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DANI DAYAN NEW CHAIRMAN OF THE YAD VASHEM DIRECTORATE

On August 22, 2021, the Israeli Government approved the appointment of Dani Dayan as the new chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate. Mr. Dayan most recently served as Israel's Consul General in New York from 2016 until 2020. He had previously served as chairman of the Yesha Council and, before that, as chairman of the board and CEO of Elad Software Systems Ltd., a company which he had founded. Dayan also volunteers as the head of the Advisory Board of Nefesh B'Nefesh and had previously been a member of the Yad Vashem Council.

Mr. Dayan holds a master's degree in finance with honors from Tel Aviv University, and a bachelor's degree in economics and computer science (cum laude) from Bar Ilan University.

Upon his appointment, Mr. Dayan shared the following message: "Leading Yad Vashem is more than a position; it is a

mission, and one I take on with awe and reverence. Yad Vashem is not just a commemorative endeavor. On our shoulders rests the responsibility to research and educate, to document and disseminate, to validate fact-based historical truths about



the Holocaust and reject all forms of distortion, in order to safeguard the memory of the *Shoah* and to ensure that the Jewish people and humanity will forever continue

to remember this event. As time passes, our work becomes more challenging, albeit more vital, than ever before. I am determined to succeed in fulfilling our shared commitment, together with the dedicated staff of Yad Vashem."

Adina Burian and Mark Moskowitz, recently appointed co-chairs of the American Society for Yad Vashem, are very much looking forward to working together with Mr. Dayan in his capacity as chair of the Yad Vashem Directorate. When asked for their perspective on the new Yad Vashem chair, Burian and Moskowitz shared, "we are excited about Dani Dayan assuming the helm at Yad Vashem. In particular, his knowledge of and familiarity with the American Jewish philanthropic community will be a tremendous asset in furthering our work together to speak to the American audience and keep Yad Vashem at the forefront of the American Jewish community's consciousness."

NEW LEADERSHIP AT THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM

Effective July 1, 2021, the American Society for Yad Vashem Board welcomed active and long-time leaders Adina Burian and Mark Moskowitz as co-chairs of the Board, succeeding Chair Lenny Wilf. Both Adina and Mark have been pillars of the ASYV leadership team, having served in many roles and capacities over the years and proven themselves committed to the mission of Holocaust remembrance. Together, Adina and Mark have over three decades of involvement with ASYV and represent three generations of involvement across their respective families.

As a founding member of ASYV's Young

Leadership Associates, Adina chaired and coordinated countless educational and social events over the years and has been honored by the organization for her dedicated service. Though not a direct descendant of Holocaust survivors, Adina has always felt drawn to the stories from this period and a commitment to spreading its profound lessons.

Mark, the son of two Holocaust survivors (Rose, and Henry z"l), is president and CEO of Argo Real Estate LLC, the family real estate and hotel business established by his father Henry. Mark has been an active supporter of ASYV and has continued and expanded his family's in-

volvement in Yad Vashem, viewing it as the ultimate authority for Holocaust remembrance.

Adina and Mark have identified a number of initiatives that they are enthusiastically targeting as goals for their tenure, committed to working closely with Stanley H. Stone, executive director of ASYV, and his team of professionals, including:

Expand ASYV's footprint — this is something which has already begun with ASYV's expansion into the Southeast with the establishment of an ASYV office in South Florida. ASYV will continue to expand its efforts both geographically and de-

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NEW LEADERSHIP AT THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM

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mographically, reaching out to new audiences and new stakeholders, as well as new communities. These efforts will be designed to expand Yad Vashem’s presence and name recognition in the United States.

Utilize and leverage Yad Vashem programming — untapped potential lies in ASYV utilizing Yad Vashem programming in the United States, particularly in supporting established Holocaust commemoration days/events such as *Yom Hashoah*, *Kristallnacht* and International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

ASYV can also leverage Yad Vashem programming by continuing to identify ways to highlight and share Yad Vashem content and content experts here in the US. Whether it’s bringing more Yad Vashem scholars to the US to meet with supporters and community institutions, or creating online programming, the overarching aim is for ASYV to tap into the riches of Yad Vashem for the benefit and edification of the American community.

New programming — another area of opportunity to be explored is a new approach to programming that affords new



ways for ASYV supporters to connect with Holocaust remembrance. Examples include connecting supporters with like-minded supporters in other parts of the world, and having Yad Vashem professionals work more closely with their counterparts at desks in other countries. On the agenda are also leadership retreats that will be introduced to more actively and meaningfully engage supporters.

Establish and strengthen ties with Yad Vashem — with the advent of new

leadership in both Israel and the US, this is a perfect time to invest in strengthening the bonds between our two entities and forge new relationships to support and advance all of our efforts.

Reset and refresh — the recent change in leadership also affords the opportunity to take a fresh look internally at many of the protocols and procedures in place in the governance of the American Society, including developing of ways to groom new leaders in the organization, revisiting of committee structures and the optimization of all aspects of governance.

Adina and Mark feel that they’ve been training for this role for decades. Their deep and intimate knowledge of the subject matter as well as their extensive institutional knowledge uniquely position them to take on the top leadership role at the American Society for Yad Vashem. Under the direction of Adina and Mark, and together with the deeply committed lay leaders who give so much of their time and resources to the organization, ASYV should be able to achieve great heights as it continues to partner with Yad Vashem to remember the past and shape the future.

TO EDUCATE, COMMEMORATE, AND DOCUMENT THE TESTIMONY

On August 17, the Young Leadership Associates gathered in the Hamptons for its first in-person event since March 2020. The event was co-hosted by YLA and WeGave-What, and co-chaired by Danielle Bernstein of WeWoreWhat and YLA Board Member Sophie Krakowski. Danielle has found the recent rise in anti-Semitism and hateful rhetoric, especially on social media, deeply disturbing. She felt compelled to get involved with YLA and bring people together to hear first-hand testimony from a survivor. Sophie is the granddaughter of Elli and Israel Krakowski, z”l, Holocaust survivors who were among the founders of the American Society for Yad Vashem. In fact, the Society’s first parlor meeting was held in the Krakowskis’ home in Queens, New York. Sophie noted, “It feels so fitting that my Opa and Oma founded the American Society for Yad Vashem in their living room and today, forty years later, we’re continuing their legacy by gathering here, in another living room not

too far away, to do exactly what they set out to accomplish — educate, commemorate, and document the testimony.”



Holocaust survivor Tova Friedman with YLA board members.

Around forty people gathered to hear testimony from Tova Friedman, one of the youngest survivors of the Auschwitz concentration camp. Tova began her testimony with the following words: “Yad Vashem represents all the people who aren’t here and can’t speak for themselves. I am a witness of children. A mil-

lion and a half children were murdered. I’m here by accident...and I’ll tell you how it happened.” At the beginning of the war, there were about 5,000 Jewish children in Tova’s hometown of *Tomaszow Mazowiecki*, Poland. By the end, there were only five. Tova was one of those children.

For over an hour, everyone in the room was captivated by Tova’s words. She shared not only the details of her harrowing experience, but also the thoughts and feelings she remembers having during that time. At one point, she recalls thinking that she was the only Jewish child left in the world. Thankfully, she was not. But it is for the million and a half Jewish children who were murdered in the Holocaust that Tova speaks. There are people in the world who believe or claim that the Holocaust never happened. That, Tova says, is exactly why it is so important to share her story. By telling her story, she is also telling the stories of all those who didn’t make it.

