Transports to Extinction

The Deportation of the Jews during the Holocaust

"Unto Every Person There Is A Name"

Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day 2022
Friends,

The Holocaust represents devastation of proportions too vast to understand. The sheer number of lives lost is beyond comprehension. It is therefore our solemn responsibility to safeguard the memories of those who died.

Every year, *Unto Each Person There is a Name* compels us to commemorate the Jewish People's tragic history by reading aloud the names of people who were murdered. We personalize the immense tragedy by breaking it down to the individual, the family, the town. We think of their lives, their hopes and dreams, and remember that each person was a world unto themselves. That the death of each individual is an indescribable loss, one that can never be replaced.

This year's theme, *Transport to Extinction*, emphasizes the loss of so many who unknowingly boarded death trains and never returned home. Jewish men, women and children were systematically crammed into cattle cars that transported them to their death. We can do nothing to bring them back, but we can counter the unimaginable cruelty— with compassion. We can defy the Nazi’s attempts to erase— by reciting the names, by actively remembering.

It is our historic responsibility to never forget the crimes that were committed against the Jewish people and never let the memory fade. Let us remember that each name represents a soul. Let us mourn as a people, and let us declare that our Jewish brothers and sisters will live on in our memories.

Sincerely yours,

Isaac Herzog
President of the State of Israel
Unto Every Person There Is A Name
Public Recitation of Names of Holocaust Victims in Israel and Abroad
on Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day

“Unto every person there is a name, given to him by God and by his parents”, wrote the Israeli poetess Zelda. Every single victim of the Holocaust had a name. The vast number of Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust – some six million men, women and children - is beyond human comprehension. We are therefore liable to lose sight of the fact that each life that was brutally ended belonged to an individual, a human being endowed with feelings, thoughts, ideas and dreams, whose entire world was destroyed, and whose future was erased. The annual recitation of names of victims on Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day is one way of posthumously restoring the victims’ names, of commemorating them as individuals. We seek in this manner to honor the memory of the victims, to grapple with the enormity of the murder, and to combat Holocaust denial and distortion.

This year marks the 33rd anniversary of the global Shoah memorial initiative “Unto Every Person There Is A Name”, held annually under the auspices of the President of the State of Israel. The project aims to reach out to as many communities and institutions as possible, in Israel and elsewhere. With this in mind, we are sending you the attached materials, in the hope that you will join us in this essential mission, and hold a name-reading recitation on Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day, in compliance with local health and safety regulations.

The theme of this year’s observances is:

Transports to Extinction
The Deportation of the Jews during the Holocaust

In keeping with their "Final Solution" policy during World War II, the German Nazis and their collaborators uprooted millions of Jews from their homes and deported them to their deaths. This meticulously organized operation throughout German-occupied territory was an unprecedented event of horror and historic significance, obliterating
Jewish communities that had existed for centuries. Vast numbers of Jews were sent directly to the extermination sites. Many others were first taken forcibly to ghettos and transit camps. Europe's modern transportation system was recruited into the service of Nazi Germany's genocidal plans. Despite the increasing complexity of the war, its distant fronts and the German Army's need for means of operational military transportation, the deportation of Jews by train to their deaths continued, ceaselessly and relentlessly. The deportations ripped the victims from the human environment as they knew it, separating them irrevocably from the rest of humanity. The world they had known until then was stolen from them forever.

The attached materials include texts and readings on this year’s theme that can be incorporated into your online recitation.

To date more than 4,800,000 names of Holocaust victims have been recorded in Yad Vashem’s online Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names, with over 2,750,000 names registered on Pages of Testimony.

You can assist in our ongoing names collection campaign by downloading and distributing Pages of Testimony, or by submitting them online through our website: www.yadvashem.org.

Sadly, the generation of Shoah survivors is dwindling rapidly. As the bearers of their legacy, we must do everything possible to perpetuate the memory of the Holocaust’s victims. By reciting their names, ages and places of death, we keep their memory alive, and remind ourselves that each man, woman and child was, and is, an entire world.

Sincerely,

Dani Dayan
Chairman
Yom Hashoah – Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day
28 April 2022 – 27 Nissan 5782

Letter from the International Committee
“Unto Every Person There Is A Name”

Introduction

The worldwide Holocaust memorial project “Unto Every Person There is a Name”, now in its 33rd consecutive year, is a unique project designed to perpetuate the memory of the Six Million - among them one-and-a-half million Jewish children – murdered while the world remained silent. The project offers the opportunity to memorialize them not only as a collective, but as individuals – one at a time - through the recitation of their names on Yom Hashoah – Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day. You can help to restore the identity and dignity of the victims of the Holocaust by organizing a name-recitation on Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day, in compliance with local health and safety regulations. Links to lists of names taken from Yad Vashem's Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names, and planning recommendations are included below.

The Unto Every Person There Is A Name project focuses attention on the urgent need to retrieve additional names of Holocaust victims, before they recede into oblivion.

The “Unto Every Person There Is A Name” project is conducted around the world through the efforts of four major Jewish organizations: B’nai B’rith International, Nativ, the World Jewish Congress and the World Zionist Organization.

The project is coordinated by Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, in consultation with the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs and enjoys the official auspices of President of the State of Israel, the Hon. Isaac Herzog.

Personalizing the Holocaust

The most fundamental feature of the Shoah is the systematic murder of six million innocent Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators for the sole reason that they were Jewish. Each of their deaths was a separate, distinct tragedy that together has caused indelible lasting trauma to the Jewish people. As time passes and fewer witnesses remain, it is imperative to create a personal link between the Jewish people today and those who were murdered under the Nazi genocidal regime. Recitation of names of Holocaust victims - together with such information as their age, place of birth and place of murder - personalizes the tragedy of the Holocaust. Emphasis is thus put on the millions of individuals – men, women and children - who were lost to the Jewish people, and not solely on the cold intangibility embodied in the term “The Six Million”.

