



# Teaching the Holocaust in the Israeli Education System

**10-15 Hours Per Year**

**K-12**

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Fred Hillman Chair in Memory of Janusz Korczak

*“Before it’s too late, we must realize that the Holocaust is not the obsession of the survivors, nor is the commemoration of the six million victims. The lessons of the Shoah are not just the concern of those who have experienced the horrors, but rather part of a long collective memory...”*

*Abba Kovner, Detaining the Tearing, Tel Aviv 1998, p. 164*





# Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day Law, 1959

(No. 36)

MARTYRS' AND HEROES' REMEMBRANCE DAY LAW, 5719-1959\*

The 27th Nisan—Remembrance Day.

1. The 27th Nisan shall be Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day, devoted, year after year, to the commemoration of the disaster which the Nazis and their collaborators brought upon the Jewish people and of the acts of heroism and revolt performed in those days.

If the 27th Nisan falls upon a Friday, Remembrance Day shall be observed on the 26th Nisan of that year.

\* Passed by the Knesset on the 29th Adar Bet, 5719 (8th April, 1955) and published in *Sefer Ha-Chukkim* No. 280 of the 9th Nisan, 5719 (17th April, 1959), p. 112; the Bill and an Explanatory Note were published in *Hatza'ot Chok* No. 384 of 5719, p. 242.

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2. Remembrance Day shall be marked throughout the State by a two-minute silence, during which all work and all road traffic shall be suspended; there shall be memorial gatherings, popular rallies, and commemorative functions in Army camps and educational institutions; flags on public buildings shall be flown at half-mast; wireless programmes shall express the special character of the day, and places of entertainment shall present only features consonant with its spirit.

Modes of observing Remembrance Day.

3. The Minister empowered in that behalf by the Government shall, in consultation with the Yad Va-Shem Remembrance Authority, issue instructions for the observance of Remembrance Day in accordance with this Law.

Institutions for the observance of Remembrance Day.

DAVID BEN-GURION  
*Prime Minister*

YITZCHAK BEN-ZVI  
*President of the State*

In 1959, the State of Israel enacted “Yom HaShoah” into parliamentary law to ensure that national remembrance of the Holocaust would continue for all generations.



# Between Consciousness and Constructive Educational Processes

*There is a need for:*

- *Formalized educational **processes** during the day of remembrance*
- ***Age-appropriate** explanations*
- ***Emotional connection***
- ***Factual knowledge***
- ***Educational discourse on the significance of the event itself***



