

# Yad Vashem Jerusalem

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Yad Vashem Marks **60** Years  
and **20** Years of the International School

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**Yad Vashem**

The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes'  
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# “Not Just

## Leah Goldstein

■ Avner Shalev assumed his position as Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate some two decades ago, in an era of great change and volatility worldwide. A man with a clear vision and a resolute mission, he has undoubtedly changed the face, scope and pace of the Holocaust Remembrance Authority, building upon the foundations laid in its formation by *Shoah* survivors, establishing it as a world-class center of archival and research expertise, and placing education at the “very center of its enterprise” for the sake of the generations to follow.

As Yad Vashem marks 60 years since its establishment, Shalev reflects upon the institution's significant accomplishments as well as the substantial challenges it faces in the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

### When you were appointed Chairman of the Directorate, what were your main motivating forces for the changes that were to follow?

As we approached the new millennium, I foresaw Yad Vashem's arrival at a critical historic juncture, which required thorough and effective preparation and responses. Yad Vashem had already initiated and conducted many successful endeavors: building the foundations of the Mount of Remembrance campus, thus creating a place of meaning and inspiration for Holocaust commemoration; already gathering the names of some 1.4 million *Shoah* victims; instituting a central archive and library of information about the Holocaust; conducting the project to recognize the Righteous Among the Nations; and nurturing Jewish-oriented, world-class academic research to increase and substantiate our knowledge base regarding the *Shoah*.

Given these major previous accomplishments, I understood that we had to update our priorities. More and more young people were being exposed, sometimes haphazardly, to portions of the *Shoah* narrative. This exposure was potentially influential, sometimes significantly so, on both their personal and collective identities – in terms of how they viewed themselves and others – thus impacting their behaviors and basic life choices. In order to enhance the meaning of Holocaust remembrance

# a History Lesson”

## Avner Shalev Speaks about the Achievements and Challenges of Yad Vashem in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century



for the younger generations – as something more than a mere obligatory ritual – I realized we had to place education at the very center of our enterprise and work to speak to the third and fourth post-*Shoah* generations, in their own language. For this purpose, we needed to build an International School for Holocaust Studies.

As we began to face this great challenge during the early 1990s, it quickly became clear that Yad Vashem was at least a decade behind in introducing advanced technology in the active service of Holocaust remembrance. I understood that we had to set about digitizing our systems and making our information and knowledge widely accessible to the entire world. Furthermore, I came to understand that this wave of strategic change must also include the immediate construction of a new, state-of-the-art documentation facility to house our treasure of precious and fragile archival materials, as well as a new museum devoted to the history of the Holocaust, designed in accordance with Yad Vashem’s rejuvenated outlook. These were my core goals as we looked ahead to the new millennium.

This new approach of infusing life with meaningful memory also needed to be reflected

in the tangible dimension of Yad Vashem’s expanded campus. Accordingly, I sought to ensure that natural light and the surrounding scenic view would reach those sitting in our new Archives and Library Building, learning in our new International School and touring our new Museum Complex.

I knew that the implementation of our vision was dependent upon strengthening our partnerships with friends and supporters from all over the world, Jews and non-Jews alike. Our friends, in our Societies worldwide and as individuals, joined forces with us to make it happen, and continue to fulfill their vital role in our ongoing efforts.

**One of the first things you did as Chairman was to establish the International School for Holocaust Studies. What were your original motivations in this regard and how have they been accomplished?**

I realized that the only effective way to ensure that education would become a central

strategic pillar of Yad Vashem’s activity was to build a school right here, on the Mount of Remembrance. Today our School has become almost a given, but back then I had to persevere in order to persuade others to get “on board” with me on this. Some questioned the idea and thought to themselves: “Why build a school in a ‘virtual cemetery’? What will this School actually do?” But I knew we had to undergo a deep change in the way the *Shoah* was taught, from a mere lesson or course in history to a comprehensive, insightful, mature utilization of the vast range of materials, knowledge and knowhow that we had already amassed. If we wanted a different, more meaningful approach to Holocaust education, we needed to, as it were, have our expert historians “share” the *Shoah* with skilled and inspiring educators. I set about nurturing an entire cadre of professional educators who, in addition to their solid historical grounding, would work with successive generations of students and teachers in rapidly changing educational environments – in Israel and worldwide. Yad Vashem’s unique advantage was that we already had all the resources to feed this educational endeavor.

At that time, the skeptics claimed that we would require a maximum of six to seven classrooms. Today, 20 years later, we fill 37 classrooms daily, and host some 300,000 participants per year in our educational programs. This reflects our indisputable achievements in this critical field. In addition to the vast majority of Israeli public school students participating in some kind of educational activity at Yad Vashem sometime during their high school years, thousands of educators from overseas have come to recognize that the *Shoah* has universal importance for inculcating values in the coming generations. Our ongoing, meaningful discussions with these professionals have engendered a compelling new discourse devoted to a value-based Holocaust education that employs central *Shoah*-related texts, themes and insights in order to help young people integrate as constructive citizens of a modern, democratic world and create a deeper connection among young students.

I realized we had to place education at the very center of our enterprise and work to speak to the third and fourth post-*Shoah* generations, in their own language

We set about digitizing our systems and making our information and knowledge widely accessible to the entire world

**A decade ago, Yad Vashem uploaded the Central Database of *Shoah* Victims' Names, a significant achievement in the dissemination of information about the Holocaust worldwide. What do you see as the major advantages of technology in the service of Holocaust remembrance?**

By the early 1990s, it was clear that global communication was becoming increasingly geared towards, and taking place within, the contexts of online media. Anyone that wasn't yet there – on the Internet or other platforms that it was facilitating – was destined to lose their relevance. It was therefore urgent that Yad Vashem set about harnessing the most advanced technologies for our purposes. Accordingly, we commenced with the digitization of our information resources, the largest of which was the Names Database, followed soon thereafter by a robustly designed and operated website.

Today, as people around the world connect via the Internet and social media, Yad Vashem is at the forefront of the dissemination of accurate, accessible information about the Holocaust.

Consistently earning worldwide acclaim, our Internet Department and Information Technology Division continue to digitize increasing amounts of archival and other related information and promote Holocaust remembrance and education.

Of course, advanced technology not only allows for widespread accessibility to information, but also, via easy access and links to our vast databases, promotes more in-depth study of chosen topics. For example, after being directed to Yad Vashem via a name, event or geographical location, our user-friendly website provides online access to extensive information and resources in many languages, including Arabic and Farsi: archival documents, online testimonies, original photos, data on Holocaust topics and terminology, and much more. Technology has therefore gone from being a supportive arm at Yad Vashem to a major strategic asset, advancing nearly all

of our areas of activity: building meaningful knowledge and profound awareness about the Holocaust, and developing *Shoah*-related learning communities around the world, together with our International School.

In the future, we plan to upload an updated version of our signature, comprehensive *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, further strengthening our status as the foremost resource for authentic information on the Holocaust.

**You were the Chief Curator of the new Holocaust History Museum, which some one million people visit each year. How do you think the Museum Complex has contributed to the understanding of the *Shoah* from the Jewish viewpoint?**

Having developed our vital new principles and methods of Holocaust education, enhanced our research activity and dramatically updated our technological infrastructure, it remained for us to position a new museum as a highlight of

## Worldwide Recognition

■ As Yad Vashem has increased its presence on the world stage, the Remembrance Authority's peerless strides towards global Holocaust remembrance and education have received international renown and recognition. Following the acceptance of Israel's most



esteemed prize in 2003 – “The Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement: A Unique Contribution to Society and the State” – Yad Vashem has, over the past decade, been the recipient of a

plethora of international prizes and honors for the range of its vital work.

In 2007, Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev was honored to accept the Prince of Asturias Award for Concord (pictured) on behalf of Yad Vashem for its “outstanding contribution to... the struggle against injustice or ignorance [and]... whose work has widened the horizons of knowledge.” A day later, Shalev was presented with the *Légion d'Honneur* by French President Nicolas Sarkozy for his “determined activity that is suffused with passion and inspiration.”

Alongside the awards bestowed upon Yad Vashem as a leading expert in Holocaust commemoration, prestigious awards from countries around the world, including Hungary, Poland, Russia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, the US, Spain and Germany, have been presented to Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council Rabbi Israel Meir Lau and many other members of the Yad Vashem staff, who have been personally honored for their dedication and outstanding achievements.

In addition, different departments have been cited by national media and educational bodies for their exemplary contributions towards the global dissemination of Holocaust-related information, and UNESCO recently declared the Pages of Testimony Repository bearing *Shoah* victims' names part of its Memory of the World Register. For the past seven years, the Yad Vashem website has won the notable *People and Computers* Magazine Special Category WebiAward for outstanding websites. Dignitaries from across the globe and world travelers – who recently rated Yad Vashem the fourth “top museum in the world” on TripAdvisor – regard a tour of the Mount of Remembrance as “a life-changing experience.”

Yad Vashem is committed to maintaining and increasing its efforts even further afield, so that more and more individuals and communities across the globe may benefit from its world-class archives, publications, exhibitions and pedagogic material in the cause of Holocaust remembrance.

## It is impossible to begin to deal with the Holocaust or start to grasp its meanings without learning about those who were most directly affected: the Jewish victims and the survivors

the new face of Yad Vashem. I stipulated two basic requirements: first, that the Museum tell the story of the *Shoah* from the perspective of the individual – that is, to highlight the human dimensions of the story, as we had already been doing in our innovative educational endeavors – without sacrificing the accuracy of genuine historical context; and, second, that the Museum emphasize the tragically unique Jewish experience of the Holocaust, based on the extensive and varied Jewish sources at Yad Vashem's disposal. For it is impossible to begin to deal with the Holocaust or start to grasp its meanings without learning about those who were most directly affected: the Jewish victims and the survivors.

Therefore, as in our educational endeavors, the Museum Complex and our wealth of traveling exhibitions tell the story of the *Shoah* by utilizing original artifacts, documentation, testimonies, film, literature, diaries, letters and works of art. The deft synthesis of these diverse channels of personal expression through a multisensory and multidimensional experience enables the visitor to internalize a wealth of invaluable information. We believe that a tour of our Museum Complex or a visit to one of our temporary exhibitions will provide visitors with an enlightening and memorable experience, generating human compassion and raising their personal commitment to worthy moral values and practices.

### What are Yad Vashem's major challenges for the coming decade?

As the events of the *Shoah* recede with time, we must ensure that it is never viewed as merely “another historical event,” relegated to competing for attention against other events and phenomena, or as irrelevant to the contemporary human situation. Furthermore, the gradual disappearance of the survivor generation already places a formidable test before us: when survivors share their stories, they elevate our efforts upon an undisputedly ethical platform; their presence and involvement provide moral vigor to our mission. Without them, we will find it increasingly difficult to illustrate to others

the centrality of the meanings of the *Shoah* in contemporary society.

In addition to the chronological challenge, we are also faced with prevalent trends towards historical revisionism: the efforts by others – whether for nationalistic, pseudo-liberal, antisemitic or religious motives – to reduce the prominence of Holocaust remembrance in favor of commemorating other perceived historical injustices. This so-called “battle over memory,” which transpires in many societies, including Israel, places a particular mantle of responsibility upon Yad Vashem: to keep our efforts vital and relevant, and to continue Holocaust research and the evolution of a *midrash* (source-based explication) of the *Shoah* that is applicable to every human audience, whatever its cultural, ethnic or social background.

How do we achieve this? We must place greater emphasis on building and developing our educational and technological capabilities. For the Jewish people, that means ensuring that the events of the *Shoah* remain a part of their identity; in the international circle, it must persist in being an important part of global discourse that will build and strengthen the basic values of human existence: the right of every individual to life, property and expression; and the fight against racism, xenophobia and antisemitism. To this end, we must continue to build and fortify Yad Vashem's bonds with our loyal supporters worldwide.

As the work of a generation of survivors at Yad Vashem approaches a natural close, new generations of dedicated men and women, many of them born in Israel and not necessarily the children of survivors, see their work here as their life's calling. Yad Vashem is blessed with a rare and outstanding group of professional, talented workers. Their fervent wish is to dedicate themselves to our mission, to serve this institution and realize its ideals year after year.

For the *Shoah* is not a closed chapter in human history; it remains an integral component of our identity, society and culture. From the Mount of Remembrance (*Har Hazikaron*) in Jerusalem, Yad Vashem shall continue to lead the effort to educate humanity towards a more responsible and tolerant existence.



### Message from Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council

■ **Sixty years is a significant period of time.** Indeed, in *The Ethics of the Fathers*, our sages note that “at sixty, one has reached old age.” But the Talmud says, “A *zaken* (old person, i.e., worthy of veneration) is only one who has acquired wisdom.”

Six decades ago, when Yad Vashem was first established, it was built on the still burning embers of the Holocaust. It was clear that some kind of center had to be established to chronicle the most horrific chapter in modern Jewish history. However, it is doubtful whether the original builders of Yad Vashem could have envisioned the global impact of the work being done here today. Over the years, Yad Vashem has indeed acquired the wisdom of how to meaningfully impart the history of this dark and devastating period.

In the five years that I have had the privilege of serving as the Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council, I have seen how the educational, research and documentation activities of the Holocaust Remembrance Authority continue to reach newer and broader audiences. We now know the names of 4.3 million of the six million Jews murdered in the *Shoah*; we are teaching educators from China to Venezuela about the *Shoah*; and we are preserving and digitizing documents of great historic significance regarding the *Shoah* for generations to come.

In 1945, I was a small boy virtually alone in the world, just released from the crucible of the camps. Those experiences have shaped who I am, and have become an integral part of my life. I have spent decades telling my story; at Yad Vashem, I know that my story – among the many, many others that make up the mosaic of the Jewish experience during the *Shoah* – will continue to be told, so that those who hear them will recommit themselves to a brighter, and wiser, future.

# "So That Future Generations

Rachel Barkai



■ *"From its first day, I saw Yad Vashem as my home for the sake of 'Zachor' - the obligation to remember. After the opening of the Museum, I understood the implication: when we are no longer here, Yad Vashem is our successor in passing on 'Zachor' from generation to generation."*

Holocaust Survivor Fanny England

Yad Vashem holds a wide range of commemorative activities throughout the calendar year – from Israel's official Holocaust Remembrance Day and VE Day events to more intimate commemorative gatherings; from state and official visits to guided tours for public and private organizations; and from assemblies of survivors and next generations to concerts, exhibition openings, honoring Righteous Among the Nations and other cultural happenings. All of these events, large and small, take a great amount of preparation and planning, both logistically and in terms of the content of the event itself. This content, based upon the profound historical knowledge of the lecturers and guides, on Yad Vashem's vast archival information, on testimonies and on personal artifacts gathered by Yad Vashem

over the years, is always placed at the heart of every public activity held either on the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem or at special events held across the country.

Within the Commemoration and Public Relations Division, which is responsible for all of the above as well as Yad Vashem's online activities (see pp. 32-33), is the Events Department, Guiding Department and Official Visits Unit, which work together to hold the range of ceremonies, visits and meetings that take place very year at Yad Vashem and across Israel. Following the dedication of the new Museum Complex in March 2005, the need arose to train guides to expertly explain the permanent exhibitions in the Holocaust History Museum and Museum for Holocaust Art. Every year, dozens of guides speaking many languages are trained at Yad Vashem to ensure that those visitors guided across the Mount of Remembrance undergo a meaningful experience.

