

# MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE



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## THE PATH OF MEMORY AND TRIBUTE: FROM VICTIMS TO HEROES

On November 1, 2005, the United Nations General Assembly established Resolution 60/7 and designated January 27 as an annual International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust and in honor of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi death camp, by the Soviet Army. This day is observed with ceremonies and activities at United Nations headquarters in New York and at United Nations offices around the world. Since its inception, this day has inspired educational programs globally.

We are the last generation to have the privilege of learning about the Holocaust from survivors and liberators. As the distance from the events of the Holocaust increases, the obligation for an international day of remembrance is more relevant than ever before. With the inauguration of January 27 as International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Holocaust commemoration and remembrance extend beyond the Jewish community to the global community. It is encouraging that this global initiative continues to impact students, educators and communities around the world. This continuity secures Holocaust remembrance, education and memory.

We also note that on April 27, 1951, the Israeli Knesset designated the 27th day of the Hebrew month of Nissan as the national day for remembering and commemorating the Holocaust. This date was named *Yom Hashoah veHagvurah*, Day of Martyrdom, Heroism and Bravery, to emphasize the bravery of that period and not just the destruction.

It is important to realize that the rationale of choosing these two dates (January 27 and the 27th of Nissan), and of what they commemorate, underscores the importance of remembering the two starkly different yet equally important components of the Holocaust. We remember those who were killed, but we also remember the heroic acts taken by the victims at that time, and the heroism of rescuers and liberators.

This distinction is captured by the recent array of programs presented by Marlene W. Yahalom, PhD, director of education at the American Society for Yad Vashem. Through these programs we remember and honor those who liberated

Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi death camp; the victims of the Holocaust; and the rescuers who helped save Jewish lives during this horrific period in Jewish and world history.

Dr. Yahalom was invited to present professional development opportunities to raise aware-

*Hashoah veHagvurah* in 1951, and to the United Nations establishing January 27 as International Holocaust Remembrance Day in 2005.

The impact of these days combined encapsulates the journey of Holocaust remembrance over the years. We recite the traditional *Kaddish* for Holocaust victims, we honor the bravery and heroism of Holocaust victims, and we pay tribute to the rescuers and liberators. Holocaust commemoration has evolved from victimhood to bravery, heroism and survival.

The American Society for Yad Vashem continues to offer virtual programs and online student-centered teaching strategies to meet the changing landscape of classroom learning without compromising our outreach, impact and content. Through Dr. Yahalom's presentations of traveling exhibits developed by Yad Vashem, students and communities nationwide learned about the victims ("No Child's Play"), the perpetrators ("Architecture of Murder: the Auschwitz-Birkenau Blueprints"), and the rescuers ("Besa: A Code of Honor"). We succeeded in offering these exhibits to a range of audiences this past month alone: 274 students, 78 educators, and audiences of no fewer than 370 during our community events.

Participants in these virtual programs have offered valuable feedback indicating the strong impact of these resources and presentations. The feedback we received included comments indicating that "this program was informative about a story that is not well known. I found it to be powerful and moving. Thank you for

sharing this experience of the Muslim Albanians who saved Jews during the darkest hours of humanity"; "... this exhibit taught me about the experience of children and how brave they were during such hard times"; and "I never realized how evil can be so horrible to disregard all human emotion and carry out such unprecedented crimes against the Jews."

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### In the Camps

As soon as they rose to power in 1933, the Nazis established concentration camps to incarcerate and abuse thousands of "undesirables", including many Jews. During World War II, many additional camps - concentration, labor, and transit - were set up throughout Europe. These camps housed hundreds of thousands of prisoners, many of whom were murdered. In the labor camps, many hundreds of thousands of Jews and non-Jews were put to hard labor. Transit camps, such as Westerbork and Drancy, were provisional collection points for Jews slated for deportation to extermination camps.



Left: Toward the end of the war, children were transferred from the Gurs camp to Chateau Front, a residence in southern France belonging to the Canadian organization.

The doll Gerti belonged to Eva Modell of St. György, Transylvania. Gerti accompanied Eva to the Terezin and Krasnoyarsk camps in Hungary, where she was interned with her mother during the war. The doll was Eva's best friend, and the only witness to the good times enjoyed by the family before the war, as well as the hard times that followed. Eva immigrated to pre-state Israel in 1945.

Goodbye, my doll Gerti!

I am leaving you with a heavy heart. I don't know whether it is right for me to give you to a strange lady from Yad Vashem. You will continue your existence among the sad possessions and memories of people or children who are strangers to you... Maybe you'll be able to tell the people of today, and particularly the children, what you saw and where you were with me - a sad story, but also a cheerful one, because I survived... Dear Gerti, you will be the last witness of a dreadful childhood. May no child anywhere go through anything like that again... Maybe some day I'll come to visit you; the only grave I have for my father and grandfather and grandmother is Yad Vashem. And perhaps my children and grandchildren will come, and then you won't be alone there! Maybe you'll meet toys and dolls who were in worse places, but survived all the same. My dear doll! Today you have become an inseparable part of my people, which has risen from fire and ashes like a phoenix. You will always be in my heart.



Eva

Excerpt from a farewell letter written by Eva Modell-Haimowitz to her doll Gerti before presenting it to Yad Vashem.

Panel from the traveling exhibit "No Child's Play."

ness about the Holocaust to students and educators on the West Coast, in the tri-state area and in South Florida. In connection with International Holocaust Remembrance Day, students and educators learned about the path of creating Holocaust commemoration — from the early efforts by the Israeli Rabbinate in 1949 identifying *Asara B'Tevet* as a day to memorialize Holocaust victims, to the Knesset designating *Yom*



# THE PATH OF MEMORY AND TRIBUTE: FROM VICTIMS TO HEROES

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Our traveling exhibits offer a view of the Holocaust through an additional lens — the importance of verifying and authenticating Holocaust documentation to safeguard this history from efforts to minimize this event through denial and distortion.

In line with this paramount concern and obligation to ensure the accuracy of information and instruction on the Holocaust, on January 26, 2007, in addition to International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 61/255 to specifically address Holocaust denial and distortion.

Resolution 61/255 articulates that it “Condemns without any reservation any denial of the Holocaust” and “Urges all Member States unreservedly to reject any denial of the Holocaust as a historical event, either in full or in part, or any activities to this end.” The United Nations emphasizes, through this resolution, that by “ignoring the historical fact of those terrible events, [we] increase the risk they will be repeated.”

Through the verification and professional review of the artifacts, content and documentation of these exhibits, Yad Vashem developed three meaningful and path-breaking traveling exhibits to honor and pay tribute to Holocaust victims and rescuers and teach about the perpetrators.



Panel from the traveling exhibit “Besa: A Code of Honor.”

These exhibits were displayed at the United Nations to commemorate International Holocaust Remembrance Day in 2006, 2008 and 2010, respectively.

**No Child’s Play:** This exhibit opens a window into the world of children during the Holocaust. It does not focus on history, statistics or descriptions of physical violence. Instead, images of the toys, games, artwork, diaries and poems displayed here highlight some of the personal stories of the children, to provide a glimpse into their lives during the Holocaust. This exhibit tells the story of the struggle of these children to hold on to life. It describes their attempts to main-

tain their childhood and youth by creating for themselves a different reality from that which surrounded them.



An image from the exhibit “Architecture of Murder: the Auschwitz-Birkenau Blueprints.”

**Besa: A Code of Honor:** This exhibit is about the Righteous Among the Nations — non-Jews who risked their lives saving Jews during the Holocaust. It is composed of portraits and text about Muslim families in Albania who saved Jews during the Holocaust, converging between two seemingly opposed worlds. Prior to World War II, some 200 Jews lived in Albania. In 1943, the Albanian population refused to comply with Nazis’ orders to turn over lists of Jews residing in Albania. The remarkable assistance afforded to the Jews was grounded in Besa, a code of honor. Besa means literally “to keep the promise.” One who acts according to Besa is someone who keeps his or her word, someone to whom one can trust one’s life and the lives of one’s family. Impressively, there were more Jews in Albania at the end of the war than before. This very human story is told through these sensitive portraits that combine to highlight a little-known but, remarkable aspect of the Holocaust.

**Architecture of Murder: The Auschwitz-Birkenau Blueprints:** This exhibit displays images of original maps, drawings, photographs of the planning stages of Auschwitz, and the original architectural blueprints of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The original plans include images of the construction of Auschwitz-Birkenau that were mostly prepared in the fall of 1941. The plans were found in 2008 in an abandoned apartment in Berlin and purchased by the German media corporation Axel Springer, the publisher of the newspaper *Bild*. They were eventually given to Yad Vashem, and will be preserved there for perpetuity.

Our upcoming Arfa Conference, taking place on March 7, 2021, is an additional resource and effective program to meet the obligation of ensuring the accuracy of information and instruction on the Holocaust through professional

development programs. The theme this year is *History Repeats Itself: Making Sure Our Students Are Listening*. Our speakers this year are

Elisha Wiesel, son of Elie Wiesel, z”l, and Shulamit Imber, director of pedagogy of the International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem.

In 1999, the Arfa Conference was created by Caroline Massel, executive board member and chair of our Education Committee. It is generously supported by the Barbara Gutfreund Arfa Endowment Fund for Holocaust Education, established by the Arfa and Massel families. This conference, organized by Dr. Marlene W. Yahalom, director of education of the American Society, has proven to be a strong vehicle to promote the mission of Holocaust remembrance and memory through education over the years.

Our charge as Holocaust educators includes that we teach our students the responsibility of accurately recording historical events, as a way to honor the memory of the victims and to safeguard against the denial and distortion of the facts of these events. This process calls for us to explore and introduce to our students how historical events may be presented and re-presented over time. We must show students the how to retrieve and verify information from various kinds of resources available to them.

Please visit our website for more information about our upcoming Arfa Conference, and updates and schedules of upcoming events through the 2020–2021 school year.

BY MARLENE W. YAHALOM, PhD,  
Director of Education

For more information about the American Society for Yad Vashem’s education work, outreach and virtual professional development opportunities, contact Marlene W. Yahalom at [mwy@yad-vashemusa.org](mailto:mwy@yad-vashemusa.org)



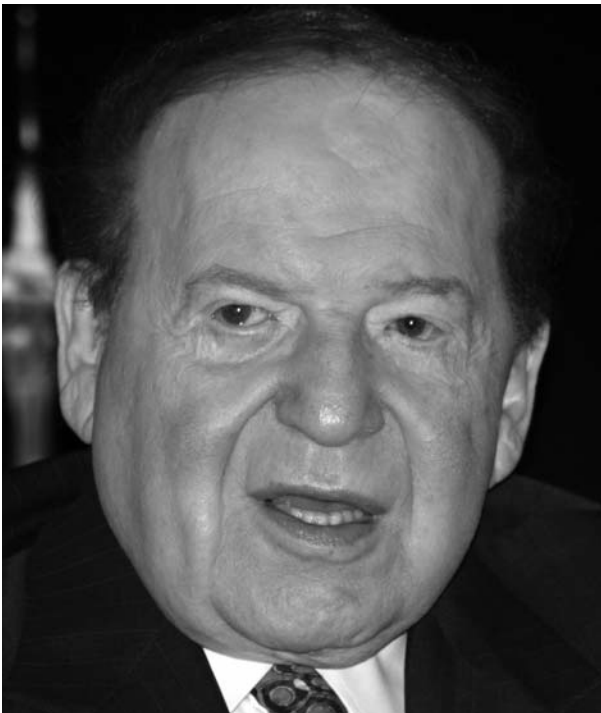
# YAD VASHEM MOURNS THE PASSING OF SHELDON G. ADELSON

Yad Vashem mourns the passing of the Patron of the Mount of Remembrance, Sheldon G. Adelson. Adelson was immensely proud of his Jewish and American heritage and deeply committed to the Jewish people, Jewish culture and the State of Israel. A self-made and determined businessman and philanthropist, he was dedicated to the furtherance of Holocaust remembrance and education for generations to come.