“Unto Every Person There is a Name” rests on the success of Yad Vashem's Shoah Victims' Names Recovery Project that to date has identified more than 4.8 million names of Shoah victims and that continues its quest to recover all the six million names.
The Central Theme for Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day 2022:
TRANSPORTS TO EXTINCTION - The Deportation of the Jews during the Holocaust

In keeping with the policy of the “Final Solution,” during World War II the Germans and their collaborators uprooted millions of Jews from their homes and deported them to their deaths. This meticulously organized operation was an event of historic significance, obliterating Jewish communities throughout German-occupied territory that had existed for centuries. Vast numbers of Jews were sent straight to the extermination sites, while many others were first taken to ghettos and transit camps. Europe’s modern transportation system was recruited into the service of Nazi Germany’s genocidal plans. Despite the increasing complexity of the war, its distant fronts and the German Army’s need for means of operational military transportation, the deportation of Jews by train to their deaths continued throughout, ceaselessly and relentlessly. The deportations ripped the deportees from the human world as they knew it, and separated them from it irrevocably. The world they recognized was stolen from them forever.

Scroll down to see the complete rationale and a collection of texts and readings for your use.

Yad Vashem’s extensive collection of video testimonies by Holocaust survivors is also available for incorporation into your ceremony: https://www.yadvashem.org/collections/testimonies.html

In addition to this collection of texts and readings, Yad Vashem has created several Ready2Print exhibitions on a range of subjects that can be printed locally.
For more information about the different exhibitions available, click here
For any queries, and to receive the exhibition files free of charge, please contact:
traveling.exhibitions@yadvashem.org.il

Recover Names of Shoah Victims

“Unto Every Person There is a Name” events provide a unique opportunity to gather heretofore unknown names of all the Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

Since its inception, one of Yad Vashem’s central missions has been the recovery of the names and personal stories of all victims of the Shoah. While the Nazis sought not only to physically destroy the Jews but also to obliterate any memory of them, The Shoah Victims’ Names Recovery Project realizes our moral imperative to memorialize each victim as a human being, and not merely a single collective number. (To learn more about the project click here)

The relentless endeavor has to date identified more than four million eight hundred thousand names of Shoah victims, documented in the Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names online at: www.yadvashem.org with over 2,750,000 names registered on “Pages of Testimony” submitted by relatives and others who knew of the victims. The remainder of the victims’ names in the database were derived from various archival sources and postwar commemoration projects. The outstanding universal value of the Pages of Testimony Memorial Collection has been recognized by UNESCO, which in 2013 inscribed it in its prestigious Memory of the World Register.

The Names Database, uploaded to the Internet in 2004, marked a pioneering use of technology in the service of memory, documenting and commemorating nearly three million names of Holocaust victims. To continue to meet the needs of an expanding worldwide community of users, Yad Vashem has upgraded and re-designed the database, making use of an innovative platform that allows the accessibility of online information in a fast and user-friendly format.

Names recitations may be utilized to call upon members of your community to complete a “Page of Testimony” for each unregistered victim, or to volunteer to assist others with this urgent task.
**Take part in creating a “Personal File” for Holocaust victims**

A “Personal File” is a cluster, which contains a number of different name records that refer to the same person. Yad Vashem’s Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names contains information on individuals from millions of testimonies and documents. In many cases, we have various records relating to the same person and, if we could only group them all together, we could tell a more complete story of their life and fate.

The systematic grouping of such records into one “personal file” is complex, and involves methodological and technical challenges.

Yad Vashem has so far managed to create many hundreds of thousands of “personal files” that bind together several “name records” related to one person. The “personal files” are displayed in the Names Database, as results about victims/people. Alongside each “personal file”, you will find a number indicating how many “name records” are included in it. We would appreciate your help to assist us in creating additional files.

For more information, scroll down past the texts for ceremonies.

**Important links**

- Lists of names
- Pages of Testimony
- Video testimonies

The official opening ceremony at Yad Vashem marking the commencement of Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day 2022 will take place on Wednesday, 27 April at 20:00 (8 PM) Israel time. The ceremony will be broadcast on Israel’s television and radio channels accessible via the internet, and in six languages on Yad Vashem’s websites, in seven languages on Yad Vashem’s youtube channels, and on Yad Vashem’s English and Hebrew Facebook pages.
We are available to answer any questions that might arise and provide additional material as necessary.

Sincerely,

Members of the “Unto Every Person There Is A Name” International Committee: **Inbal Kvity Ben Dov**, **Dr. Alexander Avram** (Yad Vashem); **Alan Schneider** (B’nai B’rith International); **World Jewish Congress**; **Sarit Handknopf** (World Zionist Organization); **Ruth Cohen-Dar** (Israel Foreign Ministry); **Masha Novikov** (Nativ).

**Project Initiator:** **Haim Roet**

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For more information about the Shoah Victims’ Names Recovery Project contact:
names.proj@yadvashem.org.il

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<td>Executive Director of the Department for Israel &amp; Holocaust Commemoration Worldwide</td>
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In keeping with the policy of the “Final Solution,” during World War II the Germans and their collaborators uprooted millions of Jews from their homes and deported them to their deaths. This meticulously organized operation was an event of historic significance, obliterating Jewish communities throughout German-occupied territory that had existed for centuries. Vast numbers of Jews were sent straight to the extermination sites, while many others were first taken to ghettos and transit camps. Thus, the cattle – or railway – car, the principal mode of Nazi deportation, became one of the most iconic symbols of the Holocaust. Originally a symbol of progress, globalization and human technological prowess during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the railway car warped into the emblem of the backsliding of human values into the abyss of wholesale mass murder on an unprecedented scale.

