confronted by the individual victims.

by Leah Goldstein

"Even back there, in the shadow of the chimneys, in the breaks between pain, there was something resembling happiness... For me, the happiness there will always be the most memorable experience, perhaps."

Imre Kertész, Futálos

When Yad Vashem's "No Child's Play" exhibition, supported by the Waldbaum Foundation, was being compiled a decade ago, research was conducted into an extraordinary character who dedicated his life to helping children during the Holocaust: Fredy Hirsch.

"Fredy was one of the unique heroes of the Holocaust," Museums Division Director and exhibition curator Yehudit Inbar explains. "Although he initially appeared as a young man with mainly physical talents, in the depths of the Shoah, at Auschwitz-Birkenau, he displayed maturity and leadership beyond his years. Because of him, hundreds of children were able to experience their last moments of happiness."

Born in Aachen, Germany in 1916, Fredy (Alfred) Hirsch was a member of the Young Maccabi youth movement. Following the promulgation of the race laws, he moved to Prague, where he became an admired sports instructor, regularly organizing gymnastic and sport events on the Hagibor (Hero) field in Prague. Fredy was in one of the first transports to the Terezin ghetto in the winter of 1941. There he became deputy head of the youth department, devoting all his time to the children incarcerated in the ghetto. He worked tirelessly to keep the youth physically and mentally fit, emphasizing independent control of their bodies and minds, through physical activity on the surface of the ghetto walls, and routine checking of the cleanliness of the children and their living environment. The enormous contribution of Fredy Hirsch in the ghetto is portrayed in the exhibit on Terezin in the new Holocaust History Museum.

In the summer of 1943, some 1,200 children arrived in Terezin from the Bialystok ghetto. In accordance with SS orders, the children were kept in isolation and prohibited from having visitors. Wishing to make personal contact with them, Fredy violated the order. He was caught, and in September 1943 deported, with some 5,000 men, women and children to Birkenau. On arrival, the entire transport did not undergo the usual selection. Instead, they were all immediately placed in the "Family Camp." This provisional camp area, which held over 17,000 prisoners deported from Terezin in September and December 1943 and May 1944, is believed to have been created by the Germans in anticipation of a visit from the Red Cross.

Fredy immediately recognized the urgent need to keep the hundreds of children occupied during the day and—claiming they were disturbing the work of the adults and the establishment of discipline in the camp—managed to persuade Dr. Josef Mengele to ask the camp commander to allow them to use one of the barracks, Block 31, as a meeting place for the older children. Ruth Bondy, who arrived at Birkenau from Terezin in December 1943, remembers Fredy as an impressive character: "There is no doubt that his outward appearance helped him in his contacts with the Germans: he was a shining example in his dress, conduct and manner of speech," she wrote in her book, "Mausi (Marianne) Hermann-Gratz, Wall Drawings from the Children's Block, reconstruction from memory, July 1997. Mausi was a counselor in the children's block."

The last block on the left, opposite the infirmary barracks, Block 31 was in clear view of the crematoria chimneys. Despite the impossible conditions, Fredy took care of food, heating and social activities for some 500 children, aged between 8 and 14. They were looked after and encouraged by a handpicked team of young counselors who determined to maintain the children’s physical and mental health through a range of activities.

The children dedicated time every day to exercising, washing and checking for lice—all vital for their physical survival. “If preserving physical health was an important part of educating Jewish youth in wartime Czechoslovakia,” remembers Bondy, “here it was the main, most crucial objective... The counselors were obliged to check the cleanliness of the children as well as their bunks and eating utensils.” The children received thicker soup than the regular prisoners, plus extra rations Fredy obtained for them, such as noodles cooked in milk, white bread, cake crumbs and food from parcels sent to already deceased prisoners. The extra food came irregularly but, combined with the strict cleanliness, was enough to ensure that the rate of death of “natural causes” (sickness and starvation)—about 22% in the Family Camp as a whole—was next to zero among the children.

In addition, Fredy forbade the counselors from eating any of the food intended for the children; breaking that rule meant immediate banishment from the block. “Unlike the norm outside the block, inside there was no scaling, no abuse, and no acts of violence by the stronger against the weak,” explains Bondy.

Though formally prohibited by the Germans, the counselors also arranged educational activities, including games, stories and plays. They set up a mini library of sorts, comprising history, science and storybooks, as well as several improvised collections of poems and songs. A memory game, invented by counselor Hana Fischel, would last for hours, and helped the children develop familiarity with historical figures, increase their power of memory, and maintain their interest.

“There was no fixed syllabus for learning,” Bondy recalls. “The counselors taught from their experiences and strengths—from their ability to interest the children, keep them busy, and educate them with no learning aids other than their own memories.” The children were also taken outside for games and “treasure hunts,” collecting scraps of paper they would later use for craft activities.

They especially loved the group singing times, organized by counselor Avi Fischer, with the French children’s song Alouette a particular favorite. At Fredy’s request, counselors Dina Babbit-Gottlieb and Mauzi Hermann-Grant decorated the windowless barrack by painting pictures of Eskimos, Indians, Africans, countryside scenes and favorite cartoon characters on the walls.

“The children loved to be in the block,” says Bondy. “The counselors never asked themselves why they should teach them the alphabet, geography, the rules of Czech grammar or about the Earth’s gravity, with death lurking at the door. Education was necessary because their students needed it. But it was also a way to forget... The block had other advantages too: a warm barrack, far away from the abusive kapas, the closeness of friendship; permission to ‘parade’ without standing in the rain and frost; and various small delights—the chance to fix a torn piece of clothing, friendly discussions, and a feeling of shelter and refuge.” A small enclosure in the block was also used as a meeting place for the Auschwitz underground.

The highlight of their week was every Sabbath eve, when the children and counselors staged performances and plays. The most memorable of these was a Christmas 1943 production of “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,” for which the children rehearsed for many weeks, creating the scripts, songs, sets and costumes. They performed the play in front of a large audience that even included SS guards. According to spectator Harry Kraus (then 12 years old): “Fredy Hirsch was the man and living spirit behind the enterprise.”

In his article in Yad Vashem Studies Vol. 24, Shimon Adler describes the daily life in Block 31 as “an island of stability in the sea of constant changes and traumas the children had to endure... The children and staff there were able to live for the moment, distancing themselves from the pain and terror reigning outside.” Yet the existence of Block 31 was not enough to ensure their survival. On 8 March 1944, the children, most of their family members and the counselors of the September transport—including Fredy—were murdered in the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

In their memoirs, the few survivors of the Family Camp repeatedly recall the importance of friendship, mutual assistance, self-endangerment to help a friend—and the image of Fredy Hirsh. “All these qualities,” writes Bondy, “helped them hold firm... and after the war to return to their studies, gain employment and build families—and not lose their faith in humanity.”
On 1 November 2005, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution designating 27 January as “International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust.” Israel’s Ministerial Committee on Symbols and Ceremonies, chaired by Minister Dan Naveh, noted that while Holocaust Remembrance Day in Israel would remain 27 Nissan, Israel would show solidarity with other countries marking 27 January. The Committee adopted the recommendations of the inter-office working group established under the chairmanship of Avner Shalev, focusing in particular on educational activities addressing the international significance of Holocaust remembrance.