“The warm connection that Sheldon had with Yad Vashem was truly exceptional,” reflected Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev. “He had an extraordinary personality and achieved great things throughout his lifetime. Particularly striking was his boundless love for the Jewish people and the State of Israel. He was well aware of the dangers inherent in anti-Semitism and recognized the duty to instill the memory of the Holocaust, believing in the value of education as a critical means of doing so. It was precisely thanks to these shared goals that Sheldon was particularly committed and closely connected to Yad Vashem. With his support, along with that of his dear wife, Dr. Miriam Adelson, we have implemented Yad Vashem’s International School’s cutting-edge pedagogical approach to Holocaust education and now conduct teacher-training programs to thousands of educators who in turn impart meaningful and relevant messages of the story of the Holocaust and the dangers of anti-Semitism.

“Yad Vashem, the Jewish people and the State of Israel owe Sheldon and Miri a tremendous debt of gratitude for their enduring commitment to these fundamental causes. They are true partners, visionaries and pioneers. Sheldon will be sorely missed.”

“As a lover and ardent supporter of the State



of Israel and the Jewish people, Sheldon’s legacy will continue to impact the lives of millions,” said Leonard Wilf, chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem. “We have lost a true partner in our efforts to support Holocaust remembrance and education. We are forever grateful for Sheldon’s vision and lifelong commitment to Yad Vashem’s critical work,” said American Society for Yad Vashem Chairs-elect Adina Burian and Mark Moskowitz.

Sheldon Adelson grew up in a low-income home in Boston, Massachusetts, to Jewish immigrant parents. At the early age of 12, his entrepreneurial instincts were already evident, when he started selling newspapers on the streets of Boston. Thanks to a keen intellect and innovative thinking, Adelson was always several steps ahead of his peers. Despite his

modest beginning, he dared to dream big, and realized those dreams by building a formidable business empire. Despite his resounding success, he maintained his close connection to his faith and his birthright. He, along with his wife Miriam, dedicated his energies and resources to supporting the causes close to his heart.

The Adelsons’ unique bond with Yad Vashem began in the early 1990s, with the couple’s first generous contribution providing an infrastructure necessary to launch Yad Vashem into the digital age. Several years later, they endowed Yad Vashem’s new Museum of Holocaust Art. In 2006, they substantially increased their vigorous involvement with the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, undertaking a multiyear commitment of unprecedented support that continues to this day. Their cumulative donations over the years constitute by far the largest private contribution ever received by Yad Vashem.

The Adelsons spoke on several occasions about their special relationship with Yad Vashem. Sheldon Adelson explained that it was their privilege to help ensure the continuity of the existence of the Jewish people and that he wanted to do everything in his power so that the Holocaust would not be forgotten. At a recent event Sheldon stated, “My wife Miriam and I, a Sabra and a Diaspora Jew, are united in our commitment to support this institution. We trust that Yad Vashem will find ways to preserve Holocaust education as a priority, to ensure that Israel’s freedom and power are never taken for granted.”

Yad Vashem conveys its deepest condolences to Dr. Miriam Adelson and the entire Adelson family.

## “THIS IS MY REVENGE AGAINST HITLER.”

On January 27, over 300 members of the Ralph Lauren team joined Holocaust survivor Gladys Halpern for a conversation in honor of International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The Ralph Lauren Corporation has a robust diversity, equity, and inclusion program, in which all employees are invited to participate in conversations that build community by encouraging safe spaces to discuss race, religion and social justice. Together with the American Society for Yad Vashem, the Ralph Lauren team was able to commemorate Holocaust Remembrance Day by exploring how we understand anti-Semitism in America and the effects it has had on survivors of the *Shoah*.

The program began with some reflections by Jordana Urman, a Ralph Lauren employee and the granddaughter of Holocaust survivors. Jordana has always been passionate about Holocaust education and eloquently articulated the contemporary importance of Holocaust remem-



Gladys Halpern is pointing to the photo of her family taken before the war.

brance. “As the grandchild of Holocaust survivors, I know that anti-Semitism never goes away. It’s one of the oldest hatreds in the world, and even if it’s quiet, it’s still there.” Jordana explained how during the Holocaust, “the indiffer-

ence of many allowed the evil few to accomplish something that nobody could imagine.” She echoed the words of Elie Wiesel by reminding her colleagues that we must never remain silent

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# WHITE COATS IN THE GHETTO

*During the summer months, White Coats in the Ghetto: Jewish Medicine in Poland during the Holocaust — a research study by Dr. Miriam Offer, Senior Lecturer in the Holocaust Studies Program at Western Galilee College — was published in English. The book traces the work of the medical staff and leaders of the Warsaw ghetto during the Holocaust, and how they dealt with professional, moral and logistical challenges in the fields of medicine and ethics, within a broad historical context.*

*In a special interview for Yad Vashem Jerusalem, Dr. Offer recounts the extensive research process she conducted for the book, the challenges she encountered and the discoveries she made, and its relevance to the contemporary world.*

**What is your background, and why did you decide to research this topic?**

Growing up in a home with parents who experienced firsthand the events of the Holocaust [her mother was born in Hungary and sent to Auschwitz, and her father was drafted into the Polish army and fought for the defense of Warsaw] — and when one’s grandparents and most

a physician and historian who survived the Vilnius ghetto, led the field of medical research during the Holocaust in general and Jewish medical activity in particular. He wrote extensively in the field, and doctors who survived the Shoah, or who had emigrated before the war, in Israel and in the Diaspora, contributed to the commemoration and documentation project — so I had an uncommon basis for inspiration.

At first, I thought to conduct a comparative study between several ghettos in different areas under German occupation. However, after collecting a great deal of material on medicine in the Warsaw ghetto, it seemed that the scope and importance of the material needed separate processing. Isaiah Trunk was among the first to present research on aspects of health and illness in the Warsaw ghetto, and in the 1990s it was Charles Roland’s outstanding study that presented a comprehensive picture of medicine in the ghetto. Equipped with these and many studies, I spent several years collecting archival materials, mainly at Yad Vashem and the Ghetto Fighters’ House in Israel, as well as in the

mans; testimonies and reports written by medical and healthcare staff — nurses, doctors, and hygienists; advertisements published in the ghetto; minutes of meetings; the underground press in the ghetto; and diaries, memoirs and testimonies collected after the Holocaust.

**What were the difficulties you had to deal with? Did you encounter any unexpected issues?**

The difficulties were many, and there was no shortage of crises. This study was written over a number of years during which I devoted myself entirely to the research, from morning to night.

For me, it was a kind of life mission. The research required deciphering documents in different languages — Polish, Yiddish, German — collecting and processing a great deal of material, and comparatively examining the issue in broad contexts, such as genocide, Eastern European Jewry, the Holocaust, and medical ethics under siege and existential threats.

Though challenging, the collection, translation and processing of these documents were also accompanied by special surprises, such as discovering new diaries written in the Holocaust — for example, the notebooks of gynecologist Dr. Adolf Polishuk, and a comprehensive report by the TOZ.

**What have you learned about this subject, and what do you think still needs to be researched?**

It is important to note that this study actually highlights some unique patterns of Jewish society coping with the Holocaust. The research shows that amid the difficult conditions prevailing in the Warsaw ghetto, there was nevertheless a rather hierarchical and disciplined health and medical system, which dealt with challenges to public health according to modern concepts: sanitation, vaccinations, isolation of infected persons, and more. Inpatient and outpatient services, laboratories and even a first aid station were also established. It is clear that despite all efforts, many of the patients could not be saved because of the dehumanizing conditions the Germans imposed on the Jews. Nevertheless, the medical staff and the ghetto leadership acted out of a perception of responsibility for the health of the general public in the ghetto. Although the results, of course, were very limited.

Usually in cases of persecution and genocide, murder and extermination occur in a rapid period of time, in which we generally witness the collapse of the medical system of the persecuted society; the services provided, if any, rely mainly on external assistance of international organizations. Not so in the Warsaw ghetto. The medical system there did not only deal with emergency medicine or the care of patients, but it also continued during this difficult period with “routine” activities: studies, advanced training and research. This was set up by the Jews themselves — that is, the persecuted society — and not by outside forces. Along with legal activity, authorized partially by the Germans mainly because of their obsessive fear of epidemics spreading outside the ghetto, the Jews also initiated a series of risky underground endeavors, including scientific studies of great importance on hunger and ty-

*(Continued on page 6)*



Nurses at work in the Warsaw ghetto’s ophthalmology department.

of one’s family were murdered in the extermination camps — there is an emotional need and intellectual curiosity to investigate the development of the most difficult event in history. When I entered academia, my in-laws, survivors of the Šiauliai (Shavli) ghetto in Lithuania, told me about a diary from that ghetto written by Dr. Aharon Pick, which lay for decades in a drawer in the home of his only son, Tedik (David), in Kibbutz Netzer Sereni. The events he described in the medical context led me to focus my master’s thesis on *Medicine and Physicians in the Šiauliai Ghetto*.

As part of my doctorate, I expanded my research on Jewish medicine in the Holocaust. The pioneers of research in the field were the doctors who were there. They documented the difficult medical reality and studied the morbidity that spread through the ghettos, to find cures for patients and to commemorate the crimes using scientific tools. Thus, very valuable documentation was left behind on morbidity and medicine in the ghettos.

After the Holocaust, Dr. Mark Meir Dworzecki,

archives of the ZIH [Jewish Historical Institute] in Warsaw and YIVO in New York.

*White Coats in the Ghetto* would not have been published without the help of the International Institute for Holocaust Research at Yad Vashem, which supported me with a scholarship and the guidance of Professor Dan Michman [head of the Institute, and the incumbent, John Naimann Chair for Holocaust Studies] and of course the professional and dedicated work of the staff in Yad Vashem’s Publication Department.

