To the incoming leadership, I say, "May you go..."

ANNUAL SPRING LUNCHEON
OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM

"MAY YOU GO FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH"
ELIZBOROWSKI, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem

It is difficult to believe that 30 years have passed since a few of us came together to begin what is now the American Society for Yad Vashem. From the modest parlor meetings held in the homes of survivors in New York and New Jersey, we have grown to almost 150,000 supporters all across the country. I would like for a moment to reflect on those early days. There is a Yiddish expression that says yeder onhob is shver — every beginning is difficult. While that is true, beginnings are also full of hope and expectation for the prospect of growth and fulfillment. At the same time, both the burden and excitement of any new venture are enhanced by the people with whom you undertake the endeavor. One of the people who joined us early on was Ikis Levenstein z’t, Reisa Feldman’s father and the elder statesman of the Pantirer family. Over the years, we would frequently see the Levensteins at simchas and at Grossinger’s, where survivors often gathered to mark the Jewish holidays. There was a commonality of spirit between myself and Ikis. We not only liked each other, but shared similar views in terms of our communal interests and responsibilities. It was through Ikis Levenstein’s efforts that the Paniter family became involved in the American Society for Yad Vashem.

Murray Pantirer z’t was an enthusiastic member of our Board. He regularly attended meetings and made a significant contribution to the Society. Together with his wife, Louise, he was a Trustee of the Valley of Communities — a project which is unique among Holocaust memorials. Two decades later, the Valley stands today, as the only comprehensive commemoration to the more than 5,000 destroyed Jewish communities.

This afternoon, in honoring the Pantirer family, we are paying tribute to three generations of a family that has been a guiding light for our Society. Together with his wife, Louise, and Murray Pantirer were ever present at our early parlor meetings and could always be counted on for support of our annual tribute gathering, instilling these values in my home. I have learned from Baba and from my mother that instilling values that are passed on to future generations continues to endeavor to understand their parents’ and grandparents’ world, their heritage, the Holocaust, and their rebirth to life, I have every confidence that the light that is slowly fading in our tent will be brightly rekindled anew by their heirs. To the incoming leadership, I say, "May you go m’cha’il/cha’il — from strength to strength."
Yom Hashoah: Remembering Victims of the Holocaust

Israel – The world has not learned the lessons of the Holocaust but Israel has, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said at the beginning of Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day.

“Even after the Holocaust, a regime still exists whose leaders publicly deny the Holocaust,” Peres said. “This should make every person sick and shake their conscience. The financial leadership of Iran is a danger to the entire world, not just Israel, but to every household; a real danger to the safety of our humanity. The nature of the world will not accept Iran having nuclear arms. They are now being tested.”

Holocaust survivor Michael Goldman spoke at the ceremony at Yad Vashem on behalf of more than 200,000 others who lived through the Nazi genocide and now reside in Israel.

Goldman described how yearning to live in a Jewish state helped him survive his ordeal.

“We never stopped believing in returning to Zion,” he said.

“In the hells of Auschwitz at night I quietly sang the song of Avigard Hameiri: ‘On the top of Mount Scopus, shalom to thee Jerusalem.’

I never stopped believing our enemies will succumb.”

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USA – President Obama marked Holocaust Remembrance Day with a statement “honoring the memory of all those who suffered and those who perished in one of the most barbaric acts in human history” during the period around World War II.

“More than six decades after the Holocaust, and at a time when Holocaust denial and genocidal ideologies persist, our grief and our outrage over the six million Jews killed by the Nazis remain,” he said.

President Obama delivers his address on Holocaust Remembrance Day, May 2, 2011.

Nazis’ murder of six million Jews and so many others have not diminished,” Obama said.

“From this tragedy we see the cost of allowing hatred to go unanswered in the world, but from this justice we also see the power of holding the perpetrators of genocide accountable. Remembering these events only reinforces our solemn commitment to prevent those who still lie about our history and to stop the spread of hate in our own time.”

The US president added that “We must heed the urgency to listen to and care for the last living survivors, camp librators and the witnesses to the Shoah.”

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Net-anyahu cautioned that “the lessons of the Holocaust have not been learned,” and warned that hatred of Jews “still sweeps across the world... and is now directed against its state and its right to exist.”

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Synagogues throughout Queens observed Yom HaShoah.

At Young Israel of Forest Hills, where Yom HaShoah first started in 1964 and then became a national event, Rep. Anthony Weiner, State Sen. Toby Stavisky, and City Councilwoman Karen Koslowitz gathered with survivors and more than 200 people to remember the tens of thousands of articles, books, blogs and the Holocaust. From left to right: Michael Gluck, El Chomsky, Felice Sundik, Jill Solomon, Dina Spierer, Eugene Gluck, Jean Gluck, Rose Mermontin.

“From the beginning of Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day, May 2, 2011, to the end of the world, the survivors of Auschwitz, Mauthausen and Dachau, who attended the memorial, was 17 and weighed 70 pounds when Gen. George Patton’s army liberated Dachau on January 18, 1945. “They came too late,” said Zeker, who was accompanied by daughters Susie and Libu.

Eugen Gluck was also 17 while working in galana uniforms on underground tunnels in Austria in conditions as cold as 35 degrees below zero. Of the 2,500 people from his town of Saltnar, Romania, only 38 survived.

Louis Katz was working with a Christian woman in Pressburg, Slovakia, delivering food to Jews in bunkers when he was caught by the Nazis in January 1945. He was beaten so badly he was in a coma for two months. He was rescued while an inmate at the Theresienstadt concentration camp on the Czech side of the dismantled country.

An exhibit, “The Auschwitz Album,” sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Els Zborowski on behalf of the American Society for Yad Vashem and co-sponsored by Eugen and Jean Gluck, Alter and Marianne Goldstein, and Allen and Judy Hymowitz, was available to attendees.

“Germans, as a rule, did not take photographs and work very hard to keep the ‘Final Solution’ a secret,” said Dina Spierer, chairperson of the event. She asked those in attendance to “educate the next generation to love your neighbor as yourself,” saying it would make it harder for acts of genocide to occur. “Let’s teach love and responsibility and make sure this will never happen again.”

Several survivors of the Holocaust, who were children at the time of Nazi power, opened a week of Yom HaShoah commemoration by lighting six white candles at the Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie.

The crowd of some 200 was told that while each candle represented one million Jews who were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators, the program focused especially on the 1.5 million Jewish children who did not survive. The Music of the Children of the Holocaust was presented by the Reform Cantors of the North Shore Havurah of Ram- bis, and the Chicago Milwaukee Associ- ation of Synagogue Musicians.

Cantor Michael Davis, from the Lake- side Congregation for Reform Judaism, directed this year’s program. He said the childhood theme was chosen because most of the survivors today were children during the devastation. Among the liturgy, several of the songs included “Lullabies in many cultures can have a dark meaning too. The mother sings a sweet song to the baby but unburdens the entire world. The nations of the world exist whose leaders publicly deny the Holocaust it is a statement of horror framed as a lullaby.”