BY JILL GOLTZER

COMMEMORATION AND RESPONSIBILITY

In 1921, when he was just six months old, my father was smuggled in a potato sack across international borders. Desperately fleeing antisemitic pogroms in the Ukraine, my grandparents set out on this perilous journey to reach relative safety in Poland. They placed their infant son into the sack and, knowing his cries risked immediate death for them all, muffled his tiny mouth with a cloth, praying they would survive the journey. Upon arrival in Poland, they were relieved to find their precious son alive. Because of their strength of spirit, I am here to tell their story – a unique narrative, but representative of the tale of much of European Jewry.

Exactly 100 years later, I have taken on a new role as chairman of Yad Vashem. I have been tasked with this privilege and tremendous responsibility after representing the State of Israel for four years as Consul General in New York. In that role, I, too, crossed many international borders, but this time under diplomatic protection with a wave of my Israeli passport. Furthermore, unlike many Jews from across Europe who for generations felt forced to hide their Jewish roots, I was empowered by the words “State of Israel” in English and Hebrew, together with the menorah, a distinct Jewish symbol, emblazoned both on my diplomatic passport and on my heart.

These two border-crossing stories, astonishing in their differences, are just one illustration of the transformative experiences undergone by the Jewish people in our time. Barely two decades after my grandparents’ and father’s miraculous escape from murderous anti-Semites, the world witnessed humanity sinking to its lowest depths during the *Shoah* — the systematic murder of two-thirds of European Jewry.

I consider myself among the fortunate, cushioned by safety, as my immediate ancestors narrowly escaped the Holocaust. I was born and raised in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and moved to Israel at the age of 15. Yet, wherever I have lived, the legacy of the *Shoah* was never far from my mind. It was instilled in my memory as I grew up as part of a Jewish minority in Latin America, and later as I became an adult in our Jewish homeland in Israel. The Holocaust is part of the collective Jewish experience, and while Yad Vashem will forever belong

to the Jewish people, it also serves as a beacon to the entire world.

As I commence my new position as chairman, I strive to meet this enormous responsibility. During a recent walkabout on Yad Vashem’s campus on Jerusalem’s Mount of Remembrance, I was compellingly struck by the final words of Gela Seksztajn, a brilliant Jewish

bystanders, collaborators and perpetrators alike are simplistically painted with the same brush. Such cynical manipulations threaten our quest for a more just world.

I just returned from Kiev, where I opened an academic conference about the phenomenon of mass shootings during the Holocaust and participated along with the presidents of Israel, Ukraine, Germany and Albania in memorial events organized by



artist from Warsaw who was murdered in *Treblinka*, at the entrance to the Museum of Holocaust Art:

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

Unfortunately, the mission bequeathed to us by Gela and the other six million Jewish men, women and children murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators is today threatened by the willful manipulation of history and memory, a dangerous phenomenon of late. We must remain wary of those who seek to exploit the events of the Holocaust or rewrite their role in history when they deem it politically expedient to do so. Holocaust distortion and appropriation can take on many forms. In some cases, politicians exaggerate their own nations’ recalled altruism and wartime moral compass. In international discourse, competing narratives of victimhood are thrust upon one another; in other cases, victims,

the government of Ukraine, in conjunction with the Babi Yar Holocaust Memorial Center, currently in development.

Now, eighty years later I have the vital task of representing the memory of the victims of Babi Yar, as well as all of six million Holocaust victims. It is our Jewish, human and moral duty to remember the men, women and children murdered in the valley of death, and never to let their faces fade away.

It is imperative that wherever the Holocaust is commemorated, especially in places where various forces have sought over the years to erase our memory of the victims, historical truth must be protected forever. Yad Vashem will not allow the memory of the Holocaust to wane; and I hereby redouble our commitment to protect and disseminate the legacy of the Holocaust and its victims for the sake of future generations of the Jewish people, and humanity as a whole.

BY DANI DAYAN
The author is currently the chairman of Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center

THE FIRST MAJOR MASSACRE IN THE “HOLOCAUST BY BULLETS”

On September 29 and 30, 1941, more than 33,000 people, mostly Jews, were executed in the Babi Yar ravine near the Ukrainian capital Kyiv — one of the largest mass murders in the Holocaust. We look back at this unspeakable event 80 years on, as plans are finally under way for an official museum honoring the victims' memory.

“A policeman told me to undress and pushed me to the edge of the pit, where a group of people were awaiting their fate.

Soviet territory after launching Operation Barbarossa in June. Nearly 100,000 Jews fled the Ukrainian capital before the Nazis took it. But for those who remained, it was the beginning of a nightmare.

As explosions planted by the NKVD (the Soviet secret police) rocked Kyiv, the Nazis decided to eliminate the city's Jews — driven by the Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracist canard at the heart of Nazi ideology, which falsely alleged that the Jewish people were responsible for Bolshevism.

The German occupiers demanded that

NKVD had already used this site to carry out massacres — it provided an out-of-the-way firing range near the big population centre of Kyiv.

“There was a whole process starting from the place where the people were forced to gather,” Boris Czerny, a professor of Russian literature and culture at the University of Caen and a specialist in the history of Jews in Eastern Europe, told *France 24*. “People were asked to take their most treasured possessions with them, then at a particular spot they had to give away their proof of identity, then at another point they had to give away the possessions they brought, and finally there was a place at which they had to undress.”

The victims were led to the ravine in small groups. Members of *Einsatzgruppen* C opened fire, alongside two groups from the German Order Police and troops from the collaborationist Ukrainian Auxiliary Police. The shooting carried on throughout the day — and into the next.

This was not the first episode in what historians call the “Holocaust by bullets”: A month earlier, 23,600 Jews suffered the same fate in *Kamenets-Podolski*, a Ukrainian town near the Hungarian border.

However, the scale of the slaughter at Babi Yar — and its systematic nature — made it a turning point in the Holocaust.

“It was the first time in history that a premeditated killing spree wiped out practically the entire Jewish population of a big European city,” Berkhoff put it, speaking to *France 24*.

“This was the first major massacre in the Holocaust by bullets, although smaller massacres had preceded it,” Czerny added. “Babi Yar inaugurated a Nazi policy of massacring Jews with guns in ditches — it was a kind of experiment that prompted the Nazis to do the same thing, carrying out similarly systematic massacres in the rest of Ukraine.”

Nearly 1.5 million Ukrainian Jews were murdered between 1941 and 1944. Almost 80 percent of them were shot dead. Executions continued at Babi Yar long after September 1941. The Nazis killed nearly 100,000 people there until Soviet forces liberated Kyiv in November 1943 — not only Jews but also Ukrainian opponents of the occupation, Poles, Roma people, the mentally ill and prisoners of war.

Before the USSR recaptured Kyiv in late 1943, the Nazis tried to hide the evidence
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A German *Einsatzgruppen* soldier talks to two unidentified women at the top of the Babi Yar ravine, where more than 33,000 people, mostly Jews, were massacred on September 29 and 30, 1941.

Before the shooting started, I was so scared that I fell into the pit. I fell onto dead bodies. At first I didn't understand a thing: where was I? How did I end up there? I thought I was going insane. The shooting went on; people were still falling. I came to my senses — and suddenly I understood everything. I could feel my arms, my legs, my stomach, my head. I wasn't even injured. I was pretending to be dead. I was on top of dead people — and injured people. I could hear some people breathing; others were moaning in pain. Suddenly I heard a child screaming: 'Mum!' It sounded like my little daughter. I burst into tears.” Dina Pronicheva, one of the few survivors of the Babi Yar massacre, captured its horror when she gave testimony in the trial of fifteen German soldiers in Kyiv in 1946.