**On what documents did you base the study?**

The issue of morbidity and medicine is so central in “ordinary” daily life, and all the more so in the conditions prevailing in the ghettos. Therefore, in many archival documents a great deal of reference can be found related to the medical issues. These include, among other things, statistical reports on morbidity and mortality; reports sent to the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) by the Jewish health organization TOZ, which also operated in the ghetto; memos sent to the Ger-



# THE ORPHANS YESHAYAHU DRUCKER RETURNED TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE

From the moment that World War II ended, Holocaust survivors had to begin to come to terms with the anguish of their newfound reality. They were utterly destroyed by years of abuse, starvation, disease and the constant fear of death, and the realization that most of them were all

from the only parents they knew, or with no idea of their Jewish heritage, having been forced by their adopted families to assume Christian identities. Smuggled out of the ghettos moments before their parents were deported, and hidden in attics, ditches or farms, a number of them had lived for years in complete silence out of fear of being dis-

One of the children Drucker rescued was Alfred-Fredek Mazeh. Born in 1938 in Warsaw, Alfred had very limited memories of his family. His parents Yishai and Helena managed to have him smuggled out of the ghetto in late 1942 or early 1943. He later recalled:

*"I heard the Polish woman telling a neighbor that they were burning the Jews. After the neighbor left, I went into the kitchen and asked her if it was true that they were burning the Jews. She told me that it wasn't true, they weren't burning everyone... and that my parents would come to get me... After that, the daughter arrived, and because we were already on good terms, I asked her and she said, 'They are burning all the Jews now, and your parents will not be coming back. They're dead.' I cried for several hours."*

Throughout the course of the war, Alfred was hidden by several different Polish families. Shortly after liberation, Drucker located the young boy and brought him to Zabrze.

Alfred remembered:

*"He [Drucker] spoke to the Polish woman. I don't know what they talked about. He visited twice, and I feared that nothing good would come of it. One day he came, and they said: 'You completed fourth grade at the top of your class' — I was very proud of the report card I had brought home — 'and they're going to send you to study in England.' England — that was a dream come true! I was pretty naïve and I swallowed it 'hook, line and sinker,' as they say. They told me, 'This man, Captain Drucker, will take you to England, and you'll come back in a few months' time.'"*

Alfred immigrated to Israel in 1949, settling in Kibbutz Gan Shmuel. In 1985, he submitted Pages



Dr. Nechama Geller, director of the children's home in Zabrze (seated center), together with the children and staff in front of the children's home. Zabrze, Poland, postwar.

alone was the final blow. Yet, they hung onto every last ounce of hope they could muster and tried to locate loved ones displaced and dispersed to the four corners of Europe — and oftentimes even further. Any sign of life or connection was painstakingly checked. But for the many thousands of Jewish children who spent the wartime years in hiding or were entrusted to non-Jewish families for safekeeping, there was often no one left to look for them.

Yeshayahu Drucker, a chaplain in the Polish army, took it upon himself to redeem these lost children. He fervently believed that the continuity of the Jewish nation was dependent on locating as many of them as possible, and restoring them to their people.

Drucker was determined to identify, locate and rescue as many child survivors as he could, initially taking them to a children's home in Zabrze, Poland. The children came from monasteries, orphanages and Polish families. Many of them, and their caregivers, were reluctant to accept Drucker's mission. In his testimony years later, Drucker recalled:

*"In most cases, child survivors living with Poles didn't want to part from these Polish families. It was extremely rare for a child to agree to leave.... Even when they had been badly treated, they didn't want to go."*

Nevertheless, from 1945 to 1948, Drucker located and cared for some 700 Holocaust survivor children, mostly orphans, aided by a dedicated staff of educators, doctors, therapists and counselors.

Many of the children arrived at the home traumatized, either from the shock of being torn away

covered and sent to their death. They found it very difficult to adjust to their new freedoms, and needed to regain trust in other human beings.

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Yeshayahu Drucker was born in 1914 in a town near Krakow. He grew up in a Zionist home and belonged to the religious Zionist Mizrahi movement. He graduated from the State Seminary for Jewish Religious Teachers in Warsaw. Shortly after the war broke out, Drucker was arrested by the Soviets and sent to a forced labor camp. In 1943, he enlisted in the Polish Kosciuszko Division, which fought alongside the Red Army and took part in the Battle for Berlin. Even while serving on the front lines, Drucker organized prayer services on Jewish holidays, made sure to observe Jewish laws, and tried to offer comfort to fellow Jewish soldiers. Prior to his discharge from military service, he was recommended for a position as a chaplain in the Polish army with the rank of major, despite having no formal rabbinical certification.

Drucker traveled all over Poland wearing his Polish officer's uniform, which facilitated his negotiations with the Poles in order to free the children from their custody.

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From the album of Yeshayahu Drucker, a Polish Army chaplain who retrieved Jewish children from Christian homes and convents, and brought them to the children's home in Zabrze as part of the process of returning them to the Jewish fold.

of Testimony to Yad Vashem in memory of his parents, Helena and Yishai. He passed away in 2000.

BY YONA KOBO  
Researcher and Online Exhibitions Coordinator in the Digital Department, Communications Division, Yad Vashem.



# "REMEMBER THAT THERE ONCE LIVED..."

*"I should like someone to remember that there once lived a person named David Berger."*

David wrote these words in his last letter, sent from Vilna in 1941. Eighty years after the 19-year-old was murdered during the Holocaust, Yad Vashem is fulfilling the last wishes of David and many other Holocaust victims through its IRemember Wall project. This unique online commemorative initiative allows the public to identify with the names and stories of some of the six million Jewish men, women and children whose lives were brutally cut short by the Nazi Germans and their collaborators during the Holocaust.

To mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day 2021, Yad Vashem once again launched the Wall, which is now available in six languages — English, Hebrew, French, Spanish, German and Russian. Each participant who joins the event will be randomly linked to one of the individuals recorded in Yad Vashem's Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names, which today includes more than 4,800,000 names. Their names will then appear together on the IRemember Wall. Participants can also choose additional Holocaust victims from the Names Database to commemorate on the Wall. Those who join are encouraged to share the stories on their social media platforms.

Each year the wall is reset, but the impact of being matched with a Holocaust victim lasts for

a lifetime. Last year the IRemember Wall campaign reached over five million individuals, and more than 85,000 names of Holocaust victims were remembered from over 175 countries around the world. Many of the participants submitted their impressions of this unique commemorative event. Here is an assortment of the feedback Yad Vashem received.

*"It is very important to remember that there is a life, a family, a story behind each and every person who perished."* **Andrew John Peers, Wigan, UK**

*"Holocaust Remembrance Day is so important, so that we never forget the millions of Jewish lives that were lost during the Holocaust. It also serves as a reminder of how antisemitism, xenophobia and hatred can create the preconditions for genocide. By creating the IRemember Wall, we give a name to the victims of the Holocaust rather than a number. It teaches us (and my students) that every victim had a story, a family and a life. It also teaches us and allows us to reflect on ideologies of discrimination and hate, and the actions that can lead to genocide."*

**Anna Pearson, North Bay, Ontario**

*"I feel committed to do what I can to educate others about the Holocaust, to ensure it is not forgotten."*

**Diane Whitton, Junee, NSW, Australia**

*"Since attending classes at Yad Vashem's*

*seminar for Christian Clergy in September of 2019, I have tried to be involved in as many activities as I can to further my own knowledge and to help teach others. My time there affected me deeply, and I want to honor those lives senselessly lost."*

**Elizabeth J Hudson, Humberston, UK**

*"We see hatred and bigotry on the rise all over the world. We cannot stand silent and pass injustice off as someone else's problem. Because hatred, racism and antisemitism eat away at the moral fabric of our society until there is nothing left to prevent another Holocaust. We have to stand up and be heard — for ourselves, for our children, and for humanity. This IRemember Wall project gives me the opportunity to stand shoulder to shoulder with individuals around the world united to remembering one person at a time. Every person can make a difference."*

**Elliot Martin, New York, NY**

*"Holocaust remembrance is very important today, because so many people try to minimize what happened again and a lot of people don't know that much about it anymore. I really like the project, because it's a commemorative activity that is meaningful but also easy to participate in."*

**Lea Busch, Ahaus, NRW, Germany**

BY SIMMY ALLEN

Head of the International Media Section, Communications Division, Yad Vashem

# WHITE COATS IN THE GHETTO

(Continued from page 4)

phus, as well as the establishment of an underground academic medical faculty in the ghetto for some 500 students. The study also shows that there was a kind of medical network in the General Government [an area of German-occupied Poland] by activists of the TOZ, who provided assistance from the central branch in Warsaw at various times to other communities and ghettos in the area.

Another important thing I learned is that the speed of organization of the Jewish medical frameworks that arose in Warsaw and other ghettos did not come "out of nowhere," but rather relied on an infrastructure of Jewish medicine that had developed between the two world wars. The Jewish community in Poland had developed a medical system designed to serve the three and a half million Jews who lived in independent Poland.

This system was based on the principles of public health that developed in modern countries and were also adopted in Jewish society. In 1931, there were about 4,500 independent Jewish physicians in Poland, who made up about 56 percent of all independent physicians in the country. Despite all the limitations and difficulties, the medical and healthcare system in the Warsaw ghetto clearly reflected a modern society, where there were about 800 doctors. All of these factors, along with the Jewish tradition that emphasized the saving of life as a supreme value, motivated the medical teams in the ghettos to make efforts under impossible conditions in order to alleviate the suffering of

the Jews in the ghetto and save lives as much as possible.



A sign in German and Polish on a building in the ghetto prohibiting entry and exit because of an epidemic.

The behavior of doctors as individuals was not significantly different from the behavior of individuals in other positions in the ghetto: they

were all faced with unprecedented moral tests. The reality there, like any human reality, was complex. Alongside many brave, heroic acts, some medical staff behaved immorally — described extensively in the book. Collectively, however, the medical and health system in the Warsaw ghetto is a unique phenomenon, unparalleled in history.

Much remains to be studied in this field of Jewish medicine and the Holocaust: for example, writing biographies of individual doctors; aspects of gender, including the contribution of women in the medical and health professions to the establishment of medical systems in the ghettos; comparative research on medicine in many unexplored ghettos; and issues of Halachah [Jewish law] and ghetto medicine.

**How is the book relevant to the modern world?**

Chapters in the book, such as those devoted to epidemics, education and medical research, or the chapter on ethical dilemmas, constitute important and relevant material to today's global society. Along with the suffering and dehumanization, one can learn about the power of the human spirit and the medical profession to maintain a value-based and professional commitment to patients even in difficult and extreme conditions. This is in stark contrast to what led to bio-racial ideas among doctors, scientists and the healthcare system in Nazi Germany, who were full partners "in white coats" to the horrific crimes and genocide that took place during the Holocaust.

BY LEAH GOLDSTEIN



# THE WARSAW GHETTO

## IN AMERICAN ART AND CULTURE

The Warsaw Ghetto in American Art and Culture.

By Samantha Baskind. The Pennsylvania State University Press: University Park, PA., 2018. 329 pp. \$44.95 hardcover.

On April 19, 1943, a small group of Jews, armed with little, remnants of the Warsaw ghetto once numbering hundreds of thousands, faced off against “two thousand well-armed SS men.” After years of unimaginable deprivation and physical suffering, these Jews realized the ultimate Nazi goal — the annihilation of all Jews! The result: They decided to fight. They would fight, regardless of the odds. They would fight, regardless of what they knew must be a tragic outcome. And they did, holding off the Nazi murderers longer than some countries did . . . most all of them dying . . . but on their own terms.

Viewed as the “epitome of courage,” what these brave men and women did was soon told and retold, “capturing the American imagination,” and making it “more prominent in American culture than any other account from the Holocaust but the story of Anne Frank.” In Samantha Baskind’s work entitled *The Warsaw Ghetto in American Art and Culture* we meet many of the artists — writers, painters, sculptors and more — responsible for the telling and retelling of this narrative. They all felt and, in fact, continue to feel called upon to respond to the Warsaw ghetto uprising in the only way they know: their work. And because of that, they have all contributed to just how the Holocaust is “seen” by Americans, even as their artistic endeavors often “convey the agenda of a particular moment.”