Volunteers, including Dr. Howard Gross, Director of Special Projects at the museum, said the commem-oration is meant to honor the memories of those who were lost as a reminder for the future.

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Poland –About 7,000 Jews marched to the former German Nazi death camp of Auschwitz on May 2 in memory of the 6 million Holocaust victims.

They held a minute's silence in tribute of a Jewish chapel that burned down and a Holmes Cereals Body in memory of the Holocaust.

Relatives of Holocaust victims lay flowers next to the names of concentration camps, during a ceremony marking the annual Holocaust Remembrance Day at the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, May 2, 2011.

Addressing the international community, the prime minister said, “Civilized people around the world – all those who say they learned the lessons of the Holocaust – they must unequivocally denounce those who call for the destruction of the Jewish state. Iran is even aiming itself with nuclear weapons to obtain that goal, and as this moment the world has not stopped it. The threat to our existence, our future, is not theoretical, cannot be brushed aside, cannot be minimalized.

“It stands right in front of us and humankind, and we must stop it.”

Iran also featured prominently during the speech delivered at the event by President Shimon Peres. He called the Islamic Republic's leadership a “danger to the entire world.”

“Has the world learned the lesson? I doubt it. Have we learned it? I believe so. Maybe the whole world know that when Israel and the Israeli Defense Forces say ‘Never again,’ we mean every word.”

At the same time, Netanyahu, who referred to Iran time and again throughout his speech, called on the world not to be indifferent to the pests posed by Tehran and hostile Islamist factions in the Middle East.

“It seems the world finds it easier to talk about the lessons of the past than identify them in the present and future,” he said.

“But we, the Jewish people, cannot ignore the lessons of the Holocaust during these days. Because there are new tyrants who are upon us, and as they deny the Holocaust during these days. Because there are new tyrants who are upon us, and as they deny the Holocaust during these days.

“More than six decades after the Holocaust, and the witnesses to the catastrophe, are upon us, and as they deny the Holocaust during these days.

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A Munich court has found John Demjanjuk guilty of war crimes and sentenced the 91-year-old former autoworker to five years in prison.

Verdict came after 93 court days, including deep affect testimony from Dutch survivor and holocaust memoirist Elie Wiesel. Wiesel was identified as the guard in question.

Wiesel's testimony was crucial as it provided the first eyewitness account of Demjanjuk's involvement in wartime crimes against humanity. Wiesel was at nearly every court date, always present in the courtroom.

The verdict was a low-key but happy life until the war ended, she recalls, staying away from danger and adopting her surrogate family.

"I was a Catholic, I admitted it," she said. "Later I would sometimes cross myself in secret that some of those names are correct.

"I was very happy to get used to.

Dina Bucher-Chen

In 1948 Dina was taken to Israel, and she was on to be Jewish people. She studied biochemistry and micro- biology, got married and raised a fam- ily. Over the years, she has devoted a large part of her time to Hadas- sah, the women's Zionist group, and helped open a shelter for women in Jerusalem. She has two children and six grandchildren.

"I love being a grandmother," she said.

She has never forgotten the knowledge of what she has been through. In response to a question, she said that if her mother's cousin had not picked her up after the war she probably would have stayed with the Bentsics, like an unknown number of orphaned Jews who were placed with gentiles by desperate parents, and raised as part of the family.

"I have stayed there and became a Catholic," she said. "People of lost life they would have told me who I was. When I went back they reminded me that they put me in the orphanage, I was Dina and a Jew. It was very hard to get used to."

The most important thing is that he was sentenced to a labor camp outside her family. After a while they checked up on me and found that she was still alive. She kept the baby, she sought out the family. At the age of 21, the baby was her son, she said. "Through the note they knew who my cousin was. The note is still kept at Yad Vashem."

Blanka Ziczer-First, her mother's cousin, whose name was on the fate-determining list, was christened Maia, or Maria, at the local church. "They took me in and baptized me. That didn't work well," Buchler-Chen said.

But that didn't work well," Buchler-Chen said after a while. Normally, Buchler-Chen said, she was always kept in the attic of the house. She would have told me who I was. When I went back she reminded me that they put me in the orphanage, I was Dina and a Jew. It was very hard to get used to.

The new deal reached between Ger- many and the Claims Conference means that the German government's con- tribution to homecare funding for Hol-ocaust survivors around the world will rise from $156 million in 2011 to about $180 million in 2012. The allocations will rise to nearly $200 million by 2014.
The Sonderberg Case

With over 50 books to his illustrious name, Nobel Prize laureate Elie Wiesel has written: “Other Teacher and Rabbi” in these unsettling times of post-Holocaust perplexities for Jew and Gentile, it is this humble account translated from the French by Catherine Temerson. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2010. 178 pp. $25.00.

Reviewed by Rabbi Israel Zoberman

The text, supplemented by personal accounts, is supplemented by the book’s protagonist, New Yorker Yedidyah (“God’s friend”), who has been a professor at the University of Paris, but who was forced to leave his native land because of his religious beliefs. He now lives in Vienna and is the author of several books, including “Our Teacher and Rabbi.”

The book’s protagonist, New Yorker Yedidyah (“God’s friend”), gives us a glimpse into the life of a writer who has successfully carried out his orders. He has written a book that is equal to the works of Voltaire, Camus and Gogol, masterfully utilizing the literary construction of tales within tales.

The Sonderberg Case is a suspenseful Holocaust novel that tells the story of a young Jewish student who was sent to Poland to work in a music store. The student, Yedidyah, is sent to Warsaw to study music and becomes involved in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943.

He meets Werner, a German officer who is in charge of the Ghetto Fighters’ House Museum. Werner tells Yedidyah about the events that took place in the Warsaw Ghetto during the war and how the Nazis used propaganda to spread anti-Semitic ideas.

Yedidyah learns about the power of music and how it can be used as a tool for propaganda. He uses his musical talents to create music that is meant to inspire and uplift the people of the Ghetto. He also meets Grand Rabbi Roosevelt, who is a leader in the Ghetto Fighters’ House Museum.

In the end, Yedidyah helps to save the Ghetto Fighters and brings an end to the war. He is praised for his bravery and courage and is able to continue his studies in music.

The Sonderberg Case is a powerful and moving story that serves as a reminder of the importance of music and the power of propaganda in times of war. It is a book that everyone should read.
HOLOCAUST-ERA SOAP FIND RAISES NEW QUESTIONS

BY SIMON STURDIE, E.P.

E ng years after Adolph Eichmann went on trial in Israel, Germany is still keeping mum on how much it knew before Mossad agents kidnapped the Nazi war criminal in Argentina in 1960.

Organizers of a Berlin exhibition, “Facing Justice – Adolph Eichmann on Trial,” say Germany’s Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND) or intelligence agency refused access to the relevant files.