At the Babi Yar ravine just outside Kyiv, 33,771 civilians were massacred on September 29 and 30, 1941, according to figures the *Einsatzgruppen C* (a *Waffen SS* travelling death squad) sent back to Berlin.

This followed the Nazis' capture of Kyiv on September 19, as they stormed through

Kyiv's Jews gather near a train station on the city's outskirts for “resettlement” elsewhere; those who refused to go there were threatened with death.

It was a trap — and many knew it. Ukrainian engineer Fedir Phido recounted the sorrow of the Jews on their way to Babi Yar, as quoted by Dutch historian Karel Berkhoff in his book *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule*: “Many thousands of people, mainly old ones — but middle-aged people were also not lacking — were moving towards Babi Yar. And the children — my God, there were so many children! All this was moving, burdened with luggage and children. Here and there old and sick people who lacked the strength to move by themselves were being carried, probably by sons or daughters, on carts without any assistance. Some cry, others console. Most were moving in a self-absorbed way, in silence and with a doomed look. It was a terrible sight.”

They were all taken to Babi Yar, which means “grandmother's ravine” or “old woman's ravine” in Ukrainian. The Soviet



THE MASSACRE IN BIALYSTOK

A NEW TEACHING UNIT DEVELOPED BY THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL FOR HOLOCAUST STUDIES LOOKS AT THE MASSACRE IN *BIALYSTOK*, FOCUSING ON THE REACTIONS BY INDIVIDUALS, INCLUDING THE PERPETRATORS.

A few days after the launch of Operation Barbarossa, the hitherto Soviet-occupied city of *Bialystok* in northeastern Poland — one of the most important and vibrant Jewish centers in the region, with a Jewish population of sixty percent — was occupied by a unit of the German *Wehrmacht* and Police Battalion 309. A murderous atmosphere against the Jewish population prevailed immediately; within just a few hours, the violence escalated and finally culminated in a massacre. Hundreds of Jewish men, women and children were forced into the large synagogue in the center of the city, which was set on fire with gasoline and hand grenades. Outside, members of the police battalion, inebriated and equipped with machine guns, kept the building surrounded, in order to prevent any escape. More than 2,000 Jews lost their lives on that day in *Bialystok*.

A new teaching unit developed by the International School for Holocaust Studies is dedicated to this massacre and its contextualization. It reveals that the individual layers of the story can only be unfolded through an examination of the personal choices and actions of individuals involved. For example, there is the story of Josef Bartoszko, the “Shabbos goy” who lived

right across the street from the synagogue and, during the massacre, helped the trapped Jews escape by giving hand signals from his window. He is one of the few examples of gentile residents of *Bialystok* who actively tried to protect their Jewish neighbors, while a large part of the non-Jewish population welcomed the Germans and sometimes even supported them in their murderous actions.

Not only does the unit feature the victims and local rescuers; it also takes a look at the perpetrators: for instance, police lieutenant Buchs, who witnesses later reported had actively taken part in the burning down of the synagogue and had “grinned constantly” while doing so. This contrasts with the behavior of an unnamed *Wehrmacht* officer who, according to witnesses, apparently tried to contain the violence by shouting at one of the policemen that “he should let the defenseless civilians go, against whom no war was being waged.”

This illustrates that even among the perpetrators there was room for individual agency, as opposed to claims by participants that they were unable to do anything but “follow orders.” The differentiated examination of individual actors and their respective decisions and actions on that day thus raises questions: How was it possible that

such a lethal dynamic could develop within just a few hours? What prompted Polish citizens to hand over their fellow Jews to the German perpetrators? Why was there anyone among the German perpetrators who decided — openly or secretly — to stay away from the brutal events?

Only a few hundred of *Bialystok*’s more than 50,000 Jews survived the *Shoah*. Desperate and traumatized, they endeavored to build a new life after the war, scattered all over the world. Almost sixty years later, in 1999, one of the survivors, Ben Milder, who by then lived in the USA, admitted: “It is still not easy for me to laugh.” The struggle that survivors had to return to life after the war stands in sharp contrast to how the perpetrators continued to live. After the war, a large number of them were able to resume their prewar existence virtually without rupture. Only a few were sentenced to prison in a trial in 1968, and by 1973 all of those convicted had already been released. In view of this, when looking at the aftermath of the massacre, the teaching unit also addresses the question of why so few of the perpetrators were willing to take responsibility for their own actions on that fateful day.

BY ANNE LEPPER

A TUNNEL OF HOPE IN THE HOLOCAUST

There are still stories to relate from the Holocaust, still horror tales of whole communities that were liquidated and the suffering endured by their survivors, but there are also heroic, almost unbelievable narratives of rebellions, escape projects and uprisings against the Nazis that are still coming to light.

One is the little-known escape from the *Novogrudok* (*Navardok*) labor camp in Belarus via an underground tunnel dug by the inmates over a period of several months.

The saga has been written up by the daughter of one of the survivors, Batya (Betty) Cohen Brodsky — whose 100-year-old mother, Fania (Fanny) Dunetz Brodsky, was one of the escapees. It was also made

into a movie by Dror H. Schwartz based on an emotional visit to the site of the tunnel and labor camp in 2013. Three survivors and many offspring of the approximately 230 heroes participated in the trip. The purpose was to discover the actual tunnel and the site of their ordeal in September 1943. The story as told by Fanny describes her childhood in a bustling Eastern Europe *stetl* called *Zhetl* where the majority of the population were Jewish.

Fania, one of four children, must have been a gifted student, because she finished the Polish high school in *Novogrudok* where few Jews were accepted and went on to study for a year in the *Bialystok* Teachers’ Seminary. But her real gift was languages (which may have saved her life), and she

quickly became fluent in Polish, Russian, German, Yiddish, English, Latin and Hebrew. She taught Russian between 1939 and 1941 but her quiet life came to an end in July 4, 1941, when the Germans captured the area and began persecuting the Jews from day one. Restrictions followed restrictions. The Nazis issued their orders to the *Judenrat* and Fania became indispensable as that committee’s secretary and translator.

The Jews of *Zhetl* were packed into a ghetto, as in so many others communities, and then came the sad day when 1,500 of the oldest members, the children and the women were massacred on April 30, 1942. Later, on August 6 of the same year, an additional 2,500 Jews were marched to the

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THE LIGHT OF DAYS

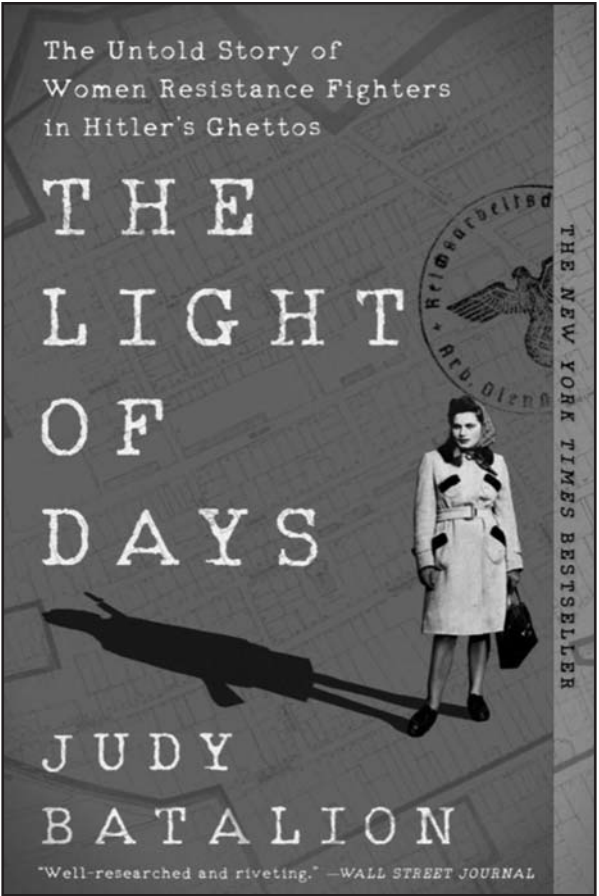
THE UNTOLD STORY OF WOMEN RESISTANCE FIGHTERS IN HITLER’S GHETTOS

The Light of Days: The Untold Story of Women Resistance Fighters in Hitler’s Ghettos.
By Judy Batalion. HarperCollins: New York, N.Y., 2020. 558 pp. \$14.73 hard-cover.