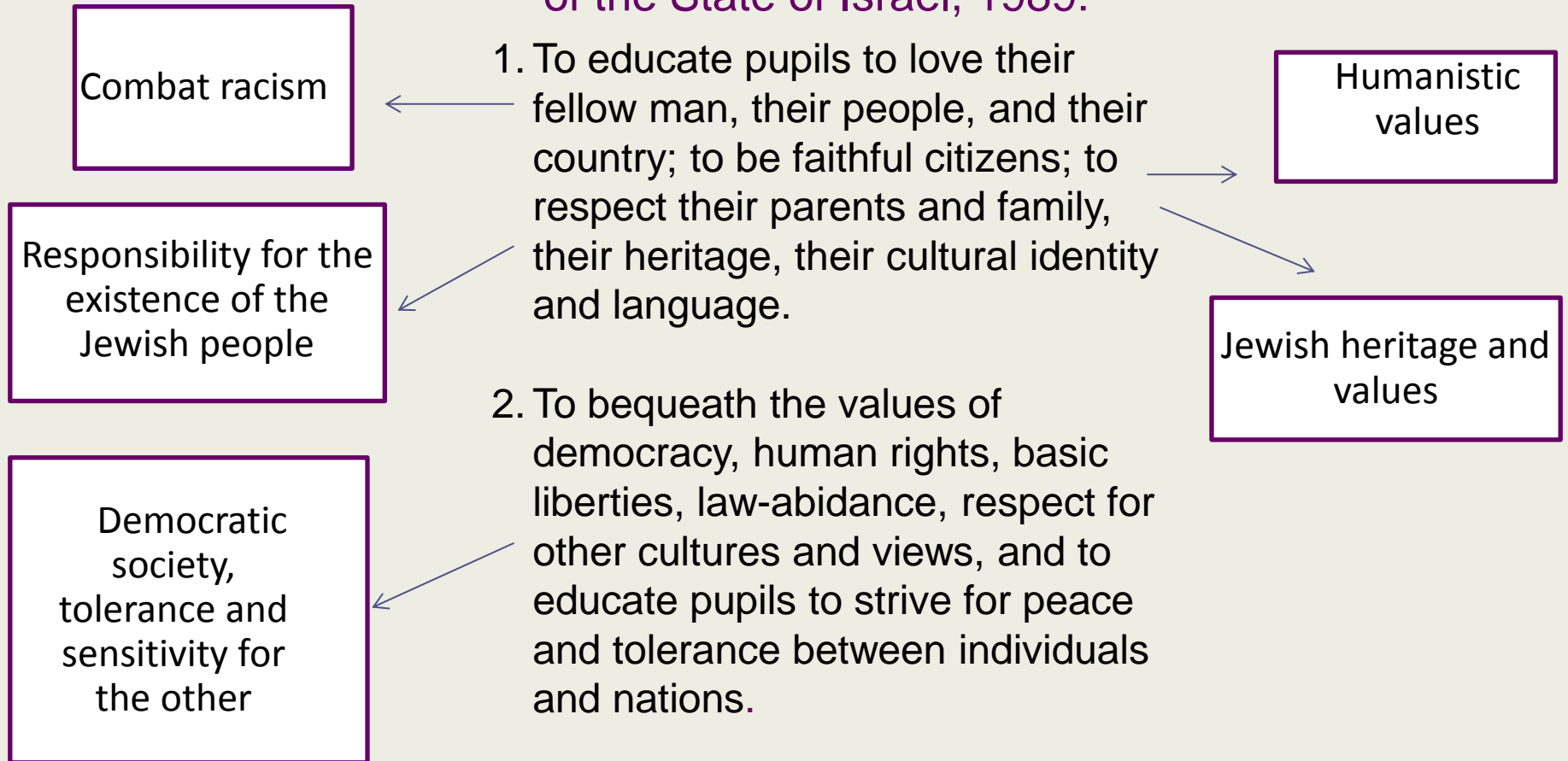


In cooperation with Yad Vashem, the Israeli Education Ministry decided in 2014 to launch a national curriculum on the Holocaust.



# Goals

## From the Law of Education of the State of Israel, 1989:



**When ?**

**What ?**

**How ?**



# General Rationale Document Israeli Ministry of Education

## When to Begin Teaching the Holocaust?

Students in Israel are exposed to the Holocaust from a **young age** and therefore you cannot hide such a major event from children. You must explain the **siren** on Holocaust Memorial Day to the children. They hear about the Holocaust on TV, the radio, and the Internet. In order to **safeguard** the children, we have to introduce the subject in an **age-appropriate** way that speaks **cognitively** and **emotionally** to the child.





# Teaching the Holocaust in the Israeli Education System

**2-15 Hours Per Year**

**K-12**

# THE SPIRAL APPROACH

## AGE THEMES:

**INDIVIDUAL**

**FAMILY**

**COMMUNITY**



**WIDE HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND  
COMPLEX MORAL QUESTIONS**

## MAIN TOPICS:

- **JEWISH LIFE BEFORE THE HOLOCAUST**
- **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**
- **THE HUMAN STORY:**
  - **JEWISH RESISTANCE DURING THE HOLOCAUST**
  - **BETWEEN THE PERPETRATORS, BYSTANDERS & THE RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS**
- **RETURN TO LIFE**