Yad Vashem is also an "open house" for survivors. In May 2005, some 9,000 survivors and family members from Israel and abroad attended a special conference entitled "Generation to Generation." At this unique gathering, meeting points were flooded by *landsmen* hailing from

## THE SURVIVOR'S VOICE

"What my eyes saw was burned into my memory...Today I celebrate my personal revival and my beautiful family... they symbolize my great victory."

Mendy Porat (Fruchter), at the commemoration service marking 70 years since the Iasi pogrom

different lost communities across Europe and North Africa; Pages of Testimony and personal artifacts were patiently and expertly gathered by Yad Vashem staff, and a lively panel was held on "The Pain of Liberation and the Return to Life." In addition, artists, actors, writers and journalists discussed the impact of the *Shoah* on their creative endeavors, and a special concert entitled "Songs from My Father's Home," held in the Valley of the Communities, ended this exceptional day.

Many of the survivors' children and grandchildren attended the conference, as they

# Will Know..."



## Public Commemoration and Guiding Activities



realized the great importance of taking upon themselves the task of Holocaust commemoration and education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Since then, members of the Second and Third Generations have significantly increased their connection to, and activities with, Yad Vashem. The “Dorot Hemshech” (Generation to Generation) organization in Israel has also held an increasing number of public forums, social events and lecture series in conjunction with the Holocaust Remembrance Authority, that bolster the connection between survivors and their descendants, enrich the knowledge of the next generations, and strengthen their capacity to continue their families’ legacies.

The programs for the dozens of annual events and meetings organized by the Commemoration and Public Relations Division that take place at Yad Vashem and elsewhere are always infused with a lecture by an expert in the field, a survivor testimony or a relevant artistic performance, in order to broaden the participants’ historical knowledge and provide them with a greater understanding of the wide-ranging educational and research activities undertaken by Yad Vashem. Lectures are offered on a variety of topics: overviews

of the Jewish world before the Holocaust and the relevant community, discussions about Yiddish and Ladino cultures, heroic tales of Jews and non-Jews during the *Shoah*, and the fascinating tales behind personal items donated to Yad Vashem by survivors and their families. Historians, researchers and experts on particular Holocaust-related topics are on the ever-expanding list of guest speakers at annual and special events, as of course are a venerable group of Holocaust survivors, some of whom volunteer to speak to groups dozens of times a year. Lectures are naturally matched to the audience: so, for example, in addition to specialized tours of the Holocaust History Museum, a visit by a law office may be given a specialized tour of the exhibition marking 50 years since the Eichmann trial and an in-depth analysis of its impact on Israeli society; a group of doctors and nurses may hear testimony about medicine in ghettos and concentration camps; Russian-speaking visitors may be exposed to testimonies of those who endured Nazi occupation in the Former Soviet Union; and journalists may examine archival German propaganda as well as underground Jewish newspapers.

Special interest groups are always welcomed at Yad Vashem. In recent years, members of the *Kindertransport* were invited to a unique conference; organized visits were held for “Tehran children” and “children with borrowed identities”; hearing-impaired visitors received specialized tours of the site; a concluding gathering took place for Holocaust survivors who were among the founders of the Israel Air Force and gave testimony as part of the “From Survival to the Skies” project; and meaningful ceremonies were held for celebrants of bar and bat mitzvahs participating in the unique “twinning” program, in which the young adult adopts the memory of a child who was murdered before they had a chance to celebrate their own coming-of-age.

As we mark six decades of commemorative activity at Yad Vashem, its staff continues to work together to provide programs rich with intellectual and experiential content so that members of the public – of all ages, religions, nationalities and social backgrounds – may continue to find relevance and meaning in their ongoing encounters with Holocaust remembrance.

*The author is Director of the Commemoration and Public Relations Division.*

# Our Partners in Making the Vision a Reality



Shaya Ben Yehuda



■ Whenever one of my colleagues is asked where he or she works, and they answer simply “Yad Vashem,” people invariably say something about the importance of the place, its achievements, and its centrality in the overall Jewish and Israeli experience.

These reactions instantly take us back to our donors, bringing to mind those partners without whom Yad Vashem would not be able to meet the challenges and objectives set before it. With deep appreciation we remember Eli Zborowski, z”l, the first Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem. In the early 1980s, Eli approached the Yad Vashem Directorate requesting, on behalf of world Jewry and Holocaust survivors in particular, that every Jew, wherever they are, be given the opportunity to become its partner. This is what brought about the establishment of Friends of Yad Vashem societies all over the world, and made possible the construction of the Valley of the Communities as well as the Children’s Memorial.

The commitment of our donors and their deeply ingrained recognition of the central role of Yad Vashem is an expression of Jewish solidarity, identification with our collective fate, and a desire that unites us all – to remember the past and thus secure the future. Today, this partnership reaches across every continent

on the globe. From Australia to Alaska, from South America to the countries of the FSU, Asia, Europe and Africa – one can find donors of Yad Vashem in every part of the world. Among them are philanthropic organizations and public foundations operating in Israel, thousands of members of the Israel Society for Yad Vashem, and Israeli citizens who have no direct personal connection with the Holocaust but give their support and seek to become partners in the cause pursued by Yad Vashem. We also appreciate the support of our Christian Friends, who view their partnership with Yad Vashem as building bridges and establishing a common language. In numerous countries, Friends’ societies and the donors driving them forward allow us to avail the Remembrance Authority of the necessary resources to engage in large-scale educational work the world over.

Alongside our individual supporters, the Claims Conference was instrumental in establishing Yad Vashem and continues to stand by us faithfully to this day. Our deep gratitude and appreciation are also due to both private and public foundations around the world that view the work of commemoration and remembrance as a task of utmost importance for all humanity.

Nearly a decade has passed since we opened the new Museum Complex. During this decade,

## THE SURVIVOR'S VOICE

“Yad Vashem is, without a doubt, the most influential and active institution in safeguarding the memory of the Holocaust.”

Joseph Gottdenker

the challenge of making the Yad Vashem Archives accessible to the broad public has gained central importance, and we have directed our efforts towards the development and deployment of state-of-the-art technological tools. During this time, the scope of our educational endeavors also expanded exponentially. Thanks to our donors we were able to build the new International Seminars Wing of the International School for Holocaust Studies, as well as meet the challenges of the new hi-tech era.

Every day, as we enter the gates of the Mount of Remembrance, we know that without our donors none of our accomplishments would have been possible. It is a privilege for each and every one of us to act on their behalf in fulfilling the vital missions entrusted to us by the State of Israel and the Jewish people.

*The author is Managing Director of the International Relations Division.*



## Strategic Partners: Dr. Miriam and Sheldon G. Adelson

■ Patrons of the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem, Dr. Miriam and Sheldon G. Adelson are exemplary, consistent benefactors of Yad Vashem who have personally initiated and partnered in an impressive array of Yad Vashem activities, primarily in the area of Holocaust education.

The Adelsons' unique bond with Yad Vashem began in the early 1990s, when their first generous contribution provided the computer infrastructure necessary to start Yad Vashem's progress towards digital information proficiency. Several years later, they endowed Yad Vashem's new and unique Museum of Holocaust Art. In 2006, the Adelsons substantially increased their vigorous involvement with Yad Vashem, undertaking a multiyear commitment of unprecedented support. Their successive donations over the past several years constitute by far the largest private contribution ever received by Yad Vashem. Earmarked almost entirely for Holocaust education, this munificent contribution has revolutionized the ability of the Remembrance Authority to conceive, create and implement extensive teaching activities of unparalleled scope and variety: seminars for overseas and Israeli teachers, comprehensive tours of the Yad Vashem Museum by IDF officers and soldiers, customized interactive web-based courses, and much more. In addition, their unwavering support of the Taglit Birthright project

has facilitated the visit of hundreds of thousands of young Jewish students to Yad Vashem. This life-changing experience connects them with their nation's history and strengthens their Jewish identity in a common quest for a brighter future for the Jewish people.

On several occasions the Adelsons have expressed the motivation for their extraordinary relationship with Yad Vashem. Mr. Adelson has described the privilege he and his wife feel to be able to contribute to the continuity of the Jewish people, and pledged never to forget the Holocaust. "We are proud to partner with Yad Vashem to ensure the continuation of its vital educational activities," he stated. "We encourage others to join us in supporting Yad Vashem in its crucial work." "We have seen the incredible impact of Yad Vashem seminars on educators of all backgrounds," added Dr. Adelson. "We look to these educators to bring the meanings of the *Shoah* to their students... That way, there is a greater assurance that it will never be forgotten."



## Generations of Support



■ For three generations, Sam Halpern, z"l, his wife Gladys and their family have served as models for the legacy of the survivors as well as steadfast supporters of Yad Vashem.

Both Sam and Gladys bear personal stories of great darkness and sparks of light during the Holocaust: after escaping the Kamionka concentration camp, Sam benefitted from the kindness of Christian rescuers, later honored as Righteous Among the Nations. Gladys (née Landau) escaped from the Lvov ghetto, and was hidden by a Polish family until liberation. Sam and Gladys were married in Bayreuth, Germany and immigrated to the United States in 1949.

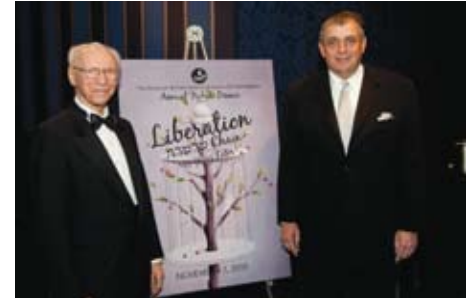
In America, the Halperns rebuilt their lives, starting a leading real estate development

firm and becoming prominent members of the Jewish community. Throughout their lives, they devoted themselves to Holocaust education, commemoration and remembrance: Gladys and Sam Halpern were major supporters of Yad Vashem as Benefactors of the Valley of the Communities and through their endowment of the Avenue of the Righteous Among the Nations.

This past October, Sam Halpern passed away at the age of 93, two months after his last visit to Yad Vashem. Yad Vashem mourns the loss of such a great leader and inspiring human being. His memory lives on through his family, as the torch of remembrance is passed on to the next generations: the Halperns' son David and daughter-in-law Sharon are Pillars of the Children's Terrace at the exit of the Children's Memorial; and their grandson Jeremy and his wife Abbi are deeply involved with the American Society's Young Leadership Associates, and have also made their own personal commitment to Yad Vashem. From generation to generation, the Halpern family has displayed their unwavering commitment to Holocaust remembrance: they are true partners in both our mission and our task.

## Embracing the Legacy of the Survivors

■ Leonard (Lenny) Wilf (pictured, right), the son of Holocaust survivors, has always had a relationship with the Holocaust that is "deeply and obviously" personal. His parents, survivors Harry and Judith, z"l, dedicated their



lives to educating the future generations about what had happened to the Jewish people: "My parents lived it, they told me about it. It's now essential that the next generation takes up this cause."

Lead Benefactors of Yad Vashem's Holocaust History Museum and the Entrance Plaza in front of the Visitors' Center, Wilf family members also served in crucial founding and leadership roles in the American Society for Yad Vashem, for which they have been honored on many occasions. In addition, the Wilfs generously endowed the Yad Vashem Square adjacent to Mount Herzl and underwrote the ongoing project to record testimonies of Holocaust survivors.

After Harry Wilf passed away, Lenny began working closely with Eli Zborowski, z"l (left), in expanding the American Society. Eli, the Society's founder, was a "powerhouse in his commitment for Holocaust remembrance and education," remembers Lenny, who took over as Chairman of the American Society after Eli's passing in 2012. "After the worst of times, after going through the hell of the Holocaust, Eli was determined to succeed." The closeness that Lenny and Eli shared gave Lenny deep insight into Eli's driving force, and secured his commitment to continuing along Eli's path.

"Eli was most passionate about education," Lenny says. "And he displayed that by making the American Society's Young Leadership Associates a top priority. The success of that program is evident, with young people eager to attend events commemorating the Holocaust and supporting the crucial work of Yad Vashem. Eli established a way for the younger generations to understand and internalize their history. I have tremendous respect for Eli and the work that he did, and I am wholly committed to preserving his legacy in the years to come."

# From Collection to Accessibility

Dr. Haim Gertner



■ **Gathering Holocaust-related information and making it accessible to the public is a central component of Yad Vashem's mission.** Over the past decade, Yad Vashem greatly expanded its collection efforts around the world, doubling the number of documents, both originals and copies, held in its Archives. During this period, the Archives signed more than 50 agreements to copy documents contained in the various archives of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the Former Soviet Union. Through these agreements, and thanks to the broad cooperation and financial support received from both private donors and public foundations, Yad Vashem has been able to gather some 3.5 million pages of documentation every year, and today the Archives hold some 154 million pages of documentation.

In 2010, Yad Vashem launched the "Gathering the Fragments" campaign in Israel to rescue personal items from the Holocaust period. So far, this nationwide effort has brought about the collection of 102,000 items and testimonies from thousands of donors (see p. 17). Yet the work is far from over. Tens of millions of Holocaust-related documents and innumerable artifacts remain scattered across the globe, with many of them hidden from public view. An example

of the success, alongside the challenge, is the collection of Holocaust victims' names: today we know the individual identities of some 4.3 million of those murdered, yet the final third remain a mystery (see pp. 12-13).

In order to make all of the information at its disposal accessible to the public, as well as to find new ways and means of discovering further information, in recent years Yad Vashem initiated the digital scanning of all its documents, photographs, names, lists and other data. This is an extremely challenging and complicated mission: Holocaust-era documents, photographs, testimonies and film clips are arranged in many configurations and written in dozens of languages, and must be sorted and organized for professional cataloguing. In addition, many have to undergo a range of restoration and conservation treatments and then be converted into accessible formats. The vast amount and particular complexity of the digital material means that the IT Division must continuously invest in state-of-the-art equipment and technology, as well as in comprehensive storage and backup services.

In the first stage, all video and audio testimonies of Holocaust survivors stored in the Yad Vashem Archives (see p. 16) were converted

into digital files, as was the collection of original film footage and Holocaust-themed movies. Today, this digitized anthology comprises over 220,000 hours of video and audio material.

## THE SURVIVOR'S VOICE

"Had it not been for Yad Vashem I never would have had what I now know. I lost my entire family... I was totally alone. The records provide some consolation. Their names are recorded for posterity."

Prof. David Weiss-Halivni

Second, some 450,000 original photographs were scanned, and today much of the Yad Vashem photographic collection is available for viewing online. The methodical scanning of Yad Vashem's enormous collection of documents followed: advanced digitization hubs were set up on the Yad Vashem campus, in order to avoid moving the fragile documents and to reduce project costs.