“We made a request to the BND around a year ago to be able to look at these files,” said Reiner Geulen, lawyer for Eichmann’s son, Joseph Weinberger. “But Roth said Holocaust experts today believe that only a small amount of soap containing human fat was ever produced. Holocaust historian Deborah Lipstadt told The Jewish Week that there is no proof that the Nazis made Jews into soap. Jay Ipson, the museum’s founder, said that he would like to have access to the relevant files. He said the evidence presented there “gave the impression that the BND had worked at a laboratory that was involved in the production of soap that contained human fat. A bar of such soap was actually introduced as evidence in the trials. Five years ago, that soap was tested by Poland’s National Remembrance Institute, which announced that it did indeed contain human fat.”

Roth said: “The suspicion is that the government of chancellor Konrad Adenauer wanted to prevent Eichmann being captured in case he fled. Eichmann’s kidney came at a frosty time in relations with communist East Germany (GDR), which had long accused West Germany of rehabilitating old Nazis in high positions, and at a particularly tense period in the Cold War. In 1961 the GDR erected the Berlin Wall and the CIA sponsored the doomed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. The following year was the Cuban missile crisis.”

Adding fuel to the fire are accusations that the West German embassy in Buenos Aires appeared to be well aware that Eichmann was in Argentina — eight years before his capture.

“Some of the belongings found in a suitcase of Holocaust survivor Joseph Weinberger contained human fat. The museum, maintained by Misaskim’s offices for safekeeping, tested to see if it contains human fat. If it does, it would be buried with the human remains, but only step by step. We don’t know if it is real,” Mermelstein said.

But Roth said: “Interestingly, the BND notified the American authorities that there was a ‘deal behind the scenes’ between West Germany and Israel, Weber said. “Adding fuel to the fire are accusations that the West German embassy in Buenos Aires appeared to be well aware that Eichmann was in Argentina, despite its claims to the contrary after his capture.”

“Nazi diplomats got top jobs in South America (after 1945), particularly in countries run by dictators,” said Kepka.

“Every Nazi criminal on the run got their identity papers issued at the embassies, from (Josef) Mengele, the concentration camp doctor, to Eichmann. It cannot possibly be that ... Born didn’t know about it.”

Eichmann’s sons applied for passports at the Buenos Aires embassy in 1954, using their father’s identity papers. “It’s very ghoulish, but for some reason the soap was brownish in color and measured about two inches by one inch; was then locked up in Misaskim’s offices for safe-keeping.”

A video screen shows Adolf Eichmann during his trial in the exhibition “Facing Justice – Adolph Eichmann on Trial” (Dau-Produktion – Adolf Eichmann vor Gericht) at the Topography of Terror documentation center in Berlin.

This is not that spectacular, observers say, but the BND’s reluctance to release these files, and the fact that it is still blocking access to others, has raised suspicions that there was more going on. “It’s one of the key issues,” said one.”

I have seen some of the (released) files, and there is too much hidden here — it is basically just trial documents with very few interesting details,” Weber told Deutsch-landt radio this week.

The fact that Eichmann in the event kept quiet on this aspect, and on other Nazis in high positions, and at a particularly tense period in the Cold War. In 1961 the GDR erected the Berlin Wall and the CIA sponsored the doomed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. The following year was the Cuban missile crisis. “Born is on trial with Eichmann,” ran the headline of GDR newspaper Neues Deutschland, reporting on what it said was “panic” in Aede- nauer’s government.

The most prominent example was Adenauer’s chief of staff, Hans Globke, who had been involved drawing up anti-Jewish legislation under the Nazis. Spiegel quoted him as saying “to lose one’s head in a crisis of hysteria.”

“Eichmann was like a walking bomb because he knew so much ... and if he had spilled the beans he would have sent quite a few people into a spin,” Weber believes.

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BY NIR HASSON, MAARETZ

Old black-and-white footage on YouTube shows children celebrating at a Purim party in post-World War II Amsterdam. In the silent, four-minute clip posted by Yad Vashem, the kids are dressed up as kings, queens, princesses, and Arab sheikhs, marching in pairs and laughing. Nothing about them indicates they are orphans who survived the Holo- caust, which had ended only a year ear- lier.

The video was recorded in 1946 at the Children's Home of Yehoshua and Hen- nie Birenbaum, whose children received the Citation of Jewish Rescue, the first award of its kind, on Holocaust Memorial Day. The ceremony was held in the For- est of Compiegne, headquarters of the newly created OSE organization and the Jewish National Fund.

The ceremony marks the culmination of a decade-long effort to raise awareness about Jews who saved other Jews.

Speaking at his Alameda home on the 70th anniversary of his arrival, Gluckman recalled the day his family fled Germany.

He clutched a newspaper clipping that showed him wearing knee-high socks, smiling as he stood in a crowd that posed after walking onto a San Francisco pier.

The immigration station opened in 1910. It was a processing point for most of the Jews who arrived in San Francisco before it burned down and was closed forever in early October 1940, just weeks before the Gluckmans arrived. Many of the Jewish families did not have visas.

Talking of his Alameda home on the 70th anniversary of his arrival, Gluckman called the day his “re-birthday.”

He went to his office closet, pulling out a yellowing family tree that stretches back five generations.

“The Gluckmans arrived with just $3.36 and a few suitcases with clothes and paperwork. The boy arrived as Heinrich Gluckmann, but immigration officials recommended the family change the name to something easier for Americans to pronounce.

Growing up in the southern German city of Stuttgart, Gluckman was expelled from German public schools by the anti-Semitic Nuremberg laws of 1935. His family enrolled him in a Jewish school attached to the Stuttgart synagogue, but on November 9, 1938, the boy watched townsmen pull books and chairs from the school, beat up a rabbi, and burn the buildings down. It was Kristallnacht, or the Night of Shattered Glass, when Nazis ransacked Jewish homes, shops, and places of worship across Germany and Austria.

It was also the night when the Gluck- mans took their renamed son to the I. Magnin department store. His parents signed his name in German means “lucky person”.

The father was a German veteran of World War I, he said. “I’ve served my country. Noth- ing will happen to us.” He even had his old sword over the fireplace, and the Iron Cross.” Gluckman said.

The boy and his parents left Germany for Austria, then crossed through Russia to Mos- cow, where they boarded the Trans-Siberian Express for a long journey across the continent. They sailed from Korea to Japan, and left Japan on Oc-tober 4, Gluckman's 11th birthday, arriving in San Francisco nearly three weeks later.

The family of three settled on Sutter Street. Gluckman’s father found work with the I. Magnin department store. His mother became a housemaid for a wealthy family in Pacific Heights.

The last contact with Gluckman’s grandparents came years later in a post- card believed to have come from the Auschwitz concentration camp. The vague message expressed that they were doing fine.

“The father spent every waking moment searching for ways to bring his parents out,” Gluckman said.

The grandparents were murdered at Auschwitz in late 1943 or early 1944, Gluckman said. He lost 58 family mem- bers in the Holocaust.