Key Topics	Early Elementary	Elementary	Middle School	High School
Jewish Life Before the Holocaust	Through the <b>eyes</b> of the <b>child</b> . The Jewish world before the Holocaust	Basic <b>familiarity</b> with <b>diversity</b> of the Jewish communities in Europe and major subjects of the Holocaust	Familiarity with the <b>wide geographic distribution</b> of the Jewish people. Expanding knowledge about the Jewish <b>cultural</b> and <b>spiritual life</b> .	<b>Political movements</b> in the Jewish society, the <b>relationship</b> with the <b>general population</b> .
Historical Context	Basic historical <b>concepts</b> taught <b>through personal</b> stories: Ghetto, Yellow Star Learning the basic context		Every <b>subject</b> which is taught in middle school is combined with a <b>wide historical introduction</b> .	Stages of the Nazi policies and general historical processes
<b>The Human Story:</b>	<b>Understanding</b> the <b>difficulties</b> along with the <b>emotional anchors</b> . Mutual help, the <b>family's struggle</b> for life. <b>Coping</b> with internal mental <b>strength imagination</b> and <b>resourcefulness</b>	Questions of identity and rescue	Exposing the student to dilemmas and difficulties Questions of Jewish identity and protecting Jewish symbols	Complex moral dilemmas and how to cope in the face of chaos
a. Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust		Through <b>personal</b> stories the concept of Germans, collaborators and the bystanders is introduced.	Subjects to be taught: <b>Outcast</b> , prejudice, and antisemitism.	Discussion about <b>perpetrators</b> and collaborators: How was it humanly possible?
b. Between the Perpetrators, Bystanders and the Righteous Among the Nations	Focus: Righteous Among the Nations			
Return to Life	Rebuilding from the beginning- centrality of the survivor	The <b>complex process</b> of returning to life in different stages: Rehabilitation through immigrating and the establishment of the State of Israel	The <b>pain of loss</b> along with the construction process	Return to Life and engaging with the <b>legacy of survivors</b>

## Tools for Teaching about Jewish Life Before the Holocaust

### Years 3-4

“I was born in 1939 in Biala Ravska, a town where Jews and Poles had lived and worked together for generations. My grandmother lived in the center of town next to the marketplace, and all of my cousins lived in a Jewish neighborhood close by. My parents, Hershel and Zisel Hershkowitz, and I lived on a busy street in Biala Ravska, across from another Jewish family.”



### Years 5-6

“The Jews spoke Yiddish and Polish and many also spoke Hebrew ... My mother, she was quite beautiful and very smart. Before her marriage to Father, she had studied pharmacology in Vienna, Austria. Upon returning to Czortkow, she worked in the pharmacy that was on the main street close to where we lived. Every day during lunch break and towards evening, when I heard the tapping of high heels on the stairs, I knew that Mother was returning home from work.”



# Jewish Life Before the Holocaust- Middle School and High School

## Middle School



“We were in school six days a week. We had an awful lot of homework. We belonged to youth groups, went skating in winter, played tennis in summer. I was a gymnast and in track.”

**Dora (12), Poland**

“One day a new movie theatre called the Palladium opened in Warsaw. Isabella talked my mother into coming with us to see a Shirley Temple movie.”

**Anna H. (10), Poland**

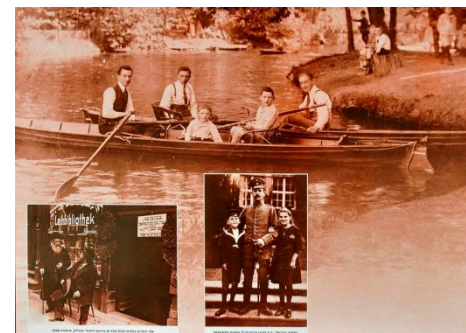
“On Sunday we went to see the opera ‘The Barber from Seville.’ The performance was wonderful and the singers were excellent. Mom asked if I wanted to continue my piano lessons this year, I said yes. Today was my first lesson.”

**Hannah, Hungary**

“When I would walk on the street and see Polish teenagers - I could tell they were students by their hats- I would cross the street so they wouldn't beat me up.”