#### Yad Vashem's Collections contain:

- 154 million pages of documentation
- 450,000 photographs
- 112,000 testimonies – video, audio and written
- 27,500 personal artifacts
- 9,000 works of art
- 700 titles of original film footage

This major-scale digitization project was built and deployed using the most advanced tools, specially customized for the task by Yad Vashem technology experts. Those knowledgeable in Holocaust history and proficient in the various languages sort and scan the material under the supervision of professionals in the field of conservation and technology. This highly qualified team currently scans over 1.5 million pages of documentation every month. To date, some two-thirds of the documents stored in the Archives have been converted into digital files, and may be accessed by the public via computers installed at Yad Vashem.

Simultaneously, Yad Vashem has gradually started to upload its databases and collections of documents to the Internet. Since the Central Database of *Shoah* Victims' Names went online in 2004, Yad Vashem has doubled its volume and upgraded and fully overhauled its user interface, and today it is accessible in five languages. The Yad Vashem Photo Archive has also been upgraded and updated several times, followed by the Library Catalogue, the Online Film Database and the Righteous Among the Nations Database. Millions of people around the world view these data and document collections every year.

Many additional challenges are still faced by Yad Vashem: continuing to rescue original artifacts from the Holocaust period, locating and photocopying extensive archival documentation all over the world, and completing the scanning of existing collections. In addition, the physical collections must be preserved, the cataloguing process expedited and upgraded, and the vast amounts of digital information already available continuously backed up and updated. Yad Vashem's expertise in all of these fields has justly earned it worldwide recognition as innovators and creative thinkers in the area of making historical documentation publicly accessible. Support from its donors and partner foundations, as well as sustained cooperation with archives, research institutions and leading content and technology organizations around the world, will ensure that it continues to lead this global endeavor for decades to come.

*The author is Director of the Yad Vashem Archives.*

## The Photo Collection

■ ***“Mendel pulls out his camera. No more flowers, clouds, nature, stills, landscapes. Amid the horror all around him, he has found his destiny: to photograph, and leave behind a testimony for all generations about the great tragedy unfolding before his eyes.”***

Thus Arieh Ben Menahem describes the work of the Lodz ghetto photographer Mendel Grossman in his book, *With a Camera in the Ghetto* (Hebrew). Ben Menahem was himself a photographer who worked as Grossman's assistant during the war. Grossman died in April 1944 in a German labor camp, but Ben Menahem survived the Holocaust and, thanks to him, hundreds of photographs the two men took in the ghetto made their way to Yad Vashem.

“Yad Vashem's photographic collection began with the gathering of individual and group photographs immediately after WWII,” explains Dr. Daniel Uziel, Director of the Yad Vashem Photo Archive. “To date, the Photo Archive comprises some 450,000 original photographs covering the lives of the Jews before, during and after the Holocaust, as well

as images of Holocaust remembrance around the world. The photographs, 150,000 of which are attached to Pages of Testimony, come from a variety of sources – official archives, private collections, museums and various historic collections – and represent an invaluable asset to historians, educators, writers, filmmakers and the public at large.”

In May 2008, Yad Vashem began to upload its historic photo collection to the Internet. To date, some 300,000 images are available for viewing online via the Yad Vashem website; viewers may conduct searches of the database by topic, name or geographical location. Every photograph in the database is also linked to existing information about its content and, when a photograph is selected for viewing, a Google map automatically opens showing the location of the places mentioned in the caption. But the collection is not just for viewing: wherever possible, the public is encouraged to decipher the pictures and identify the people in them, thus fulfilling the last wish of the Holocaust victims, including Mendel Grossman.

## The Footage Collection

■ ***“There are as many stories as there are films.”***

So explains Efrat Komisar, Head of the Footage Section in the Archives Division, in an introductory video on the Yad Vashem website regarding a short film of a town displayed in the Map of the Ghettos in the Holocaust History Museum. The film's location was identified in various archives as Ciechanów, a small town north of Warsaw. However, following research based on the Names Database, Komisar was able to pinpoint the footage to Płońsk, a town some 35 km south of Ciechanów.

The Footage Collection in the Yad Vashem Archives contains some 700 titles from before, during and after the *Shoah*, as well documentation of war crimes trials. These films are gathered from wherever the Holocaust occurred – Europe and North Africa – and include newsreels, amateur films and propaganda material.



The Footage Section collects and acquires films from archives, institutions and private individuals in Israel and worldwide. In recent years, the number of private films in the Archive has grown considerably: these films mostly commemorate families and the daily lives of different communities in Europe. Understanding that these personal films are extremely important archival material, many people around the world deposit them in archives, including at Yad Vashem. Once acquired, the investigations can begin – who made the film, why, when, where, and who features in it – and, piece by piece, stories come together.

## The Names Database

# Unto Every Person There is a Name

■ Since its inception 60 years ago, one of Yad Vashem's central missions has been to recover the identity of each and every victim of the Holocaust. The *Shoah* Victims' Names Recovery Project realizes the moral imperative to remember each victim as a human being, with a name and a unique personal story. It's an extraordinarily complex venture, one that requires sifting through archival material and postwar commemoration projects, working with Holocaust survivors to fill out Pages of Testimony, and having an understanding of a range of languages as well as the complexity of the etymology of names. Yet to date, this ceaseless endeavor has identified 4.3 million names of *Shoah* victims, documented in Yad Vashem's Central Database of *Shoah* Victims' Names.

### Names Collection in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

An initial 800,000 names were collected on Pages of Testimony in Israel during the 1950s, and in 1977 the Hall of Names was inaugurated. As public inquiries into the fate of Holocaust victims steadily increased, the collection of 1.1 million Pages of Testimony was copied to microfilm in 1984, thereby establishing an effective search

#### THE SURVIVOR'S VOICE

"The most important thing I can do is encourage someone to fill out a Page of Testimony... it's vital to ensure the preservation of his or her memory"

Rabbi Joseph Schachter, volunteer in the Hall of Names

capability. Global outreach efforts to identify the unnamed victims then expanded among Jewish communities throughout the world with the support of Yad Vashem's Friends societies. In 1990, the Hall of Names began to actively gather and process lists of names originating from such sources as deportation, camp and ghetto records.

In 1999, Yad Vashem embarked on a revolutionary project – the computerization of all names collected to date, thus creating a database already containing some two million names of Holocaust victims. During that period,

a well-publicized media campaign to collect Pages of Testimony was launched, yielding an overwhelming response from Jews in Israel and abroad. During the campaign, more than 80% of all incoming Pages contained names of victims not previously recorded in the Hall of Names. By 2000, the number of victims commemorated in the Names Database had climbed to 2.5 million.

### The Online Names Database

Under the guidance of Director of the Hall of Names Dr. Alexander Avram, an expert in Jewish onomastics (study of names and their origins), geography and history, Yad Vashem developed a sophisticated technological platform for the Names Database to provide free public access with advanced search and retrieval capabilities alongside an online Page of Testimony form and interface for submitting feedback. Avram has been with Yad Vashem since 1984, and is one of the architects of a unique information retrieval method as well as tables of names variants that make the Names Database one-of-a-kind in the world. When the Database was uploaded to Yad Vashem's website on 22 November 2004, some 2.7 victims' names were accessible in English and Hebrew.

Over the past ten years, a team of trained experts has been typing and digitizing names from archival material housed at Yad Vashem. The skilled team has tackled documentation in dozens of languages, each year adding hundreds of thousands of names to the online Names Database. Thanks to their dedicated work, today members of the public can access via the Internet some 4.3 million names. The Database is also available in German, Russian and Spanish.

### Volunteers Worldwide Join the Names Recovery Project

Notwithstanding these great efforts, millions of Jews murdered in the *Shoah* remained nameless. Leading up to the launch of the Names Database, Yad Vashem established a special project to accelerate and intensify the collection of names around the world. To facilitate this, the *Shoah* Victims' Names Recovery Project developed and established a global community outreach program for names collection, anchored by a cadre of dedicated volunteers trained to provide personal



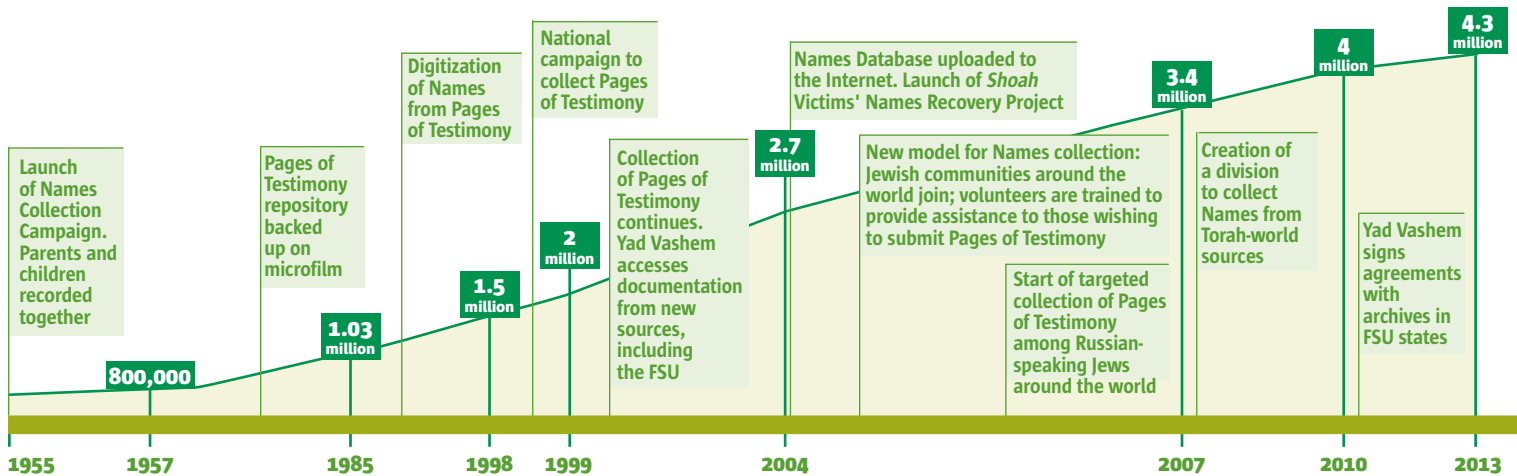
The Central Database of *Shoah* Victims' Names now contains 4.3 million names of Holocaust victims, all of which are accessible online

Close to half the total number of names in the Names Database come from over 2.6 million Pages of Testimony, the remainder from archival lists and documents

In the past decade, some 1.5 million name occurrences of Holocaust victims were digitized

Since 2004, 1,592,000 names have been collected through the *Shoah* Victims' Names Recovery Project. Of these, 371,000 names were received via Pages of Testimony

Cynthia Wroclawski



assistance in completing Pages of Testimony within their respective communities. A special guide was created, containing marketing and administrative tools as well as a comprehensive range of materials for training volunteers. The guide, now available in English, Russian and Hebrew both in printed format and on the Yad Vashem website, has been distributed to hundreds of Jewish communities and organizations around the world who have joined the efforts of the Names Recovery Project.

## Targeting Missing Names from the FSU

In 2006, the project embarked on targeted outreach in areas where a large percentage of the names were still missing; for example, in the occupied areas of the Former Soviet Union, where some 1.5 million Jews were simply shot to death where they lived. Here there were no transports, no lists, no records. Furthermore, activity related to Holocaust remembrance was strictly banned by Soviet authorities until the fall of the Iron Curtain. As Holocaust-era archives gradually open up throughout Eastern Europe, Yad Vashem has taken great strides to retrieve and digitize the names of millions of Jews who were wiped out in the centers of Jewish life that had existed for so many years before the *Shoah*. For example, from 2006-2010, Yad Vashem computerized over 200,000 names of those killed in the Soviet localities occupied by the Nazis that were documented by the Soviet Extraordinary Commission (which investigated Nazi war atrocities).

Together with strategic partners such as the Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Agency, targeted community outreach in Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Israel, Germany and the US has yielded another 430,000 names to date.

## Cooperating with the Torah World

Over the past six years, Yad Vashem has also stepped up efforts to recover names of *Shoah* victims among the ultra-Orthodox communities in Israel and the United States that traditionally commemorate the victims in unique ways acceptable to the Torah world. Names Collection staff members from the ultra-Orthodox community have digitally photographed over 700,000 names from Torah-world sources, including religious books, commemorative plaques and ritual objects in synagogues, as well as tombstones of survivors engraved with names of family members murdered in the *Shoah*.

## Official UNESCO Recognition

The *Shoah* Victims' Names Recovery Project has impacted lives the world over. It has led to hundreds of reunions, discoveries of lost families, and enabled people to connect personally with the victims of the Holocaust. Recently, the impact of the project was given official recognition when UNESCO announced that the Yad Vashem Pages of Testimony Repository was to be included in its Memory of the World Register. UNESCO's Memory of the World Program raises to a

global level the awareness and the imperative of preservation of, and access to, unique and irreplaceable documentary heritage in various parts of the world. "The Pages of Testimony Repository represents a huge-scale collective memorial to Holocaust victims, unprecedented in history in both its dimensions and its intent to preserve the names as symbols of their humanity," says Dr. Avram. "Comprised of invaluable personal hand-signed testimonies, it is unique in the world, and rightly deserves its place in the Memory of the World Register."

When one has a personal connection to the past, history becomes tangible and meaningful. In March 2013, US President Barack Obama visited Yad Vashem's Hall of Names. He noted the importance of the Names Recovery Project and the idea that lies behind it, calling the undertaking "a service to humanity." This encapsulates the essence of what Yad Vashem has undertaken. If we remember that each of the six million victims was an individual, a whole world unto him or herself, we can begin to fathom the nature and extent of loss, and start to take responsibility for the future of the Jewish people and of humanity as a whole.

*Yad Vashem invites the public to submit Pages of Testimony for Jews they know who were murdered during the Holocaust. Assistance in filling out Pages of Testimony in Israel is available at: +972 2 644 3808. Outside Israel, please contact: names.outreach@yadvashem.org.il*

*The author is Manager of the Shoah Victims' Names Recovery Project.*

# Fulfilling the Artists' Last Will



■ *As I stand on the border between life and death, certain that I will not remain alive, I wish to take leave from my friends and my works.... My works I bequeath to the Jewish museum to be built after the war. Farewell, my friends. Farewell, the Jewish people. Never again allow such a catastrophe.*

From the Last Will and Testament of Gela Seksztajn, 1 August 1942

On the precipice of death, amid the east-bound transports from the Warsaw ghetto in the summer of 1942 and only half a year before she and her daughter Margalit were transported to the Treblinka death camp, painter Gela Seksztajn wrote her last will and testament. The above quote reveals, in unsettling words and leaving no room for doubt, that she was well aware of what fate awaited her: murder at the hands of the Germans. At this significant moment – both for herself and also for her people – Seksztajn wrote these immortal words: her art works were to be bequeathed to “the Jewish museum to be built after the war.” In spite of the total destruction unfolding before her eyes, she possessed complete confidence that the Jewish people would arise from ruin, and that they would erect a Jewish museum where her paintings would find a home.