In advance of 27 January, Yad Vashem launched a mini-site accessible from its website, aimed at providing information on the Holocaust, as well as helping schools and other organizations around the world prepare to mark the day. The day itself was marked by a number of high-profile ceremonies, exhibitions and educational initiatives at the UN, in Israel and in scores of countries around the globe, many in cooperation with Yad Vashem. Below are some highlights of the events surrounding the first International Holocaust Remembrance Day:

On 27 January, the UN General Assembly opened a special session with two minutes of silence in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. Israel’s Ambassador to the UN Danny Gillerman addressed the delegates, and Academic Advisor to Yad Vashem Prof. Yehuda Bauer was the keynote speaker. The names and photographs of Holocaust victims from Yad Vashem’s Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names were also screened during the session.

The UN devoted a full week of events to International Holocaust Remembrance Day, including the display of Yad Vashem’s “No Child’s Play” exhibition in the UN building in New York. Also participating in the events were: UN Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Relations Shashi Tharoor (pictured); Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem Eli Zborowski; Vice-Chairman of the American Society Eugen Gluck; member of the Executive of the American Society Prof. Melvin Bukiet; and exhibition curator and Director of Yad Vashem’s Museums Division Yehudit Inbar.

On 26 January, the Israeli Government held a special Cabinet meeting at Yad Vashem. Chairman of the Directorate Avner Shalev participated in the Cabinet meeting and guided government ministers on a special tour of the new Holocaust History Museum. Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert thanked Yad Vashem and expressed his hope “that this step will lead to the awareness of the Holocaust being instilled in many societies around the world... and a reduction in antisemitism and Holocaust denial, which in recent years, to my regret, we have witnessed with concern.”

During the meeting, members of the government received a report on antisemitism around the world, and agreed to work towards the renovation of the Jewish Pavilion at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum. To this end, the government established an inter-ministerial committee headed by the Government Secretary and with the participation of Yad Vashem, the Center of Organizations of Holocaust Survivors in Israel and the Jewish Agency. The government charged Yad Vashem to draft a proposal for and implement the renovation work on the Pavilion according to the given budget, in coordination with the directorate of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum and the Government of Poland.

On the same day, a special session dedicated to International Holocaust Remembrance Day was held at the Knesset. Participating in the session were Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, ministers and other members of Knesset.
Yad Vashem opened a new exhibition: “Montparnasse Déporté—The End of l’Ecole de Paris” on 26 January, under the auspices of the French Embassy in Israel and in cooperation with the Montparnasse Museum, Paris. Minister of Education, Culture and Sport Meir Sheetrit, French Ambassador to Israel H.E. Mr. Gerard Araud (pictured), Yad Vashem Art Department Director and Senior Art Curator Tehudit Shendar, and dozens of ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps attended the opening.

The exhibition, which will run until 25 May 2006, presents the artwork and life stories of Jewish artists living in Paris—most of whom were murdered in the death camps—together with photographs and original documents relating to the artists themselves.

At the event, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate Avner Shalev said: “Their lives were devoted to the best of humankind: they wanted to express the love that exists in humanity. Their works, displayed here in the exhibition, survived, and with them hope for the future.”

The exhibition was made possible by the generous contribution of: Groupe Segula Technologies, France; Sylvia and Boris Samujlovic 257; Brazil and Israel; Le Comité Français pour Yad Vashem; Leumi, Israel; and Buchman Foundation representative Rosine Bron, France.

On 26 January, Ministry of Education supervisors and managers from throughout the country attended a special seminar at Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Studies. Minister of Education, Culture and Sport Meir Sheetrit (pictured) and Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv-Jaffa Rabbi Israel Meir Lau participated in the seminar, which dealt with different aspects of the UN resolution, including the place of the Holocaust in world conscience, and Holocaust remembrance in Israeli and Jewish consciousness.

The Belgian Chairmanship of the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, with 55 member states) hosted a commemorative event for the victims of the Holocaust on 27 January, at Egmont Palace in Brussels. At the event, the “Guidelines on preparing Holocaust Memorial Days for Educators” was launched (see p. 8).

OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Director Ambassador Christian Streffer attended the ceremony, explaining: “It is vital for OSCE states to provide today’s generation with the ability to comprehend the meaning of the total destruction and the unimaginable harm imposed by humans against humanity.” Also present were Belgian representative to the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, Ambassador Jan Deboutte; Special Envoy of the Belgian OSCE Chairmanship, M. Pierre Chevalier; Director-General of the Belgian Friends of Yad Vashem, Yvette Blaubergraubart; Founder of the Mechelen Museum of Deportation and Resistance, Mr. Nathan Ramet; and Director of Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Studies, Dr. Motti Shalem.

Yad Vashem held a seminar on 26 January on the late German philosopher Karl Jaspers’ book, The Question of German Guilt, coinciding with the book’s publication in Hebrew by Yad Vashem and Magnes Press. Editors of the book, Prof. Yacov Golomb of the Hebrew University, and Head of the Institute Prof. David Bankier, took part in the seminar, alongside professors from the Hebrew University and the University of Bar-Ilan. The lectures dealt with the question of individual and collective guilt, as explained by Jaspers, from the philosophical, sociological and political points of view. They were accompanied by discussions with extensive audience participation.

In Spain, King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia, as well as the country’s Prime Minister, President of the Constitutional Court, Congress President, Government Ministers, the Mayor of Madrid and President of the Spanish Society for Yad Vashem Isaac Quepbud attended an official ceremony to mark the day. The Prime Minister voiced his commitment to collaborate with Yad Vashem and the International Task Force on Holocaust Education. The Spanish government also requested that Yad Vashem’s “No Child’s Play” traveling exhibition be used countrywide as a focus for educational and public activities around the subject of the Holocaust.

In Thailand, Yad Vashem’s exhibition, “Auschwitz—The Depth of the Abyss,” displayed at the UN last year, was opened by Israel’s Ambassador at the UN Conference Center in Bangkok. Guests from the Royal Thai Government, UN and Israel Embassy officials and a number of ambassadors viewed the exhibition.

The “Generation to Generation” organization gathered at the International School for Holocaust Studies’ branch in Beit Woly, Givatayim on 26 January for a special session and general assembly entitled, “Preserving the Memory.” Participants in the session—including survivors and members of the Second and Third Generations—heard addresses from former Minister of Education Yossi Sarid MK, Chairperson of the Parliamentary Inquiry Committee for the Location and Restitution of Property of Holocaust Victims Colette Avital MK, Chairman of the “Generation to Generation” Association Dr. Yossi Shub, and Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate Avner Shalev.

The International Institute for Holocaust Research held a seminar on 26 January on the late German philosopher Karl Jaspers’ book, The Question of German Guilt, coinciding with the book’s publication in Hebrew by Yad Vashem and Magnes Press. Editors of the book, Prof. Yacov Golomb of the Hebrew University, and Head of the Institute Prof. David Bankier, took part in the seminar, alongside professors from the Hebrew University and the University of Bar-Ilan. The lectures dealt with the question of individual and collective guilt, as explained by Jaspers, from the philosophical, sociological and political points of view. They were accompanied by discussions with extensive audience participation.
by Leah Goldstein

On 25-28 February, the first annual ICHEIC (International Conference on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims) International Forum took place at Yad Vashem, with participants from 12 countries: Austria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, UK, and Ukraine. The Forum was organized within the framework of the ICHEIC Program for Holocaust Education in Europe chaired by Lawrence S. Eagleburger—a special project that seeks to preserve and perpetuate the memory of the Holocaust and its lessons; to combat the rise in antisemitism; to safeguard human rights and to prevent racism and xenophobia.