For example, in the earliest of depictions, “the valor and self-determination” of the ghetto fight-

ers was emphasized by many to “spur America to further action” vis-à-vis surviving Jews who, one would quickly see, more than deserved it! Thus, in Morton Wishengrad’s prize-winning wartime radio drama, first broadcast on Yom Kippur eve in the fall of 1943, entitled *The Battle of the Warsaw Ghetto*, the public was offered up the touching story of the Davidsons — forced into the ghetto, degraded and debilitated, yet still “attempt[ing] to stay strong amid this desolation.” Then, with every last bit of hope lost, a third of the play dealt with the uprising “in dramatic fashion, punctuated by sounds of gunfire and screams of pain.” By the end of the play, Wishengrad “show[ed] that the Jewish dead . . . had risen to the occasion. . . .” “‘They were Jews with guns,’ emphasized with an exclamation point in the script.”

In 1945, the gifted artist Arthur Szyk, who immigrated from Lodz, Poland, in 1940, created his watercolor and gouache painting entitled *Battle of the Warsaw Ghetto* with the same agenda in mind. Here we see “male and female fighters, young and old, conquering a representative SS officer lying on the ground with his helmet and gun strewn uselessly around him. One of the Jews mockingly holds up a sign with Himmler’s orders that reads: ‘Eastern District Order to the Troops: All Jews must be killed.’” In the background are more armed Jews with one “hold[ing] aloft a Zionist flag.” Finally, “at the bottom is a dedication to ‘Samson in the ghetto,’ referring to the Biblical figure in Judges . . . who kills his Philistine oppressor even while knowing that he will die too.”

Then in 1961, in Leon Uris’s best-selling novel *Mila 18*, a work of fiction that very closely follows the “establishment, liquidation and up-

rising” in the Warsaw ghetto, we meet an author whose main goal was to show “how American Jews imagine themselves and how non-Jews wanted to imagine Jews, following the wreckage of the Holocaust” — thus “invigorat[ing] post-Holocaust Jewry.” Put simply, as a Jew and former Marine himself, Uris wanted once and for all to put to rest the idea that Jews are “faint-hearted, disloyal, and physically inferior.” In *Exodus*, a book he wrote in the late 1950s, his Jews are fearless fighters, skilled and honorable. In *Mila 18* they are too! No, *The Diary of Anne Frank* was most definitely not to his taste. He would write, “[Anne Frank] is to me the symbol of the passive Jew who died quietly, and as you know from my writings, this goes strongly against my grain.”

At the same time, Baskind tells us, other artists found themselves responding not so much to the battle in the ghetto, but to “the haunting photograph of the Warsaw boy,” one of “fifty or so photographs” from “General Jürgen Stroop’s official victory report which details the final destruction and liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto.” Arrested by the Germans at some time during the uprising, the boy with his hands up in surrender appears to be around seven years old in “coat, hat and short pants, with black dress socks pulled up almost to his knees,” foregrounded in a group including adults (one, undoubtedly, his mother) and some other few children in the background. Indeed, Samuel Bak, himself a child survivor of the Vilna ghetto, would do “seventy-five paintings (1995-2008)” based on that boy. His reason, in his own words: “My paintings are meant to bear personal testimony to the trauma of surviving.”

In sum, *The Warsaw Ghetto in American Art and Culture* is a thought-provoking book, well written, and beautifully illustrated.

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN  
Professor of Media, Communication, and Visual Arts at Pace University.

## “THIS IS MY REVENGE AGAINST HITLER.”

(Continued from page 3)  
and that we must cherish the opportunity to listen to Holocaust survivors, such as Gladys Halpern, so that we may learn from their wisdom.

The morning’s conversation was moderated by incoming ASYV co-chair Adina Burian. Mrs. Halpern began by telling everyone a bit about her hometown and family. Gladys (née Landau) was born in *Zólkiew*, Ukraine (today Poland) near the town of *Lvov*. Initially imprisoned in the *Zólkiew* ghetto, Gladys and her mother escaped the *Lwów* pogrom and were hidden by a Christian family who was later recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations. Sadly, her father perished when the *Zólkiew* ghetto was liquidated on March 25,

1943, and Gladys is one of only a few survivors on both sides of her family. She survived the war along with her mother and two of her mother’s sisters. After the war ended, Gladys and her mother made their way to western Poland. During this time, she met Sam Halpern, z”l, who would later become her husband. Gladys and Sam were married in Germany in 1946 and emigrated to the United States in 1949. They have been active members of the American Society for Yad Vashem since its inception and are Benefactors of Yad Vashem.

Throughout the program, attendees shared notes of gratitude in the Zoom chat. One participant wrote, “Gladys, your strength and courage is incredible. Being able to hear this story and be a part of this conversation is one

of my proudest moments in my 15 years at Ralph Lauren. Thank you all for organizing such an important and incredible opportunity.” It was very inspiring to see the effect that Mrs. Halpern had on so many individuals. Being able to hear directly from a survivor is a privilege that we must all take advantage of while we still can. Mrs. Halpern’s testimony is harrowing. But to see and hear her speak with such poise and grace 76 years after the war’s end is an inspiration. However, perhaps the most inspiring part of the program came at the very end when Mrs. Halpern held up a photo of herself surrounded by her many children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. She pointed to the photo and said, “This is my revenge against Hitler.”



# AN UNBREAKABLE BOND

## WITNESSES, EDUCATORS AND THE GENERATIONS TO COME

*On the eve of his retirement from Yad Vashem after more than thirty years of dedication to the development of impactful educational seminars across the globe, Ephraim Kaye, director of the Jewish World and International Seminars Department at the International School, gave an overview of the development of this critical component of Holocaust education.*

**When did survivors first start to join in the efforts of Yad Vashem to educate about the Holocaust?**

In 1988, I arrived at what was then Yad Vashem's Educational Department, which had a staff of just five [today the International School



Ephraim Kaye.

has over 150 permanent staff, excluding external guides]. Already while teaching in high school I had begun to introduce survivors to the classroom. Back then, they were the parents of students of mine, and some of the boys I taught had never heard their parents talk about their wartime experiences. I learned that the idea of survivors engaging with students had to be handled correctly; they needed to be guided as to what was appropriate to talk about, and most importantly, to allow for a dialogue with their audience.

**How did the training course for survivor witnesses begin?**

In the early 1990s, my colleague Shulamit Imber [now the Pedagogical Head of the International School, and Fred Hillman Chair in Memory of Janusz Korczak] began to develop Yad Vashem's educational philosophy of age-appropriate and culturally targeted programs. Our then department head Shalmi Bar Mor approached me with the idea of developing the proposal of Holocaust survivor Hana Greenfield, z"l, to "break the silence" of Holocaust survivors, most of whom rarely gave public testimony outside of the courtroom, even decades after the end of World War II.

**What do these courses include?**

We invited psychotherapist Moshe Harel Sternberg from the AMCHA organization, which provides psychological and social support to Holocaust survivors and the Second Generation, to help develop a five-day course that included lectures, tours of the Yad Vashem campus, and tools to enable survivors to tell their story in a concise and effective manner. It was a very del-

icate process balancing the enormous need of the survivors to tell all of their story, as a monologue, with the necessity to relate shortened versions according to time, place and events, so that the audience is given the chance to digest their words and ask questions.

Sternberg also encouraged the survivors to develop a kind of "visiting card" — a short and informational introduction to themselves, so that those engaging with them may view them as real people, with histories, family connections and careers that extend beyond their Holocaust years. Over time, some 450 survivor witnesses have attended our training courses, where they learned to trust our experience as educators, and adhere to our guidelines in order to ensure as effective an encounter as possible for all of our audiences.

**How do audiences generally react to hearing firsthand testimony?**

After so many years developing Yad Vashem's world-class educational seminars, I can honestly say that there is nothing that comes close to really internalizing events of the Holocaust like hearing survivors speak and interacting with them. I've seen people literally break down in tears, embrace or hold hands with survivors, and even laugh with them: They create bonds they never would have thought possible — even those who hail from countries with very few Jewish residents such as China, or regions with racial tensions such as South Africa. The kaleidoscope of stories they hear, from survivors who hailed from countries across Europe and North Africa, leaves an impression that I believe lasts forever in their minds and hearts. Beyond the obvious imperative to learn the facts of the Holocaust and the creative and vital pedagogical tools to teach it in their own classrooms, seminar participants who meet with survivors are forever changed, inspired to pass on messages of hope, faith and resilience to audiences the world over.

**How are the seminars also important for the survivors?**

The seminars give the survivors the chance to tell about their experiences, and a purpose to both their survival and the lives that they rebuilt here in Israel. You would be amazed at the lengths they will go to in order to join our seminars either in Jerusalem, or abroad — some have flown as far as New Zealand, and many have joined students on their traditional roots trip to Poland before or during their national military service. As one survivor told me, "Yad Vashem is filled with life — soldiers, visitors and educators. That is why I need to give testimony." Our survivor witnesses are a true community we have built together.

**What will happen when these kinds of testimonies are no longer feasible owing to the absence of survivor witnesses in the world?**

There is no doubt that the face of Holocaust-related seminars, as well as commemoration cer-

emonies and media interviews, will change forever once survivors are no longer available to give their precious, irreplaceable, firsthand testimonies before live audiences. But Yad Vashem has been preparing for this eventuality for some years, through gathering artifacts, artwork and documentation that are the "silent witnesses" to the atrocities of the Holocaust, as well as with its flagship educational video series "Witnesses and Education." Developed by the International School's e-Learning Department, this unique series takes Holocaust survivors back to the locations in which their prewar lives developed, their wartime experiences took place, and their new lives were rebuilt. The videos have proved to be extremely effective in classrooms and courses around the world, either as whole units, or broken up into shorter segments to illustrate a particular Holocaust-related theme or episode. This is certainly what I would call "the next best thing" to meeting a survivor in person, although obviously that bond is much harder to engender via a screen.

Nevertheless, we are still taking full advantage of the fact that they are still with us, and creating chances for people to hear them speak. Every meeting with a survivor — in person or online — is a blessing. As Professor Elie Weisel re-



Holocaust survivor Mirjam Bolle being interviewed at the World Holocaust Forum, Yad Vashem, January 2020.

marked, "When you listen to a witness, you become a witness."

**In which ways has Yad Vashem adapted its partnership with survivors in the coronavirus era?**

Just like those in our department, I know that many other members of Yad Vashem staff in the different divisions have made a concerted effort to keep in touch with our survivor witnesses during this difficult period, to let them know we are concerned, and to try to help them in any way possible.

A few of them have been able to master the technology and join us for online seminars, interviews and memorial ceremonies — which are reaching thousands of participants around the world, including other survivors. This is how we close the circle — the unbreakable bond between the witnesses, the educators and the generations to come.

BY LEAH GOLDSTEIN



# MODERN MACCABEES

**O**n April 19, 1943, an SS-led force entered the Warsaw ghetto with the goal of resuming the deportation of Jews to Nazi death camps, which had been temporarily halted because of armed resistance four months earlier.