Europe’s modern transportation system was recruited into the service of Nazi Germany’s genocidal plans. The Reichsbahn (German State Railway) transported the Jews with the assistance of government-run railways in occupied and German-allied countries. The deportation operation was cooperatively coordinated by bureaucrats in the Reichsbahn, the Reich security authorities, government ministries and municipal authorities. The main authority tasked with sourcing the trains and arranging the deportations was the Department for Jewish Affairs and Evacuation in the SS-run Reich Security Main Office.

More than half of those murdered in the Holocaust were brought to their deaths through the elaborate deportation system developed by these joint efforts and an immense bureaucratic infrastructure, which used mainly trains, but also enlisted trucks, ships and wagons, and sometimes forced the deportees to march on foot.

Despite the increasing complexity of the war, its distant fronts and the German Army’s need for means of operational military transportation, the deportation of Jews by train to their deaths continued throughout, ceaselessly and relentlessly, as another task to be fulfilled. In an effort to reduce the number of journeys and to cut costs, the deportation authorities began to make use of antiquated railway cars, to increase the number of cars in each transport, and to cram as many Jews – men, women and children – as was physically possible inside each car.

ORGANIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DEPORTATIONS

Although the deportations were carried out across occupied Europe, there were distinct differences between the deportations in Western and Southern Europe, and those further east. The lack of restraint that characterized German policy in Eastern Europe led to the confinement of most of the Jews into open or sealed ghettos, which were often established in the impoverished neighborhoods of the cities and towns, and inside which the Jews suffered from appalling crowding, debilitating hunger and rampant disease.
The deportations in Eastern Europe were typically savage, and habitually began with Jews being murdered in their homes, in the streets and in local cemeteries. Such was the fate that befell the Jews of Lublin – the victims of the first deportation carried out by Germans in the Generalgouvernement (central Poland under German administration).

In March-April 1941, some 40,000 Jews were confined in a ghetto established in Lublin’s old city quarter. In early 1942, a few short weeks before the deportation, German brutality towards the 40,000 Jews in the city’s ghetto escalated, with many being shot. But nothing prepared the Jews of Lublin for the events of 17 March 1942, the day the mass deportations began. At 5 am, the Germans and their Ukrainian collaborators woke the Jews, and ordered them to leave their homes within a matter of minutes. The deportees were led to the collection point, in this case the venerable "Maharshal" Synagogue, which had stood in Lublin for 375 years. Those who tarried in their departure, or tried to evade the deportation, were dragged forcibly, beaten or shot. A few craftsmen were returned to the ghetto, while the rest of the Jews were marched 3 km from the synagogue to the freight train station, from where they were deported to the Bełżec extermination camp.

The element of surprise, the shouting of the Germans and Ukrainians, the wailing of the deportees, and the beatings and shootings, combined to terrorize the Jews into submission. In addition to those shot leaving their homes, others were murdered on their way to the synagogue and during the march to the train station. By 14 April 1942, approximately 30,000 Lublin Jews had been deported to their deaths in Bełżec and thousands killed in their homes and in the streets; thousands more were executed soon after in the nearby woods.

The format for deporting the Jews of Central Europe was usually similar to that in the west and south, and was based upon deception; the transports were misleadingly referred to as “labor recruitment.” While the Germans directed the deportations, in practice they entrusted significant elements of their implementation to local police forces and their auxiliaries. Unlike the Jews of Eastern Europe, the Jews of Central, Western and Southern Europe were concentrated prior to their deportation mainly in transit camps, from which the deportations left for the extermination camps.

Much documentary evidence remains of the bureaucratic management of the deportations from Western and Central Europe: lists of deportees’ names, documentation of looted property and additional documents – the litany of extinction. Conversely, the Jews of Poland were deported without registration or detailed documentation, and each day, thousands were crammed into cattle cars that made their way to the death camps.

The policy of deception spanned geographical borders and was carried out systematically in all the occupied countries. For instance, the deportation of the Jews of Thessaloniki, the largest Jewish community in Greece, commenced in March 1943. In the weeks leading up to the deportation, the Jews were confined in three ghettos, and then in a ghetto in the Baron Hirsch neighborhood. They were permitted to take a specific sum of Polish złotys, which they bought with Greek drachmas, but forbidden to take any gold, other coins or precious stones. Their journey was financed by the liquidation of their assets, and employees at the Greek State Railway handed them their tickets. In their testimonies, survivors related that the Germans took all of their belongings, replacing them with a signed piece of paper specifying the value of their possessions in Reichsmarks. They were told that they would be able to receive the aforementioned sum on arrival in Poland.
Deportations to death began as early as 1941. That autumn, Romania, an ally of Germany, initiated the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Jews to Transnistria from Bukovina, Bessarabia and adjacent Ukrainian areas. The deportations were carried out with barbaric cruelty. Many were murdered en route, while others met their deaths in the ghettos and camps established in Transnistria. In Western Poland, deportations to the Chelmno extermination camp began in December 1941.