They were leaders in the ghettos. They were couriers “disguis[ing] themselves as non-Jews and travel[ing] between locked ghettos and towns, smuggling people, cash, documents, information, and weapons, many of which they had obtained themselves.” They were fighters in the ghettos. They were fighters in partisan groups “carrying out sabotage and intelligence missions,” making their homes in the forests of Europe. All this and more, young Jewish women did, courageously and selflessly. Some of them are known by long-time students of the Holocaust — like Zivia Lubetkin and Vladka Meed — but so many more should be. Judy Batalion, in her volume *The Light of Days: The Untold Story of Women Resistance Fighters in Hitler’s Ghettos*, conscientiously researched and well written, does that, giving these forgotten heroes their well-deserved place in history. Moreover, she does so with an empathy and compassion that only an author who admires her subjects and understands the murderous times they lived in can.

Interestingly, Batalion frequently introduces these women to us in telling the story of Renia Kukielka and the many unimaginable twists and turns her life would take. Born in 1924 in Jędrzejów, a

shtetl in Poland, to parents who were “modern and observant,” Renia dreamed of becoming a stenographer and “a life of office work.” Then, in 1939, the war came and changed everything. By October



1942, alone but for her sister, Sarah, she was in *Będzin* and part of the Freedom kibbutz, a Labor-Zionist group increasingly — what with German brutality and deportations — active in Jewish resistance. Soon, because she didn’t look Jewish and spoke a “flawless” Polish, Renia, like Vladka Meed in Warsaw, became a courier — till she was caught by the

Gestapo and tortured by them.
Like Zivia Lubetkin, a leader in the Warsaw ghetto, we meet Frumka Plotnicka, a Freedom leader in *Będzin*. Born into a Hasidic family in 1914 *Pinsk*, Frumka was “an ardent Zionist.” Ironically, she was to make *aliyah* in the summer of 1939, but, unfortunately, waited till the fall, when it became impossible. During the war, initially in Warsaw and working with Zivia, Frumka “established a public soup kitchen that fed six hundred Jews.” Together with Zivia, she built up the Freedom network in Warsaw and the provinces. Together they also tried to find escape routes to Palestine. In fact, it was while looking for these routes that she came to *Będzin*. Once there, she told of all the atrocities she had seen perpetrated against the Jews in Poland. “She didn’t let the *Judenrat* rest. She had several decrees rescinded and saved more than one person. . . .” But, most importantly, she encouraged others to fight, and she herself fought till the very end.

We hear about Gusta Davidson in *Kraków*, born into “an extremely religious family.” She was both a courier and a leader in Akiva, another Zionist youth group become a resistance force. “Before the war she served on the central committee, as writer and editor for their publication.” With the war, she, along with her husband, Shimshon, also an Akiva leader, ran the “resistance’s forgery factory.” “They forged documents and wrote and published their underground newspaper.”

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HOW TO TEACH THE HOLOCAUST GOING FORWARD

Is the Holocaust, it is often asked, any more important than other demonstrations of inhumanity in the world? And what of the co-opting of its messages for political purposes?

Imagine that you are a Jewish doctor in a Nazi concentration camp. About 100 of your fellow inmates suffer from diabetes, and you only have a limited supply of insulin, with no guarantee of more on the way. Do you give each patient the same amount regardless of individual need, knowing that all of them will likely die within a month? Or do you reserve your supply for those with a greater chance of survival, meaning that those with severe diabetes will die much sooner as a result?

Or imagine that you are the Greek Jewish teenager from *Salonika* who’s picked up enough German from polishing the boots of the Nazi officers occupying your city that when you are eventually deported to Auschwitz, your linguistic abilities land you a low-level clerical job, instead of a spot in the gas chamber. In the camp administrative office, you have access to the index-card system that assigns each prisoner to a different slave-labor brigade — most of which involves punishing physical work in the freezing outdoors, with the risk of frostbite, pneumonia, beatings or even execution for those deemed by the guards to be slacking off.

One of your fellow prisoners, who is near death, begs you to sneak his card into

the box of a different brigade, one with lighter duties. As long as your Nazi overlords don’t catch you, it’s in your power to do that. But if you decide to help your friend, then you have to switch his card out with that of another person from the same brigade, and then that person spends his or her days facing snow, ice and death from starvation. What do you do? And, come to think of it, how on earth did you end up in this position?

The above documented examples are what many Holocaust scholars and educators like to describe as “choiceless choices” — appalling moral dilemmas faced by a people that were systematically dehumanized by the Nazi regime, and who knew

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A TUNNEL OF HOPE IN THE HOLOCAUST

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cemetery and machine-gunned, while the neighboring citizens and German soldiers from the barracks looked on “for the show.” Fania’s parents, siblings, uncles and other relatives were murdered. Only she and her younger brother Motl remained.

The Nazis kept 500 of the more skilled workers alive to work for them, she as a secretary and translator, Motl as a carpenter who made wooden shoes, but even of this small number, half were eliminated in an additional action on May 7, 1943. The remaining 250 skilled slave workers knew it was only a matter of time until they too would be killed. They discussed armed resistance “since if even 10 of us remain it’s better than waiting for our death.” Fania was offered the opportunity to escape into the nearby forest by someone who knew her from before, but she gave up her place for her brother Motl, who actually survived and joined the partisans. Neither of the siblings knew the other was alive, and they met by chance after the war in the town marketplace.

The idea of digging an escape tunnel from the skilled workers’ barracks to the nearby wheat field was considered, discarded and then brought up again. A committee was formed to plan an escape, and two-thirds of the prisoners voted in favor of a tunnel plan. They began working under one of the beds, using spoons, scrapers, pieces of metal, wood and anything else that could be implemented to dig the tunnel. Dirt was collected in homemade bags and discarded.

The work was carried out at night, after long hours of slave labor, with most working two-hour shifts in the narrow, 60-by-60 centimeters hole, just enough room for a normal-sized adult to squeeze through. One-third of the slave laborers thought it was suicide to try to escape via a tunnel and the guards would surely detect them when they emerged into the wheat field. Nevertheless they too went along with the actual breakout.

After a few meters of digging they encountered their first challenge — the extreme dark at night under the bed made work impossible. A very skillful electrician called Rakovsky managed to connect to the power source in the camp and even found equipment to set up lighting inside the tunnel. People worked in shifts and exchanged tasks: digging, carrying the dirt back to its hiding place, distributing the dirt and keeping the tunnel going in the right direction, by lifting the roof of their barracks ever so slightly during daylight to see the direction to be taken.

The escape was planned for a moonless night on a Sunday in mid-August, when the soldiers were often drunk. The day when they wanted to reach the tall standing wheat field, farmers started harvesting the stalks which were supposed to hide the escapees, so the plan had to be changed, to extend the tunnel another 100 meters, to the edge of a forest. Finally that too was achieved.