But the troops swiftly came under violent attack and were initially forced to retreat once again. It would take the Nazis over a month to quell the ghetto uprising and a further month to root out the last pockets of resistance.

The Warsaw ghetto uprising is perhaps the Holocaust's most famous act of Jewish resistance. It is, though, far from the only one, as an exhibition at London's Wiener Holocaust Library ably demonstrates.


"Jewish Resistance to the Holocaust" draws on the library's unique collection of photographs, manuscripts and over 1,000 eyewitness accounts to paint a picture of a largely untold story.

“One reason that we decided to do it was precisely because it’s not very well known,” says Dr. Barbara Warnock, the library’s senior curator, of the decision to stage the exhibition. “When people in Britain conceive of resistance to the Nazis, what comes to mind is the French Resistance. People probably don’t know that some of the French underground were Jewish and, equally, they don’t know that there was Jewish resistance to the Holocaust across Europe.”


Research by the Center for Holocaust Educa-

tion at University College London also shows that many British schools and students are largely unaware of Jewish resistance, she adds.

But, as the exhibition makes clear, in every European country which fell under Nazi rule, Jews resisted the Germans, their allies and their collaborators. Sometimes that resistance was as part of wider underground organizations, while sometimes Jews established their own groups.



The nature of resistance was varied, and included armed uprisings, rescue missions and “spiritual resistance” — a refusal to lose faith or forgo rituals even under the most trying of circumstances. Jews also risked their lives to preserve historical documents and testimonies, and to gather and smuggle out evidence of the Nazis’ genocidal crimes.



A group of Jewish women

Warsaw and *Białystok* — where several hundred Jewish fighters launched a short-lived uprising in August 1943 — were but two of the seven major and 45 smaller ghettos in occupied Poland and the Soviet Union where Jewish un-

derground groups operated. And the two cities were by no means alone in seeing Jewish armed revolts. In dozens of ghettos, including *Krakow*, *Vilna*, *Kovno*, *Będzin* and *Częstochowa*, Jews took up arms against their persecutors.



**A group of Jewish women and children being marched through the streets of Minsk, 1941.**

Across Europe, the ability of Jews to undertake armed resistance depended on a number of factors, explains Warnock. The most obvious was access to arms. The difficulties encountered by the Hungarian resistance in getting its hands on weapons, for instance, helps explain the absence of significant armed Jewish resistance in the country.

(Continued on page 11)



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Chief of Information  
Son of the late Nobel  
Prize Laureate Elie Wiesel



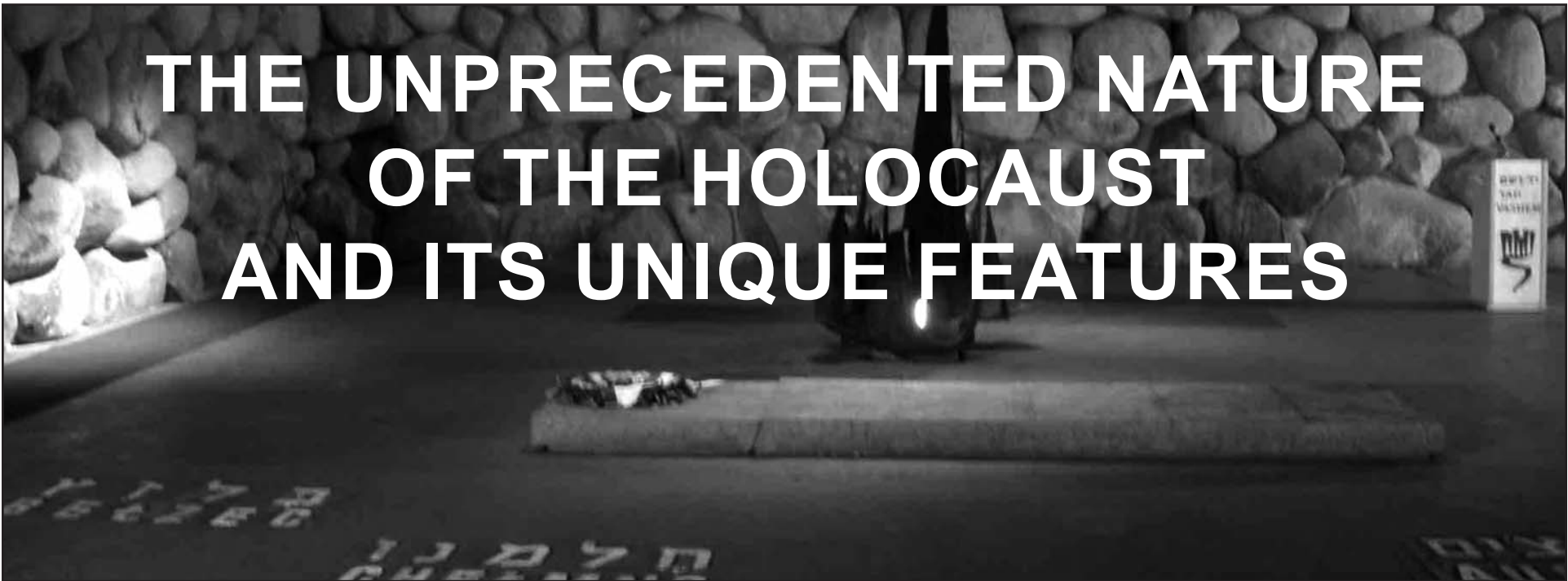
**Shulamit Imber**  
Director of Pedagogy  
International School for  
Holocaust Studies  
Yad Vashem

**Elisha Wiesel** is the son of Elie Wiesel, z'l, and describes himself as a recovering Wall Street Executive. He is now using his time in quarantine to learn Metallica songs on guitar from his son, to learn TikTok dances from his daughter, to learn a little Talmud every day, and to obey his wife and mother. When his father passed, he realized many others missed his father's voice - and so Elisha speaks about his father's legacy and message when the right opportunities arise to make a difference in the world.

**Shulamit Imber** is the Pedagogical Director of the International School for Holocaust Studies of Yad Vashem and the Fred Hillman Chair in Memory of Janusz Korczak. Shulamit pioneered Holocaust education at Yad Vashem, has collaborated on the development of educational materials and has participated in numerous international conferences on Holocaust education. She is currently featured in a massive open online course on Teaching about the Holocaust (MOOC). Shulamit earned her M.A. from the Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

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# THE UNPRECEDENTED NATURE OF THE HOLOCAUST AND ITS UNIQUE FEATURES

One can probably say about every historical event that it has elements that are rooted in the past and similarities with past events, and at the same time has elements that are new and unprecedented. Of course, the proportions of old and new differ from event to event. For example, World War I is regarded by most historians as the first modern war because of the new technologies used, and the up-to-that-time unprecedented scale of carnage. Yet some of the modern aspects we associate with World War I, such as machine guns, modern transport of troops and trench warfare, had already made their appearance in the American Civil War some fifty years earlier. Others, such as mustard gas, airplanes and giant artillery pieces like the Big Bertha, were new. Thus, one can argue for aspects of World War I that were unprecedented, whereas others have deeper historical roots. Similarly, one can say about almost every event that it has — at least some — unique features which are grounded in its specific context; here the term “unique” will be used, according to the Oxford dictionary, “in practice... [in] the meaning ‘very remarkable or unusual.’”

This is true for the Holocaust, too. On the one hand it includes mass violence and a genocide and so, aspects of it fit into a class of extreme crimes with a significant list of tragic cases. On the other hand, the Holocaust has some prominent and exceptional features that are not present in other instances of genocide and mass violence and that place it beyond the definition(s) of these categories.

## UNPRECEDENTEDNESS AND UNIQUENESS

It may be said that the unprecedentedness of the *Shoah* lies first and foremost in one of the central reasons Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler embarked upon it. The Nazis sought to remold their own country, Europe and essentially the world, in accordance to pseudoscientific racial principles. They sought to make Germany a racially pure superpower (although at the time this term was not yet in use), totally independent and beholden to no one, a utopian society for members of their “master race.” For this, they believed, they needed more land and all the material benefits that land would bring. War was the primary means of gaining land, and the Nazis were not at all concerned with the price the in-

habitants of those lands would have to pay to ensure the sustenance of Germans. But the worldview (*Weltanschauung*) of Nazi Germany had an even more extreme vision: to reform and reshape the world of ideas by fighting and erasing the “unnatural” idea of equality, which, so they maintained, had polluted the political, social and economic systems. They sought instead to institute the “natural” principle of hierarchy, including in human relations, a principle that would give the so-called Aryan race (as embodied first and foremost in the Germans) world domination.

According to Nazi thought, the principle of human equality originated in Jewish thought, was taken over by Christianity, and from there had penetrated and polluted modernity. The Jews were deemed the primary racial carriers of this idea and thus both an ideological and physical enemy; according to Nazi ideology, solving the so-called “Jewish problem” was central to its entire enterprise. It wasn’t just the physical Jew who was considered a danger by the Nazis. “Jewish Bolshevism,” embodied in the Soviet Union but with broad cancerous extensions, was seen by them as the most dangerous of all rival systems. In their view democracies, too, were “Jewified.” For the Nazis, the battle between the “unnatural” and “natural” principles had reached a decisive moment and needed an immediate and total solution. This drive gave the anti-Jewish Nazi enterprise — the Holocaust — a unique, apocalyptic dimension: in terms of geographical breadth, of resolute implementation and of urgency.

Nazi policies for solving “the Jewish problem” unfolded over time. They started immediately after Hitler’s rise to power on January 30, 1933. Throughout the first years of Nazi rule, the search for a definitive solution led to the exclusion of Jews from many spheres of life, expropriation and impoverishment, and an increasingly coerced emigration. After the beginning of World War II in September 1939, in the occupied territories, policies escalated and new measures were undertaken: concentration, marking Jews, forced labor, defamation and even random killings were implemented. During the second half of 1941 and the beginning of 1942 in broadening geographical circles, policies coalesced into systematic mass murder, called (by the German bureaucracy) the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question.” The notion that the Nazis believed

they had to solve the Jewish problem definitively for the good of Germany and essentially for the good of mankind, and that they attacked the physical and metaphysical Jew, was new in history and unique. In other words, the campaign — which Eichmann’s aide Dieter Wisliceny called “witch-mania” (*Hexenwahn*) intended to exorcise the “Jewish idea” and its physical carriers, which was viewed as redemptive, was unprecedented.

### SYSTEMATIC AND INDUSTRIALIZED KILLING CENTERS

The systematic murder campaign of Jews started in killing sites in the occupied Soviet Union and accounted for almost half of the Jewish victims. Some scholars assert that this kind of wholesale murder of a group had its roots in German genocidal acts against the Nama and Herrero in Namibia at the dawn of the twentieth century. But another major aspect of the Holocaust that is usually seen as new, is the industrialized murder represented by the camps like Auschwitz-Birkenau (the Nazi term was *Vernichtungslager*, extermination camps, a term that is deeply rooted in their ideology, since those who were to be exterminated in them were deemed to be less than human and were considered to be pests in need of extermination). This well-honed system of large-scale industrialized murder could be implemented because that the “industry” was provided with victims who were “shipped” in a modern commercial mode as a “product” to them, by a well-organized modern state bureaucracy using the modern railway system. This enterprise, which spanned the length and breadth of most of Europe, can certainly be considered to be new.