THE DEPORTEES’ EXPERIENCE

"Life in the cattle cars was the death of my adolescence. How quickly I aged." ¹ wrote the late Nobel Prize Laureate Eli Wiesel of his deportation in May 1944 to Auschwitz-Birkenau from his home in Sighet, then under Hungarian rule. Simon Grinbaud, who was deported from the Drancy transit camp in France to Auschwitz-Birkenau in September 1942, describes boarding the train in his memoir:

"In such a car, which was designed to transport 'eighteen horses' according to the sign on the door, we were a hundred of us – adults, children, sick, elderly, in indescribably crowded conditions... In every car there was a bucket with water for everyone and another bucket for toilets; so much of the water reserve was soiled as we boarded the train." ²

The overcrowding in the cars was unbearable, the feeling of suffocation overwhelming, and a desperate struggle ensued for proximity to the narrow window. Growing hunger and thirst magnified the anguish. The necessity to relieve themselves inside the railcar was a nadir for the humiliated deportees. The journey in the freight cars was sometimes a matter of hours (within Poland); often three to four days (from France, Hungary and the Netherlands); occasionally seven to eight days (from Thessaloniki); while some deportees were shuttled around for more than two weeks on boats and trains (the Jews of Thrace and Macedonia on their journey to Treblinka). Others were marched on foot, and were forced to cross a wide river on dilapidated rafts (the Jews of Bessarabia, Bukovina and Dorohoi, who were deported to Transnistria). None of the deportees had the slightest idea regarding the location or nature of their final destination.

The deportations tore entire families apart. Oftentimes parents, siblings, children and friends were left behind. Inside the cattle cars, Jews tried in different ways to convey their situation and feelings to loved ones left behind, and wrote them letters on scraps of paper they found, in great haste and in many cases, in code. The writers threw their letters out of the train, in the hope that someone would pick them up and send them on to their destination. One of those writers was Aron Liwerant, who wrote the following message in the railway car that left the Drancy transit camp in France headed for the Majdanek camp, where he was murdered. He tossed the note out of the deportation train. Aron did not know where he was bound, but he wanted to leave a message of hope for his children:

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² https://deportation.yadvashem.org/index.html?language=en&itemId=5092605&ind=1
Dear Berthe. It is already the fourth day. I am now in the railroad car. We are surely traveling to Germany. I am also certain that we are going to work. We are about 700 people. 23 railroad cars... I hope, my child, that you will know how to behave as a free person, even though you are meanwhile without your parents. Don’t forget... to be a Jew and also a human being... Tell Simon everything that I write you. Tell him to study and be a good student, because he is gifted... I am going with confidence that you will grow up and be a good, healthy and smart girl.

Your Father,

Hoping to see you soon  

Many of the deportees perished in the railroad cars, succumbing to suffocation, ferocious thirst or utter exhaustion. In light of the appalling conditions in the cars, leaping from the moving train was one way to attempt to stay alive. There were those who survived the jump, but many others died in the process, or were denounced to the Germans by locals.

In July 1944, the Kovno ghetto in Lithuania was liquidated, and the remaining Jews, including the Perk family, were crammed into a cattle car that had one small opening covered with barbed wire. One of the Jews in the car managed to tear the barbed wire. Kalman Perk jumped from the train, and later wrote about this experience:

Just 14 years old, in short trousers and a shirt, I jumped from the train into a hostile world. With great anguish, I left my loved ones to their fate... We didn't cry or kiss each other before I jumped from the car. Father just looked at me and said: "Kalman, be a ‘mensch’ (human being)." These last words were my father’s will and testament.  

The shock that accompanied the stages of deportation – the roundup and the time inside the cars – lingered after the deportees’ arrival at the extermination camps. Jaco Poliker talks about this in his testimony. Born in Thessaloniki, Poliker was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau with his pregnant wife Celia and their young son Mordechai. After many long days in the overcrowded cattle cars without food or water, the train pulled into the station.

When we finally arrived at “our destination” and the train stopped... the doors suddenly opened. Outside it was still dark, and the Germans started beating us indiscriminately, shouting: “Out! Quickly! Everybody out! Quickly, quickly!” Stunned to the point of insanity, people were thrown out [of the car]. I held my child in my arms the entire time. The boy was faint, half dead. At some point, when the beaten masses had been pushed out with tremendous force by rampaging Germans, I don’t know how it happened, the child slipped out of my arms and disappeared. A mighty wave of people propelled me, trampling everything underfoot. The wave washed over me, too. I didn’t see my child or my family again. In one instant, everything was swallowed up; my whole world vanished as if it had never existed...  

The deportations ripped the deportees from the human world as they knew it, and separated them from it irrevocably. The world they recognized was stolen from them forever.

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4 Translated from the Hebrew: https://www.yadvashem.org/he/remembrance/survivors/perk.html
Almost always, at the beginning of the memory sequence, stands the train which marked the departure towards the unknown not only for chronological reasons but also for the gratuitous cruelty with which those (otherwise innocuous) convoys of ordinary freight cars were employed for extraordinary purposes."

Did you hear?” she cried. “They have put up notices – posters about the deportations!” We stood speechless. So the rumors were really true!... My own heart was pounding as having pushed my way through the crowd, I came close enough to read the printed words.

By order of the German authorities, all the Jews of Warsaw, regardless of age or sex, will be deported. Only those employed in the German workshops, the Judenrat, the Jewish police and the Jewish hospital will be exempt. Every deportee will be permitted to carry fifteen kilograms of luggage, including cash, valuables and provisions for three days. Those failing to comply with this edict will be liable to the death penalty.

(Signed) The Judenrat

The street became a human sea, as people milled about in front of the German poster, straining to read between the lines, to fathom the meaning behind the words. Scattered voices raise terrible questions that went unanswered: "Where are we going? How many will be deported?"