Everyone was ready to crawl through and run quickly into the trees and meet up with partisans. However, it was a wild, stormy night, and even though the crawl itself went very quickly, almost unimaginably quickly, once they came to the exit, many of the survivors became disoriented, some even running back toward the camp.

Somehow many of them reached the forest safely and even there kept running, not believing that they were actually free. However, the guards noticed some movement out in the fields. They thought that perhaps a partisan group in the area was coming to liberate the prisoners and started shooting indiscriminately. Some were killed and more than a third were recaptured and tortured to death. The remaining group of 123 regrouped in the forest and it took them a number of days to latch up with a partisan groups, of which there were several in the area. One group was very suspicious of the motley group and wanted to shoot the escapees on the spot. Luckily, their leader prevented this.

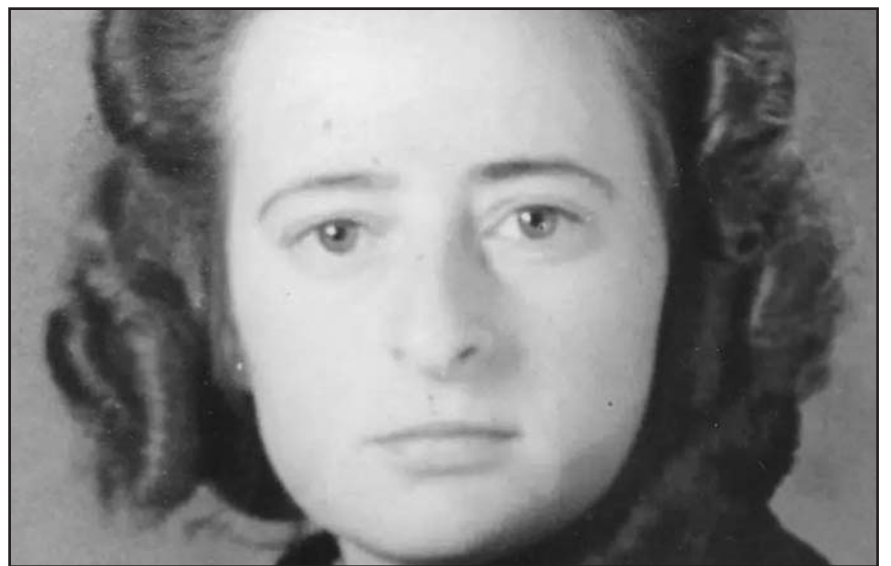
Fania and her friends joined the famous Bielski Jewish partisan group. Here, too, her translating skills were very much in need. She also worked as a nurse until she caught typhus, and that ended her medical career. Most of the escapees not only survived, but built productive lives all over the world. Many told their children and grandchildren about their extraordinary escape, and that ignited a desire for many of the offspring to actually travel back to Belarus and see for themselves the site.

After long negotiations with the authorities, a trip to *Novogrudok* was organized. For almost a week, a bulldozer and local authorities got directions on the spot from the three elderly escapees who were able to take part. They, and fifty children and grandchildren, dug where they thought the remains of the tunnel should be. All assisted in the work, but for a disappointing five days they found nothing more than a

few wooden support pieces and a scraper or two. Discovering the remains of electrical wiring, and eventually the mouth of the tunnel itself, proved to be very emotional.

Grandchildren called their homebound grandparents back home in the US or Israel with the news: “We’ve discovered your tunnel, grandma. We’ve discovered the tunnel!” Pictures were taken, the authorities were notified of the find with hopes of a memorial being established, and stories were exchanged about each survivor’s memory.

Two more groups also visited the tunnel, although smaller ones; in October 2018 some descendants came for the 75th anniversary of the liberation, and in July 2019 they were invited for the dedication of a memorial wall which held all the names of the slave labor camp escapees.



Fania Dunetz after the war circa 1945.

But back in 1945, after being liberated by the Russians and leaving the partisan group, Fania herself together with her brother Motl returned to *Zhetl*, where they were not greeted with joy.

They found a family of squatters living in their parents’ home, who allowed them a room in which to stay until they “found” themselves. Fania actually sold them the house for a winter coat.

Motl and Fania moved to a D.P. camp to get out of Europe, and it was there that Fania met her husband, also a Holocaust survivor, who was camp administrator. In 1949, they moved to New York. Now a widow, she lives in Israel and has a son, Steven, and daughter, Betty.

Betty recently completed writing the story of the tunnel of hope. Through her research, she has proved that the escape in *Novogrudok* by Jewish inmates, largely unknown thus far, is undoubtedly the most successful of all escapes during the Holocaust. She has identified 229 escapees and 123 survivors.

BY LEAH ABRAMOWITZ,
The Jerusalem Post

TRACING THE FATE OF HILDE KOCH

The new volume of Yad Vashem Studies covers a range of academic research on Holocaust-related topics. In one particularly fascinating account, Dr. Edel Sheridan-Quantz investigated the fate of Hilde Koch, a German children's book illustrator, during the Shoah.

Born in Dublin, Ireland, Dr. Sheridan-Quantz studied geography and German, eventually earning her PhD in a comparative study of eighteenth-century Dublin and Berlin. She went to Germany in the 1990s with a postdoctoral scholarship



Hilde Koch Neuberger, late 1930s.

from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation to study the commercial development of Hanover city center in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. “This roused my interest in the vanished families of the many Jewish entrepreneurs who had shaped the modern city and then fled from the Nazis or were murdered in the Holocaust,” explains Dr. Sheridan-Quantz. “One of these businesses was the printing works of Adolf Molling, but information about the firm was scarce. The expansion of the internet in the early 2000s, as well as documents relating to the economic aspects of the persecution of German Jews in the State Archives of Lower Saxony, helped me reconstruct the history of the company and its international printing and publishing activities. Among Molling’s picture books, three books illustrated by Hilde Koch in 1921 stood out. Her vibrant illustrations made me curious to know more about her as the only unknown woman among well-known male artists.”

In her article, Dr. Sheridan-Quantz describes how she eventually found an address for Hilde Koch, which through the Frankfurt City Directory for 1921 led her to a Julius Koch living at that address.

Searching on Yad Vashem’s Names Database, she discovered Pages of Testimony for Julius Koch, his daughter Hilde Koch Neuberger and her husband Otto Neuberger. Indeed, Dr. Sheridan-Quantz made good use of Yad Vashem’s archival resources: There she also found Hilde’s letters to her sister Leonie, as well as summaries of the deportation transports from France to Auschwitz.