The broad, transnational, modern and apocalyptic nature of the Holocaust, which encompassed Jewish communities of North Africa as well, thus stands out as different from other cases of genocide. In those cases, the conflict was between two entities, and mostly relating to domination over certain territories; thus, they were more restricted and their basis more concrete. In contrast, the conflict with “the Jews” was imagined, and not restricted to a given territory, but global in its essence. Consequently, Nazi Germany implemented its anti-Jewish policies in every occupied country, and the ideologues and planners envisioned its implementation far be-

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# MODERN MACCABEES

(Continued from page 9)

By contrast, the Warsaw ghetto uprising was aided by a united Jewish resistance movement which encompassed people with a range of political persuasions from Communists to left-wing and right-wing Zionists and people with ties to Polish nationalist groups.

"This quite diverse group of people had contacts in resistance outside of the ghetto and in non-Jewish resistance, and that helped to accumulate weapons inside the ghetto," says Warnock.

Terrain, too, played an important part, with the swampy, marshy forests of Belarus and Lithuania providing hiding places for partisan groups which proved particularly impenetrable for the German army. Finally, there is the question of the speed with which the Holocaust unfolded.

"In some parts of Ukraine, for example, things moved very quickly and it was very difficult for people to organize and respond," notes Warnock.

**T**he Minsk ghetto — the scene of another revolt — also saw an audacious effort to smuggle out Jews and sabotage German factories. The exhibition highlights the story of Michail Gebelev, who liaised between resistance groups inside and outside the ghetto and organized mass escapes in 1942. But Gebelev refused to escape himself. Aged 36, he was betrayed and murdered by the Nazis in August 1942. Thanks in part to his efforts, however, up to 10,000 of the 100,000 Jews imprisoned in the Minsk ghetto successfully escaped; many of them then joined the Soviet partisans.

The success of the Minsk rescue missions also reflected the manner in which the heads of the *Judenrat*, or Jewish council, worked closely with the resistance movement.

Such cooperation between the two did not always occur, however. In Łódź, Poland's second-largest ghetto, the *Judenrat* and ghetto police exerted tight control and — hoping that cooperation with the Nazis would save the inhabitants — actively discouraged armed or organized resistance. Although this hope proved ultimately futile, there was nonetheless extensive political, spiritual and cultural resistance in the ghetto.

Indeed, throughout the ghettos of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Jews organized illegal schools, theaters and orchestras, established soup kitchens and social services, and engaged in clandestine religious services.

Some of the most extensive cultural and educational programs occurred in the *Theresienstadt* ghetto, where conditions, though dire, were better than in many other ghettos. Philipp Manes, a German Jew and writer, headed the *Theresienstadt* Orientation Service, which organized over 500 lectures. Manes and his wife perished in Auschwitz in late 1944.

Elsewhere, there were important efforts to ensure that Jewish culture and history were pre-

served. In the Warsaw ghetto, the Oneg Shabbat (Joy of Sabbath) organization buried historical documents and testimonies in milk cans and tin boxes. The exhibition contains an image of Rachel Auerbach and Hersz Wasser, two of the small number of Jews who survived the ghetto's destruction, helping retrieve the buried items after the war. Similarly, another image shows three members of the Paper Brigade — the poets Shmerke Kaczerginski and Avraham Sutzkever and teacher Rakhele Pupko-Krinsky — on a balcony in the Vilna ghetto in July 1943. The group helped to preserve documents about Yiddish culture from the Nazis.

As the exhibition explains, the opportunity and ability to resist in the camps was, of course, far more constrained. Nonetheless, Jews led six prisoner rebellions in concentration and death camps, with at least 18 occurring in slave labor camps.

Indeed, despite the huge risks and danger involved — especially for escapees who did not know the local geography or language — some inmates were drawn into resistance as a way of maintaining morale. As Esther Raab, a survivor

and seized guns and grenades. Buildings were torched, guards were attacked and, in the ensuing chaos, several hundred prisoners escaped. Although many were recaptured, the 70 prisoners who took part in the *Treblinka* uprising were the only Jewish survivors of the death camp, which was dismantled in late 1943.

A year later, on October 7, 1944, Jewish *sonderkommando*, or work units of death camp prisoners often tasked with assisting in the gas chambers, blew up Crematorium IV at Auschwitz, igniting a rebellion in which nearly 500 prisoners lost their lives. The exhibition highlights the crucial part in the uprising played by Roza Robota, a Polish Jew, who coordinated the smuggling of gunpowder from a group of women working in a munitions factory to the Jewish underground and the *sonderkommando* at the crematoria. Despite the bloody aftermath and Robota's own death two weeks before the camp's evacuation, Crematorium IV was damaged beyond repair and never used again.

The exhibition also tells the story of perhaps the most significant of the 144 prisoners who escaped from Auschwitz. Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler absconded in April 1944 as part of a plan hatched by the underground to make the world aware of the horrors being perpetrated at the camp.

After hiding for three days in a woodpile while guards searched for them, Vrba and Wetzler made their way to Slovakia, where they were sheltered by the Jewish council. A report they compiled about the camp — which included details of transports gathered by a Slovakian slave laborer who worked at the gas chambers — reached the international press three months later. The report increased the pressure on the Hungarian leader, Admiral Miklós Horthy, to halt deportations to Auschwitz. Although these resumed

in November 1944 after the Nazis ousted Horthy, the eventual survival of 250,000 Jewish Hungarians can, in part, be traced to Wetzler and Vrba's bravery.

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**B**eyond the ghettos and camps, Jews also played significant roles in partisan and guerrilla groups which resisted Nazi rule from the forests of Belarus to the shores of southern France.

Up to 30,000 Jews served as armed partisan fighters in occupied Russia, Ukraine and Baltic states. Many served in Soviet partisan groups, but, after facing anti-Semitism and hostility, others opted to form their own resistance organizations.

Among those groups featured in the exhibition is the Bielski group, which began as a band of 30 partisans sheltering in the forests of Belarus in the summer of 1942. It launched attacks on collaborators — especially those who had killed or betrayed Jews — but combat was not its primary purpose. Instead, as Tuvia Bielski put it: "So few of us are left, we have to save lives. To

(Continued on page 13)



Jewish-Lithuanian partisan group The Avengers on their return to Vilna at the time of the Red Army's liberation of the city, July 1944.

of the *Sobibor* camp uprising whose words feature in the exhibition, put it: "We started organizing and talking... it kept us alive... maybe we'll be able to take revenge for all those who can't."

The uprising at *Sobibor* on October 14, 1943, was coordinated by Polish Jewish resisters and Soviet Jewish prisoners of war. In an endeavor that saw 300 of the camp's 650 prisoners escape, 11 SS officials and guards — including the deputy commandant, Johann Niemann — were killed. One hundred of the escaped prisoners were quickly recaptured, but 47 of those who took part in the *Sobibor* uprising survived the war. Twelve of these survivors are shown in a photo in the exhibition which was taken in *Lublin* in August 1944.

The exhibition also displays an eyewitness account of the *Treblinka* uprising from the library's collection, given by one of the survivors, Stanislaw Kohn. The carefully planned revolt by over 700 Jewish prisoners commenced on August 2, 1943, after a party of German and Ukrainian guards left the camp on an excursion.

Members of the resistance unlocked a weapons store using a previously duplicated key



# THE UNPRECEDENTED NATURE OF THE HOLOCAUST AND ITS UNIQUE FEATURES

(Continued from page 10)

yond Europe. Moreover, this enterprise was joined by people across the large swath of land they came to dominate either as occupiers or as senior partners in alliances. One can therefore say that Nazi anti-Semitism also radicalized anti-Jewish policies and traditions outside Germany. Germany's ally Romania, for instance, was responsible for the death of close to 400,000 Jews. The transnational nature of the Holocaust is not only about the geography of persecution but also includes other geographical aspects, such as the places that emerged as sites of refuge or possible sites of refuge for Jews fleeing persecution. In short, it can be said that the events of the Holocaust touched much of the world.

Neither should one forget that the Third Reich existed only 12 years and 98 days, that the unprecedented numerical results of the murder campaign were reached in less than four years, and that this was all done without even having a designated budget for this purpose. I.e., the anti-Jewish campaign could be implemented only with the broad and creative input of many ordinary players — Germans and others throughout Europe — not only Hitler and the Nazi elite.

Up until now we reviewed some aspects of the unprecedented and unique nature of the Holocaust. Now we will further explore those qualities, as well as others that have precedents in human history, and the implications of both. Why is it important to try to discern what is new to the consciousness of people during the *Shoah*? Perhaps most saliently, understanding how events unfolded and how they were perceived goes to the heart of any discussion about response during the Holocaust — of Jews and others. The unprecedented aspects of events certainly influenced decisions on many levels.

## NEIGHBORS KILLING NEIGHBORS

If Auschwitz and the other similar camps represent something new in the Holocaust, there are other aspects of the persecution and murder of the Jews that are as old as human history itself. The first murder in the Judeo-Christian consciousness is that of brother killing brother, Cain killing Abel. Throughout history brother has murdered brother, and neighbors have murdered their neighbors. Throughout the Nazi period, ethnic, religious and political tensions erupted violently among various groups in the crucible of the war and its immediate aftermath as a result of local long-term relations; yet the phenomenon of neighbors frequently rising up against their Jewish neighbors was not restricted to one locality but was a widespread phenomenon, especially in Eastern Europe.

Today, the most well-known, infamous incident of Jews being murdered by their neighbors occurred in *Jedwabne* in Poland in the summer of 1941, when Poles burned alive the Jews of their town in a barn. There is a substantial literature that argues about many of the details, but it

is clear that in that town, non-Jewish Poles played a significant role in the murder of their Jewish neighbors.

*Jedwabne* may be a case in point, but it was not an isolated incident. In different ways, and in many times and places during the Holocaust, Jews died at the hands of people who knew them and had often lived with them for generations. Neighbors murdered their Jewish neighbors for many reasons: racial hatred, religious



Kindertransport memorial in London.

hatred, ultra-nationalism, revenge for supposed Jewish crimes under the Communist occupation, and, not the least, greed. Some of these motivations are quite ordinary and timeless, whereas others are rooted more in the specifics of time and place; they all burst forth owing to the presence and influence of, and the atmosphere created by, Nazi Germany.

The intimate face of murder happened not only in the Holocaust, but in other genocides as well. For instance, it is a central theme in Rwanda, where the Tutsi and Hutu lived among each other. Testimonies of some of survivors in Rwanda are eerily reminiscent of those of some Jewish Holocaust survivors. Clearly, the human suffering in all genocides has a great deal in common, and scholars are trying very hard to uncover the common elements of genocide in the hope, among others, that this will help prevent future genocides. But no less important is discerning the differences between the cases. It is only by looking at commonalities and differences that we may learn. However, there is no place for comparing or grading human suffering and moral breakdown.