The posters offered no clue.

It was rumored that freight cars were being brought up and shunted onto railway sidings. Bewildered, I made my way from one group to another, the words "Deportation – immediate deportation!” hammering away at my brain.

Vladka (age17)
The Germans forced the Jews from one corner to another, lashing out with whips and shooting. People were trampling on each other. Many of them started to say the prayer of the dying. I lost my mommy. Her hand was torn from mine by the crowd... I fell down, was trampled on. I thought I was going to die too. Somebody picked me up in his arms and cried: 'Save the child'.

Rebecca (age 8)

Thousands and thousands, tens of thousands of people were walking, taking their belongings with them; some on their heads, some on their backs, some on their shoulders. There were children, old people, babies – all of them, like the exile of the peoples, the exile from Egypt.

Avraham (age 14)

Eventually we were all moved onto railway shuntings where we again waited, on one knew why or for how long. Later we were moved and driven into railway wagons – the sort that usually transport animals, which were part of a long train. Some of the wagons were open-topped, some closed.

Agnes (age 11)

Backpacks must be sewn, preparations made. What to cram into a sack small enough to be carried for a long distance? Food? Clothing? Valuables? Where are they taking us? A cold climate? Then warm clothes are important. Will they feed us on the journey? If not, food is the most important. How about gold or silver, or even china? Converted into cash, these may prove the most important. Who knows? I wish Daddy were here... Feverish packing of lifetimes into knapsacks to be carried into cattle cars. No more cribs, washbowls, baby carriages, everything had to be reduced into a small parcel per family. All life's needs were capsulated into a compact bundle. Nothing else is permitted...

Livia (age 13)
Dear Mrs. Bousson,

As you probably know, I am at the moment in Drancy [the transit camp near Paris from which transports left for Auschwitz and other camps in the east], and by the time you will be reading these lines, I will already be on the way of being deported – probably to Poland. However don’t think that I am in a state of despair. On the contrary, I am more confident about the future than ever before. I know, I feel, that the misery in which I find myself at the moment will not last long, and that I will soon return in good health. If it is indeed Poland, where I will be going, I will try to find my husband and the friends I have told you about. I have one request from you: watch over and take care of my child as if it were your own. I have great confidence in you. I ask you not to give my little one to anybody except my mother. I have sent money to you. You have probably already received it. I may also send a package with clothes, but this is not certain. If I do, you will be notified so that you can go and get it. I ask you to go to the address I have given you, even though I know that you have much to do. Now I have to leave you. I ask you once again to take care of my little one so that he will lack nothing. I have asked someone to write this letter for me, because I am not in a state to write. Excuse me.

Mme Rutkowska

In order to obtain my address, please ask the French Red Cross. I will write to you as soon as possible. Mr. Max Bedouet will come and see you. Welcome him – he is a good man.

Letter sent by Nacha Rutkowska to Mme Bousson, July 1942, before her deportation to Auschwitz. She was deported on 29 July 1942. Although her letter says that she was sure she would soon return, Nacha never came back to her child. She was probably murdered as soon as she arrived in Auschwitz.

Nacha Rutkowski’s husband Hillel was deported a month earlier, on 22 June 1942. He survived the initial selection on arrival in Auschwitz and managed to stay alive for little over a month before he succumbed to the camp’s conditions. His name is listed in the Auschwitz death book as having died on 28 July 1942. It was three days before his wife arrived in the camp. Nacha was not granted the wish she had expressed in her letter and never again met her husband.
The doors clanked shut.
We had fallen into the trap,
up to our necks.
The doors were nailed, the
way back irrevocably cut off.
The world had become a
hermetically sealed cattle car."

Elie Wiesel, Night, Hill and Wang
(USA, 2008), p. 42
December 16, 1944

Dear Magda,

I cannot describe in what emotional state I write this letter; for eight days we’ve been locked up in a railroad car. Out of 77 people – 65 men and 12 women – 14 have so far escaped, and I don’t know whether to do so myself.

Imagine that at about 8-9 in the morning they release us from the railroad car to relieve ourselves – and this happens near the cars, because it’s impossible to move away even one step. They again lock us up and until the next morning they don’t open the railroad cars for us, no matter what happens. And so, many of those here relieve themselves in the car.

Once a day we get one slice of bread with a morsel of canned food, and this was only since Tuesday – until then we didn’t get a thing. The heart nearly passes out for a sip of water, and I cannot even describe the kind of people here. A decent person gets completely lost in all the muck here.

My Magdushka, I am terribly miserable. When I think that they will take me and that I’ll never see you again and be with you, I’m close to insanity. If only the Lord helps so it’s over fast because such a life cannot be tolerated. How shocking and awful what goes on here at night! Our days somehow pass by, but already at 5:00 in the afternoon it gets dark and a person curls up over his bag. Until 7:00 the next morning he cannot even budge. I think that in a day or two we will also have lice, because I heard that some have already found...

My Magdushka, since last week when I came from home I wasn’t even able to wash up once. I can rinse my mouth from time to time, but for this I must give up my daily ration of water, and instead of drinking I prefer to rinse my mouth.

So that... my Magdushka, it’s impossible to tolerate this much longer... to humiliate people to such an animal level. It is almost inconceivable. If I myself were not here, I wouldn’t be able to believe it.
And to top it all, it’s winter and it’s snowing, and I am absolutely without a home, so alone in the world.

I think that I will try to escape because if I fail and get caught – then at least death is certain.

My Magdushka, my heart is torn just thinking about Father. I arrived here and he remained alone at home, poor thing. I don’t even know where he is or what happened to him.....