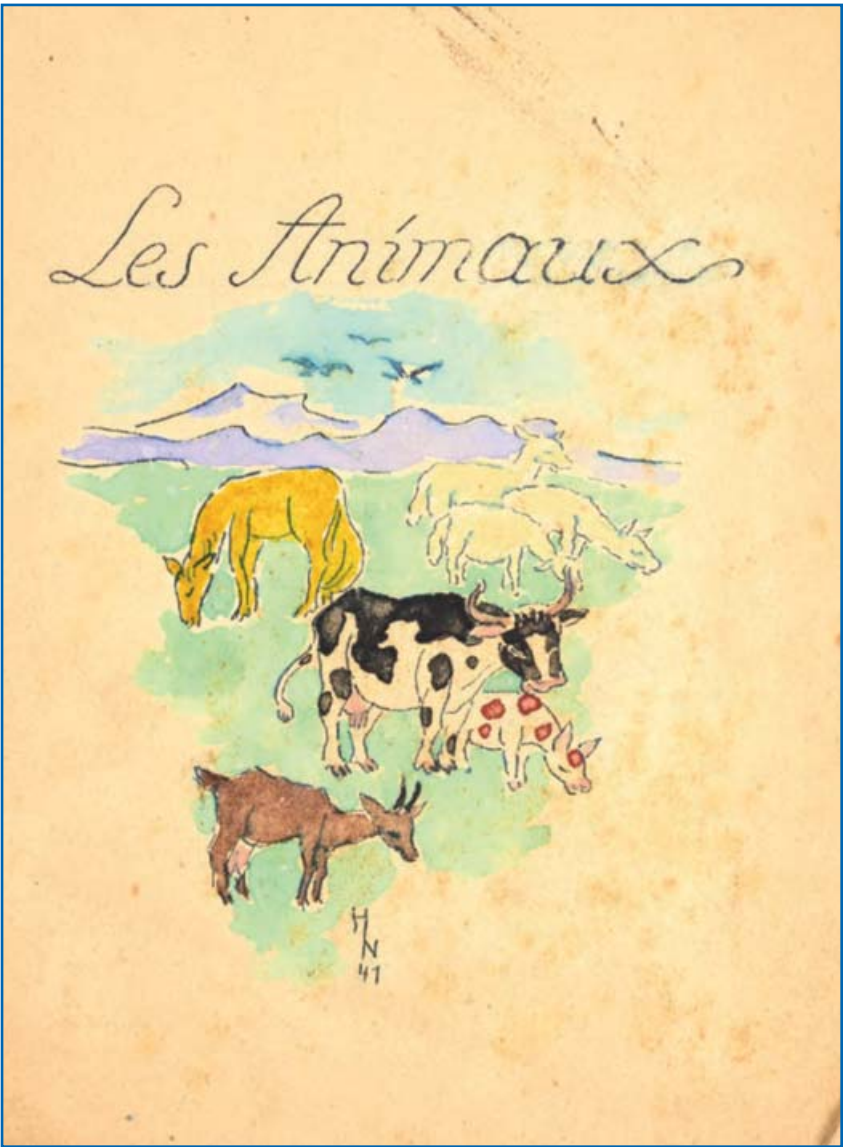
“After that I simply followed up every single clue revealed by these resources — I wrote to the archives in Frankfurt and Mannheim (where Hilde lived after her marriage); I scoured the academic literature on German book illustration; and I searched genealogical websites to trace Hilde’s family tree — always in the hope of finding and connecting with a living relative. Every tiny new discovery gave me a new starting point for further searches. I wrote to the French archives in the regions that Hilde passed through on the journey from Gurs to Auschwitz, and I visited the State Archives in Karlsruhe, where the files relating to the robbery and restitution of the Jews of Mannheim are kept. This principle of ‘leaving no stone unturned,’ or the exhaustive examination of every possible source and clue, is central to the practice of microhistory.

“The amount of detail I discovered exceeded my wildest hopes,” she explains. “It was surprising that the fragments of Hilde’s life story revealed such a level of complexity, in spite of their incompleteness. There are so many points of departure for further discussion in what we now know of Hilde’s life — the questions around her education and professional training as an upper-middle-class Jewish woman, the use of Christian imagery in her work, the degree to which her professional life may have been a secret from her family, and the remarkable way in which she reclaimed her identity as an artist on her camp Gurs registration card.”

In 2018 Dr. Sheridan-Quantz finally connected with Hilde’s niece Miryam Nachsatz, Leonie’s daughter, who lives in central Israel. “This was more than merely academic satisfaction,” she relates. “Miryam sent me scans of numerous family photographs of

Hilde, Leonie and their parents Clementine and Julius Koch. Miryam had also inherited from Leonie the artworks that Hilde managed to save before she was deported in 1942 — but she did not know that Hilde had published any of her works. Our conversations changed Miryam’s image of Hilde and mine — Miryam learned of Hilde’s ‘secret’ life as a professional illustrator, I discovered a new breadth of creativity not reflected in the published work.”

Since 2017, Dr. Sheridan-Quantz has been employed as a researcher for the city of Hanover, and one of the tasks most important to her is to research miniature biographies for Stolpersteine (stumbling stones), concrete cubes in the pavement bearing brass plates that memorialize people persecuted by the Nazis. “Many of these individuals are ‘insignificant’ in the sense that they had no public presence — they were mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, daughters and sons, friends, associates, business partners, employees, casual laborers,” she explains. “Most of them left few traces in the sources avail-



The cover of the picture book illustrated by Hilde Koch Neuberger in the Gurs internment camp, 1941.

able to us, but I try to recreate the circumstances of their lives in as much detail as possible, so that visitors gain a sense of their humanity, their place in the city and
(Continued on page 9)

TRACING THE FATE OF HILDE KOCH

(Continued from page 8)
the reality of their lives.”

Hilde Klara Neuberger (née Koch) was born in *Frankfurt am Main* on July 17, 1896, to Julius and Clementine Felice (née Metz). Her younger sister Leonie Hermine was born in 1899.

In 1920, when she was 24 years old, Hilde illustrated children’s books, three of them printed by Jewish-owned publishing houses in *Hanover*. In 1921, Hilde became a member of the Frankfurt-Offenbach Group of the German Graphic Artists’ Association. In 1924 her mother, Clementine, died. In 1934, Hilde married Otto Neuberger (b. 1886), a widower with two children, both of whom emigrated to the Land of Israel in 1939. That same year, Hilde’s 77-year-old father, Julius, moved in with her and her husband in *Mannheim*.



Sketch created by Hilde Koch Neuberger during the war.

In October 1940, the Jews in *Baden*, including Hilde and Julius, were deported to

the *Gurs* detention camp in France. Otto Neuberger, who had suffered a stroke, was allowed to stay in the *Mannheim* Jewish Hospital. Julius Koch died in *Gurs* in November 1940. Otto was deported in August 1942 from *Mannheim* to *Terezín*, where he died in March 1943. In 1942, Hilde was deported from *Gurs* to *Vénissieux* and *Drancy*, and finally to Auschwitz — where she was murdered.

In February 2019, Hilde’s niece Miryam Nachsatz donated to Yad Vashem the manuscript picture book *Les Animaux*, which Hilde had created for her in the *Gurs* detention camp in 1941, as well as some other pieces of artwork Miryam had inherited from her mother. “It was so difficult for me to hand over the artworks, the only surviving remnants left by my aunt, who I never had the honor of knowing,” said Miryam. “But I could see they were getting old, disintegrating, and I wanted them to be kept safe by Yad Vashem, the most appropriate home for items like these. I feel that through her drawings, and this very important article written by Edel [Sheridan-Quantz], we have somehow brought her back to life.”

BY LEAH GOLDSTEIN

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SILENT WITNESSES TO THE SHOAH

Some 34,000 items, large and small, fill the drawers and shelves of Yad Vashem's Artifacts Collection. A number of them are on display at the Holocaust History Museum, others at the Yad Vashem Synagogue, and some are used for temporary exhibitions in Israel and around the world. But whether on display or not, all of Yad Vashem's artifacts pose as "silent witnesses" to the Holocaust. Yad Vashem has been working hard to record the testimony of their former owners for several decades, in order to restore their journeys and thus document this dark period of Nazi persecution.

Michael Tal, who has been working at Yad Vashem for the last 22 years, today directs the Artifacts Department in Yad Vashem's Museums Division. He knows almost every trinket, plate, uniform, pendant, toy and more housed in the collection, and often takes visitors behind the scenes to illustrate a mission that has not finished revealing all of its secrets.

Yad Vashem has been collecting Holocaust-related items since its inception in 1953. "Even at the height of the Holocaust, there was already talk of gathering evidence — diaries, letters and artifacts — in order to testify on behalf of the individual Jews who suffered such a terrible ordeal," says Tal.