Through the Program, Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Studies conducts a wide range of teacher training seminars tailored towards educators from across the continent, providing them with the tools necessary for teaching the Holocaust in their own countries.

The Forum offered an opportunity for European educators and coordinators from various government offices and NGOs, together with Yad Vashem staff, to take part in an exchange of ideas and to enhance cooperation on both a bilateral and European level. Participants examined a wide range of topics pertaining to Holocaust education, including the importance of teacher training seminars in Israel and in Europe, and the creation of specific educational units by Yad Vashem for use in a variety of European countries. Zoltan Loboda of the Hungarian Ministry of Education spoke about the need for innovative change in Holocaust education: “Yad Vashem seminars have had a huge impact on changing teaching attitudes, encouraging educators to apply new methodologies in other fields of teaching.”

Participants also discussed the importance of creating a European network of educators, and specific methods to encourage post-seminar activities. Alessandra Chiappano of the Institute for the History of the Liberation Movement in Italy appreciated being able to meet other educators from across Europe and discussing different pedagogical approaches: “I think the creation of a network of European teachers is of great importance,” she said. “Holocaust education must also be connected with themes such as human rights and democratic awareness.”

OSCE - Yad Vashem Guidelines launched in Belgium

Marking the first International Day for Holocaust Remembrance, Yad Vashem and the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) published guidelines for educators on marking Holocaust Remembrance Days. Developed as a practical tool for educators planning and organizing projects or commemorative events on the Holocaust, the guidelines were launched in Brussels on 27 February at a memorial ceremony for the victims of the Holocaust, hosted by the Belgian Chairmanship of the 55-member state OSCE (see p. 7).

“These guidelines provide a plethora of examples of Holocaust-related commemoration and education projects,” explained Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate Avner Shalev before the launch. “Our hope is that they will empower educators to explore this complex and difficult subject matter with their students and in their communities.”

Currently available in five languages (English, Russian, Flemish, French and Italian), the guidelines will be translated into additional languages over the coming months. They are accessible on both the OSCE and Yad Vashem websites and in hard copy with an accompanying CD of the best practice examples.

Part of a larger joint project between the OSCE and Yad Vashem, the guidelines began to be formulated during an international forum of experts with the participation of OSCE member states at Yad Vashem last October. The meeting was generously funded by the Asper International Holocaust Studies Program, supported by the Asper Foundation, and developed with the support of the Government of Germany. Additional guidelines for educators on how to combat antisemitism and other forms of intolerance are currently being developed.
Initiatives in Europe

The first quarter of 2006 saw a flurry of cooperative activity on the European continent, with seminars and official visits conducted by School staff:

Italy

Italy is one of Yad Vashem’s most active partners in the field of Holocaust education. Following an Italian teacher training seminar in Jerusalem last September, Yad Vashem educational experts participated in four seminars around Italy since the beginning of 2006. Staff at the School are also developing educational materials in Italian, which will soon be available online.

Slovakia

For the first time, a seminar was held in Bratislava, Slovakia, in cooperation with the Council of Europe and the Slovakian Ministry of Education. Teachers from Slovakia, Germany, Russia, the UK, Greece, Malta, Finland, Cyprus, Croatia, the Czech Republic and Romania took part in educational workshops in which they learned about various Holocaust teaching strategies. An additional seminar is planned for the participants at Yad Vashem in the next few months.

Croatia

Yad Vashem staff visited the location of a new museum in Jasenovac, Croatia, the site of a network of camps where hundreds of thousands of Serbs, Jews, Gypsies and Croatian opponents of the ruling regime were murdered during WWII. Some 60 teachers from around Croatia participated in the seminar that followed, held jointly by Yad Vashem and the Croatian Ministries of Education and Culture, the Croatian Pedagogical Institute, the Jasenovac Museum, the Shoah Foundation and the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

The visit to the Republic of Srpska was an important opportunity to re-connect with teachers who had participated in Yad Vashem seminars, as well as to promote Holocaust education in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The tremendous local interest in Yad Vashem was reflected in the large number of participants in the educational workshop—in which not only teachers but also journalists and other local residents took part—and the public lecture delivered in the municipality auditorium. This was perhaps the first time the participants had learned in detail about the suffering endured by the Jews, as well as about ways of perpetuating memory. They expressed interest in gathering names of Holocaust victims and in launching a similar project for Serbian victims.

Scandinavia

A senior delegation of the Swedish Living History Forum, initiated by Prime Minister Göran Persson, came for a constructive three-day exchange at Yad Vashem. The Forum is the ICHEIC partner in the first-ever Scandinavian teacher training seminar to be held in July 2006, organized jointly with the Danish Institute for International Studies and The Center for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities in Norway. The Thanks To Scandinavia Foundation is also supporting this seminar, as well as the first seminar for educators from Finland to be held jointly with the Finnish Institute in the Middle East in April 2006.

Events at
The International School for Holocaust Studies
January – March 2006

In the first quarter of 2006, over two hundred youth groups visited Yad Vashem with the birthing program. Some 20 one-day seminars were held for Jewish teachers and students from all over the world, and a winter seminar and a Spanish seminar were held in January, with some 60 participants. From January to March, seminars for IDF senior personnel were conducted, as well as preparatory seminars for “Witnesses in Uniform”—IDF delegations in advance of their upcoming trip to Poland.

In preparation for Holocaust Remembrance Day, the School was engaged in a number of special projects in the field of arts, including: “Visions”—a film competition for high school students on the subject of the Holocaust; “Meeting of Worlds”—a joint project for students of the Ohn School for disabled youth and students of Shenker Art College, who created a poster exhibition; and “Musica”—Young People Connect with the Holocaust—performances by youth in different spheres, such as music, poetry, theater and the visual arts.

During the winter vacation, some 1,400 participants in the School’s year-long courses visited Yad Vashem for focused one-day seminars. Specially tailored seminars were also held for high school guidance counselors, kindergarten teachers, elementary school principals, principals of special education schools, and others.

In January, Yad Vashem held a special course for teacher training instructors in the ultra-orthodox sector. During the week of 10th Tevet—the General Day of Mourning—some 20 ultra-orthodox groups visited Yad Vashem, among them women from Agudath Israel, Beit Rivka Religious College for Women, Beit Yaakov Teacher Training Seminary, Gur Hasidic seminar, Moreshet Yaakov Religious College of Education, “Binyan Olam” synagogue college, and Talmud Torah pedagogy teams.

Teaching the Holocaust to Future Generations
The Fifth International Educators’ Conference, 26-29 June 2006

The Fifth International Conference on “Teaching the Holocaust to Future Generations” will be held at Yad Vashem from 26-29 June 2006. Educators from around the world will gather to hear some of the outstanding speakers and educators in the field of Holocaust education, including Prof. Lawrence Langer, Prof. Irwin Cotler, Prof. Steven Feinstein, Prof. Tehuda Bauer, Prof. Colin Tatz, Prof. Rita Süssmuth and Lt.-Gen. (Ret.) Romeo Dallaire. The conference will provide educators with an enriching and productive dialogue on the central dilemmas and complex issues involved in teaching about the Holocaust. It will also explore new areas of research in the sphere of Holocaust education and the extensive variety of teaching materials, curricula, films and Internet sites in Holocaust education; present contemporary manifestations of antisemitism and Holocaust denial and the means for coping with such phenomena in the classroom; and introduce new directions in Holocaust education into other disciplines such as literature, art and theater. Afternoon workshops will allow participants to present their research and classroom work in 45-minute sessions, designed to promote an ongoing dialogue among the experts in the field.