## YAD VASHEM AND THE SPECIFIC AND UNIVERSAL IMPLICATIONS

Regarding commemoration, education, research and resource collection, Yad Vashem's charge is to deal with the Holocaust. That means that the persecution of Jews, the experiences of Jews, attitudes toward Jews, how Jews reacted and responded to their reality, as well as the help

given or not given to the Jews, lie at the heart of Yad Vashem's activities. This is Yad Vashem's area of expertise and what Yad Vashem can bring to the table regarding scholarly and public discussion about genocide, and about other issues such as stereotyping, conspiracy theories and more.

Clearly when it comes to trying to understand the Holocaust and teach about it in wider contexts, serious engagement with all the victims of the Nazis and their partners, and with the subject of genocide, is crucial. Sadly, it has become fashionable to accuse Yad Vashem of willful narrow-mindedness and refusal to address these wider contexts. Those who purport to be knowledgeable about what happens at Yad Vashem apparently are not as well informed as they could be. Or perhaps they are more interested in making points with certain political cliques or intellectual circles than in trying to really grapple with understanding the place of the Holocaust in broader contexts, including that of an age of genocide.

The Holocaust, like all historical events, is a specific event with its own context. At its core it is a particular event with Jews at its vortex, who were lethally persecuted by Nazi Germany and its partners because they embodied "the Jewish spirit" that had to be exorcised. It has many consequences for those individuals and groups who experienced it. It has profound ramifications for the Jews as a collective, because it drastically changed the Jewish world and deeply wounded Jewish culture. Thus, it played and plays an important role in the shaping of post-Holocaust Jewish consciousness and behavior. Among the nations, societies, organizations and groups that perpetrated the Holocaust, there are particular implications as well, which some have grappled with more openly and honestly than others. This Jewish dimension should not be downplayed and marginalized. Yet because of its enormity and unusual dimensions and characteristics, the Holocaust also bears universal implications. It is also about the broader crime of genocide, and ultimately, it is about human beings, giving us much to ponder about the most fundamental questions regarding humanity, inhumanity, empathy, acting and indifference, and good and evil.

BY DR. ROBERT ROZETT,  
Senior Historian in the International Institute for Holocaust Research, Yad Vashem  
BY PROF. DAN MICHMAN,  
Head of the Yad Vashem International Institute of Holocaust Research



# CELEBRATION THROUGH COMMEMORATION

## FORGING A CONNECTION TO JEWISH HISTORY

A Bar or Bat Mitzvah signifies the moment a child accepts his or her place as a Jewish individual and takes part in the fabric of the Jewish people. This landmark occasion is an opportunity for families to come together, celebrate and embrace their Jewish heritage.

David Bergman was a regular 13-year-old boy, eagerly anticipating his Bar Mitzvah.

*"I was so much looking forward to this day of Bar Mitzvah. I had several years of preparation for this event. My parents even had all the gifts set aside. Indeed that day I became a man heading for an unknown destination.... The day was spent in a cattle train. My father had a bottle of wine that he had secretly taken aboard, risking his life to do so. But this event meant so much to him — he felt it was worth the sacrifice. He passed the bottle of wine around and everyone made a toast to me, and that is how I celebrated my Bar Mitzvah."*

David himself related this story in the personal testimony he gave to Yad Vashem years later.

David was deported to Auschwitz, and then transferred to the *Dachau* and *Gross-Rosen* camps. Miraculously, he survived the Holo-

caust.

However, David's story is unusual. Nearly 1.5 million Jewish children were murdered during the Holocaust — many never having the opportunity to reach the age of Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

Yad Vashem's Twinning Program is a unique way to mark this rite of passage. The program connects boys or girls marking their Bar or Bat Mitzvah to their past by bonding them with the memory of an individual child who was murdered during the Holocaust.

Families who have participated in the program describe it as a meaningful experience that deeply connects them to the Jewish people. Hallie Kopel, a Bat Mitzvah girl who twinned with a Shoah victim, said, *"It is important to know where you're from, so that you know where you are going."*

Reflecting on the twinning ceremony of her son at Yad Vashem, Debra Rinn said:

*"It was very special for us to have the opportunity to share our son's Bar Mitzvah with the memory of a boy who was murdered in the Holocaust."*

Yad Vashem has now made it possible to bring this meaningful remembrance experience directly to you anywhere in the world. The on-

line option of this unique project is being offered as the world grapples with COVID-19. The pandemic has altogether changed the way people are gathering to mark important events and occasions, and families have reached out seeking alternative ways of participating in this special project.

Aron Wells chose to participate in the online Twinning Program. Aron's father, Adam, tweeted:

*"My son, Aron, was paired with Aron Gotlib from Poland, who was born in 1933. Aron was murdered, along with his mother Fela, when he was only 9 years old. I don't want Aron Gotlib's name and beautiful face to just be consigned to history. He deserved to have his Bar Mitzvah and celebrate with his family, like millions of others. On 'my' Aron's Bar Mitzvah we will celebrate on his behalf too."*

As the events of the Holocaust recede in time, engaging young people in carrying the memory of the Shoah forward is vital. The Yad Vashem Twinning Program offers an opportunity to honor those murdered during the Holocaust, and helps to ensure that the youth of today remain connected to their Jewish heritage.

# MODERN MACCABEES

(Continued from page 11)

save a Jew is more important than to kill Germans." By the end of the war, some 1,200 Jews were living in the forests under the protection of Bielski and his brothers.

The Avengers, another Jewish partisan group whose work is described in the exhibition, operated from the Lithuanian forests. Its leaders — Abba Kovner, Rozka Korczak and Vikta Kempner — managed to escape the mass killings perpetrated by the Nazis and their allies in Vilna and used the forests as cover to launch sabotage missions and guerrilla attacks on German and collaborator targets.

The group is credited with killing over 200 enemy soldiers, rescuing at least 70 Jews and destroying 180 miles of train tracks. After the war, Kovner was famously a founder of both an underground movement to help Jews escape Europe for Mandate Palestine, and Nakam, a secret organization which planned to take revenge for the Holocaust.

On the other side of the continent, as the exhibition notes, Jews were overrepresented in the resistance movements of Germany, Austria and Western Europe.

A mainly Jewish detachment of the French Communist partisan group FTP-MOI, for instance, began work in September 1942 to disrupt the German war effort: among the 50 attacks it carried out were assassinations and

derailing trains with bombs and grenades.

When the FTP-MOI Parisian section — known as the Manouchian group — was eventually apprehended in late 1943, more than half of its 23 members were Jewish. Attempts by the Germans to make propaganda out of the ensuing trials and executions — thousands of copies of the infamous "Affiche Rouge" poster portraying the group as foreign Jewish terrorists were distributed — backfired. Instead, many members of the public viewed the group's members as he-

wife and friends in the 1930s, it eventually grew to over 100 members in 1940; many, like Baum himself, were young Jewish forced laborers.

The group's activities — which included distributing leaflets highlighting the atrocities committed by their fellow Germans in the East — were perilous. But an arson attack on May 18, 1942, which targeted "Soviet Paradise," an anti-Semitic and anti-Communist exhibition staged by the Nazis in Berlin, led to the arrest of many of the group's members. Baum was murdered in prison in June 1942, and other members of the organization were executed that summer.

But, for the organizers of "Jewish Resistance to the Holocaust," remembering the heroism and sacrifice of Baum and his comrades — together with the countless other Jews who resisted the Nazis — is not simply about finally telling a story which has remained untold for too long. It is also a matter of setting straight the historical record.

"It's important to challenge this myth about Jews not resisting, which perhaps was an attitude that was held quite widely [at one time,] and maybe some people still have that view today," says Warnock.



A contemporary illustration of Theresienstadt ghetto from the journals of Philipp Manes, 1942-1944.

roes, and the poster was frequently graffitied with the words: "They died for France."

As the exhibition describes, Jewish resistance also reached deep into the heart of the Reich itself. It recounts the tragic story of the Baum group. Founded by Herbert Baum along with his

resistance in the most extreme and difficult circumstances, and this research and exhibition show that whenever they had the chance to, people resisted in some way or another," she says.

BY ROBERT PHILPOT, *The Times of Israel*



# SHELTERING IN SAINT MARTIN VÉSUBIE

Seventy kilometers north of Nice, France, at roughly 1,000 meters altitude, nestled among the mountains of the Maritime Alps, lies the picturesque village of *Saint Martin Vesubie*. The village attracts tourists from all over Europe. At first glance, then, *Saint Martin Vesubie* would seem to be just another typical tourist spot not to be missed. However, there is something unique about *Saint Martin Vesubie* that one rarely finds in other places, and it's not necessarily something about its physical character, but rather its spirit. This village, you see, observes once a year, without pomp or fanfare, a very special day to commemorate an event bequeathed to its citizens by their near ancestors.

It is an exceptional legacy which has been etched into the hearts and minds of many of its citizens to this day. Like a precious family heirloom, it is being handed down from one generation to the next so that it may not be forgotten. It is something that can only be described as philo-Semitism. In 1940, when France, having lost the war, announced an armistice with Nazi Germany, the country was carved into three separate zones. The northern and all of the Atlantic coast fell under direct German administration. The southern part of the country, euphemistically called the *Zone Libre*, or Free Zone, came under the jurisdiction of the Fascist French government, with its headquarters in the city of Vichy. Not to be left out, Italy, being part of the Axis powers, occupied the southeastern part of France, which by 1942 included an area of more than 800 square kilometers. The city of Nice then, and of course *Saint Martin Vesubie*, being so close to the prewar frontier, found themselves governed by the Italian military. Initially, many Jews from the north of France and elsewhere, including my own family, fled to the relative safety of the south, although persecution of Jews there by the Vichy government continued. This state of affairs changed drastically when in November of 1942 Germany invaded and occupied all of France, except of course the area under Italian administration. Having nowhere else to go, many found asylum in the Italian sector, particularly in the city of Nice, where thousands of Jews found refuge. However, many were not so lucky, and were rounded up by the Nazis to be deported to Auschwitz and other concentration camps, where they perished. When in January 1943 Germany pressured Italy to give up the Jews under its control, the Italians refused to cooperate, and in March of that year the Italians prevented Nazis from deporting Jews from their zone. Of those who escaped the Nazi clutches, a number of families, including my own, found haven in the small village of *Saint Martin Vesubie*. Altogether about 300 families, more than 1,000 souls, found refuge there, where they outnumbered the residents. Its citizens opened their arms to us, sheltering us and feeding us, and in general providing us with all the services that

were needed. Our family, my parents, my mother's young cousin Margit Reich, and three of us children — my brother Eli, five and a half years old; my baby sister, Danielle, age one and a half; and myself, age four — lived at the edge of the village in a two-story building. Across from us was our neighbor, Madame Rifka Fass, who lived alone and

We never heard from my father again. Starting 21 years ago and every year since, in September, a *Marche de la Memoire* (memorial walk) takes place in *Saint Martin Vesubie* to commemorate the exodus of Jews fleeing their Nazi pursuers. Several hundred people from both the Italian and the French sides walk up to meet at the pass known as the *Col de Fenestre*, or at the *Col de Cerise* along the demarcation line of the frontier between France and Italy.

I was privileged to join the march this year with my family. We were met at the pass by an Italian group consisting of more than 100 marchers led by Sandro Capellaro, who organizes the walk from the Italian side. After several speeches, a rabbi from Nice recited the *kaddish* memorial prayer and then blew a shofar.