Following the war, a more concentrated and organized collection of items began. Survivors donated archival documents, photos and personal effects, and filled out Pages of Testimony to remember relatives and friends whose lives were so cruelly cut short. "The survivors wanted to bear witness to the *Shoah*, so they brought us historical documentation," continues Tal. "These included yellow stars, prisoner uniforms, internee numbers engraved on iron plates, and proof of the various passages to concentration camps." "However, at the time, personal items were not yet discussed."

When Yad Vashem's Historical Museum first opened its doors in 1973, artifacts were still seen as "secondary" to documents and photographs — the latter of which made up its early exhibitions. It was only in 1995 that artifacts began to be considered as evidence of history, becoming a collection in their own right.

Today, the ten thematic galleries of the Holocaust History Museum contain more than 1,000 objects, direct witnesses of the *Shoah*. Behind each artifact hides the harrowing journey of a lifetime, and thus each object becomes a storyteller, giving a face and a name to every victim of the *Shoah*, whether they survived or not.

Indeed, for the past two decades Jewish individuality has been at the center of Yad Vashem's vision. Its educational goal is to focus on the human story; to "bring the victims back to life" by telling the narratives of individuals, families and communities in hiding places, camps and ghettos through original artifacts, survivor testimonies and

danek or Auschwitz further reinforce the idea that the enormity of the Holocaust is often represented by stacks of uniforms, shoes and suitcases, which express mass murder, the fate of the collective," explains Tal. "Yad Vashem understands that its mission is to tell the Holocaust through the individual stories."

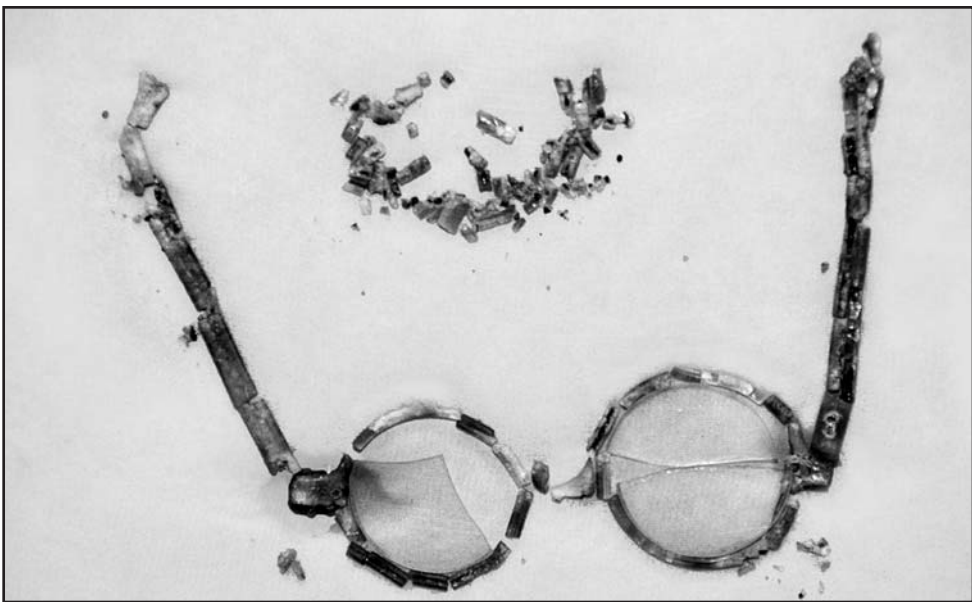
While collecting the artifacts is vital, a whole extra effort is involved in trying to "make them speak." "You often have to go back to old depositaries to fill in the missing information, and these are not always easy to locate," Tal points out. "Investigative work for a single, simple item — a cookbook, a child's toy, an engraved ring — may span several years."

To illustrate, Tal brings the example of Bluma Walach's glasses, entrusted by her daughter Tola to Yad Vashem:

"Bluma and Tola were deported together from the *Lodz* ghetto to Auschwitz. At the time of selection, they were separated, and Bluma was led from the ramp directly to the gas chambers. Tola later realized that she had kept her mother's glasses in her pocket. They were now the only memory she had left of her, and she refused to throw them away, even after the war. When the glasses began to decompose in the 1990s, Tola donated them to Yad Vashem. This pair of glasses with broken lenses and deformed frames is a particularly strong and powerful testimony to the life of Tola and her mother

Bluma, of their separation and of their markedly different fates. Today, they are on display at the Holocaust History Museum."

Since the 1990s, the Artifacts Collection has grown tremendously, with approximately 42,000 new artifacts added. In a
(Continued on page 13)



Glasses that Bluma Walach gave to her daughter Tola during the selection on arrival at the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp.

personal possessions.

Yad Vashem staff are very proactive in gathering Holocaust-era items through meeting with survivors, initiating calls for personal objects, and traveling to Europe, in particular to Eastern Europe, in order to find artifacts. "Visits to camps like *Maj-*

HOW TO TEACH THE HOLOCAUST GOING FORWARD

(Continued from page 6)

that they faced death at any second. They formed part of an intense, enriching four days that I spent with a small group of other writers and journalists at Yad Vashem.

We were there to study and discuss many aspects of the Holocaust — from “choiceless choices” to archive management to Holocaust art — but we did so from a starting point that the way we teach younger generations about the Nazi attempt to destroy the Jews of Europe and North Africa is changing radically.

Holocaust survivors have all reached advanced ages, meaning that there won’t be any in-person testimonies to listen to within a few years (even if we are left with their accounts captured on video, holograms or other forms of visual reproduction). Since 1945, countless other genocides have wreaked havoc in the Balkans, much of Africa, Asia and the Middle East, while a few of those that occurred before — the Herero nation slaughtered by German colonists in southern Africa, the Armenians annihilated by Turkey — to this day remain underrecognized. Is the Holocaust, it is often asked, any more important than these other demonstrations of inhumanity in the world?

And there’s more, much more. In countries like Lithuania and Ukraine, wartime collaborators with the Nazis are now being lionized as anti-Communist heroes. The Israeli government walks along an undignified diplomatic tightrope with these states, having to balance present-day bilateral relations with guardianship of the Holocaust’s truths. Elsewhere, some Holocaust-commemoration activities are so fixated with a universalist approach that basic facts about

the Jewish character of the genocide — like the young diarist Anne Frank having been Jewish, and being deported because she was Jewish — are buried in a bid to be “meaningful” to “everyone.”

Meanwhile, in Western Europe and the United States, social protest movements, like the “Yellow Vests” in France and the Women’s March in America, have been penetrated by Holocaust deniers, anti-Semitic conspiracy-mongers and advocates of Israel’s elimination. And that’s not to



Participants in professional seminars at Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Studies.

mention those who don’t deny the Holocaust, but who do delight in invoking the Nazis as a metaphor for Israeli policies toward the Palestinians or go the whole hog by — check out the French “comedian” Dieudonné M’bala M’bala — making fun of it in front of receptive crowds in theaters.

In the recent past, perhaps the key Holocaust debate was why the Allied powers did so little to stop it. During our group’s exchange with Avner Shalev, the former chair of Yad Vashem who pioneered its renewal over the last two decades, he related the story of guiding President George W. Bush around the institute’s impressive museum. When they reached the exhibit about President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s response to the Holocaust, Bush turned to

his then national security advisor, Condoleezza Rice, and asked: “Why didn’t FDR bomb the camps? He should have.”

But that burning question has been superseded by an even more vexing one: Why should we seek to educate about the Holocaust in a world where the phrase “Never Again” sounds farcical to many people? There are many answers, and to my mind, there are three key ones.