Wiping tears as he talked, Gluckman said his name in German means “lucky man.”

He went to his office closet, pulling out a piece of cardboard where his father had drawn a family tree that stretches back to the 19th century. Gluckman keeps it updated, he said, as he used a finger to trace a line to his grandchildren.

“Hitler did not wipe out all of the Jews,” Gluckman said. “There were enough of us here to restart the family.”

First published in the San Jose Mercury News

O nce the Nazis occupied Holland, they were determined to make sure their Jewish neighbors were aware of their total power. So they sent a vague message expressing that they were doing fine.

“My parents used to sneak up to the camp headquarters, see which children were on the next transport and try to stop them from being taken,” said Sonja Birenbaum, the couple’s daughter, in a report submitted to the Dutch gov- ernment after the war. Yehoshua Biren- baum wrote: “We already succeeded, more than once, to put off children’s trans- ports, even when it seemed like a lost cause. We knew how to find... people who could help us. Once it was a notorious who designed a rescue plan, once it was a doc- tor who forbade sending the children due to a contagious disease in our hut...”

In one case, Henne Birenbaum per- suaded the camp commander that 50 of the children were actually Christians, born to Dutch soldiers and Jewish women. Equipped with forged documents, she managed to save all of them but one.

The orphanage operated until February 1944, when the Birenbaums and the re- maining children were sent to the Bergen- Belsen concentration camp.

The Birenbaums set up an orphanage there for 40 children, almost all of whom survived. They reestablished their Chil- dren’s Home in Amsterdam after the war and in 1950 immigrated to Israel with 15 orphans.

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The orphanage operated until February 1944, when the Birenbaums and the re- maining children were sent to the Bergen- Belsen concentration camp.

The Birenbaums set up an orphanage there for 40 children, almost all of whom survived. They reestablished their Chil- dren’s Home in Amsterdam after the war and in 1950 immigrated to Israel with 15 orphans.

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A new book has outraged hard-line Polish nationalists by exposing the widespread plundering of Jewish graves by their countrymen.  

BY EDWARD ROTHSTEIN, THE NEW YORK TIMES

Before the $45 million Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center opened in Skokie, two years ago, there was some urgency in completing its 65,000-square-foot building, which now stands as a stark monument in the midst of Chicago’s suburban landscape. At one time, 7,000 Jews bearing the scars of the Holocaust had lived in Skokie with their families, and they were aging. Many had contributed artifacts to the museum, and when it was just a storefront on Main Street; some had their oral histories recorded for its exhibition and their lives chronicled in the institution’s imposing companion book, “Memory and Legacy.” And though they had survived one of history’s greatest scourges, many, as we are reminded by the closing years of their biographies, did not live to see the building completed.

That is a shame, because although the museum has its flaws — some of which are shared by others of the 16 major Holocaust museums in the United States — it is an impressive achievement, its permanent historical exhibition surveying Germany’s descent from high civilization to Nazi infamy, as obsessively dragged Europe’s Jews to their deaths in ditches and crematoria.

Like the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust, which opened last fall, it will also most likely be among the last such institutions created by survivors of the cataclysm, bearing witness and offering lessons. That participation is one of the sources of the museum’s success, but strangely, too, it is also a source of weakness. In its history, in fact, this museum encapsulates one aspect of the evolution of such institutions. Refugees from horrors have always tended to congregate in particular communities, not to keep their memories alive but to allow them to be forgotten; the past would become an aspect of shared experiences that did not need memorialization, least of all as a collective memory.

Ultimately, after court challenges and demonstrations, the plans of this Nazi-in- spired group were changed, and scarcely two dozen acrylics gathered to demonstrate in Chicago. But as a concluding gallery in this museum shows, the controversy galvanized the community of survivors and reawakened old vulnerabilities. Artifacts and memories were contributed for the creation of a small museum, which opened in 1984. A speakers bureau of survivors was established to share experiences. And lobbying began, to include the planned National Socialist Party march given too much emphasis to the effects of prejudice, and sometimes prosperous lives. As their partitioned neighbors, some went on to live as Jews, some as Poles.

Their approach was amplified by others who wished to avoid making the Holocaust seem too particular, emphasizing instead general human drama. But, the lesson, most broadly, and most blandly, is that those who learn from the Holocaust must learn the importance of empathy and take a stand against injustice.

Becoming an “upstander,” not a “bystander,” is an urgent call to action. “Now it’s up to you,” its repetition rings. “We are reminded of the prevalence of genocides, we know about the Holocaust, but we are now forced to think about the dangers to our children” — after all, it is their literature explains, “provides a safe space where they can brainstorm strategies on how to speak up, whether it’s talking to a neighborhood, preju- dice, and discrimination through listening and acting of intolerance within their local and global communities.”

(Continued on page 14)
The American and International Societies for Yad Vashem held their annual Spring Luncheon in New York City. It was the largest attended Luncheon and celebrated the Societies’ 30th Anniversary of Holocaust remembrance.

The late Mr. Murray Pantirer and Mrs. Louise Pantirer were among the guests at the Societies’ 30th Anniversary Luncheon. The Societies were founded in 1981 by Mr. Eli Zborowski together with a handful of dedicated individuals who shared his vision for the perpetuation of the memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

The American and International Societies for Yad Vashem are non-profit organizations dedicated to the study, preservation, and dissemination of the history of the Jewish people and to the prevention of future genocides. They maintain a museum and research center in Jerusalem, Israel, and operate branches in various countries around the world.

The Societies’ 30th Anniversary Spring Luncheon was attended by a diverse group of guests, including members of the Pantirer family, who have been involved in the Societies’ activities since their inception. The event was hosted by Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem, and included speeches by Dr. Joanna Michlich, the 2011 Annual Spring Luncheon Guest Speaker, and Mr. Zborowski.

Seated: Lili Goldberg, Jeanne Jemal, Gabriela Shnay, Jill Finestone; standing: Nancy Chetrit, Rose Goldberg, Elise Goldberg, Debbie Cooper, Dale Goldberg, Elisa Pines, Nancy Waldenberg, and Deborah Berg. 

Marilyn Rubenstein; Dr. Joanna Michlich, 2011 Annual Spring Luncheon Guest Speaker; and Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem.
AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM

Annual Spring Luncheon on Tuesday, May 24, 2011 at the Pierre Hotel in New York City marking the 40th Anniversary. In marking this occasion it honored Mrs. Louise Pantirer Lieberman, three generations of leadership and dedication to the cause of first to hold a parlor meeting during the Societies’ formative years. The Societies have been dedicated to the cause of Holocaust survivors.

Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem, accompanied by Jean Gluck, Rebbe Ribetzin Lau, and her daughter, together with other distinguished guests.

Alan Pines; Elisa Pantirer Pines, recipient of the 2011 American Society for Yad Vashem Achievement Award; Nicole Pines Lieberman, recipient of the 2011 American Society for Yad Vashem Achievement Award; and Avi Lieberman.