... I’m going absolutely mad, my Magdushka, I am ashamed of myself. What has become of me, day and night I sit in a corner and weep.....

...The one and only request that I ask of the Lord, is that we should all be together as before, and I hope that the good Lord will help me attain this.

My Magdushka, take very good care of yourself lest something happens to you, my little sister. I don’t feel that this is a parting letter because the Lord is good and He will not abandon us.

I kiss you with love,

Blanca Levi

Women and children being loaded onto the deportation train. Siedlce, Poland, 23.8.1942

This letter was written in the winter of 1944 on the train that deported the writer to Bergen-Belsen.

My very dear ones,
My spirits are very high.
We will see each other soon. Lots of kisses to all of you. All my thoughts are of you.

Nina

(Anna Ventura's Last Postcard)
Yad Vashem Archives

The postcard was written on the deportation train that left the Fossili camp for Auschwitz on 22 February 1944, and was thrown from the train on 24 February, as it crossed the border between Italy and Austria. Anna wrote the words, "Please send this postcard by mail" on the postcard, in the hope that someone would find it. Fearing that the secret police may not allow the postcard to reach its destination if they thought that it had been thrown from a train of Jews being sent to their death, Anna used a common Christian name as that of the sender. She gave "Bolzano", a city on the Austro-German border as the sender's address, to offer a clue as to where she was being transported. The postcard contained her last words.

For a long time the family held on to the faint hope that they would see her again. Later, they learned the bitter truth. On 26 February 1944, following a five day journey, the train arrived at Auschwitz. Of the 650 Jews deported, 521 Jews were murdered on the day of their arrival at the camp; Anna Ventura was among them. Few survived until the end of the war.
Athens, 14th of Av 5703

Dear Brothers,

The first response to our appeal to our brothers in free countries came to us with your letter of the 12th of Tammuz of this year. Many thanks to you, my dear brothers, that you heard our voice and rushed to our assistance. May God be with you. May He not forsake your sons.

We ask your forgiveness for the style of the letter, since we don’t really know your language. And now I am presenting you with the history of all that has happened to us in recent months. In June 1942, 8,500 Jews of Saloniki were sent to hard labor.... In March 1943, they forced all the Jews of Saloniki to put the Star of David on their garments, to leave their homes in the city and assemble in the ghetto. On March 14, they suddenly took three thousand people from the ghetto, the elderly, youth, women, boys and girls, and put them in closed railroad cars meant for cattle. After the first train’s journey, they took another three thousand people, and so it continued with the third and fourth trains, and more, so that by the first of June, the last of the Jews were deported. A total of 53,000 of our brothers were deported, and now no Jew remains in Saloniki and the cities of Macedonia. Until this day we do not know where they sent them and what is their fate. It is impossible to describe to you the conditions of their journey. We are afraid that only twenty percent of the passengers will remain alive when they reach their destination....

...Now, not one single Jew remains in Saloniki. "Alas – she sits in solitude," "a city and center of the Jewish nation!" Houses of prayer were lost, our cemetery was destroyed, our libraries, our Torah scrolls were destroyed, all the community ledgers were burnt and our property was taken...

...And now, our upright brothers, farewell to you. Our hope is not yet lost, for with the last of the Jews remains the last of our hope.

Plonsk, December 16, 1942

Please toss the note in the nearest mailbox.

It is now morning. We are in the railroad car with the whole family. We are leaving with the last transport. Plonsk is cleansed [of Jews, the German expression]. Please go to the Bam family, on 6 Niske and sent them regards.

Yours truly,

A note thrown from a train taking a transport to the Auschwitz death camp. It was written by an unidentified Jew to his family in the Warsaw ghetto.
Legionowo, [December 16] 1942
Additional payment of 18 gr' (Legionowo)
Warsaw
Nalabecki
47/19
Please kindly toss this into a box.
Today we left Plonsk, our whole family and all the Jews traveled. Be aware, that we are traveling to a wedding [in other words, to annihilation].
See you again!
David

Czestochowa, December 17, 1942
My dears!
We are now passing Czestochowa, therefore I'm writing a few words. We have passed Warsaw also. We are traveling to work. Think positively. I'm not giving you my new address, because I don't have it yet.
Parting with kisses,
Yours, Gittel
We are en route for the second day.

Warsaw, Praga, December 16, 1942
Additional payment of 18 gr', L. Paz'igoda, Warsaw, Mila 46
Please kindly toss this into a box.
I'm in the Praga station, writing a few words to you. It is unknown where we are traveling.
Be well. Leah

A note thrown from a train that was transporting a group of Jews to the Auschwitz death camp. It was written by a Jew named David to his family in the Warsaw ghetto.

A note thrown from the train taking a transport to the Auschwitz death camp. It was written by an unidentified Jewish woman named Gittel of Plonsk, to her family in the Warsaw ghetto.

A note thrown from a train transporting a group of Jews to the Auschwitz death camp. It was written by an unidentified Jewish woman named Leah of Plonsk, to her family in the Warsaw ghetto.
Czestochowa, December 17, 1942
Dear Sir
Roguzak
Warsaw
19 Zamenhoff St.
For P. Rothblatt

My dear,
We are with the whole family at the Czestochowa Pass, we don’t know where we’re traveling.
With best wishes, I kiss you
Guta Fuchs

A note thrown from the train taking a transport to the Auschwitz death camp. It was written by a Jewish woman whose name was Guta Fuchs of Plonsk, to her family in the Warsaw ghetto.