The conference is being organized by the International School for Holocaust Studies and Oranim Educational Initiatives Ltd. and is supported by the Asper International Holocaust Studies Program at Yad Vashem. For more information on the conference and to register, please visit: www.teachingholocaust.com or email: info@teachingholocaust.com
On 26 February, the first Congress of Israeli Youth Movements was held at Yad Vashem. Participating in the congress were some 350 members of local youth movements spanning secular and religious groups, the Jewish and Arab sectors, and the complete political spectrum. The event was held in cooperation with the Israel Council of Youth Movements (the umbrella organization for Israel’s 14 recognized youth movements) and the Ministry of Education’s Society and Youth Administration.

The congress addressed the role of youth movement leaders in passing on Holocaust memory in contemporary Israeli society. “At this unique congress, young Israelis of all sectors and opinions had the opportunity to engage in a dialogue about something that unites them—preserving the memory of the Holocaust,” said International School for Holocaust Studies Director Dr. Moti Shalem. “We regard this high-caliber group—which plays a leading role in Israeli public discourse—as ambassadors and transmitters of the message, and as a bridge to the memory of the Holocaust in a society that changes with the passing generations.”

The School’s Pedagogical Director Shulamit Imber opened the congress with a lecture entitled, “Youth Groups During the Holocaust: A Source of Inspiration.” Yad Vashem’s Director-General Nathan Eitan greeted the participants, and Rabbi Dr. Benny Lau and Muki Tzur addressed the issue of “Human Dignity and Freedom in the Wake of the Holocaust” in a panel discussion moderated by Sivan Rahav-Meir. There were also workshops on the shaping of Holocaust remembrance as well as on how the Holocaust is reflected in art, literature and contemporary media. Film selections from the Muzika project, dealing with the meaning of words, were screened; posters prepared by Shenkar College students were displayed; and a tour of the site was conducted around the theme of Israeli Society and the Holocaust.

Discussion groups formed to debate the role of youth and youth movements in shaping the memory of the Holocaust, unified by the theme: “The Scepter of Memory—How and Where To?”

The congress’s concluding session included a roundtable discussion in which youth movement representatives exchanged ideas on their approaches to preserving the memory of the Holocaust.

The author is Coordinator of the Informal Training Division at the International School for Holocaust Studies.
The Names Database

by Yifat Bachrach-Ron

I have just received a phone call from someone in Australia named William Buckingham, who told me he has some silver items belonging to my family. I couldn't believe my ears. I was the only member of my family to survive." So related Sioma Slovin of Haifa recently to delighted staff at Yad Vashem's Hall of Names. Soon after contact between Buckingham and Slovin was established, the items were dutifully returned to their owner—over 60 years after they were entrusted to William's mother Vera for safekeeping.

Born in Riga, Vera emigrated to Australia with her mother, Salme Krum, in 1949. The women brought with them a great number of personal belongings, including silver utensils. Vera married soon after, bearing three children, the youngest of whom, William, was born in 1958.

Although William had always been aware of the silver, he only noticed some 10 years ago that

the victims to fill in Pages of Testimony, which will then be added to the Names Database. During the year, Yad Vashem will also upload the Russian version of the Names Database to the Internet supported by the Nadav Foundation (Israel), enabling the Russian-speaking population to search for and submit additional victims' names and photographs online.

Boris Mafzir, head of the names recovery campaign in the Russian-language sector, calls this "the next crucial step" in collecting the missing information: "We plan to work intensively with the help of all the Jewish organizations in Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Russia. Our efforts will also be channeled through Jewish schools, universities, and welfare and Holocaust centers. In Israel, the search for names will include hundreds of collection points throughout the country where the Russian-speaking population resides."

Yad Vashem has launched a new online community outreach guide to initiate local Names Recovery Campaigns. Packed with valuable resources and materials, the guide enables individuals, synagogues, community centers, welfare agencies, schools, youth groups and universities to plan and implement meaningful memorial programs, names collection events and related activities around Yom Hashoah—Israel's national Holocaust Remembrance Day (this year, 25 April)—and other significant dates in the Jewish calendar, such as 10 Tevet, 17 Tammuz, 9 Av, Roah Havannah and Yom Kippur. The guide may be accessed from the Yad Vashem website: www.yadvashem.org
Emanuel Ringelblum—The Man and the Historian
Edited by Israel Gutman, 2006, 260 pages, NIS 63
by Prof. Israel Gutman

Marking 62 years since Emanuel Ringelblum was murdered by the Germans, Yad Vashem has published a selection of articles from the international conference held in 2004 on the historian’s life and work.

Born in 1900 in Buczacz, Dr. Emanuel Ringelblum was one of the most prominent and socially active figures in the Warsaw ghetto. In the years preceding the war, Ringelblum worked as a teacher. He devoted his evenings to what he regarded as his life’s mission: researching the history of Polish Jewry.

When war broke out, Ringelblum refused to join his friends fleeing eastward, citing his obligation to remain in Warsaw. While efforts were still being made to defend the city in September 1939, Ringelblum devoted his time to helping those suffering the most—the homeless and refugees. With few leaders and public activists remaining among the 400,000 Jews in the city, Ringelblum became one of the founders of the Jewish Self-Help Organization (ZSS).

However, Ringelblum’s most important and historically valuable achievement was undoubtedly the establishment of the ghetto Underground’s archive: Oneg Shabbat. From the early days of German occupation, Ringelblum realized that no historical precedent existed for the events that were taking place, and that human imagination was not equipped to foresee the fate awaiting the Jews. He thus organized a group of dedicated individuals—writers, historians and young volunteers—to document life in the ghetto. The Oneg Shabbat archivists not only assembled material; they also attempted to describe the changes taking place in the lives of individuals and families; the various social sectors; underground welfare activity; and the work of the Judenrat and the Jewish police. Ringelblum also collected diaries, literary works and newspapers, thereby turning the archive into a multifaceted documentation center for the history of the Jews in Poland in general, and in the Warsaw ghetto in particular.

Together with his wife Yehudit and son Uri, Ringelblum was smuggled out of the ghetto with the help of Barbara (Batya) and Avraham Adolf Berman who, aided by Polish friends, had escaped earlier to the “Aryan” side. Even from outside its walls, Ringelblum strove to maintain contact with the last Jews remaining in the ghetto after the mass transports to Treblinka, hiding the archival material he had amassed in different locations. On 18 April 1943, just before Passover, he re-entered the ghetto. The next day the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt broke out. Ringelblum was caught and deported to the Trawniki work camp near Lublin. When his friends in Warsaw heard of this, two underground members were sent to smuggle him out of the camp and bring him back to Warsaw.

During his last months, Ringelblum hid with his family and a group of refugees in an underground bunker on Grojecka Street, in exceedingly difficult and overcrowded conditions. Nonetheless he continued his activities, encouraging his companions to record their memories of the ghetto, the deportations and their months in hiding.

In 1946 and 1950, some important documents from the archive were found in the ruins of the ghetto, including letters written by Emanuel and Yehudit Ringelblum during their time in the bunker, before an informer betrayed its location. These letters, sent to the Bermans, paint a picture of life in the bunker, of Ringelblum’s self-help efforts and his tireless historical activity.