Gela Seksztajn’s last will is in fact that of all the artists who were murdered during the Shoah, and in its light are the artworks displayed in the Museum of Holocaust Art that opened in March 2005 as part of the new Museum Complex. The exhibition presented within this space gives tangible expression to the versatility and uniqueness of Yad Vashem’s Art Collection that contains over 9,000 works of art, most of which were created during the Holocaust. In the ghettos, in the camps and in places of hiding, artists used their pencils and brushes – mostly unconsciously – as tools of defiance. They created art in spite and in the face of intolerable oppression, attesting to an astonishing phenomenon: namely, that artistic expression cannot be silenced, even in the most horrific conditions. These artworks are an eternal verification to the German Nazi perpetrators that the persecuted Jewish people, labeled by them as subhuman, possessed the power of creativity – the tangible manifestation of the inspired individual.

Artworks in the Museum Collection have no common denominator except having been created during those years of darkness. Artists used their distinctive artistic forms and creative expression while their choice of topics varied

## THE SURVIVOR'S VOICE

“My work here was helping pass on the memory of the Holocaust to the younger generations, and this has helped me greatly overcome the painful memories.”

Shoshana Schtark, volunteer in the Museum of Holocaust Art

greatly. The colors – at times astonishingly vital and bright – are a reminder that the Germans perpetrated their atrocities amid the daily reality of the ordinary world. The artworks wordlessly relate the true drama in colorful guise: the natural world was not a black and white reality; it carried on in its usual course of vividness as millions of Jewish men, women and children were transported to their deaths.

Most of the artists whose artworks are on display at Yad Vashem were not given the opportunity to leave behind a written legacy; they were murdered, and their mute creations remained for future generations to ponder.

# A Broad Mosaic of Memory

Yehudit Shendar

Michael Tal

How did artworks survive, while their creators did not? The annals behind the endurance of these artworks and their passage to Yad Vashem are fascinating and often dramatic. Each item charted its own unique route, but for a small number of multiple collections. The rescue of artworks from destruction is in some cases credited to the artists themselves, who took the effort to conceal and secret them away in safe places; others were salvaged by friends and relatives, who were committed to the cause of rescue. Many more works of Holocaust-era artists were revealed in attics and basements or in the hands of strangers; these, too, found their way to Yad Vashem. The small number of artists who survived reveal that the burden of memory weighed upon their creative efforts.

Almost 70 years since the defeat of the Nazi regime, it would not be implausible to deduce that the task of collecting Holocaust Art would have been by now completed, and that it is time to progress to collecting postwar and contemporary art confronting Holocaust-related topics. Yet, surprisingly, hundreds of new artworks created in the very midst of the Holocaust have been added to the collection annually over recent years. Since the year 2000, in fact, over 3,000 new items have been incorporated into the Art Collection, including works by Max Liebermann, Ludwig Meidner, Felix Nussbaum, Charlotte Salomon and Bruno Schulz, as well as by less-recognized artists. The emphasis on rescuing and preserving Holocaust-era artworks thus remains relevant to this day, even as the Museum lays the cornerstones for its collection of contemporary expressions on the Holocaust.

The last will of Gela Seksztajn and her brethren-in-fate has been fulfilled. A Jewish museum stands upon the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem, and Holocaust-era artists have an eternal presence within its walls. Visitors to Yad Vashem are given an opportunity to see the *Shoah* through the eyes of witnesses, testifying with their brush, pencil and palette, and shunning words that fall short of describing the reality around them – and that is the source of the artistic expression.

*The author is Senior Art Curator and Deputy Director, Museums Division.*

### THE SURVIVOR'S VOICE

**“When our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren touch them, the Holocaust becomes concrete; it’s not abstract, not just a story.”**

Mordechai Sela, donor of two Torah staves rescued from the *Kristallnacht* pogrom in Vienna

■ **“Just seconds before we were ordered to strip, I found my mother’s reading glasses in the pocket of my coat. That was the last object I possessed... later on I improvised some string and tied the glasses to my body. I kept them with me all the time [...] for 45 years the glasses sat in my drawer – but they changed shape. They turned into a tiny heap of crumbs... Such precious crumbs! I brought them with me to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, because it is the most appropriate place for the glasses.”**

From a letter written by  
Tola Wallach Meltzer, z”l, Haifa, 1997

Yad Vashem’s Artifacts Collection contains some 27,500 items donated over the years by Holocaust survivors and members of their families, as well as those received from various organizations in Israel and abroad. The collection features a wide range of objects connected with the events that occurred in Europe during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, reflecting different aspects relevant to the Holocaust period: artifacts from the years preceding the war through the horrors of WWII and on to the survivors’ return to their homes and attempts at rehabilitation in DP camps and in *Eretz Israel*.

The collection comprises items from ghettos and camps as well as personal effects unveiling the stories of people, families and, at times, entire communities. In recent years, a particular effort has been made to collect artifacts documenting the daily lives of Jews under the imminent threat of extermination, such as children’s toys, objects created as gifts, and items testifying to spiritual forbearance.

“The collection of artifacts embodies a broad mosaic of human memories,” explains Haviva Peled-Carmeli, Senior Artifacts Curator at Yad Vashem. “The unique nature of this collection is manifested both in its large volume and in the ways in which the items were collected. The majority of the objects are connected with the life stories of people who experienced the events of the Holocaust first-hand, and the stories recorded at the time of their donation tell us of the fate of their owners. In this way, the artifacts represent the identities of Holocaust victims – those who were murdered and those who survived, real people with faces and names.”

Each artifact that comes to the collection is registered in a logbook, in accordance with the Museums Law of the State of Israel. A letter of receipt is issued to the donor, and a unique catalogue number assigned to each item so it may be easily located when required. Documentation accompanying each item includes a record of the events and their location, names of all the family members, and a collection of relevant photographs. All of the information collected is then digitized to facilitate its use for commemoration, educational, research and exhibition purposes.

“I would like to express my gratitude for the warm reception I was given during my visit to see my beloved teddy bear,” wrote Stella Knobel in 2012. “It is hard to describe my emotions before and during the visit, when I was able to hold him again, tell him all that has happened to me, and let him know just how much I missed him. Still, I am happy that my teddy bear has finally found a safe haven and a final home for all eternity. Thank you... for all your work that makes it possible to restore and conserve precious artifacts from the *Shoah*.”

*The author is a Curator in the Artifacts Department, Museums Division.*

# Individual Stories, Collective Memory

Malka Tor

■ No one today doubts the value of testimonies for the survivors and their families, as well as for educational, historical and commemorative purposes. In the face of Holocaust denial and revisionism, filmed testimonies of Holocaust survivors embody solid proof of its unique reality.

Not only are filmed testimonies of critical importance for researchers, they also enable the younger generations in Israel and beyond to become acquainted with the collection of personal stories that make up the greater, more complex picture of the events that took place across Europe and North Africa during WWII. Indeed, these testimonies are already becoming a primary tool in Holocaust education, replacing face-to-face encounters with the rapidly dwindling survivor generation. In recognition of this, over the past decade Yad Vashem has made a special effort to increase the number of testimonies it collects every year: out of the 112,000 witness accounts – both from Yad Vashem and other important collections around the world – currently housed in its Archives, some 11,500 were taken since 2003. In the summer of 2006, Yad Vashem teams began to offer a service to survivors: visiting and filming them in their places of residence across Israel. Many of those previously prevented from giving their accounts either by geographical distance or poor health were now able to tell their personal stories in the comfort of their own homes. Today, between 1,000 and 1,200 survivor testimonies are collected on an annual basis.

A series of unique projects were also recently carried out by Yad Vashem in cooperation with various organizations, including the collection of witness accounts from hearing-impaired survivors (together with the Institute for the Advancement of Deaf Persons in Israel); testimonies in Ladino (in partnership with the Center for the Preservation of Ladino Heritage); eyewitness recollections taken from ultra-Orthodox survivors by interviewers from the community specially trained by Yad Vashem (in cooperation with the Ginzach Kiddush Hashem Institute in Bnei Brak); testimonies of Holocaust survivors from North African countries (in cooperation with Yad Ben Zvi); and joint projects with volunteer organizations



## THE SURVIVOR'S VOICE

“The interview allowed me to unburden myself of the heavy load I carried for over 60 years... it opened up deep layers of complex and charged emotions... I want to express my great appreciation for your ability and sensitivity in guiding the course of the interview.”

Aharon Kaplan

engaged in obtaining survivor testimonies (Yad Lezahava and Yad Sarah). A special project entitled “From Survival to the Open Skies” has seen accounts collected from Holocaust survivors who are veterans of the Israeli Air Force, with the extensive help of the IAF Fund.

Alongside ongoing collection of testimonies, the Oral History Section at Yad Vashem implements a number of group interview sessions each year, where survivors tell a shared story from many different angles. Together, these fragments of memory coalesce

into a common story of a place, organization or group of people. Among the accounts of this kind, Yad Vashem has obtained group testimonies from former children’s homes in Krakow, Otwock and Brzeziny in Poland; Beit Birenbaum, Holland; the orphanages of Transnistria; and the religious youth village of Deszk, Hungary. In addition, accounts were collected from members of ‘Group 131’ – child survivors from Kovno who formed a group in Auschwitz, as well as former prisoners at a military vehicle repair work camp near the Vilna ghetto, with a special focus on the rescue and relief activities of Righteous Among the Nations Karl Plagge. Collective stories have also been told to Yad Vashem by survivors from the Đakovo camp in Yugoslavia; graduates of the Hebrew Gymnasium in Krakow; members of a partisan unit that managed to survive; and survivors of the Bershah and Murafa ghettos and the death camps of Transnistria.

Overall, it is clear that Yad Vashem’s collection of witness accounts shapes a portrait of both the individual and the community during the *Shoah* across a broad spectrum of diversity, and thus plays a critical role in shaping the collective memory and consciousness of the Holocaust.

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



# Intensifying Efforts to Gather the Fragments

Orit Noiman

## THE SURVIVOR'S VOICE

"If Yad Vashem did not exist it would have had to be invented, if only to ensure the proper transmission of the objects, stories and memories to the coming generations."

Prof. Shlomo Breznitz

■ For many years, Nitza Edelstein treasured the notebooks of drawings belonging to her brother Tibor, whom she never had the fortune to meet. Tibor Karini was born in 1931 in Novi Sad, Serbia. After his bar mitzvah, Tibor moved to live with his grandfather and grandmother, as his father believed he would be safer there. His mother, Elizabeth (Elisheva) née Fisker was not convinced that the move was wise, and struggled with the separation from her son. Unfortunately, she was proven right. Elizabeth survived the war, while Tibor was sent with her husband's parents to Auschwitz, where he was murdered. After the war, Elizabeth returned to her old house in Novi Sad and found her son's notebooks together with his schoolbooks. Elizabeth kept them as a memento of her beloved son for the rest of her life, and after her mother's death, Nitza Edelstein, Elizabeth's daughter from a postwar marriage, carefully looked after the treasured books. In April 2012, Nitza came to a collection day in Herzliya held by Yad Vashem within the framework of the "Gathering the Fragments" national campaign, and presented the notebooks, along with many other items, to campaign staff. "Thank you for the sensitivity and the exemplary approach to the materials I have placed in your trustworthy hands, to be preserved for eternity at Yad Vashem," wrote Edelstein after the meeting. "Your support helped me through the difficult process of parting with the personal effects of loved ones, allowing me to achieve closure in my life's journey."

For many decades, Yad Vashem has been engaged in collecting Holocaust-related artifacts along with their personal stories, and currently holds the world's largest collection of documentary material on the Shoah. Yet in spite

■ Within the framework of "Gathering the Fragments" campaign, over 102,000 items have been collected so far, including approximately 33,000 documents, 41,000 photographs, 22,000 letters, 2,400 personal effects, 1,400 books, 926 memoirs, 400 artworks, 290 diaries and 145 reels of original film footage.

of all these efforts, numerous personal items still remain undiscovered in the homes of Holocaust survivors and their families. Consequently, with the support of the National Heritage Project at the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry for Senior Citizens and the Ministry of Education, for the past few years Yad Vashem has been running the national "Gathering the Fragments" campaign in Israel, to accelerate the collection of items dating back to the Holocaust and to discover their unique stories.

"Holocaust survivors and their families possess large quantities of personal items that are unknown and inaccessible to the broader public," explains Dr. Haim Gertner, Director of the Yad Vashem Archives. "Many of those

professional photographers and equipped with digital scanners, so that the individuals who donate Holocaust-related materials to Yad Vashem may retain a copy of the treasured items they had kept safe for so many years. In addition, highly skilled teams visit Holocaust survivors in their homes when the latter are unable to attend a central collection day in person. Every item received is carefully catalogued in Yad Vashem's computerized systems and then forwarded, according to its type, to the various Yad Vashem departments for registration and documentation. After special conservation treatment, some of the items are put on display for the wider public visiting Yad Vashem. To date, some 5,660 individuals have donated over 102,000 personal items, including diaries, certificates, letters,



who own these items are unaware of their importance, or of the critical necessity that they be professionally conserved. Collection of items directly from Holocaust survivors is particularly important, for only in this way is it possible to hear and record the personal stories connected with each item. It is clear that we are running on borrowed time; soon, these witnesses will unfortunately no longer be with us. This project is indeed a rescue operation."

On each advertized collection day, Yad Vashem staff interview those bringing the items, and carefully document all the information they receive. The collection team is accompanied by

photographs, various personal effects, artworks, film footage and witness accounts.

"The artifacts we collect help us reconstruct the fates that befell individual Jews during the Holocaust, and fulfill our historical duty to preserve and commemorate their personal histories," concludes Gertner. "Moreover, their accessibility to the wider public will allow researchers, exhibition curators, educators and the wider community to view them and ensure that their stories are told to future generations."

*The author is Manager of the "Gathering the Fragments" Campaign, Archives Division.*

# Cornerstones of Holocaust Research



■ **Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research** was established two decades ago in order to encourage, support and advance scholarly research on the Holocaust, as well as to inform about and commemorate the *Shoah* through its publications. The first two heads of the Institute, Prof. Israel Gutman, z"l, and Prof. Yehuda Bauer, laid the foundation for the Institute to achieve its objectives, under the direction of Esther Aran. Over the last ten years, under the leadership of Prof. David Bankier, z"l, and Prof. Dan Michman and the direction of Dr. Bella Gutterman, and more recently with Yad Vashem Chief Historian Prof. Dina Porat, the Institute has continued to expand its academic activities and increase its reach to both veteran and newly emerging scholars around the world.

In this interview, the Institute's new Director, Dr. Iael Nidam-Orvieto, takes a look at its main goals and remarkable achievements over the years, as well as the challenges that lie ahead:

## Why is Holocaust research such an important element of Yad Vashem's work?

One of Yad Vashem's main tenets is that historical-based academic research is the foundation of all Holocaust-related commemoration and educational activities. As such, the Research Institute has made it a priority to attract and invite the leading researchers in the field to present and discuss their findings, as well as promote new research by encouraging up-and-coming young academics to utilize Yad Vashem's vast resources and facilities.

The Institute's international academic conferences and one- and two-day symposia on a variety of topics bring fresh insights and data on a range of topics, as well as reevaluations of previously held perceptions. For example, the 2001 conference on the return of the Jews to their countries of origin in the aftermath of WWII enabled us to further explore this important subject, and led to a stimulating international conference five years later on the judicial aspects of the Holocaust and their local and international ramifications. In 2009, the Diana Zborowski Center for the Study of the Aftermath of the Holocaust became the Institute's first specialized

center of research, aiming to study the fate of Holocaust survivors after the war and efforts at memorializing the victims, repossessing stolen Jewish property, and bringing to justice Nazi war criminals and their accomplices.