**Benjamin, Vilna**

## High School





# The World after Auschwitz



# *Words,* Meir Wiesallter

***What was the word Holocaust***

***Two years before the Holocaust?***

***It was a word for a great commotion***

***[...]***

***What was the word Destruction***

***Two years before the Destruction?***

***A word to describe something bad***

***[...]***

***Two years before the Destruction***

***Destruction was not called Destruction***

***Two years before the Holocaust***

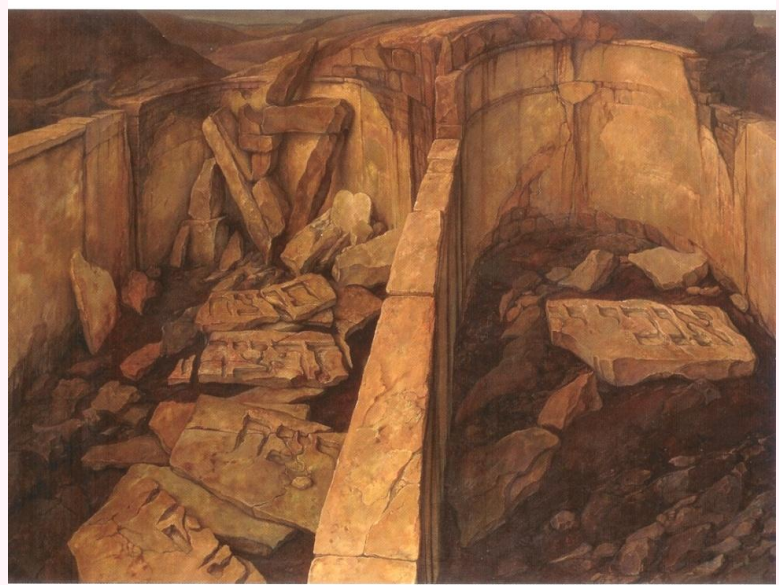
***It did not have a name***



God was at last to believe in man:  
good and strong,  
but good and strong  
are still two different people.

How to live--someone asked me this in a letter,  
someone I had wanted  
to ask that very thing.

Wislawa Szymborska, *The Turn of the Century*



**Thou Shalt Not Kill, diptych, 1970**  
Samuel Beck  
Oil on canvas  
122x162 cm. each  
Collection of the Yad Vashem Art  
Museum, Jerusalem  
Gift of the artist





Formerly I used to love being alone, far away from human company; I sought to seclude myself, to commune alone with Auschwitz.

Now Auschwitz crouches down at man's doorstep, inasmuch as man created Auschwitz, for the devil did not create Auschwitz but rather you and I [...] man.



“Nevertheless, we do hear a commanding voice, and this voice was heard from Auschwitz also at the outset, although this was a weak almost inaudible voice.”

Emil Fackenheim, *Jewish Faith and the Holocaust, on Faith and History*

“The very first demand on education is that there not be another Auschwitz.”

Theodor Adorno, *Education After Auschwitz*



“It's not a distant or closed chapter in history. This is our present and our potential future. It can happen anywhere and anytime. It can be perpetrated by anyone against anyone. There is a great responsibility on the politicians, media and educational institutions to prevent it from happening. But the greatest deal of responsibility rests upon us: the individuals.”

Robert Szuchta, Educator, Poland



The International School for Holocaust Studies

*“We should examine what the heritage was for the survivors. It was an attempt to remain human in the face of cruel sub-human and inhumane conditions.*

*“After the war these survivors were free to choose the way of nihilism, hedonism, violent revenge or simply to become extremely selfish. They[...] chose to stress hope and honor [...]”*

*“We must also not remain indifferent to the sufferings of others. This too is part of our moral heritage. When people suffer injustices, when they become victims of society or fate, we must not inspect their identity cards, but rather immediately offer them our aid and active participation. In other words, we must do for others what no man did for us.”*

– Elie Wiesel, address to the first gathering of Holocaust survivors at Yad Vashem





# Methodological Concepts

- **Relevance:** tailored to the pupil's stage of development: age, cognition, sensitivity
- **Value:** learning of value to the pupil and to society
- **Involvement:** active learning to create a learning experience and partnering with the student in structuring knowledge
  - It is important to maintain these values during the classroom learning process
  - Each school has been given the pedagogical flexibility to choose how to build the curriculum and in which subjects to integrate it



**The Spiral Age-Appropriate Approach:  
Together with Respective Historical Discussion  
and the Development of Values**

**High School**

Historical study of the complexity of the Holocaust. Deep study of moral **dilemmas** and identity **questions** among Jews.

Discussion in depth about the behavior of people during the Holocaust and the question: **how was it humanly possible?**

**Middle School**

- Expanding **historical knowledge**, and the diversity of the topics and voices

- Exposing the student to the **complexity** of the story in terms of the fate of the Jews and their coping strategies

Relevant topics for moral development of the students will be present **initially**

**Elementary**

**Protected** dialogue and providing basic historical concepts