Emanuel Ringelblum was an optimist who fiercely believed in humanity. In his last letters, however, he admitted the improbability of his survival. The letter he wrote on 1 March 1944—a few days before the bunker was discovered—was concerned with the fate of the historical material he had collected and written: it constitutes the last will and testament of Emanuel Ringelblum.

The author is Academic Advisor to Yad Vashem. Translated from the Polish by Ella Linda, Yad Vashem Archives

Also New on the Shelf...

I giusti d’Italia. I non ebrei che salvarono gli ebrei. 1943-1945
(The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Italy)
Series editor: Israel Gutman; Editor: Bracha Rivlin; Translators: Nanette Hayon and Maya Zippel; Italian edition Editor: Liliana Picciotto. Yad Vashem in association with Mondadori, 2006, NIS 129

Over the past five decades, more than 21,000 people have been recognized as Righteous Among the Nations—the highest honor bestowed upon non-Jews by the Jewish nation. The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations aims to reveal their individual stories as witnessed by survivors from across Europe. The Italian volume presents eyewitness accounts of the persecution of Jews in Fascist Italy and during WWII. The individuals honored within saved not only the lives of many Jews, but also the human dignity and honor of their compatriots.

The publication of this volume was made possible by cooperation between Yad Vashem, the Italian Embassy in Israel, the Italian Cultural Institute in Tel Aviv and Mondadori publishing house. It was presented on International Holocaust Remembrance Day (27 January 2006) to Italian Foreign Minister Gianfranco Fini at a ceremony held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome, in the presence of Rabbi Emeritus Elio Toaff, Dr. Simonetta Della Setta and Mr. Nathan Ben Horin, and on 15 March to President Moshe Katzav in the presence of Italian Ambassador to Israel H.E. Mr. Sandro De Bernardin and Avner Shalev.

Theodor Friedricks, Exiles
My Family’s Journey: Berlin-Shanghai-New York
Series Editor: Dr. David Silberklang; Managing Editor: Daniella Zaidman Mauer. Yad Vashem in association with The Holocaust Survivors’ Memoirs Project, 2006, 232 pages, $21 (airmail included) / NIS 69

Following the loss of his physician’s practice in Berlin, Theodor Friedricks decided to emigrate with his family to Japan. His autobiography describes in detail his frustrations with the bureaucratic nightmare created by the Nazis to hinder emigration by the Jews, followed by rich descriptions of the eight years he spent in Shanghai. There he learned to treat unfamiliar tropical diseases—thereby saving many lives—while battling personal deprivation and illness. After the war, Friedricks emigrated to the United States and rebuilt his life, practicing in New York for the next 20 years.
Highlights of Yad Vashem’s Activities in 2005

Holocaust Education
- Some 163,000 pupils from Israel and abroad and 1,454 groups of Israeli soldiers participated in seminars at the International School for Holocaust Studies and at the School’s branch in Givatayim. 600 classes of Israeli students made use of the School’s three Nayelet (Mobile Unit) programs.
- The first National Conference for Israeli Teachers was held in July 2005, with some 450 participants from across the country. In addition, some 17,000 Israeli educators attended over 420 teacher training days nationwide, including 4,700 students from teacher training colleges and 1,800 principals and senior educators who attended seminars at the School. 26 seminars were conducted for 800 participants in a year-long course given by the School.
- The School’s new European Department—opened with support from the International Conference on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims (ICHEIC)—conducted 18 seminars at Yad Vashem for educators from abroad, with some 430 participants attending from 13 European states. Seminars also took place in 12 countries across the continent, and the Department produced a number of educational units in several languages.
- 9 seminars were conducted for Jewish educators and educators in countries outside of Europe, with 235 participants. The School also produced Echoes and Reflections, a special multimedia curriculum for US high schools, in cooperation with the ADL and the Shoah Foundation.
- 3 workshops were held for survivors on how to give testimonies in front of audiences.
- Some 70 teachers completed 2 online courses, and the School published 6 new educational units.

Research and Publications
- 2 international conferences, 5 seminars, 14 research workshops and an annual lecture for a research chair were held by the International Institute for Holocaust Research.
- 6 senior researchers were hosted by the Research Institute, assisted by research fellowship grants. In addition, 16 awards to masters and doctoral students, 1 doctoral research scholarship and 1 research award were granted by the Institute.
- 42 new books were published by Yad Vashem, including the new Museum Album, To Bear Witness, published in Hebrew and English, and then translated into German, French, Spanish and Russian. Further volumes of both the Lexicon of the Righteous Among the Nations and The Comprehensive History of the Holocaust were also published in 2005, as well as 4 books in the new series of memoirs in English, published in cooperation with The Holocaust Survivors’ Memoirs Project.

Documentation, Photographs, Testimonies, Names and Books
- 3,636,000 pages of Holocaust-era documentation were received by Yad Vashem. To date, Yad Vashem’s Archive contains some 68 million pages of documentation.
- Some 150,000 names from Pages of Testimony, archival lists and other documentation were added to the Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names, which now contains close to 3.1 million names of Holocaust victims.
- In the first year after the Names Database was uploaded to the Internet, over 7 million visitors from 215 countries were registered on the Yad Vashem website.
- Over 46,000 new Pages of Testimony were submitted to the Hall of Names. The Names Database now contains over 2 million Pages of Testimony (two thirds of the total number of names in the Database).
- 3,400 photographs were added to the Photo Archives, and 1,200 photos to the Hall of Names. Yad Vashem currently houses close to 300,000 photographs, and over 115,000 attached to Pages of Testimony.
- 571 new Holocaust survivor testimonies were recorded by the Oral History Section, Archives Division. The Archives currently house some 44,000 video, audio and written testimonies.
- 4,200 book titles were acquired by the Yad Vashem Library. To date, the library holds over 112,000 titles in some 50 languages.
- 32,000 public inquiries were answered by the Reference and Information Services Department. The Department also assisted over 15,000 members of the public in the Library and Archives Reading Room, and answered some 3,100 written enquiries.

Art works and Artifacts
- 733 artifacts and 502 works of art were added Yad Vashem’s Museums Division. The artifacts collection now holds some 24,000 items, and the art collection comprises some 10,500 pieces.

Righteous Among the Nations
- 563 individuals were recognized as Righteous Among the Nations. To date, 21,320 individuals have been awarded this honor by Yad Vashem.

Events, Ceremonies and Public Relations
- 2005 saw the completion and dedication of the new Museum Complex: the Holocaust History Museum, the Museum for Holocaust Art, the Exhibitions Pavilion, the Visual Center, the Learning Center, and the new Synagogue. The official dedication ceremony for the new Museum, in March 2005, was attended by over 2,000 people, including Heads of State and delegations from 40 countries, Holocaust survivors, Yad Vashem supporters and Righteous Among the Nations.
- The opening of the new Museum Complex and the tremendous public interest that followed had a dramatic effect on the number of visitors to the site, which increased to over one million by the end of 2005, including 10,000 organized groups.
- Some 10,000 Holocaust survivors and members of their families from Israel and 12 other countries attended the historic Multigenerational Gathering at Yad Vashem in May 2005.
- In addition, the Commemoration and Public Relations Division held some 75 events and 283 memorial services. The Division also conducted 971 guided tours for guests of Yad Vashem out of the 2,595 guided tours that took place across the site for more than 50,000 visitors.
Home Away from Home by Dr. Mordecai Paldiel

Every year, Yad Vashem honors hundreds of people as Righteous Among the Nations. With few exceptions, all the rescuers hail from outside Israel. However, two of these people—both originally from Ukraine—actually ended up moving to Israel with those they saved, where they settled and eventually passed away. Their stories came to light only last year:

In 1939, Antonia Gruber was a student of German Philology in Lwow, Poland. She also took piano lessons at a nearby conservatory, where she met another student, (Jozef) Nestor Sniadanko. Soon after the German invasion in June 1941, Antonia, her widowed mother and two sisters were forced out of their home into a Jewish-designated house. Nestor visited Antonia’s family in their overcrowded dwelling and later in the ghetto, bringing them hard-to-obtain food and provisions, and protecting them from attacks. In 1942, Antonia escaped from the ghetto and was sheltered by Nestor in his home until liberation in July 1944. Antonia’s mother and her two sisters perished.