Sheila Erlich Pruzansky; Anna Erlich; Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem; and Susan Erlich.

Joseph and Elizabeth Will.

Miriam Field, Selma Gruiter Horovitz, and Pearl Field.

Caroline Massel, Chair of the Young Leadership Associates; and Nicole Pines Lieberman, recipient of the 2011 American Society for Yad Vashem Achievement Award.

Nicole Pines Lieberman, Sharenne Loeffler, Tamara Loeffler, Elana Loeffler, Danielle Schwebel, and Ilisa Klapper.
devastation unfolded. lives that continued to be lived while the events that led to its destruction, and the way we can reconstruct as much of the woven together into a broad and deep intersecting and combining, are then an end. These threads of information, left behind. Each fragment tells its own of people who went through the vortex of places – government and private works of art. Despite their wide dispersions, it’s of paramount importance that we dedicate ourselves to continuing the process of gathering fragments. During the Shoah, an entire world was shattered. The remaining scattered fragments vary infinitely in size, shape and texture – from documents to diaries, testimonies to artifacts, photographs to works of art. Despite their wide dispersions, they can still be found in many places – government and private archives, libraries, and even in the homes of people who went through the vortex of the Shoah, and members of their families left behind. Each fragment tells its own tale and, like a thread, has a beginning and an end. These threads of information, intersecting and combining, are then woven together into a broad and deep tapestry that depicts a multifaceted story stretching over time and space. In this way we can reconstruct as much of the shattered Jewish world as possible, the events that led to its destruction, and the lives that continued to be lived while the devastation unfolded.

Mrs. Ilona Lukacsi lived in Rakoscsaba (now part of Budapest), Hungary, where she, her husband Jozsef, a shoemaker, and her sister Jolán took responsibility for saving the family of Ede Hajos, a Jewish worker in Jozsef’s shoe-making workshop. Jozsef made the brave decision to help the Hajos family, and brought the family to his home in Rakoscsaba. He was required to serve in the Hungarian military as a conscript and was gone for long stretches of time, leaving the day-to-day care and protection of the Hajos family to his wife and sister-in-law.

While Ede Hajos was taken by the Nazis to the forced labor camps in 1942 or 1943, his family was saved thanks to the heroic actions of Jozsef, Ilona and Jolán, which included hiding and caring for Hajos’ wife Mrs. Ede Hajos (Hajos Ilona), their Margit Grunwald, and his daughters Eva and Enika and her sisters Klara and Erzsebet Grunwald during the war. The Jewish community concern for the Hajos family enabled them to survive unharmed. Ede wasn’t as fortunate. He died in the concentration camp.

This honor is bestowed posthumously to the two sisters. Ilona passed away in 1976 and Jolán in 1995. The honor of Righteous Among the Nations recognizes those people who upheld moral and human values in the midst of a moral vacuum. This triptych attempts to convey the gratitude of the State of Israel and the Jewish people to those who stood by their side during a time of persecution and great tragedy. Those recognized receive a medal and a certificate of honor, and their names are inscribed on the Wall.

| YAD VASHEM RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS AWARD PRESENTED IN NEW YORK |
|-----------------|----------------|
| BY MADELYN COHEN |----------------|

On April 27, 2011, the American Society for Yad Vashem and the Consulate General of Israel in New York presented the prestigious Righteous Among the Nations award to Mrs. Maria Rabb, in honor of her late mother, Mrs. Jozsef Lukacsi (Lukacsi Josefnejse), nee Ilona Klimes, and late aunt, Mrs. Laszlo Lukacsi (Lukacsi Laszloje), nee Jolan Klimes, for saving Jewish lives during the Holocaust.

Maria Rabb with the Righteous Among the Nations award.

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A trove of papers and photographs documenting the lives of Holocaust victims and survivors includes notable names like Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel and former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. But Benzion Baumrind’s name might have stayed forgotten to his descendants without the records kept by a humanitarian aid agency.

This photo provided by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee shows a group of French Jewish refugee children who arrived from Marseilles via Spain to the Bosnian train station in Lisbon in 1943. A genealogist discovered Baumrind, one of 6 million Jews killed during the Holocaust, was in her family with one stray document buried in a database of historic papers and photos kept by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. With over 500,000 names and more than 1,000 photographs, the searchable collection documents the relief organization’s vast efforts during World War II and the postwar era in 24 countries, from China and Japan to the Dominican Republic and Bolivia.

The records, being made available online for the first time, open a singular view into the lives of survivors that the JDC aided during and after the war.

“We can get better pictures of the actual everyday social life in that time,” said Kenneth Waltzer, director of the Jewish Studies Department at Michigan State University, said of the collection.

In 1943, the organization’s archive has been largely inaccessible to the public, kept at a private storage location short subway ride from Manhattan.

Volunteers entered names in a database for over a year; rare, fragile documents were scanned into the computer system. Users of the site can submit names to identify people they recognize in the photographs, which may be later added to captions.

“A website like this is where history meets technology,” said Gideon Taylor, an executive with the New York-based committee. “It’s taking history out of the dusty files... and bringing it out into the community.”

The committee plans to put even more documents from its archive online later this summer.

The project is one of a growing number around the world aimed at making available on the Internet primary records about the Holocaust.

“It is a world phenomenon that’s launched by the technology,” said David M. Klieiman, president of Heritage Muse Inc., a New York-based genealogy technology firm.

The collection offers glimpses of the lives of children who survived the Holocaust to become moral and spiritual leaders, political and cultural artists.

There was the 16-year-old teenager who would become an author and one of the world’s most esteemed Holocaust writers — Elie Wiesel — listed on a document naming 426 orphaned boys from the Theresienstadt concentration camp who were taken to Paris by the committee in 1945. Also on the list: a future Chief Rabbi of Israel and one of the youngest surviving prisoners of Buchenwald, Israel Meir Lau, who was 7 years old when he was liberated.

Begin, the future Israeli prime minister, is named on a list of 9,000 Polish Jewish refugees receiving the agency’s aid in Vilna, Lithuania, in 1940.

Another person named in the files is Peter Max, the famed New York artist whose cosmic-col- orous wares bear the signature style of the hippie 1960s.

For him, “it’s amazing that people [had] the will to organize, to create organizations to help people who fled other countries... We had to figure out how to make the best of it,” says Max, who was 6 months old when his family, the Finkelesteins, fled Berlin and found safe haven in Shanghai, where the JDC also had a relief operation.

A researcher with 30 years of experience in genealogy, even she was surprised when she came across a document that connected her to Baumrind, who lived in the Polish town where her father was from.

That document, a list of Polish Jews expelled by the Nazi German government and living in the border town of Zossen, Poland, between 1938 and 1939, showed that her great-aunt was named as Baumrind’s contact in the United States. It was a tantalizing clue that would help her document him as a cousin.

“My discovery allows him to have a place in somebody’s memory,” she said.