Thursday, Czestochowa, December 17, 1942
To
E. Bogatti
Warsaw […]

My dear!
We’ve been en route since yesterday morning. We were inside the train for a few hours in Prague. I am here, we are here, in Czestochowa in the train station. We are probably traveling to a labor camp, to Tarnowskie Gory or to Auschwitz. I have great heartache because of my tragedy with Lonia and Henio. Will I ever see them again?
I feel very saddened.
Mark

A note thrown from the train taking a transport to the Auschwitz death camp, to relatives in Warsaw.

Over 100 people were packed into our cattle car... It is impossible to describe the tragic situation in our airless, closed car. Everyone tried to push his way to a small air opening. I found a crack in one of the floorboards into which I pushed my nose to get a little air. The stench in the cattle car was unbearable. People were defecating in all four corners of the car... After some time, the train suddenly stopped. A guard entered the car. He had come to rob us. He took everything that had not been well hidden: money, watches, valuables... Water! We pleaded with the railroad workers. We would pay them well. I paid 500 zlotys and received a cup of water – about half a liter. As I began to drink, a woman, whose child had fainted, attacked me. She was determined to make me leave her a little water. I did leave a bit of water at the bottom of the cup, and watched the child drink. The situation in the cattle car was deteriorating. The car was sweltering in the sun. The men lay half naked. Some of the women lay in their undergarments. People struggled to get some air, and some no longer moved... The train reached the camp. Many lay inert on the cattle car floor. Some were no longer alive."

Excerpt from the testimony of Jakób Krzepicki, who was deported from the Warsaw ghetto to the Treblinka extermination camp. He managed to escape from the camp and added his testimony to the ghetto archive, but was murdered in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.
My name is David. I am a Polish Jew aged 13. I have been taken from the Warsaw ghetto, along with many other Jews, old and young, for the deportation to a so-called labor camp called Treblinka. We are lined up beside a railroad cattle car. As we are then pushed onto the car, some of us fall off and are thrown back on by the German guards. Once we are in, I notice that a thick layer of lime and chlorine over which water has been poured has been spread on the floor. There is no room to sit. In order to make room we are forced to stand with our hands above our heads. There is no roof on the car. The wintery weather is already beginning to make itself felt. Suddenly, the door is slammed shut and sealed. A water bucket is tossed in the car for use as a disposal container for human waste. The car is hitched to a locomotive and begins to move. The crunch in the car is horrible as the mass of people try to find room. Terrible cries pierce the air as some people suffer from sudden lurching. From time to time, the car stops to pick up other victims from other towns along the way. At those stops a loaf or two of bread is thrown in. This causes us to trample on those near us for food. An old lady jammed near me has just died. A little boy is screaming for his mother. I feel that I want to die. Suddenly the train screeches to a halt. I don’t know how long we have been traveling, but it seems like days.

David (aged 13)
My dearest darlings,

We just now passed Toulouse; it’s 12 noon.
You can imagine what my feelings are.
Am just happy and glad that I don’t have you two, my darlings, here with me.
I am very curious to know when you left.
In God’s name, be courageous and quiet and thankful with all your hear to dear Sister Friedl.

I kiss you with all my heart.

Your Mommy

Photograph taken around the summer of 1936 in a park in Antwerp.
From right (adults): Perla Krieser, Avigdor Aichel (Hilda Tiar’s cousin, captured on the streets of Köln, Germany together with his father and sent to Sbaszyn on the border with Poland, murdered Hanukkah 1939), Solomon Krieser
From right (children): Hannah Krieser, Hilda Tiar’s sister who was with her in the Riversaltes camp, Hilda Tiar (Krieser)

When the bombing of Belgium began in 1940, Perla and Solomon Krieser of Antwerp and their two daughters, 16-year-old Hilda and 12-year-old Hannah fled across the border to France. They were caught together with many other refugees, and sent to the Riversaltes camp in France. The living conditions in Riversaltes were appalling - overcrowding in the barracks, lack of sanitation, hunger and malnutrition, widespread disease and epidemic outbreaks. During her internment, Hilda was lucky enough to work as a kindergarten teacher under the auspices of the Secours Suisse, an organization affiliated with the Swiss Red Cross that operated in the camp. Thanks to her position she received extra food rations, which she then shared with her family. After a while, Hilda was offered a similar position in a Red Cross children’s home in the city of Pringy, Switzerland. Hilda accepted the position on the condition that she could take her sister Hannah with her.
When they arrived in Pringy, the municipal secretary gave Hilda false ID papers bearing the name Helene Rambaux, and she started to work, not revealing her Jewish identity. The sisters managed to correspond with their parents, who remained in Riversaltes.
Hilda and Hannah’s safe haven was short lived, however, as in the summer of 1942 the sisters were returned to Riversaltes by the French police so that the family could be “reunited in a new camp”. Back at Riversaltes, the deportations to the East were well under way. Together with their mother, Hilda and Hannah waited in line to board the train. Friedel Bohny-Reiter, a member of the Secours Suisse who was shocked to see the girls back in the camp, signaled them to come with her. Friedel then led them to an unlit storeroom in the camp where they hid. Friedel went back and pulled more children off the train and hid them in the storeroom, asking Hilda to watch over them and ensure that they wouldn’t cry. For three days Friedel worked relentlessly, trying to convince the camp commander and senior officials elsewhere to let the children go.
Eventually she succeeded in attaining the precious permits for Hilda and Hannah to leave the camp and return to the children’s home in Pringy, where they stayed until the end of the war. Friedel Bohny-Reiter sent the other children she had hidden in Riversaltes to families who agreed to hide them, thus saving their lives. In recognition of her rescue work, she has been honored by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations.
The transport that the Krieser girls evaded left Riversaltes bound for the Drancy camp. From there, the deportees were sent to Auschwitz, where most of them were murdered. Deported separately, Perla and Solomon Krieser were both murdered in Auschwitz. Shortly before his deportation, Solomon sent his daughters a parcel containing his tallit (prayer shawl), all the family’s money and a postcard, the last words he would write to his children. Perla Krieser wrote a last letter to her daughters from the deportation train as it passed Toulouse.
When the Russians were already very close to Kovno, the Germans decided to eliminate what remained of the ghetto. They took us to the train station, which was at the other end of town. I don’t know how many people were in that cattle car. 50, maybe 100. Everyone knew that this was a journey to the extermination camps. There was no doubt. I can say that there was no hysteria despite the stifling conditions. I can feel the smell even now... Nevertheless, people did not lose their humanity.