**You came to the position of Institute Director as a seasoned researcher in your own right, having developed your skills and knowledge under the guidance of some of the top Holocaust researchers in the world. How do you see the Institute playing that same role for other novice scholars?**

In addition to the world-renowned conferences and symposia, the Institute hosts a variety of more intimate workshops on new areas of research, such as on Jewish life during the Holocaust or real-time media reports during WWII. These workshops provide an important opportunity for both young and veteran researchers to share and

## THE SURVIVOR'S VOICE

"Yad Vashem is vitally important as the institute that coordinates global research on the Holocaust. This is where those interested in investigating all facets of the *Shoah* come to receive assistance. Here they can find rich archives and effective tools to help them pursue their individual areas of study."

Prof. Israel Gutman

discuss the ideas presented. At the initiative of Prof. Bankier and the direction of former Institute Director Dr. Tikva Fatal-Knaani, the Institute also helps PhD students through workshops organized by universities and other Holocaust research institutions that take place either at Yad Vashem or abroad. The program allows many young scholars to expound upon their studies and become part of the international scholarly community, to receive feedback from international peers, and to utilize the archives at their disposal.

**Beyond the opportunities you offer to help promote new research, what kind of assistance does the Institute offer those beginning their academic journeys?**

Over the years, more than 160 research fellows of the Institute, along with many other scholars, have utilized the vast sea of resources at Yad



Vashem and received assistance from the Institute. A decade ago the Institute opened its doors to in-residence researchers sponsored by various universities, state programs and organizations, such as the Claims Conference and the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI). The Institute also awards prizes and scholarships to MA and PhD students who are enrolled in Israeli universities and engaged in Holocaust research, as well as research fellowships for postdoctoral academics.

Three years ago, the Institute began to host a biennial workshop in advanced *Shoah* Studies, and also established a PhD fellowship program to encourage doctoral students and assist scholars who come to Yad Vashem independently to develop their own projects.

**What role does international cooperation play for the Institute?**

Yad Vashem in general, and certainly the Institute, places a very high value on developing and maintaining an international network of academics in order to assist and advance Holocaust research. In addition, various Institute staff members participate in conferences, workshops and symposia both in Israel and abroad, presenting our research in international forums.

Each year, the International Institute for Holocaust Research:

Holds international conferences, research workshops and annual lectures for dozens of veteran and newly emerging young scholars

Hosts 12 senior researchers from Israel and abroad

Grants some 20 awards to Masters and Doctoral students

Awards an international book prize for Holocaust research

## Leah Goldstein



### What kind of research projects does the staff at the Institute undertake, and what is their purpose?

Our staff is involved in both short- and long-term projects aimed at uncovering and refining information about broad-based issues, such as the history, location and fate of every Jewish ghetto during WWII; the vast network of deportations of the Jews from across the continent; and the sites in Eastern Europe in which mass murders took place within reach of the victims' own homes. These comprehensive studies provide not only a source of information in their own right, but also serve to promote future research with the data they make available to other scholars.

For example, *The Untold Stories: The Murder Sites of Jews in the Occupied Territories of the Former Soviet Union* is an online research project that utilizes eyewitness testimonies, film footage, written and oral documentation and memoirs to help locate murder sites of Jewish individuals and communities in the German-occupied areas of the FSU. Through exploration of the actual sites and local archives, Institute staff members have been able to combine their existing knowledge with new discoveries, and thus paint a more accurate picture of the

actual numbers of victims, their identities and their fates. Project staff also research the prewar history and postwar commemoration of these sites – and then all of the gathered information is uploaded to the Yad Vashem website, together with Google mapping, for easy searching and access by scholars around the world.

### The Institute is also renowned for its focused studies of individual countries. Why is this so important?

In recent years, and with the unshakable support of our friends around the world, the Institute has been able to open new centers of research that concentrate on the prewar history, wartime events and postwar ramifications of the Holocaust in specific regions in Europe. These centers are crucial for Yad Vashem to keep abreast of current research within and about each particular area, to fine-tune conclusions based on newly discovered documentation, and to increase contact with the scholarly community.

The Institute is proud of the tremendous strides made so far by its recently established Center of Research on the History of Soviet Jews during the Holocaust, Center for Research on the Holocaust in Poland and Center for Research on the Holocaust in Germany.

### It is clear that there are certain current trends to “equate” the Holocaust with other forms of genocide, particularly of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and even to revise the events to fit new theories and hypotheses. How will the Institute meet this and other challenges in the coming years?

As a major center for Holocaust research, we fervently believe that we must engage with today's global discourse about these topics, while continuing the basic research of the core topics of the Holocaust. There is still much that is unknown and needs to be investigated.

Undoubtedly, the future will present us with new challenges and we will find our way to deal with them. As the survivor generation slowly disappears from our horizon, it is imperative that we continue to place original documentation, as well as their testimonies, at the fore of our academic studies in order to keep global Holocaust research true to its ultimate mission: to learn about, and better understand, the ramifications of this unprecedented event in human history.

# A Legacy of Stories in Print

Dozens of new publications are released each year by Yad Vashem, including research studies, memoirs, diaries, conference proceedings, catalogues and albums

Dr. Ella Florsheim

Although Yad Vashem Publications was officially established in 1990, the first issue of Yad Vashem's flagship academic publication, *Yad Vashem Studies*, saw light as early as 1957. Since then, many Holocaust-related books have been published by Yad Vashem, including diaries, memoirs, research papers, conference proceedings, catalogues and albums. In the spirit of the Yad Vashem tradition of extensive and diverse publishing activity, Yad Vashem Publications releases dozens of new titles each year, in a variety of genres and languages, including English, Hebrew, German, Spanish and French. Some of these are produced in

## THE SURVIVOR'S VOICE

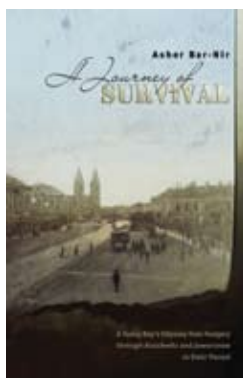
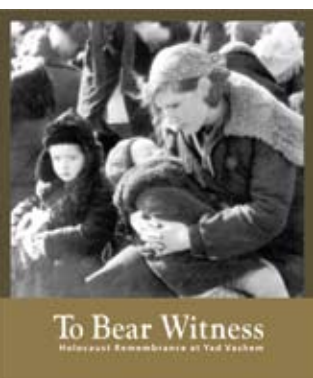
"I've learned to live with the shadow and to create with the light."

Jakob Zim, author of *Shards and Light*, published by Yad Vashem

attention paid to exposing various details of the historical context. Academic supervision is also provided during the publication of Holocaust survivors' memoirs. Due to the abundance of

*the Nations*, which commemorates the actions of the Righteous and the stories of rescue by country. Another major research project published in recent years is *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos during the Holocaust*. This comprehensive encyclopedia contains over 1,100 entries illustrated by detailed mapping, providing information on every ghetto in Europe and the lives of the Jews incarcerated within.

An important hub of ongoing discourse on the cutting-edge of Holocaust research published by Yad Vashem is *Yad Vashem Studies*, which since its foundation has been produced in many



cooperation with academic and commercial publishing institutions in Israel and abroad.

Operating within the framework of the International Institute for Holocaust Research, Yad Vashem Publications serves as the spearhead of new and innovative research in the field of the Holocaust. Numerous books released by Yad Vashem draw upon its large archives and databases, as well as a broad range of documentary materials from other archives worldwide. The toil of releasing these archival materials in print – such as diaries and chronicles from the Holocaust era which have been the object of special efforts undertaken over the last decade – requires meticulous deciphering of the original documents and thorough academic editing, with special

memoirs written in recent years, Yad Vashem also supports the release of privately published manuscripts.

Among the research publications released by Yad Vashem, several unique undertakings are most noteworthy, including: *The Comprehensive History of the Holocaust*, a series that summarizes the present state of Holocaust research in individual countries and expounds upon major topics such as the development and implementation of the "Final Solution" in each locale and the reactions of the Jews to what was happening; *The Encyclopedia of the Jewish Communities*, a collection of historical information on European Jewish communities from their foundation until after the Holocaust; and *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among*

dozens of volumes and justly earned the highest acclaim as a world-rated scientific journal (see p. 21). Various conference proceedings and the *Search and Research* series also summarize up-to-date research presented at various seminars held by the International Institute for Holocaust Research.

Looking ahead, Yad Vashem Publications aspires to continue the drive to publish diaries and other important documentary accounts from the Yad Vashem Archives, while working on the publication of memoirs, research from Israel and abroad, and a plethora of other publications that will influence Holocaust remembrance and academic research in future years.

The author is Editor-in-Chief of Yad Vashem Publications.

# At the Heart of Academic Discourse

Dr. David Silberklang



■ With the publication in 1957 of volume 1 of *Yad Vashem Studies*, the first journal devoted to research on the Holocaust was launched. Every aspect of the *Shoah* was a new research subject at that time – and for years to come. This was reflected in the wide variety of subjects addressed in the first volumes, including German perpetrators, local attitudes toward the murder of the Jews, the variety of Jewish responses and rescue attempts. The journal also broke new ground by appearing in two separate volumes in two languages, Hebrew and English, something unheard of in the academic world. In this very decision, the editors expressed a fundamental principle that is still one of the guiding lights of *Yad Vashem Studies* – the particular and universal aspects of the Holocaust. This was to be a journal that would reach scholars and interest readers both in Israel and worldwide.

And indeed, of the nearly 600 articles that have been published to date, almost one-third have come from outside Israel. International representation has increased steadily over the years; in the last decade more than half the articles have come from scholars around the world. Authors from more than 20 countries have submitted articles in more than a dozen languages.

What have been the directions of these scholars' interests? In its early volumes,

*Yad Vashem Studies* addressed a wide variety of subjects, including those most basic to our efforts to understand the *Shoah*. Some addressed fundamental methodological questions and others historical questions regarding the development of Nazi policies toward Jews. Following the Eichmann trial, scholars examined philosophical, psychological and legal questions regarding the perpetrators. These early volumes also examined Jewish underground activity and armed resistance; death marches; German Jewish responses; daily life in the ghettos; French and Macedonian Jewry during the Holocaust; and much more.

From the late 1960s, *Yad Vashem Studies* published pioneering studies that have become classics in the field, and quite a few of these anticipated major books and ongoing debates. Among these were Nachman Blumenthal on Adam Czerniaków's diary; Isaiah Trunk and Aharon Weiss on the Judenräte; Bela Vago on Ottó Komoly's diaries; Israel Gutman on the inception of the armed resistance in the Warsaw ghetto; and Yehuda Bauer on rescue operations via Vilna. Three of the important articles on the evolution of the Nazis' anti-Jewish policies came from Uwe Adam, Christopher Browning and Martin Broszat – the latter in his critique of David Irving's controversial book, *Hitler's War*.

Research on Romania (Jean Ancel), Hungary (Randolph Braham) and "Operation Reinhard" (Yitzhak Arad) were among the many articles that generated discussion in the 1970s and 1980s, and Saul Friedländer's penetrating analysis of the intentionalist-functionalist debate regarding the development of Nazi decision-making on the "Final Solution" is also still included in syllabi in universities around the world. Scholars also engaged in major historical debates on the pages of *Yad Vashem Studies*, such as the *Historikerstreit* in Germany and the beginning of the debate regarding the role of ordinary Polish people in the Holocaust; discussions regarding the role and influence of middle-level German officials on

policy-making regarding the Jews; perspectives on Daniel Goldhagen's book, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*; and discussion of Jan Gross's book, *Neighbors*.

In October 1992, Holocaust historian and survivor and long-term *Yad Vashem* senior staff member Shmuel Spector commented that it would take all the researchers in the world more than 100 years just to turn the pages of the new material being made available in the archives of the Former Soviet Union. Since then, additional archives with tens of millions of pages of documentation have opened in various countries. In the last ten years, *Yad Vashem Studies* has been developing ties with scholars worldwide, including in post-communist countries, resulting in pathbreaking articles such as those on Hitler's role in the "Final Solution;" Polish attitudes towards the murder of the Jews; the attitudes of local Romanians; analyses of Hungarian leaders' ideologies; an anthropological analysis of the July 1946 Kielce pogrom; and archaeological research at the Sobibór extermination camp.

Together with heightened scholarly interest in the field by both veteran and up-and-coming scholars, the journal's move to a semi-annual format in 2007 has brought increasing numbers of submissions in recent years, allowing for a sizeable increase in the number of articles published in *Yad Vashem Studies*. The review section, with in-depth articles on recent noteworthy books in numerous languages, has also become one of the journal's calling cards.

While it is impossible to predict exactly what kinds of research will be undertaken in the coming years, if the submissions in the last decade are any indication, there will probably be more articles from the FSU utilizing Soviet archives; on countries that have been under-researched in the past, such as Greece; on annotated diaries and other documents; on forced labor; on Jews' reactions in places that have not been extensively researched; and on the reactions and actions of local non-Jewish populations. One hundred years? It seems that Spector may have underestimated.

*The author is Senior Historian at the International Institute of Holocaust Research, and Editor-in-Chief of Yad Vashem Studies.*

# An Island of Information

■ **Yad Vashem's Library now holds over 141,000 titles in 54 languages**

■ **The Reference and Information Services Unit aids more than 30,000 members of the public each year, both in the Library and Archives Reading Room and through written responses**

**Leah Goldstein**



■ **Dr. Robert Rozett is Director of both Yad Vashem Libraries, book and film, as well as a historical researcher, published author and occasional newspaper columnist.** In a special interview for this edition of *Yad Vashem Jerusalem*, Dr. Rozett focuses on the publications library, its achievements over the past decade and its future plans:

### **What is the Yad Vashem Library's main role?**

The Yad Vashem Library was established with the mission to collect all known publications about the *Shoah* and related subjects for the benefit of scholars, Yad Vashem staff, students, teachers, occasional readers and, perhaps most importantly, for posterity. In the past decade, we have added over 42,600 new titles to our collection, and thousands more duplicate copies of important items in a variety of formats. The Library collection now includes over 141,000 titles, and remains the most comprehensive such collection in the world.

In addition to offering these publications through the main Library branch in Jerusalem and our smaller branch in Beit Wolyn in Givatayim, during recent years we carried out several projects that have made the material more accessible than ever before. Perhaps the most important of these was to create an online catalogue for the

Library collection with the help of Yad Vashem's IT Division. Today one can search through the online Library catalogue on the Yad Vashem website, which is updated every few weeks.

### **In which languages is most material about the Holocaust written?**

Titles in our library appear in some 54 languages, including for us rather esoteric tongues like Icelandic, Basque and Tadjhik. Over the last decade, the majority of the material received has been in English, followed by German, Hebrew, French, Russian and Polish.

### **Which well-known researchers have made use of the Library over the years?**

The image of libraries is that they are far from dynamic places; instead they are quiet islands of information in a sea of frenetic activity. There is a certain truth to that regarding the main Yad Vashem Library, since the reading room overlooks the green valley between Yad Vashem and the western neighborhoods of Jerusalem, thus providing a calm atmosphere to explore a subject that is never easy to confront.