The committee, commonly known as the JDC, was founded in 1914 to help Jews in need in war-ravaged Europe and Palestine. During World War II, it provided assistance to refugees from Lithuania to Japan and helped Jews escape Europe by booking them on ships headed for the Americas.

Claus Hirsch, 76, of New York, fled Berlin with his parents and found asylum in Shanghai and had to rely on the Joint for hot meals. As a volunteer, he said, he was surrounded by the past as he was creating it in the database, it has been an emotional experience.

“It’s nice to see a name on a list,” he said, before he began to weep. “I saw names of people I had known years ago. And I hadn’t thought about them in 30 or 40 years.”

TROVE OF HISTORIC RECORDS OF HOLOCAUST GOES ONLINE

BY CRISTIAN SALAZAR and RANDY HERSCHAFT, AP

This page provided by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee shows a hand-drawn Monopoly from Theresienstadt, an area of northwestern Czechoslovakia where the Nazis established a ghetto for the Jews of Bohemia and Moravia.

At ages eight and 10, Micha and Dan became intimately familiar with death. Over 35,000 people perished in Theresienstadt while another 84,000 were sent on to be murdered in the Nazi death camps further east.

Disease, famine, and sub-human conditions aside, the camp’s prisoners did everything they could to make the best of it, including playing games.

“Hand-drawn Monopoly from Theresienstadt”

During the recent trip to Israel, the brothers still had the games they brought to the camp — a piece of everyday social life in the hellish environment, says Shacher.

It was a way to maintain a sense of humanity and purpose in a hellish environment, says Shacher.

The family eventually made their way to Israel to begin a new life, and with them they brought their ghetto Monopoly set. Over the course of years the boys would occasionally play the game and continued to hold on to it as a reminder of what they lived through.

Hand-drawn Monopoly from Theresienstadt

In this April 23, 2011, photo, Claus Hirsch recalls as he is interviewed at the American Jewish Committee offices in New York, Hirsch is one of the volunteers entering data for JDC.

Fifteen years ago, the brothers decided to donate the game to Israel’s Holocaust Museum, where it now sits on permanent display. The reasons were simple, according to Micha.

“Because there are many, many people who think that there was not a Holocaust — we had a very happy family before the war and after the war there was nothing,” he says.

 Micha’s younger brother Dan says the passage of time has made him reflect more about the past and the importance of memory. The game, he said, is an important symbol.

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BY LIAT COLLINS, THE JERUSALEM POST

Three statements come to mind whenever I write about the Holocaust. The first I can attribute to Elie Wiesel: The Holocaust is not a crime against humanity, but a crime against the Jews. The second was told to me by writer Haim Guri: “Israel was created not because of the Shoah but in spite of it.” I don’t remember who told me the third, but it is no less valuable: Had there been a Jewish state in the 1930s, the Holocaust might not have happened at all, or would have been on a much-reduced scale.

Do I get tired of emphasizing these three points? Of course. But I can’t bring myself to stop. As history becomes replaced by narratives and universalism sets the tone, these lessons seem set to disappear. They are being transplanted by more fashionable inclusive versions: The Holocaust does not belong to the Jews, but to anyone who has been the victim of violence; and Israel grew out of the Nazi atrocities and not because of any intrinsic right of the Jewish people to their own land. Sadly, it is often Jews in the Diaspora who fail to internalize the lessons of the Shoah in terms of true anti-Semitism around the globe, it is the answer. That is why a year is seen as Holocaust Remembrance Day. To be more precise, the world marks it once – on January 27, the day Auschwitz was liberated. For the past few years it has become a set feature on the United Nations calendar. Unfortunately, for the rest of the year the world body raises motion after motion turning Israel into the source of all evil. Its protection of global peace and well-being is so advanced that having finally suspended the use of nuclear weapons, it is a perfect message for the Twitter generation. With the perspective of barely three months – during which the changed landscape – as more than 100 crises – Obama takes the most epic event in more than four millennia of Jewish history and reduces it to its lowest common denominator, and then distorts it some more.

The world is marking 50 years since the Trial of Adolf Eichmann, the taskmaster who gave us terms like “the barrenness of evil.” Have we learned its lessons? It doesn’t seem so when, under the same principle of universal justice, Israeli leaders cannot travel to places like Britain for fear of being arrested for “war crimes.” As the Shoah becomes more universalized, it is being dumbed down – the greater the attempts to apply it to all, the less relevant it becomes. The Holocaust, as Wiesel noted, was about the systematic attempt to eradicate the Jews, their religion, and their culture. Let us not change it. We can and should learn from it but we can’t change it. The Shoah was not about the Palestinians, but you wouldn’t know it from the imagery that floats around on “human rights fatalities” and among their land-based supporters. Historians of the Shoah closed ranks on the likely unilateral declaration of independence, they seem to grow further from each other rather than closer. The Jewish state, as Guri noted, would have grown faster and stronger had there been a Jewish state pre-1948; the state would have been smaller and shorter had there been a Jewish state to offer sanctuary. Rightly, the topic of the Holocaust in Arab schools has been the focus of heated debates.

For many to Palestinian Media Watch, the union of UNRWA workers in Palestine with the exclusion of their Arab Jerusalem component as a “victims” and “perpetrators” of the experience is “the ultimate expression of evil.”

BY AL BIENENFELD

The best of people

In Sierra Leone conditions were harsh, living in a wooden structure with a dirt floor, drawing water from a well. Nonetheless the family survived and ultimately made it to America where my father’s unwavering support, through the 1930s, the Holocaust, the war crimes. He might have been surprised by the burning of Torah scrolls in the local synagogue this month, but Jews elsewhere in the world have gone to Duke and Harvard. As a young man, he never had to do without. We were a happy family, able to spend time reading books and going to the theater, as well as going to work. Grandparents have gone to Duke and Harvard. As a result of their lives I know what it means to be a Jew. He just took me long time to figure it out.

I believe I come from the best of people. My family thought this, but the difference is young age. The investment had a name, and he never had to do without. We were a happy family, able to spend time reading books and going to the theater, as well as going to work. Grandparents have gone to Duke and Harvard. As a result of their lives I know what it means to be a Jew. He just took me long time to figure it out.

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NEW BNEI BRAK CENTER TO FOCUS ON HAREDI-STYLE SHOAH COMMEMORATION

BY YAIR ETINGER, HAARETZ

A few months ago, bulldozers demolished
the second generation — together.

In fact, the Kiddush Hashem Archive is a long-standing Haredi enterprise dedicated to commemorating the Holocaust. It was established by the late Rabbi Moshe Prager and is run today by Rabbi David Prager. However, it is actually located in a series of places scattered around Bnei Brak. The planned facility is thus a break-through, to be located in one place in the center of the city.