The train started moving. And at this point, something surprising happened. One of the people ran up to the “window”. He tore the barbed wire with extraordinary power, and tried to crawl out, but could not. I was fourteen then, very thin as were most people in the ghetto, and my mother said that if someone was to survive and recount what we had gone through, it would be me. My father said, “Yes, you are going,” and in his calculated way, he gets up, lifts me, and moreover he says: “I will get you out with your legs, go out using your legs!” And I remember this motion because it is really engraved in my soul. I turned my head, wanting a hug, something. The dreadful goodbye. All the people I loved were going to the extermination camps. Instead of this, in a very calm manner, I guess he wanted to radiate calm, he said to me in Yiddish: “Be a ‘mensch’ (a good person),” and shoved me outside.

My mother was taken to Stutthof, to the crematoria. And on the same day, my grandfather, my grandmother and the rest of the family were murdered. And my father suffered the same fate in Dachau. That precept of my father’s, to be a good person, has been the essence of my life. And it didn’t matter if I became a professor or a cobbler. The only thing that mattered was being a good person. I only hope that up until the last moment he felt and knew that I would always live according to that precept.
Each of us has a name given by God
and given by our parents

Each of us has a name given by our stature and our smile
and given by what we wear

Each of us has a name given by the mountains
and given by our walls

Each of us has a name given by the stars
and given by our neighbors

Each of us has a name given by our sins
and given by our longing

Each of us has a name given by our enemies
and given by our love

Each of us has a name given by our celebrations
and given by our work

Each of us has a name given by the seasons
and given by our blindness

Each of us has a name given by the sea
and given by our death.

WE INVITE YOU TO TAKE PART IN CREATING A "PERSONAL FILE" FOR HOLOCAUST VICTIMS

Guidelines for Suggesting “Personal Files” in the Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names

Archives Division, Yad Vashem

Tema Lea and Her Two Children, Shifra and Salek
What is a “Personal File”? 

- A “Personal File” is a cluster, which contains a number of different name records that refer to the same person.
- Yad Vashem's Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names contains information on individuals from millions of testimonies and documents. In many cases, we have various records relating to the same person and, if we could only group them all together, we could tell a more complete story of their life and fate.
- The systematic grouping of such records into one “personal file” is complex, and involves methodological and technical challenges.
- Yad Vashem has so far managed to create hundreds of thousands of “personal files” that bind together several “name records” related to one person. The “personal files” are displayed in the Names Database, as results about victims/people. Alongside each “personal file”, you will find a number indicating how many “name records” are included in it.
- We need your help to help us create additional files.

>> Stage 1: Conducting a Search

Search the Names Database. Searching for “Krakowska Zisla” from Będzin, we receive two results:

- Krakowska, Zofia Zisla 1892 Będzin, Poland murdered
- Krakowska, Zysla 1892 Bedzin, Poland murdered

>> Stage 2: Selecting Results for Comparison

The two results in our example are unrelated, but a first look at the details makes us think that this may be the same person. To try to check whether this is true, we will look at both results in depth. In the “Add to list» column, mark the entries that we want to compare by pressing the «+» button.
From the table you can see that the details in the two records are quite similar:

- The name and the maiden name are similar
- The year of birth and place of birth are similar
- Pre-war residence is similar (though not the same)

>> Stage 2: Selecting Results for Comparison (continued)

Next to the list of results, a new window will open, listing our selected entries, along with a comparison tool:

Note: You can also select an existing cluster to add additional name records related to that person

>> Stage 3: Comparison of Records

Notice the buttons at the bottom of the window. Click the «Compare» button.

From the table you can see that the details in the two records are quite similar:

- The name and the maiden name are similar
- The year of birth and place of birth are similar
- Pre-war residence is similar (though not the same)
If we are convinced from the comparison that both records actually point to the same person, a suggestion can be sent to the “Hall of Names” team in the Yad Vashem Archives to bind them in a “personal file”, i.e. a “cluster”. To submit the suggestion, click the “Suggest” button.

Fields for filling in your personal information will appear below:

If you have any additional comments you can fill them out in this free-text field.

If you have scans of documentation to add that assist in identifying the records as referring to the same individual you can attach them here.

When you finish click the “Submit” button.
After submitting, you will receive a confirmation message (be patient – it may take a minute or two):

![Confirmation Message]

You can click the “Clear” button at the top of the screen of your selected records and return to the list of results.

**Now you can try to find and suggest another Personal File!**

The Yad Vashem team will review your suggestion and, if approved, it will upload it to the Names Database site in one of the upcoming updates.

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**We are very grateful to you for your help.**

For questions and inquiries you can contact the Yad Vashem team at any time:

clusters@yadvashem.org.il