For the Shabbat preceding the walk, we were fortunate to have a *minyán* (prayer quorum) for the Friday evening prayers, the first in that place since 1943. On Shabbat morning, something else not seen in the village for 76 years took place, as we were privileged to read from a Torah graciously loaned to us by Chabad of Nice.

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In the center of the village, not far from City Hall in a small square, stands a monument to the sons of the village who fell in defense of their country during the two World Wars. Nearby there stand three granite slabs with chiseled inscriptions of more recent vintage. The first is dedicated to the Righteous Among the Nations of *Saint Martin Vesubie* who answered the call to save their fellow men in their time of distress.

Another is a memorial to the Jews of *Saint Martin Vesubie* who, despite the best efforts of the village to save them, were arrested and deported and perished in the ovens of Auschwitz. Several years ago, through the dedicated and unswerving efforts of Daniel Wancier, himself a survivor and the representative of Yad Vashem for the *Nice-Côte d'Azur* region and also the organizer of the march on the French side, a third slab was erected. It lists in alphabetical order the more than 300 names of men, women and children, who were deported and murdered by the Nazis, among them, my father.

At five in the afternoon after the walk, a ceremony attended by more than 80 people. Simultaneously, at the *Borgo San Dalmazzo* train station on the Italian side, a ceremony was held near a monument to the memory of the more than 300 souls who were deported from the station. Bronze plaques of their names are embedded into the platform on the spot where they stood before being shipped out. As a backdrop, there are three cattle cars that stand on the railroad track as a reminder.

I thank the all-merciful One for allowing me to survive and live to see my children and grandchildren join me in this most moving event. It was indeed for me a personal March of the Living.

By AVRAHAM SCHONBRUNN,  
*The Jerusalem Post*



The memorial to those deported from *Saint Martin Vesubie*. The names are read annually following the *Marche de la Memoire*.

who unfortunately was one of the deported. As I look back, the snippets of memory that remained with me from that period seemed to be of a placid existence. This calm, however, did not last long. With massive Allied landings in the south of Italy, the Italian government very soon realized that the war was a lost cause for Italy, so that on September 3, 1943, the Italian government signed an armistice with the Allies.

Five days later, on September 8, Nazi Germany invaded the formerly Italian-controlled zone, and with that, thousands of Jews were trapped and once again had to flee. First the Nazis made a clean sweep of Nice, where thousands were immediately rounded up. In *Saint Martin Vesubie*, at great risk and upon penalty of death, some of the villagers took in some of the children, passing them off as their own.

For the rest of us, the only means of escape was going east over the forbidding mountain passes and down into Italy. Aside from the distance to walk, at that time of year the weather in the Maritime Alps can be quite cold, especially when reaching altitudes above two kilometers.

None of us were prepared for such an arduous journey. Without the proper winter clothes or shoes, and with three small children in tow, the ascent over a rocky and steep trail made that much more difficult.

Newly demobilized Italian soldiers guided us through the mountains and helped by carrying the small children. Several hundred of us followed them helplessly, having no other recourse but to trust that they would lead us to safety. Little did we or even they know what was awaiting us on the other side of the mountain.

When we arrived in *Entracque*, a small Alpine Italian village, the villagers there initially provided us with some succor. Unfortunately, the reception was short lived, as the Germans had taken over the whole Piedmont region. It was there that my father was arrested along with several hundred men. They were first sent to a prison camp in the nearby town of *Borgo San Dalmazzo* and from there all were deported to Auschwitz.



# “THEY WERE PROUD OF WHAT THEY WERE DOING”

Henry Fenichel's happy childhood in *The Hague* was destroyed by the Nazi occupation in 1940 and his subsequent deportation, as a Jew, to *Bergen-Belsen*. But his quick-thinking mother saw an opportunity for escape, and Fenichel — now 82 — survived to tell the story. Born in *The Hague* in 1938, but living in the USA since 1953, his survival has compelled him “to bear witness.”

The last vestige of a normal childhood is a photograph of Henry, an only child, with his parents Moritz and Pessel — the only picture he has of all three of them together. “Soon after that, all hell broke loose and the Nazis invaded and life changed,” he says. However, a stealth approach meant that the country's 140,000 Jews were not yet fully aware of the danger they were in. “When they invaded Holland, they didn't immediately round up the Jews. They were very smart about what they did,” says Henry. “But then all of a sudden, the cop on the street corner, instead of being a Dutch cop, would be a Nazi cop or a Dutch collaborator — and there were plenty of those.” By 1941, almost all freedom of movement and information had been banned. Jewish businesses were shut down, students were expelled from universities and lists were drawn up of Jews to be sent to forced labor camps. Henry still has the yellow star with *Jood* printed in the center that he was forced to wear and which he says he keeps with him “as a symbol of strength.” “It continues to remind me of the importance and the need for tolerance, openness and the acceptance others who look different from us,” he says.

In 1942, Henry's father was arrested and taken to *Mauthausen* and then on to *Auschwitz* where, Henry later discovered, he was murdered shortly after arrival. “The records they kept were unreal,” he says. “They were proud of what they were doing.” Henry's mother made arrangements to leave their apartment and go into hiding at a convalescence home with a child care center on its ground floor. “If the Nazis were in the neighborhood, my mother would be feigning some disease and lying in bed, and I would be playing with the kids downstairs or in the little park across the street,” Henry remembers. For a long time, Henry thought the place was run by a Sister Frank, whom he took to be a nun. However, he recently discovered that the woman who had found them sanctuary there was none other than Sedje Frank — also known as Sedje Hémon — a key figure in the Dutch resistance who helped many Jews escape to safety in Switzerland.

The next part of the story has been erased from Henry's memory, something he's always felt uneasy about. “I always wondered, how did the Nazis find us? For all I know, I was responsible for it. You know, if they come and ask a kid a question or two, I might have divulged something,” he says. The pair were taken to Amsterdam and rounded up at the Hollandse

Schouwberg theater, where during the war some 45,000 prisoners were held prior to deportation. Henry, whose family name is today etched on the monument there along with Anne Frank's, remembers sleeping on a bench inside the theater before being housed temporarily at *Muiderschans 74*, now the *Sarphatistraat*. On May 15, 1943, clutching a pillowcase stuffed with toys, five-year-old Henry was transported with his mother to *Westerbork*, a transit camp to more lethal destinations such as *Auschwitz*, and known as “the gateway to hell.” *Westerbork* was run by a Jewish committee which, says Henry, “tried to make life as easy as possible.” “*Wester-*



In Palestine, little red-haired Henry captures the attention of Meyer Weisgal (left), a leading figure in the Zionist movement, and Chaim Weizmann (right), who would become Israel's first president.

*bork* was more like a ghetto than a camp,” says Henry, but it was nevertheless ring-fenced with barbed wire, and every Tuesday a list had to be drawn up of around 1000 people to be sent east on cattle cars, never to return again.

On February 1, 1944, their own names appeared on the list, and Henry and Pessel were transported by train to *Bergen-Belsen*, a concentration camp whose harsh conditions would claim the lives of 52,000 prisoners, including Anne Frank, who succumbed to typhus there. A terrified child, miles from home, Henry recalls “getting off the train in *Belsen* and walking along a long country road with tall trees on both sides [and] Nazi soldiers with huge dogs, bigger than me, herding us into the camp.” Starvation also claimed lives at the camp, and many of Henry's memories relate to food. “We had to stand outside the barrack. We had little tin cans. There would be a big barrel outside with some slop in it they called soup and somebody would ladle some of that soup into each one of our little cups.” Afterwards, the children were made to clean out the barrel. “That was not a punishment, in retrospect,” says Henry. “Probably, while we were cleaning it, we could find a few more potato peels or something for extra nourishment.” Pessel's religious observance also kept him from starving. Each meal she would save a scrap of bread to serve on a Friday evening as a *challah* to mark the *Shabbat*. That no trauma exists in Henry's memory, he also attributes to his mother.

“She must have been an incredible woman to protect me,” he says. “Have you seen the Italian movie *Life is Beautiful*? That's my story, ... taking care of the kid and making him feel like it was a game — my mother must have done that for me in order to keep me sane.”

While at *Westerbork*, Pessel came to hear of a prisoner exchange program with *Templers*, a Protestant sect originating in Germany. *Templers* living in British-controlled Palestine, and now held captive by the British, were to be freed in Germany in exchange for the liberation of Allied detainees with a connection to Palestine. Since Henry's father had immediate family in Tel Aviv,

there was a chance they might be eligible. When they went into hiding, the Fenichels' neighbors in *The Hague* had swiftly occupied their empty apartment to avoid attracting attention to it, and so — crucially — their paperwork was still intact. Despite an initial failed application, Henry and Pessel eventually acquired the registration numbers necessary to satisfy the record-obsessed Nazis. Miraculously, they eventually found themselves on a special list of just 222 prisoners — mostly women and children — and their lives were spared. “If it were not for a few people who saw an opportunity to save a few souls, I would not be here today,” Henry says. In June 1944, he and his mother began the long journey to the Middle East on what became

known as *Transport 222*, with little Henry sleeping in the luggage rack overhead, all tied up to prevent him from falling. The German soldiers on the train, fearful that the ghastly truth of *Bergen-Belsen* would be liberated along with these prisoners, began to sweet-talk the emaciated passengers. “We didn't treat you so badly, did we?” they said. The hardship of the camp, however, revealed itself from time to time in the passengers' behavior. When a peddler approached the train selling cherries, for example, Henry's eyes were like saucers. He had not seen fresh fruit for two years.

The exchange of prisoners took place on water: two boats nudging side by side on the *Bosphorus*. The 222 then skirted the Turkish coast and made for Lebanon by train. As the Jews crossed the border into Palestine, passengers tried to rouse a chorus of “*Hatikvah*,” but it was drowned out by their sobs.

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Three-quarters of the Jews in the Netherlands, around 110,000 adults and children, were murdered in the Holocaust — the most in western Europe, both proportionally and in total number. But when you hear these numbers, says Henry, it means almost nothing. “The history books rarely speak about individual citizens and how these wars affect us,” he says. Listening carefully to the story of survivors, he believes, is one of the best ways to make good on the past.

BY DEBORAH NICHOLLS-LEE, *Dutch News*





## ELI ZBOROWSKI LEGACY CIRCLE



The American Society for Yad Vashem was founded in 1981 by a group of Holocaust survivors and led by Eli Zborowski, z”l, for more than thirty years. Our Legacy Circle is named in memory of Eli Zborowski, z”l, who was greatly respected for his work and accomplishments on behalf of Yad Vashem and is missed by all who knew him.

The Eli Zborowski Legacy Circle is open to anyone who includes Yad Vashem in their estate plans. This includes a bequest by will, funding a

Charitable Remainder Trust or Charitable Gift Annuity, donating a paid-up life insurance policy or contributing an IRA or retirement plan.\*

By including Yad Vashem in your estate plans, you assure a future in which Holocaust remembrance and education will serve as a powerful antidote to Holocaust denial, distortion, hate and indifference.

*“I did not find the world desolate when I entered it. As my fathers planted for me before I was born, so do I plant for those who will come after me.”*

The Talmud

For further information about the Eli Zborowski Legacy Circle, please contact

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\*ASYV now has nearly 100 individuals and families who have joined the Zborowski Legacy Circle.

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