In 1945, Antonia and Nestor married, and decided to leave the area and move westward. For security reasons, they destroyed all their personal documents, and Nestor altered his family name to that of his wife—Gruber. In 1947, Antonia gave birth to their son, Freddy, in the Rosenheim Displacement Camp in Germany. The Grubers then moved to Palestine, settling in Haifa. In Israel, Antonia resumed her interest in music, and eventually taught piano at the Rubin Conservatory. Her husband, Nestor, found employment at the Paz Oil Company, where he remained until his retirement. Freddy Gruber became a well-known television journalist.

Nestor Gruber died in 1979 and was buried in the local Christian cemetery. For many years, Antonia kept the story of her rescue to herself, but finally decided last year, at the age of 88, to ask Yad Vashem to have her late husband honored as a Righteous Among the Nations.

Soon after the German occupation of Nadworna, Poland in 1941, the Jewish population was confined to a ghetto. Dov Blitzer, a wealthy owner of a leather-making firm, was murdered during a Nazi action later that year. His wife had died before the war. In December 1941, Dov’s mother sent an urgent message to Frania Dedek, a former domestic help of the Blitzer family, to save her grandson Benjamin, then two and a half years old; his sister Sonia wished to remain with her grandmother. Frania took the child with her and fled into the nearby woods, where she spent seven months hiding in holes and bushes.

Posing as a Ukrainian field worker, she moved with Benjamin from place to place, concealing him in the fields where she worked. After the liberation by the Russian army in the summer of 1944, Frania took another orphaned child, Eliæzer Art, under her wings. Following a tortuous journey, Frania and her two boys, Benjamin and Eliæzer, reached Israel in February 1948. There Frania married Avraham Bielski, a Holocaust survivor who had lost his wife and children. She converted to Judaism and brought up the children in a religious environment.

In submitting her name for the title of Righteous Among the Nations, Frania Bielski-Dedek’s daughter-in-law Esther said, “This is the ‘least’ that we can do to reward her and her memory.”

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

First symposium on Cinema and the Holocaust this May

Marking the recent establishment of Yad Vashem’s new Visual Center, the International Institute for Holocaust Research and Sapir Academic College will convene a special one-day international symposium entitled, “Cinematic Representation and the Holocaust Record—Hollywood and Israel.” The symposium will take place on 22 May 2006 in the main auditorium of Yad Vashem.

Undoubtedly, the vehicle of film has brought the subject of the Holocaust and awareness about it to more people across the globe than any other media, and no single source of film has had a broader impact than those produced in Hollywood, which has vastly improved its representation of the Holocaust over the years. It has evolved from two-dimensional depictions to portrayals of more complex and authentic stories, albeit often circumscribed by the limits of mainstream Hollywood productions. Israeli filmmakers—who have always been interested in the Holocaust—have also developed their art, mirroring fluxes amongst its society’s attitudes to the Holocaust.

The symposium will deal with three main topics: “Hollywood and the Representation of the Holocaust,” “The Holocaust Through the Israeli Lens,” and “Israel-Germany Model 2004: Finished but Incomplete.” Lecturers from Israel and abroad, from the fields of Holocaust history, film history and film production will meet to discuss the subject at hand. The Visual Center thus seeks not only to compile a definitive collection about Holocaust-related films but also, through such symposia, to explore the role of film in our emergent understanding of the Holocaust, its antecedents and repercussions.

For more information: visual.center@yadvashem.org.il or research.institute@yadvashem.org.il
Events January – March 2006

9 January Evening marking 10 Tevet—the General Day of Mourning, in cooperation with the Israel Council of Young Israel. The evening opened with a guided tour of the new Museum for members of the movement, and continued in the auditorium, with the participation of Yad Vashem Council member Prof. Meir Schwartz and a lecture by Rabbi Yuval Sherlo on “Kaddish and Kedusha.” Some 300 people attended.

10 January Event marking 10 Tevet—the General Day of Mourning, at the International School for Holocaust Studies’ branch in Beit Wolyń, in cooperation with the Givatayim Municipality and the Tel Aviv Cantorial Institute. Tel Aviv Chief Rabbi Israel Meir Lau participated in the event, during which cantorial pieces were sung with musical accompaniment by Raymond Goldstein. Some 250 people attended.

22 January Assembly of the Memorial Foundation for Romanian Jewry, marking 65 years since the Bucharest pogrom, at the Beit Yaakov Yosef – Rabbi Zvi Gutman synagogue and community center in Tel Aviv. Speaking at the assembly were Rabbi Ephraim Gutman of the Romanian immigrant community, Prof. Jean Ashkenazi of Tel Aviv University, Prof. Yitzhak Ben Zvi of Tel Aviv University and the Technion, and Ronit Fisher of the University of Haifa.

24 January Ceremonial presentation of the original diary of Nelli Schlesinger of Villa Emma, Italy, written during the Holocaust. Present at the ceremony were Nelli’s children and grandchildren, Yad Vashem Publications Director Dr. Bella Gutterman, Director of the Archives Dr. Yaakov Lozowick (left), and Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities: Italy editor Dr. Bracha Rivlin. The diary was edited by Nelli’s daughter Amira (Levkovitch) Rom (right), and published by Yad Vashem.

13 February Annual lecture of the John Najmann Chair of Holocaust Studies, on “Shaping the Memory of the Holocaust: Germany 1945-1947.” The lecture was delivered by Prof. David Bankier, Head of the International Institute for Holocaust Research and Incumbent of the John Najmann Chair of Holocaust Studies, endowed by the Najmann Family, UK.

28 February Study evening marking the publication of Poems from Bergen-Belsen, 1944 (in Hebrew and Polish), by Uri Orlev. The event was held in the presence of the author, Head of the Contemporary Judaism program at Bar-Ilan University Prof. Judy Baumei, representative of the Polish Embassy in Israel Aleksandra Bukowska-McCabe, and Yad Vashem Publications Director Dr. Bella Gutterman.

International School Launches New Educational Center

In February 2006, the David and Fela Shapell Family Shoah and Heroism Study Center for Youth was launched at Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Studies. The Center will offer intense, full-day seminars to some 10,000 Israeli 11th graders annually, as well as to Jewish students from abroad participating in the “March of the Living” and “birthright” programs. Through the study of Jewish heroism—both spiritual and physical—during the Shoah, the Center presents the Holocaust not merely as an historical episode but rather as an event that challenges students to strengthen their commitment to universal values, to the Jewish people and to Jewish continuity.