Nevertheless, the Library is a place that inspires many who use its resources. World-renowned authors such as Yann Martel (*Beatrice and Virgil*), Sir Martin Gilbert (*The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy*) and Saul Friedländer

(*Nazi Germany and the Jews*) have benefitted from the Library's collection to help them gather material for their noteworthy, thought-provoking and bestselling books.

### **In this online era, how is the Library developing its technological capabilities?**

The world of publications is deep into the digital revolution, although for the time being, printed matter is not only still with us, but also remains of tremendous import. Since the landscape is still in a state of flux, it is not yet clear exactly how the new era of e-books and online access to publications will eventually impact the Yad Vashem Library. Meanwhile, however, Yad Vashem is endeavoring to utilize all the tools at its disposal, including integrating

## **THE SURVIVOR'S VOICE**

**"My work gives me a great deal of satisfaction because I'm doing something to preserve the memory of the Holocaust and, ultimately, of the members of my family who were murdered in Auschwitz."**

Moshe Abeles, volunteer in the Yad Vashem Library

and enhancing search capabilities on all of its resources. For this reason, the Library has successfully been brought in line with other branches of Yad Vashem regarding one of the main avenues of accessing material – searches by place names. The next step, to be carried out soon, is to do the same for searches by sites of persecution.

But regardless of the medium by which information will be published, stored and transmitted over the next 60 years, the core activities of the Library will most likely remain the same: to collect and make available to our readership as much of the published material relevant to our subject as we can, and to ensure that it is preserved for future generations.

# A Repository of Holocaust Cinema

- The Visual Center's database currently features 8,500 titles
- 5,800 of these films are available for viewing at the Center's digital film library
- Over 1,000 public inquiries for research and information regarding Holocaust-related cinema are answered every year

Liat Benhabib and Mimi Ash



■ In November 2005, just seven months after the opening of the new Holocaust History Museum, the Visual Center at Yad Vashem was inaugurated. In less than a decade, the Center has become the leading international repository of Holocaust cinema, featuring a digital viewing library and database instantly accessible to filmmakers, researchers, educators and the public at large. Today there are 8,500 films of all genres on its online film database, and 5,800 of them are available for viewing, free of charge, at individual computer stations at the Visual Center. Meanwhile,

### THE SURVIVOR'S VOICE

“There is no single story of the *Shoah*... so we have to listen to those who spoke about what happened... the Visual Center and its film collection will serve generations to come.”

Avraham Harshalom, who sponsored the Online Film Database, inaugurated in 2011

members of staff at the Center continue the search for films about the Holocaust, to collect, preserve and offer them for viewing. The assistance of all creative people in the world of film devoted to safeguarding the memory of the Holocaust is vital to this mission.

### Important Acquisitions

As in the past, the Visual Center plans to persist in joining forces with local and international filmmakers as well as institutions dedicated to the preservation of the audio-visual memory of the *Shoah*. By making the classics as well as new releases accessible to audiences in Israel and abroad, it will ensure that quality cinema continues to be brought to the public, as in the premieres of the restored versions of *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *Night and Fog*. This involves ongoing acquisitions, at the Center's rate of at least 300-500 new titles each year. To attain this objective, its longstanding working relationships with major distributors of Holocaust films in Israel and abroad – most notably, NMC United, Seventh Art Releasing, DEFA, Ruth Diskin Films and Go2Films – must be maintained. The Center has also acquired complete collections of filmmakers such as Arthur Brauner, Péter Forgács, Mira Hamermesh, Claude Lanzmann, Willy Lindwer, Jeanine Meerapfel, Marek Rosenbaum, Renee Sanders, Istvan Szabo and Ruth Walk, and calls on filmmakers who have created Holocaust-related works to deposit copies of their films in its collection.

### Rescuing Rare Material

One of the Visual Center's most prominent endeavors in recent years was the restoration of *Memories of the Eichmann Trial* – an unfinished,

discerning work by the renowned Israeli documentary filmmaker David Perlov. Several screenings in Israel and at high-profile festivals abroad followed the painstaking restoration process, which resulted in a new high-definition digital version of this groundbreaking film. The Center eagerly awaits authorization from the Israel Broadcasting Authority to produce and distribute a DVD of this important film, which was literally rescued from oblivion on the shelves.

### The Avner Shalev Award

The Visual Center grants the Avner Shalev Yad Vashem Chairman's Award for Artistic Achievement in Holocaust-related Film at the International Jerusalem Film Festival each summer. This prestigious prize has spotlighted new films, including *Human Failure*, *Cabaret Berlin* and the latest winner, *Aftermath*. In addition, the Visual Center has sponsored Israeli premieres of major films at commemorative events, including *Adam Resurrected*, *The Counterfeiters*, *Killing Kasztner*, *In Darkness* and *Hannah Arendt*.

### Assisting the Public

Hundreds of local and international organizations have held special screenings at the Visual Center in conjunction with conferences, teacher-training seminars and remembrance ceremonies. The Center's professional staff has answered more than 10,000 requests for assistance on film productions, educational programming and searches for films and testimonies. In 2008, a special one-off Yad Vashem film fund provided funding and consultation to the creators of eight documentaries, among them *A Film Unfinished*, *The Lost Love Diaries* and *Rafting to Bombay*.

In this image-dominated age of new and always more innovative media, it is clear that there is no substitute for the response that film gives to the need to tell and re-tell the story of the Holocaust, from generation to generation.

For credits and further information about all the films in the Online Film Database, please visit the Yad Vashem website: [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org)

Liat Benhabib is Director of the Visual Center and Mimi Ash is responsible for the Center's Film Acquisitions.

# A Source of Inspiration



Leah Goldstein



■ In July 2013, Yad Vashem was rated fourth among 25 of the world's most important museums by TripAdvisor, a leading travel website that is driven by opinions of travelers from all over the world. Visitors gave highest praise to the "moving and informative exhibitions" and described their visit as "an emotional, educational and inspirational experience" and a "must see" for everyone traveling in Israel.

The new Yad Vashem Museum Complex opened its doors in March 2005, in a ceremony attended by the UN Secretary General, presidents, prime ministers, foreign ministers and dignitaries representing 40 of the world's nations, as well as Holocaust survivors, Yad Vashem donors and Righteous Among the Nations. Every year, almost a million people from all over the world visit the Museum Complex, which comprises the Holocaust History Museum, the Museum of Holocaust Art, the Exhibitions Pavilion, the Synagogue, the Learning Center and the Visual Center.

In a special interview, Director of the Museums Division Yehudit Inbar summarizes the unique nature of the Museum Complex, explains the reasons for the high demand for traveling exhibitions examining various aspects of the Holocaust, and looks at the future of Holocaust museums:

### Why was it necessary to build a new Museum Complex at Yad Vashem?

Yad Vashem's original historical museum established in the 1970s was an important and professional museum, yet over time it became inadequate to the task of facilitating the sheer

quantities of people visiting Yad Vashem every year. As long as 20 years ago, the number of annual visitors reached several hundred thousand, causing serious congestion and at times preventing our guests from entering the museum. Moreover, the physical condition of the exhibition was far from satisfactory. Despite several renovation-and-remodeling operations undertaken over the years, the passage of time and the large visitor turnover contributed to the physical deterioration of the exhibits.

We also realized that the exhibition needed to be updated in order to express the paradigm shift that has occurred over the years in the way we think about the Holocaust, and to awaken the interest of the younger generation by presenting an up-to-date exhibition allowing the viewers to identify with and understand Holocaust victims by encountering their personal stories.

### In what way does the Holocaust History Museum convey the narrative of the Jewish people, and how does it tell the story of the individuals who were murdered?

The historical museum was built by the survivors under the leadership of Dr. Yitzhak Arad, who sought to tell the world what the Nazis and their accomplices did to the Jewish people. They could not, and perhaps did not think it appropriate – yet – to tell their own story. Accordingly, the museum mainly displayed photographs and models of the camps. The photos had been taken by the murderers, and the exhibit said almost nothing of the Jews themselves. Two generations after the Holocaust,

### THE SURVIVOR'S VOICE

I'm afraid that in the future the Holocaust will become just another historical episode; that's why it's important that the story be told from a personal perspective: numbers alone have no meaning."

Rena Quint, volunteer guide in the Holocaust History Museum

this approach has changed. We want to tell the Jewish story – albeit within the context of the crimes perpetrated by German Nazis and their collaborators – highlighting the Jewish viewpoint of the events. In the Holocaust History Museum, the Jewish story is also presented via personal accounts and not only as a general historical narrative: art displayed in the Museum allows a different view of the Holocaust based on the experience of the individual; artifacts present personal and communal stories; photographs are explored in detail; and videos and personal testimonies convey the range of narratives from the Holocaust period. All these elements give visual and experiential expression to the narrative, while using the tools and media familiar to today's younger generations.

### What are the special features of the Museum Complex?

After a visit to the Holocaust History Museum – which is not easy from an emotional or physical



**Close to a million people from all over the world visit the Yad Vashem Museum Complex each year**

The Museum Complex concentrates the entire range of museum fields in one geographical area, thus facilitating the visitor's every need



viewpoint – one can sit and contemplate the experience on the inner patio of the Complex. This island of quiet gives the visitor a place to rest and then decide what they should see next: perhaps several artworks from the Holocaust era displayed at the Art Museum? Or maybe it is time to hear various answers to the difficult questions raised by the Holocaust (Learning Center) or see an interesting film examining a specific aspect of that historical era (Visual Center)? Or is it best to take some time for prayer and contemplation at the fully functioning Synagogue that displays authentic Judaica from synagogues in Europe destroyed during the Holocaust? The uniqueness of the Museum Complex, designed by architect Moshe Safdie, is the fact that it concentrates the entire range of museum fields in one geographical area, thus facilitating our visitors' every need.

### **What temporary exhibitions have been presented over the past decade and how were they chosen?**

The temporary exhibitions presented in the Exhibitions Pavilion open a special window onto the inner world and realities of Holocaust victims, and provide unique insights into the continuous efforts to understand the meaning of the Holocaust from the Jewish point of view. Exhibition topics therefore combine history and art. In recent years, among others, we held an exhibition dedicated to portraits painted during the Holocaust; a display of Auschwitz-Birkenau architectural plans; an exhibit showcasing the contribution made by the survivors to the State of Israel; another telling the unique story of

women during the Holocaust; and exhibitions of artworks by Holocaust survivors as well as those created by modern artists. Currently we are showing an exhibition that marks 50 years of honoring Righteous Among the Nations, entitled "I Am My Brother's Keeper."

### **Yad Vashem has 12 traveling exhibitions appearing in 15 languages all over the world. What are the goals of these exhibitions, and how are they received by the public in different countries?**

The traveling exhibitions were created in order to meet the need expressed by various parties – museums, communities, cultural and educational facilities, parliaments, etc. We receive requests both from bodies directly associated with the Holocaust as well as from those that do not work in that field. Requests from such places are particularly important as they allow us to reach many people beyond the audiences that are normally exposed to this topic. These exhibitions have been viewed by hundreds of thousands of people.

In recent years, we have also presented numerous exhibitions inside the UN building marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The latest exhibition, on 27 January 2012, was entitled "A Monument of Good Deeds": Dreams and Hopes of Children during the Holocaust" and targeted youth audiences (with hands-on exhibits that could be operated by the viewers). The exhibition most widely displayed is "No Child's Play," which has been translated into 12 languages and has been traveling worldwide since 1998.

### **How do you envision the future of Holocaust museums around the world? What direction will these exhibitions take in the future?**

It is hard to foresee the future, but the direction in which the museums – historical museums in particular – are moving gives rise to multiple questions. Today's world is a digital universe, and a large percentage of its population mainly uses digital tools. The "Spots of Light" exhibition was created as a virtual display that fits seamlessly into any space where it is presented. The permanent exhibition "Shoah," curated by Yad Vashem and recently opened inside Block 27 at Auschwitz-Birkenau, is almost entirely digital. The most recent exhibition unveiled at Yad Vashem, honoring the Righteous Among the Nations, is essentially a large video display. This type of exhibition has a number of significant advantages, especially for topics such as the Holocaust, where many aspects lack tangible visual expression. In addition, such exhibitions can be transferred from one location to another easily and at minimal expense. The question is, therefore, whether museums which today can be toured via the Internet almost entirely, will turn into "white elephants," rendering physical visits redundant? Or rather, will the authentic museum experience, with exhibitions displayed inside a physical space, featuring original artifacts and visited on one's own, as part of a group or with friends and family, retain its emotional and intellectual attraction? It is hard to tell, but I believe that the best solution is to integrate both approaches for future audiences.

The International School

# A World Center for Holocaust Teaching



■ Two decades ago, as he embarked upon his new role as Chairman of Yad Vashem, Avner Shalev brought with him a vision: to turn the Holocaust Remembrance Authority into a center of learning and inspiration, as relevant to the lives of the younger generations as it had been to their parents and grandparents. As such, he firmly placed education at the heart of the enterprise, and within months, the International School for Holocaust Studies was established.

Over the years, the School developed its boundaries both physically – moving into its new building in 1999 and expanding into the state-of-the-art International Seminars Wing in 2012 – and in terms of its productive output: currently engaging with more than 300,000 educators, students and soldiers from Israel and abroad, producing a plethora of pedagogical materials in some 15 languages, and conducting hundreds of long- and short-term seminars to train teachers from Israel and abroad in age-appropriate Holocaust education. The School's sub-site on Yad Vashem's website offers a wealth of resources and ideas for lesson plans, Remembrance Day ceremonies and online courses, and graduates are encouraged to form an international network of trained specialists, widening the discourse on Holocaust education and enlarging the cadre of "educational ambassadors."

For this special edition of *Yad Vashem Jerusalem*, Dorit Novak, current Director General of Yad Vashem and previous Director of the International School, Shulamit Imber, Pedagogical Director of the School, and Dr. Eyal Kaminka, Lily Safra Chair of Holocaust Education and the School's current Director, look back on the achievements of the School over the past two decades and discuss its current and future challenges:

**We are now some 70 years after the events of the Shoah. Why do you think Holocaust education is still relevant today?**

**Dr. Eyal Kaminka:** Holocaust education has certainly taken a new direction in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While the survivor population is dwindling, second and third generations of Jews are seeking new ways to safeguard their legacy. Further abroad, in this almost borderless world, learning about the *Shoah* has so many



relevant aspects to young people who search for meaning and direction in their lives: the behavior and choices of human beings under the most difficult circumstances, and the strengthening of universal human values. The extremism and uniqueness of the Holocaust challenges each and every one of us to take a good look at ourselves, at the education of our children and at our relationship with people different from us – and to develop awareness, sensitivity and even a kind of humility in how our behaviors influence our society. More than a terrifying and unprecedented historical event, the Holocaust is, and continues to be, a relevant topic of learning for every generation, in every country.

**How is the International School's pedagogical approach unique in its teaching of the Holocaust?**

**Shulamit Imber:** The Holocaust is a seminal event in Jewish, Israeli and human society, and thus is an active factor in the design of the memory, consciousness and identity of future generations. It is a Jewish story with implications for all of humanity, and we teach it first and foremost as a human story.