A investment of NIS 7 million to NIS 8 million, the building is slated to serve as a museum for the public at large and a facility for the study of the Holocaust, replete with a new archive, a library, and a memorial wing. Since 1964, the Kiddush Hashem has mainly collected thousands of names submitted in 1956 by a Simcha Perlstein, where name collection is particularly difficult because Jews were often rounded up, shot, and dumped in mass graves without any documentation. The names of Jews killed at German death camps, on the other hand, often remain because of meticulous Nazi records.

Hugging his cousin for the first time, the gray-haired Shikler said the joy of the moment was mixed with sadness over those who couldn’t witness it. He, too, knew lit-tle about his family history.

Of their grandparent’s five children, two perished in the Holocaust, Shikler’s fa-ther came to Israel, Tamir’s mother died in Russia, and another sibling emigrated to the United States, never to be heard of again.

The two cousins live an hour from each other — Tamir in Tel Aviv, Shikler in Haifa. They say they have much to share and much to learn.

“We are connected by blood,” Shikler said, in a scratchy voice. “All you need to do is listen and it all starts flowing out.”

Tamir’s daughter said the situation would be transformed.

“All of a sudden we have a family tree. Until now it was just one branch,” she said. “I don’t know what you do with fam-ily because it is really strange and new for us.”

Some commonalities Gorko sees in children of survivors are feelings of being separate or “different” from the rest of the world; having an “escape plan” and security issues; having food or hoarding is-sues; and struggling with guilt and pain for the suffering of their parents. Both Forman and Golombek grew up feeling “different.” Though her father didn’t speak about his trauma, Forman felt it on a daily basis.

“I know that the Holocaust left its mark on us,” said Forman. “We will try to help our (Houston) survivors any way we can.”

“My parents pushed for education, and good Jewish spouses, it was so important to them and I didn’t want to disappoint them,” Korman said. “Their greatest happiness was seeing their family expand with grandchil-dren and great-grandchildren.”

Though many said their parents did not lose faith in God, some, like Golombek, experienced their parents’ feelings of “an angry and vengeful God.”

As Holocaust survivors are now elderly, descendants are focused on education.

“My own concern is seeing that some-how, authentically, our parents’ stories are not lost once they die,” said Sandy Lessig, a co-leader of Generations After. “We also want to give our (Houston) survivors any way we are able.”

ISRAELI COUSINS UNITED BY HOLOCAUST DATABASE

(Continued from page 10)

mournful activities. These activities ultimately lead us to the first time — it was always the elephant in the room. We didn’t discuss what our parents went through and how it affected us. When I grew up, I started to question who we were in Israel discourse, that the Haredi narrative was not included in Holocaust memorials,” said Forman to Eizenberg, who devoted her dissertation at Bar-Ilan University to Prager. She recalls that he had reserva-tions about the information she gathered and other institutions on ghetto rebellions led by Zionists-affiliated organizations. He felt such a tendency distorted the role and contribution in the ultra-Orthodox community’s at-itude toward the Holocaust.

“At some point in the mid-'90s, I decided to go to Yad Vashem, where it's more open and accessible,” Forman said. “It definitely feels like I cracked a mystery and now we have a better picture of our family,” said Ilana Tamir. “I feel like I gave my mother a gift, I gave her a family. We had a hole in our hearts, and we disavow a family or blood re-lationships with anyone — and sud-denly a family was born.”

C H O M E R-A VROHOLCE

“Tamar has always refused to go to any of the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem. But now she is interested in going to the Holyland to be with her family.”
THE MEMORY OF HOLOCAUST, FORTIFIED

BY ISABEL KERSHNER, THE NEW YORK TIMES

As millions of Israelis paused in reflection on May 2 at the sound of the sirens marking Holocaust Remembrance Day, the Internet here was buzzing. The first online database of the names of all Jewish victims of the Holocaust, containing more than half a million names of victims lost by Holocaust victims, many in Eastern Europe, had just been uploaded as a first step toward restitution.

After years of quiet diplomacy that accomplished little, organizers of the new project, financed by the Israeli government, said the idea was to harness technology in the struggle for restitution and to make as much noise as possible.

“This is an activist approach,” said Bobby Brown, executive director of the Holocaust Era Asset Restitution Taskforce, known by its acronym, Project Heart. “We believe there are no secrets anymore about the Holocaust.”

Listing to the thousands of public drives in the past, like the campaign for Soviet Jewry and the setting up by survivors of Jewish German victims by Swiss banks, Mr. Brown said the issue of property restitution is too big to be out there on Twitter and Facebook, although negotiations with countries where properties are located “are not to be made public right away.”

The project, a nonprofit global campaign of the Jewish Agency for Israel, a quasi-governmental body, has set up offices in Milan and Brussels. This is the first worldwide list of property confiscated, looted or forcibly sold during the Holocaust to be made public by survivors and their heirs. Compiled from hundreds of European archives, including tax records and voter registries, it includes real estate and land, movable property like art and jewelry, and intangible personal property like stocks, bonds, and savings accounts.

THE SONDERBERG CASE

The project has already invited potential claimants to submit their names to the Web site, which is in 13 languages. Many of the properties in the database are listed with the names of the original owners, and sometimes their professions, information culled from the public records to help potential claimants find a match. Some 650,000 pieces of property were uploaded in a week, and Mr. Brown hopes that the list will grow to a million by the end of the year. About 3.3 million Jews lived in Poland alone; he notes that many of these lost their family in the Holocaust.

Other Jewish organizations have dealt with restitution for decades. The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany has focused on Germany and Austria. The World Jewish Restitution Organization was established in 1993 to focus on Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Communist governments. There has been some progress in the issue of community-owned property, but none on personal property, according to Mr. Brown.

The subject of restitution has long been a delicate one between governments, and this is the first time that the Israeli government has become involved, providing Project Heart with an annual budget of more than $2.5 million for three years.

WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING COMMEMORATED IN EVOCATIVE BOOK

(Continued from page 4) The Germans. In 1942, Czerniakow committed suicide, never to be able to fulfill German demands.

By then, the ghetto’s population consisted of a small class of Jewish professionals, police, and lawyers, a much larger group of Jews struggling to survive on a bare subsistence diet and a smaller group of those who could get by. The Jewish Fighting Force, which organized the uprising, was formed on July 28, 1942, just as the greatest deportation in the ghetto’s history got under way. Its top leaders were Mordechai Anielewicz, Mordecai Tenenbaum, Joseph Kaplan, Yitzhak (Ateek) Zuckerman, and Zivia Lubetkin. Only Zuckerman survived.

The odds against them were overwhelming, given the paucity of weapons and ammunition at their disposal. The Polish underground donated a small cache of 49 pistols and 50 grenades. Polish army deserters filled in the gaps.

As late as 1981, Richard Breitman, the museum’s director, the author succeeded nonetheless in connecting three pivotal covenants in a delicate balance. The Sonderberg Case will long echo in a reawarded reader.