David and Fela Shapell immigrated to the United States after WWII. They have 3 children and 10 grandchildren.

Now on the Web

www.yadvashem.org

In light of the great interest surrounding the choice by US television personality Oprah Winfrey to include Elie Wiesel’s book, Night in her book club, Yad Vashem launched a mini-site devoted to the book and its author. The mini-site provides surfers with a wealth of material to enrich their reading of the book, including the Auschwitz Album; links to relevant information about the Holocaust; educational material produced by the International School for Holocaust Studies; and video clips of survivors’ testimonies related to events described in Wiesel’s book. In addition, users can access speeches by Elie Wiesel at the opening ceremony of the new Museum in March 2005, at the International Educators’ Conference at Yad Vashem in 2002, and at the event marking the uploading of the Names Database to the Internet in November 2004.

A new online exhibition, “With Sanctity and With Valour” highlights the lifestyles and religious practices of Orthodox Jewry in the years preceding, during and immediately following the Holocaust. It provides a rare glimpse into the world of those who displayed tremendous religious faith and belief, as well as their wartime experiences and ultimate fate.

The exhibition’s video testimony is taken from the educational unit, “Years Wherein We Have Seen Evil” produced by the International School for Holocaust Studies and developed with the generous donation of Rudolph and Edith Tessler. The unit focuses on the story of religious Jewry during the Holocaust within a general historical and broader Jewish context.

Correction:
In the article “A Gift of Color” in Magazine 40 (Winter 2006), the name of Fella (Rosenberg) Allon was unintentionally misspelled. We apologize for the error.
Triumph Over Adversity

Yad Vashem mourns the passing of a dear friend and Benefactor, Arie Halpern, z”l.

Arie was born in Chorostkow, Poland in 1918. His family was religiously observant, and particularly dedicated to fulfilling the Jewish tradition of hospitality. After his father and mother were murdered by the Nazis, Arie and his brother Sam were sent to the Kamionka labor camp. Hearing of the camp’s pending liquidation, the two brothers escaped and were taken in by a kind Polish family that, at great risk to their own lives, hid them in the hayloft of their barn for eight and a half months until they were liberated by the Red Army in March 1944. Only 26 Jews from his community of 2,000 survived the war.

Arie Halpern was a true example of triumph over adversity. After the war, the Halpern brothers started a textile business in Germany and then moved to the United States, where they found success in the construction business. Despite his traumatic youth, Arie maintained his strong commitment to Judaism, dedicating his life to the Jewish community, Jewish education and Zionist causes, as well as Holocaust remembrance and commemoration. He supported the building of the Valley of the Communities at Yad Vashem and, together with Sam, contributed to the renovation of the Avenue of the Righteous Among the Nations. Arie also served on the Executive Board of the American and International Societies for Yad Vashem.

After the war, Arie married Frieda Geller and the couple had three daughters. Frieda died in 1965, and Arie later married Eva Stein (née Krenkel), an old family friend and one of the only survivors from Chorostkow. In 1995, Arie and his brother Sam returned to the town of their birth and erected a monument to the memory of the Jews of Chorostkow—the only visible testimony to this vanished community.

Arie is survived by five children—Ben, Bella, Shelly, Henry and Nanette—and many grandchildren. He will be missed by all who had the privilege of knowing him.

Yad Vashem mourns the passing of William Herskovitz z”l, a longtime supporter and “Builder” of Yad Vashem. William escaped from Auschwitz in 1942 and helped mobilize the Belgian Resistance to bomb the railways leading to Auschwitz, thus saving hundreds of Jewish lives. In 2003, Yad Vashem published Escape to Life—a memoir recounting his efforts during the Holocaust.

Yad Vashem mourns the passing of Ab Caransa z”l, former Chairman of the Dutch Society for Yad Vashem. A survivor of the Shoah, Ab contributed greatly to Holocaust remembrance.

The New Museum: Visitor Information

The new Museum Complex is open from Sunday to Wednesday, 9am-5pm, and on Thursdays from 9am-8pm. On Fridays and Holiday eve’s, the Museum is open from 9am-2pm. Entrance is permitted until one hour before closing. Yad Vashem is closed on Saturdays and Jewish Holidays.

The Hall of Names (in the Holocaust History Museum) is open from Sunday to Thursday, from 9am-5pm, and on Fridays from 9am-1pm.

Please note:
- Entry to all parts of the Yad Vashem campus is free of charge.
- Guided tours are available on site.
- Entry to the new Holocaust History Museum is not permitted to children under the age of 10.
- A visit to the Holocaust History Museum averages from one-and-a-half to three hours.
- Organized groups must coordinate their visit to Yad Vashem in advance, via the Reservations Center. For further details, Tel: +972 2 644 3802; Fax: +972 2 644 3803; E-mail: group.visit@yadvashem.org.il
- Guided tours for groups are permitted only with the aid of an earphone system, which may be rented from the groups desk in the Visitors Center.
- For a virtual tour of the new Museum and further information, please visit www.yadvashem.org and click on “The New Museum.”
On 26 January, Yad Vashem’s *Auschwitz Album* exhibition was opened with a reception in the Field Museum in Chicago, hosted by Yad Vashem Benefactors Renee and Lester Crown and family. Since its opening, more than 10,000 visitors have viewed the exhibit, which will run until June 2006, supported by the American Society for Yad Vashem.

Speakers at the opening reception included: Lester Crown, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem Eli Zborowski, Israeli Consul General to the Midwest Ambassador Barukh Bina, and Auschwitz survivor and educator Zev Weiss.

Pictured, left to right: American Society Director of Development Shraga I. Mekel, Vice-Chairman Mark Palmer, Lester and Renee Crown, Eli Zborowski

The Black, Frybourg and Ressler families during their December 2005 visit to Yad Vashem

Taibe Goldberg at the unveiling of a plaque in memory of her husband’s five-year-old son Moshe z"l, murdered in Auschwitz

Shaya Ben Yehuda (left) greets Jeffrey Bogatin and family during their visit to Yad Vashem.

Shaya Ben Yehuda hosted Chaya and Jimmy Aviram of Florida during their visit to Yad Vashem in January.

In December 2005, Yad Vashem hosted the Israel Bonds Delegation.

Top, left to right: Ron Katz and Chairman of the Israel Bonds and American Society Executive Committee member David Halpern, son of Yad Vashem Benefactors Sam and Gladys Halpern. Bottom, second and third from right: Suzanne and Jan Czuker
Deputy Director of International Relations Sari Granitza (left) accompanied Leslie Myerson and her daughter Julia during their visit to Yad Vashem in January.

Shaya Ben Yehuda met with Yad Vashem "Builder" Benjamin Warren and his sister Helen Spektor, during their February visit to Yad Vashem.

The Zagdanski family of Toronto visited Yad Vashem in December 2005.

Yad Vashem Benefactor Pauline Gandel with her son Ian, daughter-in-law Linda, and grandson in December 2005, by the Heroes' Promenade, endowed by John and Pauline Gandel and family.

In December 2005, the UK Society for Yad Vashem held an historic and moving ceremony in which surviving members of a Dutch and a Belgian family, now living in the UK, were honored as Righteous Among the Nations. The ceremony took place in the Moses Room in the House of Lords in the presence of people the honorees had saved. The Awards were presented by the Israeli Ambassador to the UK, H.E. Mr. Zvi Heferz, who was joined by the Ambassadors of France and The Netherlands.