The International School for Holocaust Studies approaches the Holocaust on two levels, the historical and the pedagogical. Here in Yad Vashem, we are exposed to a great amount of original material from across the institution –

the Research Institute, the Archives, the Hall of Names, the Righteous Among the Nations Department, and the Art and Artifacts Collections.

## THE SURVIVOR'S VOICE

"The most important thing is to teach the teachers how to teach the children...they have to rouse their students to be proud of who they are."

Pearl Benisch

To these precious items we add an educational aspect, so that teachers can make use of them in the classroom. Our wide range of programs held at schools around the world means that they are tested over and over, and through the years we maintain a constant dialogue with the educators in the field. These educators come to us from different countries with varying world views, and teach children from first to twelfth grade.

We are also unique in our comprehensive educational outlook, both from the topics we tackle as well as the different age groups with which we work. We have created educational kits, lesson plans and online learning environments utilizing a variety of methods in order to illustrate the topic from as many angles as possible.

## Leah Goldstein

We understood that in order to appreciate what was lost, we had to teach about the thriving, diverse and multi-layered Jewish life that existed before the Nazis rose to power. Our educational seminars always include content on “the world that was.” In addition, we also realized the importance of relaying how these individuals – men, women and children, educated and simple, rich and poor, secular and religious – coped with the chaos that erupted around them and yet endeavored to safeguard their humanity in their day-to-day lives. The return to life after the Holocaust, and the challenges survivors faced in rebuilding their lives, show the resilience of mankind. We also teach about the history of antisemitism, Nazi ideology and the “Final Solution,” so that teachers and students receive a balanced and accurate historical picture. As part of this discussion, we discuss the choices made by persecutors, bystanders and Righteous Among the Nations.

With all of these elements in mind, we are now formulating a comprehensive Holocaust education syllabus for all Israeli students, aged 6-18, at the request of Israel’s Ministry of Education. We are both honored and privileged to have been given such an important assignment, and will use all of the experience, resources and knowledge at our disposal to create a program that will enlighten and inspire future generations.

### What would you say are the main achievements of the International School over the past 20 years?

**Dorit Novak:** First and foremost, the International School has developed a reputation as a world center for Holocaust teaching. The majority of Israeli students – some 80% of those in the state school system – visit the School during their high school years; the number and length of our seminars for educators from abroad far surpass any other Holocaust-related institution; and our outreach activities, both in Israel and across five continents, are eagerly anticipated and enthusiastically welcomed.

Pedagogical materials and teacher-training activities are also tailor-made to each group seeking our expertise and experience: from the ultra-Orthodox educational system to Israel security services personnel, from young Jewish

### Each year:

More than 300,000 students from Israel and abroad participate in seminars and programs of the International School for Holocaust Studies

School staff work in some 30 different countries around the globe

Some 5,000 educators from Israel and abroad take part in long-term seminars at Yad Vashem

More than 10,000 Israeli educators attend teacher-training days at Yad Vashem and throughout Israel, among these more than 4,000 ultra-Orthodox teachers

The Virtual School provides pedagogic material in 20 languages, runs online courses and produces testimony films that are translated into as many as 12 languages

students on a first-time trip to Israel to foreign seminar graduates working within their own home environments, the International School is dedicated to producing programs and resources to suit the individual needs of each and every participant, in order to maximize their capacity for understanding the historical events and internalizing their meanings for their own lives.

### Do survivors still play a part in Holocaust education?

**SI:** The testimonies of those who actually experienced the events of the *Shoah*, in whatever environment they lived, is critical to our understanding of the period and the human reactions it engendered. Our educational seminars involve face-to-face meetings with Holocaust survivors whenever possible. It is vital that our participants not only hear about what Jewish people went through during the war years, but also how they faced the years that followed and rebuilt their lives despite – or because of – the traumas they encountered. Meeting with a survivor and hearing his or her testimony always stimulates conversations about the period that go beyond the incidents themselves, and creates a feeling of responsibility and obligation to remember.

**DN:** Sadly, the survivor generation is gradually leaving us, which is why the School’s Educational Technology Department has spent considerable resources filming survivors describing their experiences in the places the events occurred. These invaluable documentaries, available in a number of languages and viewable online, will continue to serve as key components of our comprehensive educational efforts.

### What are the major challenges of Holocaust education today?

**EK:** Certain current worldwide trends challenge the position of the *Shoah* as a constitutive historical event, and Holocaust terminology and imagery is sometimes used for various political and social agendas. In addition, there are whole communities that are completely disconnected from – or choose not to engage with – this seminal period in human history.

In this global environment, the dedicated and highly skilled staff at the International

School is continuing to develop its educational doctrine, with all its nuances, so it remains relevant to as many cultures as possible. In this area, timely feedback is vital, so we can properly adapt our methodology to suit the particular audience. We are also working to further enlarge our cadre of educational leaders – people in positions of influence in the communal and political spheres – who are familiar with our comprehensive and age-appropriate outlook. These “ambassadors” – young and more senior – help influence critical decisions regarding Holocaust-related teaching curricula in their own countries, and create appropriate commemorative and educational events in accordance with Yad Vashem’s highly regarded approach to Holocaust education.

**DN:** In recent years we have broken significant new ground in countries not traditionally focused upon European history. Educators from China, India, New Zealand, Australia, South America and Taiwan have joined their colleagues from across the European continent to increase their historical knowledge about the period and tackle the universal concepts arising from the events that took place. We are hoping to solidify and further expand our cooperation with the official educational systems in as many regions as possible, in order to aid them in developing accurate and stimulating resources for their teachers and students.

**SI:** We need to find ways to engage with classrooms in which different cultures are represented, and often long-standing stereotypes need to be addressed and broken down. Holocaust education provides the basic tools that allow the student to understand events in their historical context, and consider the values we wish to instill. Because the *Shoah* took place in the heart of modern western society, learning about the Holocaust is a good starting point to fighting the evils that plague society today. Of course, not every problem can be solved through Holocaust education, but I firmly believe that it is our job to build layers of consciousness, day by day, and thus inspire others to be more sensitive to the issues brought forth through learning about the *Shoah*.

# Increasing Holocaust Educa



■ Two decades ago, when the International School for Holocaust Studies was established at Yad Vashem, there was a relatively small staff of some 20-30 educators divided between different departments. As part of its ongoing pedagogical efforts, four international seminars for educators were held every year: one in Spanish for educators from South America; one in French for educators from France; and two (summer and winter) in English for educators from North America, Australia and other English-speaking countries. At the same time, Yad Vashem held seminars for European educators, but without follow-up projects, and had begun to produce pedagogical materials.

In 1999, the International School for Holocaust Studies entered its new and specially designed building. At the same time, the world saw a proliferation of Holocaust museums and centers and a heightened interest in the subject of the Holocaust. Subsequently, educators began to take a greater interest in educational seminars at Yad Vashem, and the number of staff at the School and their educational activities in Israel and abroad began to expand significantly.

In 2004 the International School's fledgling European Department began to foster relationships with European educators and develop specialized educational materials. In order to maximize the staff's professional and linguistic skills, the department divided into various geographic "desks" to target 11 initial countries: Austria, Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia and Slovakia.

Today, the School hosts some 80 seminars every year for close to 2,000 educators from

countries across Western and Eastern Europe, North and South America, Australia and New Zealand. In recent years, the School has expanded its global reach even further, providing tailor-made programs for educators from the Jewish world as well as from Cyprus, Macedonia, China, Taiwan, India and South Korea.

## Unique, Tailor-made Seminars

Yad Vashem remains the only institution to offer in-depth educational seminars for teachers of the Holocaust from different countries around the world. Its unique programs combine academic, pedagogical and experiential elements, offering teachers an array of educational units that are both tailor-made for the country of origin and age-appropriate. In addition, multiple survivor testimonies are an integral part of every seminar, as well as a variety of guided tours across the Yad Vashem campus and throughout the country that provide the participants with crucial aspects of Jewish and Israeli history.

In 2004, Yad Vashem, the Anti-Defamation League and the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education created a multimedia and interdisciplinary curriculum for US high school students called "Echoes and Reflections." So far, senior staff members from the International School have taken part in training over 20,000 teachers in the US to use the 10-lesson program, which includes innovative strategies to foster anti-bias education. Rich with visual history testimony and rare materials, the curriculum incorporates the pedagogical expertise and vast archival holdings of Yad Vashem, the national outreach network of the ADL and the unmatched visual history resources

of the Shoah Foundation Institute, helping students connect history with contemporary issues, and develop skills to become active members of an informed citizenry.

## Growth and Impact in Europe

The staff of the European Department now numbers approximately 20 people, including two part-time representatives in Europe. Their profound contributions and serious inroads into Holocaust education in Europe speak for themselves: close to 10,000 educators from approximately 40 European countries have graduated from customized enrichment seminars at Yad Vashem, and far more have participated in Yad Vashem's programming in their home countries. The Department has also launched study seminars in Europe for graduates: an international seminar at Brama Grodzka in Poland recently attracted 137 applicants, out of whom 25 graduates from 19 countries attended.

Right from the beginning of its activities, the International School has sought to evaluate its impact. In addition to collecting and analyzing participants' feedback, Yad Vashem has welcomed external experts from Brandeis University in the US and the Szold Institute in Israel to analyze the effects of Yad Vashem's seminars. "The trip to Yad Vashem was an amazing experience which exceeded all my expectations," said 2013 graduate Suzanne Armour from Scotland. "Although upsetting at times, it was a fantastic learning experience. The lecturers and speakers were all engaging and passionate, and each and every seminar was interesting and worthwhile."

# tion around the World



Richelle Budd Caplan, Ephraim Kaye and James Joseph McIntosh



## Widening the Field

Yad Vashem primarily targets educators for its professional enrichment seminars, but has also developed relationships with professionals from other fields, including jurists, police officers, clergy members and youth leaders. Complementing its seminars in Israel and in Europe, the European Department has also pioneered the use of video conferences with its partners overseas. This technology has empowered Yad Vashem's staff to reach a larger audience and create a sort of long-distance educational academy.

The International School has cultivated contacts with global organizations (see box), helping establish connections with other professionals through these multilateral networks. As part of its long-term strategic relationships, the School has also signed agreements with governments, universities and Holocaust-related non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In the past year, for example, Yad Vashem has signed memoranda of understanding with Croatia's Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, the Elie Wiesel

Institute in Romania and the University of Lucerne in Switzerland, amongst other international bodies. Signed by high-ranking officials, these agreements will help sustain Yad Vashem's future relationships with its international colleagues who are devoted to promoting accurate and effective Holocaust education around the world.

*Ephraim Kaye is Director for International Seminars for Educators, and Richelle Budd Caplan is Director of the European Department, International School for Holocaust Studies. James Joseph McIntosh works in the European Department.*

## Education on the International Stage

■ As it enters its seventh decade, Yad Vashem has probably become the most identified name associated with worldwide Holocaust remembrance, research and education. Active today on six continents, the global renown is due in no small part to the many partnerships and joint ventures undertaken with leading international bodies such as the International Council of Museums, the International Tracing Service and the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure, as well as the international NGO status granted by the United Nations in 2007.

Yet some of the most meaningful strides in its international presence have taken place over the past decade via the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF), recently renamed the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). The ever-expanding IHRA currently comprises 31 member states, enabling cooperation on both inter-organizational and diplomatic levels for a range of policy issues

such as the creation of Holocaust education curricula, the opening of national archives, condemning antisemitism, and developing models for Holocaust memorial days.

Yad Vashem has remained involved in IHRA since the outset: Yad Vashem Academic Advisor Prof. Yehuda Bauer, who co-authored IHRA's cornerstone Stockholm Declaration, continues to serve as its Honorary Chairman; and both he and Yad Vashem Chief Historian Prof. Dina Porat are the organization's emeritus Academic Advisors. Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev currently acts as co-Head of the Israeli IHRA delegation alongside diplomats from Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who additionally partner with Yad Vashem in creating programs to combat antisemitism around the world. Experts from Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies, Archives Division and International Research Institute comprise the remainder of the Israeli IHRA delegation. Active in their working groups, they have affected

## Jane Jacobs-Kimmelman

significant change in a number of projects, including surveying local archives, the mapping of killing sites, and raising awareness on the Holocaust particularly in countries where antisemitism, Holocaust denial, revisionism or indifference is prevalent.

Furthermore, over this period, Yad Vashem has also developed solid partnerships and initiatives with UNESCO, the OSCE/ODIHR, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the Council of Europe, all permanent observers to IHRA. Cooperative ventures include an agreement signed in 2012 with the Council of Europe on Holocaust education, and the creation of a joint "Toolkit" on teaching the Holocaust in schools across Europe. In addition, Yad Vashem maintains ongoing consultation and cooperation with the UN's Holocaust Outreach Program, partnering in projects such as study guides, film production and educational exhibitions.

*The author is Director of International Relations, International School for Holocaust Studies.*

# Teaching Without Trauma

Yael Richler-Friedman

■ **How do you discuss the Holocaust with elementary school students?** What guidelines should direct teachers of these classes on Holocaust Remembrance Days? Are there appropriate educational tools for the cognitive and emotional ability of younger children?

These questions and many others are raised year after year among specialist and homeroom teachers working at elementary schools in Israel. In response, over the past decade the Teacher Training Department at the International School for Holocaust Studies has developed a series of unique courses based on materials written specially for elementary school students, differentiated by age group and taking into account the abilities and emotional needs of the students. The majority of these courses open with an honest and meaningful discussion with the teachers, examining the place of the Holocaust in the children's identity and the fact that elementary schools in Israel play a central role in its formation.

"Over recent years, our courses for teachers working with all grades – from first to twelfth – have tackled the teacher's role in the presentation



of such a traumatic and complicated topic, an encounter that goes far beyond any specific lesson plan," explains Sarit Hoch, Director of the Teacher Training Department. "The courses we now offer therefore both enrich the teachers' knowledge and enable them to acquire the tools to convey this knowledge to their students in an appropriate way."

For teachers working in subject areas where the Holocaust is a topic of primary relevance, such as history and literature,

these courses have undergone further customization. In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, lectures by Yad Vashem educators are incorporated in their teacher training programs. For example, after all the History matriculation exams for the year are turned in, Ministry staff review which areas are the most consistently problematic, and ask Yad Vashem lecturers to focus on these questions in future training sessions.

"Over recent years, we have also witnessed a significant change as educational processes become increasingly reliant on communication technologies," continues Hoch. "We now face an exciting challenge to help teachers harness these new educational environments while staying true to the special age-appropriate approach of the International School for Holocaust Studies."

*The author is Head of the Educational Materials Development Section, Teacher Training Department, International School for Holocaust Studies.*

# Expanding the Network

■ **"I want you to know how much I enjoyed the course [...] I waited for each new lesson to come online, and then could not stop reading and learning until it was done. This is a wonderful project of exceptional importance, and I am privileged to have participated in it."**

So wrote a teacher from the US after completing the online course offered by the International School for Holocaust Studies on the topic of ghettos. The course is one of 19 online courses provided in six languages currently available at Yad Vashem's "Virtual School." Over recent years, thousands of teachers have completed these online courses.