Rabbi Israel Zoberman is spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Chaverim in Virginia Beach.
BY AMNON RUBINSTEIN,
THE JERUSALEM POST

Eiván, Auschwitz, the Pinelli brothers all explain why, for Jews, the Nazi era is more significant than any other.

The painter Max Liebermann was a lucky man. He died in the third year of the Nazi era, on February 13, 1935. The Nazi era began in January 1933, when Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany. Liebermann was a world-famous German Jewish painter, the father of German impressionism and of the Berliner secession school. He was a committed Berliner, born and bred in the capital. He lived with his wife Martha in the Pariser Platz, in an apartment overlooking the Brandenburg Gate (when asked for his address, he would say: “I live in Berlin,” first turning to the right). He was born in the same house his father and grandfather were born. In the Liebermanns also had a summer house in fashionable Wannsee district — not far from another Jewish-owned villa where the infamous Final Solution conference took place some years later. When he saw from his window the Nazis’ black and red flag, he commented: “I cannot eat as much as I would like to vomit.”

In the first year of the Nazi era, he resigned from the presidency of the Prussian Arts Academy to protest the academy’s decision to exhibit works by Jewish artists. None of the members of the Academy showed any interest or sympathy. He lived to see the nazification of Germany against Jews by the new regime, but passed away before it enacted the Nuremberg laws, and while many Germans still believed the Nazis were a passing phase. Liebermann was indeed a lucky man. Before he died, he wrote the then-mayor of Tel Aviv, Meir Dizengoff: “With much sorrow, I realize that I woke up from the dream of assimilation into a nightmare.”

In the sixth year of the Nazi era, he was forced to sell the Wannsee villa to a German Aryan. In the twelfth year, at age 85 and incapacitated by a stroke, he was told that the police would come and deport him to the Terezin concentration camp. They came in the afternoon with a stretcher to carry her out. Despite her weakness, she managed to commit suicide by swallowing barbiturates before they dumped her on the stretcher. Her last words were: “I cannot live in Germany, at least I can die here.”

The Nazi era is certainly more relevant to mankind than any other. This was the era in which the word “not” was struck off the commandment: “thou shall not kill.” And, therefore, it divides human history into “before” and “after” more significantly than any other time. To Jews, this division is especially relevant: the Holocaust was not a road accident, but a culmination of stages of hatred, persecution and brutality. To be a Jew after the Holocaust is different from the days preceding the Nazi era. True, Jews were not the only victims of the murderous Nazi offensive: millions of non-Jews — including Germans — were also killed. But all Jews were by definition sentenced to die because of their birth. And in this they were alone.

And there is another important distinction for Jews, the stepping stones of the Nazi era were not confined to the horrific events of World War II, but extended to events which took place before and after the war.

From a Jewish point of view, Eiván is as relevant as Auschwitz. In July 1938, President Roosevelt convened an international conference in Eiván-les-Bains to deal with the plight of “refugees” — the word Jewish was not mentioned in the invitation. The conference ended with a flat refusal to give shelter to these refugees from Germany and Austria. These people belonged to the elite of Europe and would have enriched the arts, industry, and science of any host country. They were refused shelter only because of their Jewishness.

Europe at the time was full of homeless refugees, but only the Jewish displaced persons (DPs) were refused shelter. When they went to their former home countries, they found Jew-less and infested by a population competing in pogroms in a few cases. Great Britain closed the gates of Palestine to these refugees, thus preventing them from joining the Jewish Yishuv — the only community ready to give them shelter. And one cannot forget the circles in the pre-reconciliation Vatican, which encouraged Catholic monasteries not to return Jewish children — who were sheltered there during the war — to their families. There were many such cases, and we shall never know how many children were not claimed back because all their relatives had perished. The most notorious case was the refusal of a French monastery to hand over the two Pinelli brothers to their Jewish relatives. It took a long time for the relatives to get custody of the two orphans. Only in 1953 — the 20th year of the Nazi era — were the orphans allowed to join their cousins in Israel.

These stepping stones — Eiván, Auschwitz, the Pinellis — all explain why, for Jews, the Nazi era is more significant than any other.

The writer is a Professor of Law at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya, a former minister of education and Knesset member, as well as the recipient of the 2006 Israel Prize in Law.
The Germans confiscated from the Jewish people every violin, viola, cello they could and we are talking about thousands, gone with the wind," said Amnon Weinstein, working amongst the dozens of violins and bows hanging from the walls and ceilings of his unique workspace.

Weinstein is a luthier, an artisan and craftsman of string instruments. He is a relic of a bygone era, whose moustache and spectacles do little to hide his eccentric streak. He says almost all of the survivors who played in the concentration camps owed their lives to their instruments.

"The Germans needed them, to cheat the Jewish people. In the camps, if somebody was playing the violin nobody would think the next door was a gas chamber. That was the plan of how German and Austrian instruments were used to conspire with the war," said Weinstein.

As news of the Nazis' savage campaign against the Jews of Europe reached Palestine, these musicians refused to continue playing German instruments, said Weinstein.

"People who played on German instruments either broke them or burned them, and some came to my father telling him they would throw them away if he did not buy them," said Weinstein. After Weinstein's initial lecture, he launched a radio appeal for people to continue forward with more stories about "Holocaust violins."

Only then did he start receiving instruments that were played in camps, and the true search for survivors began. Scouring warehouses, antiques markets, and violin shops, he found violins belonging to Jewish artisans in Poland and to Klezmer families in central Europe, from the ghettos in Warsaw and concentration camps such as Auschwitz.

Each of their violins, some of which bear the Star of David, tell another extraordinary story. The luther claims he can identify a violin's history from the scuffs and scars on it.

"Today I am like a policeman. I can identify which one suffered, which didn't. Those which were in the Holocaust came in horrible condition, so the workshop made the decision to make a concert instrument out of each one," said Weinstein, who now safeguards more than 26 of these instruments.

By his own estimation, he has volunteered the equivalent of almost $200,000 in labor on this project, but the more time passes, the harder finding these instruments becomes.

Following the end of World War II in 1945, very few survivors came to Palestine. They could not fathom another war, and so a large percentage of them went to the United States, Weinstein said.

Upon arrival, the majority of them "put the violin in the attic and forgot about it," he said.

Violins, like memories, faded in the decades following the war as years passed and generations that followed knew little about the instruments left behind. Many of them were thrown away, but some found their way to antique dealers and violin makers, where Weinstein tracked them down.

"It is a very complicated period that is impossible to understand, impossible to explain, but the sound of the violin is taking us back to this time. Today it is difficult to convince people something like this happened. This is our mission, that everybody will understand a little bit the friction. The violin is a friction, but you can hear a sound and it is making life a little bit more understandable," he said.

The "Violins of Hope" have been played by Jewish Holocaust victims and survivors who played in the concentration camps, and to Klezmer families in central Europe, from the ghettos in Warsaw and concentration camps such as Auschwitz.

"Holocaust violins."

For more information, or for help with proper wording for the bequest to ASV, please contact us at 212-220-4304.