David and Rachel Tessler (left), son and daughter-in-law of Yad Vashem “Guardians” Rudolph and Edith Tessler, visited the Pedagogical Center at Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Studies.

AUSTRALIA
LIECHTENSTEIN

On 12 January, Yad Vashem's art exhibition, "Private Tolotchek at the Gates of Hell" was opened in Liechtenstein. The opening ceremony was attended by Members of Parliament, as well as politicians from Liechtenstein and Switzerland.

Pictured, left to right: Russian Ambassador to Switzerland Dimitry Cherkashin and his wife; Chairman of the Friends of Yad Vashem Association in Liechtenstein Markus Buechel; Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Culture of the Principality of Liechtenstein Rita Kiefer-Beck; Chairman of the Swiss Friends of Yad Vashem Dr. Rolf Bloch; Ambassador of Israel to Switzerland Aviv Shir-On; Prince Wolfgang von Liechtenstein; Director of the Desk for German speaking countries and Switzerland Arik Rav-On

VENEZUELA

Shaya Ben Yehuda and Perla Hazan with the Vainstein family during their visit to Yad Vashem

BRAZIL

Perla Hazan with Gustavo Halbreich, his family and friends during their visit to Yad Vashem

MEXICO

The new Mexican Society for Yad Vashem was opened in January 2006 at a gala ceremony in Mexico City. The event, which included the inauguration of the Society's new offices, was attended by leaders of the Mexican Jewish community and members of the Second Generation.

Left to right: President of Mexico's Sephardi Community David Ashkenazi; Yad Vashem supporter David Gorodzinsky; Rabbi Abraham Palti of Mexico's Sephardi Community; Director of the Ibero-American Desk Perla Hazan; President of the Mexican Society Stephanie Fastlicht

Left to right: Vice President of the Mexican Society Marcos Metta; Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate Avner Shalev; Rabbi Abraham Palti

Yad Vashem Benefactor Daniel Jusidman (left) at the unveiling of the dedication plaque in the Square of Hope, accompanied by Avner Shalev

Yad Vashem appreciates the generosity of its friends in supporting its mission of Shoah commemoration, documentation, research and education. 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:
USA: American Society for Yad Vashem
500 Fifth Avenue, 42nd Floor
New York, NY 10110
Canada: Canadian Society for Yad Vashem
970 Lawrence Avenue West, Suite 211
Toronto, ONT M6A 3B6
UK: Yad Vashem UK Foundation
6 Bloomsbury Square
London, WC1A 2LP

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.
Menachem Frenkel

Born in 1936, Antwerp, Belgium. At the war’s outbreak, Menachem’s family fled to France. He and his sister were among 100 children rescued from the Venisieux Camp and transported to Chateau de Peyrin, a private institution headed by Madame Germaine Chesneau. Menachem was later sent to live with the Hughes family in the village of Rosans. When the war ended, Menachem’s mother and sister found him, and in September 1945, they immigrated to Israel. He has 4 children and 21 grandchildren.

Ester (Lipszyc) Burstein

Born in 1923, Lodz. Ester’s father was deported in September 1942 to Chelmo. Her mother died a year later in the ghetto, and Ester was left responsible for her two sisters and two cousins. In 1944, the girls were deported to Auschwitz and from there to Christianstadt, a work camp near Berlin. In January 1945, they were forced to march to Bergen-Belsen. They caught typhus and Ester’s sister Chana died immediately after liberation. Ester managed to recuperate, immigrating to Israel with her sister Mina in May 1946. She has 6 children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Kalman Bar On

Born in 1930, Ilok, Yugoslavia. In May 1944, Kalman was deported with his family to Auschwitz-Birkenau. He was taken to the “Twins Block.” He worked as a servant in the guardroom, where he managed to collect precious food scraps. In July 1944, Kalman found out that his mother and sister were in the barracks next door, and began to throw food to them over the fence. Months after liberation, he found his sister; his mother had already died. Kalman came to Israel in 1947. He has twin sons and one grandson.

Hedy (Engel) Hirsch

Born in 1927, Ternova, Czechoslovakia. In 1942, Hedy’s father was deported to Auschwitz. She and her mother fled to Hungary, where they reunited with her sister Edith. For many months, the women hid in Budapest, but in 1944 they were caught and sent to Auschwitz, and then to Altenburg, Germany to work in a munitions factory. After liberation, they returned to Czechoslovakia. In 1949, Hedy and her mother immigrated to Israel. Hedy has 4 children and grandchildren.

Uri Chanoch

Born in 1928 in Kowno, Lithuania. Uri worked for the underground in the ghetto. In June 1944, the ghetto inhabitants were deported to Germany. The women were unloaded from the train at Stutthof; the men were taken to Dachau. Within weeks, Uri’s younger brother Dani and his father were sent to Auschwitz. In April 1945, Uri jumped from a bombed train and hid in the forest until he was rescued. Uri came to Israel in 1946, together with another brother. He has 3 children and 5 grandchildren.

Chasia (Bilicka) Bornstein

Born in 1921 in Grodno, Poland. As part of her underground activity, Chasia was sent to Bialystok, where she served as a signaler in the forest partisan brigade. Thanks to a map she prepared, the city was captured with no losses by the Red Army. For this act, Chasia was awarded the highest civilian mark of distinction. In April 1947, Chasia immigrated to Israel with over 500 children in her care. She has 3 children, 11 grandchildren and 2 great-granddaughters.

Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day 2006

Program of Events at Yad Vashem

Eve of Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day: Monday 24 April

20:00 The opening ceremony marking Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day, in the presence of Israel’s President, Prime Minister and Speaker of the Knesset—Warsaw Ghetto Square

Admission by personal invitation only

22:00 Symposium on “The Human Spirit in the Shadow of Death—Concepts of Good and Evil through the Lens of the Shoah,” with the participation of Prof. Ella Beller, Rabbi Dr. Daniel Hartman, Dr. Rachel Korazim, Roman Frister, Muki Tzur and the author Shoham Smith, moderated by Emanuel Halperin—Auditorium

Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day: Tuesday 25 April

8:30 – 15:00 Meetings with survivors, multimedia workshops, special tours, and creative activities—International School for Holocaust Studies. For details, tel: 02-6443630

10:00 Siren

10:02 Wreath-laying ceremony with the participation of Israel’s President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Knesset, President of the Supreme Court, Chairman of the Jewish Agency, Chief of General Staff, Chief of Police, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Mayor of Jerusalem, public figures, representatives of survivor organizations, school children and delegations from throughout the country—Warsaw Ghetto Square

10:30 – 12:30 “Unto Every Person There is a Name”—Recitation of Holocaust victims’ names by members of the public—Hall of Remembrance

11:00 “Unto Every Person There is a Name”—Recitation of Holocaust victims’ names in the presence of the Speaker of the Knesset, President and Prime Minister of Israel and public figures—Knesset

11:00-14:30 Special screening program of Holocaust-related films—Visual Center

13:00 Main memorial ceremony—Hall of Remembrance

16:00 Memorial ceremony for former members of the Jewish Resistance in France—Auditorium

17:30 Ceremony for youth movements in conjunction with the Ministry of Education’s Information Center, Youth and Social Administration, and Youth Movement Council—Valley of the Communities

20:30 “Boulevard des Misères”—Production marking 60 years since the liberation of Holland—Gerard Behar Center, Jerusalem. Admission free. For tickets, tel: 02-6251139