When the Virtual School was launched as a subsection of the Yad Vashem website in 2000, it consisted of only a few pages with scant educational material. Today it comprises thousands of web pages featuring a wide variety of educational materials in 20 languages, including online courses, videos, survivor

testimonies, lesson plans, interactive and collaborative learning tools, texts, online journals, video lectures and learning environments. Over the years, the School website has also branched out into various fields of online and interactive learning, utilizing social networks and creating virtual communities.

## THE SURVIVOR'S VOICE

"I never stop telling my story so anyone that hears me will be able to say – even when I am no longer here – 'I heard Hannah Bar Yesha. I knew her, I listened to her. She was there, and she told me.'"

Hannah Bar Yesha, subject of the documentary film *She Was There and She Told Me*

Through online learning, Yad Vashem can disseminate its educational approach and provide access to a wide variety of materials for those who would not necessarily explore the Yad Vashem website in depth. In addition to enriching their historical and pedagogical knowledge, educators also act as emissaries on behalf of the School when they use information acquired via the site in their classrooms. Upon completing the online pedagogical course on Holocaust education, an Israeli teacher wrote: "As a granddaughter of Auschwitz survivors, the Holocaust was always a presence – disturbing and fascinating – in my conscience; yet teaching about the Holocaust was no easy task: I did not know how to go about it or whether I was doing it right. The educational approach presented in the course – the human stories of the Jewish victims – certainly helped direct me and equipped me with the tools and confidence necessary to teach children of various ages. The material I

## A World of Creativity and Diversity Daphna Gallili

■ Seventy years after the end of WWII, educators today face the great challenge of conveying the events of a somewhat distant past to a young, diverse and often critical

### THE SURVIVOR'S VOICE

“The children conveyed my feelings as a little girl so precisely – they even reminded me of the emotions I felt at the time. To see them so deeply moved... it was truly profound.”

Betty Ben Atar, after watching the stage adaptation of her memoirs performed by sixth-graders

audience that lives light years away from the reality of the Holocaust period. How can we teach about the Holocaust in a manner that awakens curiosity in today's youth, and inspires them to continue learning, to delve deeper? How do we communicate facts and historical details and at the same time create a moving experience that will remain with our younger audience as a meaningful and valuable memory?

The search for answers led staff at the Guiding Department of the International School for Holocaust Studies to create projects in various artistic fields. One such project, “Designing Memory,” encourages design professionals and students, as well as members of the general public, to submit proposals for Israel's official Holocaust Remembrance Day poster. In another, “Muzika: Youth Encounter the Holocaust,” high school students compose, arrange and perform songs based on texts written by poets who went through the Holocaust. There is also the “Signposts: Students Shaping Memory” project, in which students of the Neri Bloomfield WIZO Academy of Design and Education in Haifa create postcard series examining various aspects of Holocaust remembrance from personal and universal viewpoints. Other artistic encounters produce short animated films, children's drawings and other artworks. Each such encounter comprises two layers: the artistic layer, led by professionals from the relevant field; and the layer of content, facilitated by staff at the Yad Vashem's International School.

“Artistic language has become a significant component of our seminar programs,” says Inbal Kivity Ben Dov, Director of the Guiding Department at the International School. “We have found it to be a most effective anchor

for initiating rich and fascinating discussions with students, soldiers, guides and educators, all of whom recognize the infinite ability of art to both convey knowledge and allow one to relate to the Holocaust on a personal level. Our partnership with young artists brings a further degree of diversity to the audience of those who seek knowledge on the Yad Vashem campus, allowing them to explore new areas in the broad field of Holocaust remembrance and study.”

*The author is Head of the Higher Education Division, Guiding Department, International School for Holocaust Studies.*



### Dr. Naama Shik

encountered – some for the first time, thanks to this course – and the study assignments for which detailed feedback was provided, will certainly help me in addressing the topic of the Holocaust at school.”

Witness accounts are also at the center of today's Holocaust education. However, as the survivor generation dwindles, the experience of hearing testimony firsthand, with the unparalleled empathy and emotion it stirs, will soon no longer be possible. As such, in 2007 the Educational Technology Department joined the Hebrew University's Center for Multimedia Assisted Instruction to produce films that tell the life stories of the survivors before the war, during the Holocaust and afterwards. Filmed on location, where the actual events took place, these documentaries strive to convey as full and rich a story as possible. After production, the films are translated into at least five languages; some are now available in as many as 12



languages. So far, 11 testimony films have been produced in this “Witnesses and Education” series, and have reached an audience of tens of thousands through the Virtual School, on Yad Vashem's YouTube channel as well as via screenings at the International School for students preparing for trips to Poland.

Feedback from educators, teachers-in-training and the broader public continues to indicate a great interest in the Virtual School; participants describe their learning experiences, and most importantly, testify to how the rich variety of material continues to serve them and their students. “Recently, we completed a series of activities at our school dedicated to International Holocaust Remembrance Day,” said one teacher. “All our teaching aids and other materials were taken from your website – both the lesson plans and the ceremony. These materials were of tremendous help and allowed us, primary school teachers, to adjust our teaching to the needs and perception levels of our students, as well as their ability to cope with such content... thank you, to all who toiled in this vital endeavor.”

*The author is Director of the Educational Technology Department, International School for Holocaust Studies.*

# Technology in the Service of

■ When the Yad Vashem website was launched (in English and Hebrew) in 1999, its *raison d'être* was to make knowledge about the Holocaust available, accessible and meaningful to a global audience. Over recent years, and with the support of its many friends around the world, Yad Vashem has launched comprehensive websites in Spanish, German, Russian, Farsi and Arabic, to meet the ever-growing demand worldwide for Holocaust-related information.

The website offers a range of Holocaust-related resources, including: a thematic and chronological history of the Holocaust



with extensive related resources such as photos, documents, artifacts, video clips and artworks; online collections and databases such as the Central Database of *Shoah* Victims' Names, Yad Vashem's Photo Archives, the Deportations Database, the Righteous Among the Nations Database, and the Library and Film Databases; and a Video Testimony Resource Center with hundreds of recorded stories by Holocaust survivors searchable by



“Thank you, thank you, thank you a million times. Sharing the survivors’ stories really puts a face, a voice and the reality to the absolute barbarism of the Holocaust”

topic or location. Also available are over 150 online exhibitions and mini-sites providing experiential and informational content on a wide variety of topics, such as the history of different communities before, during and after the *Shoah*; women and children during the Holocaust; Jewish culture, music and art before and during the war; and religious leadership and dilemmas in the face of brutal persecution and destruction. Materials for educators and teaching units in over 20 languages and an online store with hundreds of books, catalogues and other Holocaust-related multimedia aids round out this prize-winning, comprehensive and user-friendly website, which continues to be a vital source of information and insight for millions of people around the globe.

In addition to continuously developing relevant and meaningful content for the websites, Yad Vashem recently expanded its online activities to include a dynamic presence in social media. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest offer

unprecedented opportunities for Yad Vashem to instantaneously communicate ideas, share content, and actively engage with and connect to a broad and diverse public. By optimizing the special features and advantages found in the different social media platforms, the potential reach of the information shared and “reshared” by others can easily reach hundreds of thousands of people within a 24-hour period.

On its Facebook page, the Internet Department regularly posts timely and meaningful pictures and stories from the



“The online exhibitions constitute an important contribution both to strengthening the intergenerational bond and to keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive”

website such as from the “Spots of Light” online exhibition posted on International Women’s Day; Jews engaged in sports before the Holocaust posted before the 2012 Olympic Games; and survivors with Israeli flags from its archives and photo collection posted continuously throughout Israel’s Independence Day. Through Twitter, continuous links are sent out briefly describing events “On This Day in



# Memory

Dana Porath



“As heartbreaking as these documents are, it is vital that they are not only preserved, but also read by people now and in the future. Thank you for making them available online”

“I just wanted to commend you on your social media... I went on Birthright about five years ago and Yad Vashem was one of my favorite parts of my experience... I truly enjoy getting updates on the museum, on visitors who are making their way around the magnificent campus, and on educational initiatives through your albums and comments. Thank you for making it possible to help maintain my connection with Yad Vashem on a daily basis”

Holocaust History,” as well as promoting a host of conferences, gatherings, symposiums, events and visits taking place at Yad Vashem on a

daily basis. Yad Vashem also sends out regular “tweets” in Arabic related to dates or events, providing pertinent, real-time information with links. Through Pinterest, topical boards are created that aggregate related resources from the website – such as religious artifacts, children’s creativity and the return to life of Holocaust survivors.

Through all available platforms, Yad Vashem is committed to continue making the Holocaust meaningful and relevant to audiences of all nationalities and religions, thus ensuring its enduring commemoration and memory.

*The author is Director of the Internet Department.*



# Courageous and Kind



■ For many members of the Second Generation, the Holocaust in general and their parents' experiences in particular were not a topic for discussion in their childhood homes. Such was the case of Claire Hoffer (née Fox). Growing up in Canada in the 1950s and 1960s, Claire knew nothing of how her parents survived the Holocaust. "In my early years I had no interest," says Claire, "and later I intuitively understood that any questions brought about a series of memories and nightmares." But many years after her parents passed away, Claire's curiosity regarding the past and her family's history motivated her to return for the first time to her parents' native towns in Poland and Ukraine.

As part of her preparations for the journey, Claire decided to research a name she had found among her father's documents after his death: Olga Grocholski. The name was written on an envelope, along with an address in Poland. She had no idea what the connection between her father and Grocholski was, but as she searched for the name online she was directed to Yad Vashem's website, where, to her amazement, she found the name of the woman she had been looking for.

Through Yad Vashem, Claire discovered that Olga Grocholski and her husband Józef had saved the life of Pawel Fuks during WWII. From the fall of 1943 to the spring of 1944, Fuks and two Jewish women lay hidden in a dugout in the Grocholskis' backyard. The



Grocholskis took care of their every need, under enormous risk. After the war they kept in touch, and continued to correspond even after Fuks immigrated to Canada and changed his name to Paul Fox.

In 1987, the Grocholskis were recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations, but sadly, Paul Fox had already passed away by then. Now, 70 years after Fox knocked on the Grocholskis' door asking for help, his daughter Claire was able to fill in the missing pieces of her family's past.

Claire's story is just one of many recent revelations to family members of both rescuers and survivors of the Holocaust, enabled through the uploading of information to the Internet by Yad Vashem's Department of the

Righteous Among the Nations. "Despite the growing distance in time from the events of the Holocaust, applications from Holocaust survivors, rescuers, researchers and the general public from all over the world continue to be submitted to the Department of the Righteous," explains Irena Steinfeldt, the Department's Director. "This clearly illustrates that the need of the survivors to express their gratitude

### THE SURVIVOR'S VOICE

"There is a no more dignified and proper way to pay my own personal, modest tribute, than when it is based upon that of my country and my people. I have all of this because you allowed me to find solace, reconciliation and acceptance with my childhood memories of WWII."

Dan Dagan

towards their rescuers has not diminished – and neither has our commitment to continue to seek out and honor these brave men and women. However, while the interest of all involved remains high, the methods by which information is gathered and distributed have



Gili Diamant

To date, over 25,000 individuals have been recognized as Righteous Among the Nations  
These individuals hail from 48 countries over five continents  
Every year, 400-500 people are honored as Righteous Among the Nations



The need of the survivors to express their gratitude towards their rescuers has not diminished – and neither has our commitment to continue to seek out and honor these brave men and women

### THE SURVIVOR'S VOICE

"Thanks to our rescuers, my husband and I felt protected from the fascist terror... They should serve as role models for the younger generations."

Klara Levi

surrounding the rescue attempt, as well as the historical background. "The availability of this valuable information, combined with the database's user-friendly interface, has already attracted numerous visitors, and become an

indispensable tool for educators, researchers and historians," continues Steinfeldt. "Moreover, this easily-accessed information has deeply touched the lives of family members of both rescuers and Holocaust survivors."

"It is never too late," Claire Hoffer recently wrote to Yad Vashem, thanking them for their part in the discovery of her father's rescuer. "I believe I should know my family's story and certainly tell the Grocholskis' descendants that I still care, remember and am thankful for their grandparents' kindness. They sheltered my father and others at risk to their own lives, and in doing so they also gave them hope in their fellow man."

*The author works in the Righteous Among the Nations Department.*

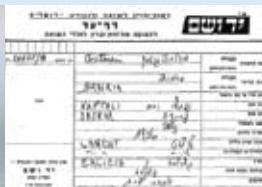
changed remarkably over the past decade. As the Internet becomes more and more a part of everyday life, information that up until recently had been almost impossible to obtain is now available at one's fingertips."

Over the past decade, the Righteous Department joined this information revolution, making a list of the more than 25,000 Righteous recognized so far available on the Yad Vashem website. In addition, an extensive online database contains many detailed entries for people recognized over the years as Righteous Among the Nations, with various search options and thousands of photographs. Each entry is accompanied by a short account of the events

## The Righteous Among the Nations Program Marks 50 Years

■ One of Yad Vashem's principal duties is to convey the gratitude of the State of Israel and the Jewish people to non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. This mission was defined by the law establishing Yad Vashem, and since 1963 members of staff at the Department of the Righteous have worked diligently to piece together testimonies, documents and photographic evidence in order to uncover as many details as possible of each story. Currently, hundreds of requests are received by the Department each year, and a public commission, headed by a Supreme Court Justice (currently Justice Jacob Türkel), examines each case presented to them by the Department. Those deemed worthy of recognition – between 400 and 500 each year – receive a medal and a certificate of honor, and their names are commemorated on the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem.

# Landmarks in the History of Yad Vashem



**1953**  
Enactment of the Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Law (Yad Vashem) Law

**1955**  
Launch of collection of Shoah victims' names via Pages of Testimony

**1961**  
Dedication of the Hall of Remembrance

**1962-3**  
Launch of Righteous Among the Nations Program and Opening of the Avenue of the Righteous

**1968**  
First International Research Conference held at Yad Vashem

**1973**  
Opening of the first permanent exhibit in the museum building



**1977**  
Dedication of the Hall of Names

**1982**  
Establishment of the Holocaust Art Museum

**1987**  
Dedication of the Children's Memorial

**1992**  
Dedication of the Valley of the Communities

**1993**  
Establishment of the International Institute for Holocaust Research

**1993**  
Establishment of the International School for Holocaust Studies



**1999**  
Launch of Yad Vashem website

**1999**  
Digitization of the Pages of Testimony Collection

**1999**  
Dedication of the new building for the International School

**2000**  
Dedication of the Archives and Library Building

**2003**  
Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement awarded to Yad Vashem

**2004**  
Launch of the Online Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names



**2005**  
Inauguration of the new Museum Complex

**2008**  
Uploading of Yad Vashem's Photographic Collection to the Internet

**2010**  
Names Database reaches four million Shoah victims' names

**2011**  
Launch of the "Gathering the Fragments" Campaign to rescue personal items from the Holocaust era

**2012**  
Opening of the new International Seminars Wing at the International School for Holocaust Studies

**2013**  
Opening of the new Permanent Exhibition "Shoah" in Block 27, Auschwitz-Birkenau, curated, designed and constructed by Yad Vashem



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