First, there are still some survivors of the Holocaust. I think specifically of a man named Albert de Leeuw and 150 other former child laborers in the Amsterdam ghetto, who have still not received proper compensation from the German government, and who continue fighting for that recognition in the twilight of their lives. To abandon them now would be shameful.

Second, however much people believe politics has changed with the rise of populism on left and right in the last several years, the Holocaust remains a truly foundational moment of our era and the source of many of the international institutions that, for good or ill, manage international relations today. Look back and you will see that the Holocaust changed a good deal more than we realize — for example, how we look at art and music, or our relationship with technology and our agonizing about inclusiveness in our society.

Third, if we are to teach our children the basic facts of the Holocaust, they can be boiled down like this: Six million Jews died because they were dehumanized for being Jews. Many of them resisted, in a variety of ways. And far too many were faced with the “choiceless choices” that symbolize the reality of the Holocaust.

BY BEN COHEN, JNS

THE LIGHT OF DAYS

(Continued from page 6)

Additionally, “Gusta found hiding places, accompanied groups to the forest, consulted with leaders and connected communities.” Gusta and her husband, like Frumka, would encourage others to fight and fought themselves, wholeheartedly devoted to their people and each other. “Married in 1940, [the couple had] made a pact that if one of them was caught, the other would turn themselves in.”

And then, “from the Communist group Spartacus,” there was the Warsaw ghetto’s “Little Wanda with the Braids,” a nickname given Niuta Teitelbaum by the Gestapo. At

one point she was a history student at Warsaw University. The war turned her into a fearless “assassin.” Unafraid, and dressed like an innocent teenager with her “flaxen hair in braids,” she “walked straight into the office of a high-ranking Gestapo officer . . . and shot him in cold blood.” Another she killed in his bed. With still another, she completed the job of killing him by dressing as a doctor and shooting him in his hospital room.

Nor does the number of courageous women end here. Adding but a few more: there was Bela Hazan, “a Freedom courier, based in Grodno, Vilna, [and] Bialystok.” There was Ruzka Korczak, “a leader of

The Young Guard [another Zionist youth group] in Vilna’s fighter organization (FPO) and a partisan leader in the forests.” There was Roza Robota, who was instrumental in getting the gunpowder to the *sonderkommando* that blew up the crematorium in Auschwitz.

Indeed, Batalion has done a great service by bringing the names and stories of these courageous women out of the darkness and into “the light of day.”

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

FRAUGHT FAMILY REUNIFICATION AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

As the World War II ended, an estimated 150,000 – 180,000 child survivors of the Holocaust emerged from their hiding places or centers of internment. They were a tenth of Europe's prewar population of Jewish children, a fragment of an entire generation. In the months and years that followed, these child survivors began to search for their families, and some (we will never know exactly how many) were reunited with surviving mothers and fathers. But this was rarely the happy ending that we would like to imagine.

In my latest book, *Survivors: Children's Lives After the Holocaust*, I found that the stories of child Holocaust survivors upended my assumptions again and again, and nowhere was this truer than around the emotive topic of family reunions. We are so used to encountering scenes of joy as families are reunited, in Holocaust film and literature, that it is challenging to accept the reality of a bleaker picture. The notion that family reunification was the best possible outcome for a survivor child is deeply seductive, particularly as so many survivor children found themselves with no remaining family members at the war's end. Children who found their way back to surviving mothers and fathers were frequently told how lucky they were. Yet of the 100 children whose stories I examine in the book, not one who was reunited with surviving parents described the experience as joyful. They often had far more painful postwar experiences than those who found themselves living in care homes, without family. Their stories expose just how deep is our desire to see the survival of a family in and of itself as a victory.

If we consider the complexities of the early postwar period, we begin to see why it was intensely difficult for surviving children and parents to find themselves together again. The reunified Jewish family was profoundly fragile. Parents and children had often been apart for years, and the war had changed them. They sometimes could no longer speak the same language. Children had acquired new wartime identities, particularly if they had survived in hiding: they may have had new names, new religious identities, and new attachments to families who had hidden them during the war. If they were young enough, they may have had no memory of their par-

ents at all.

Moreover, parents had changed. They had experienced internment and concentration camps, forced labor, life in hiding, or the anxiety-ridden experience of those who tried to pass as Aryan. Many were in a state of physical and emotional collapse by 1945. These exhausted adults returned to find strangers living in their homes, their possessions scattered, their jobs gone. Adult Holocaust survivors faced staggering poverty in the early postwar period, and children who went back to live with surviving parents often found that their families lacked housing, food and clothing. In such



Child Holocaust survivor Suse Grunbaum at age one.

circumstances, the additional burden of caring for a child could push a family to the point of collapse.

We can see this in the numbers. The American Joint Jewish Distribution Committee supported 120,000 child Holocaust survivors after the war, and a majority of these — 85,000 children — were living with a surviving parent or relative who was too impoverished to care for the child without financial aid. Children living in care homes intended for orphans also frequently had surviving parents. Surviving parents saw in such institutions an opportunity for their children to have a better quality of life than in the family home. These arrangements were often meant to be temporary, but they also extended the period in which children and parents grew stranger to each other — sometimes until too much time had passed for the relationship to be restored.

Many children struggled to trust survivor parents who were essentially strangers. Some felt anger that their parents had abandoned them, and further anger when these parents removed them from wartime rescue families where they had felt happy and comfortable. Whether they had survived the war in hiding or in internment, children had often needed to be obedient,

quiet and good to stay safe. With that need gone, they could rebel. They withdrew emotionally from their parents, refusing to touch them or even to accept them. Henri O., who survived in hiding in the Netherlands as a very small child, was reunited with both his mother and father after the war. He was five years old. He recalled the discomfort of their reunion:

"When they turned up, I recognized my mother, and I said, 'you stayed away a very long time.' Yeah, two and a half years, half my life. Okay. And then somebody says, 'Why don't you want to sit on your daddy's lap?' So I sat on my daddy's lap. But it wasn't quite the same."

For some child survivors, one of the greatest frustrations in these reunited homes was the enforced silence around the wartime past. Many had urgent questions that surviving parents did not want or could not bear to answer, particularly about murdered relatives. Those living with surviving mothers asked after their murdered fathers (or the reverse), and frequently had their enquiries rebuffed. That precious knowledge — what was my father or mother really like? — was withheld by parents too traumatized to engage in the work of remembering their dead partners. In other cases, the enormity of a parent's own traumatic memories interceded in the daily life of the household. Cecile H., who had survived the war by escaping with her mother to neutral Switzerland, was reunited with her concentration-camp survivor father after the war:

"Father had found photos in the barracks or SS lockers when he was liberated, and had taken some because he was worried that no one would believe him. He hid these pictures in the house on top of a closet, and once I took those pictures and laid them all out on the floor, and I'll see those pictures until my dying day. [...] I kept having nightmares after that, and [my father] burned them. He said, 'I'm never going to talk about that again.' It was a difficult time for us, after the war."

When thinking about families after the Holocaust, we should be attuned to the incredible challenges that these families faced. We should consider what sorts of outcomes awaited children who went back to live with surviving parents, and how this felt to children, what it meant to them, and what role the memory of the recent past played in reconstructed households.

BY REBECCA CLIFFORD, HNN

SILENT WITNESSES TO THE SHOAH

(Continued from page 10)

race against time, the Artifacts Department of Yad Vashem's Museum Division plays an active role in gathering Holocaust-era items from across Europe and North Africa. "The more time passes, however, the more difficult it will be for us to locate new objects, and reveal the stories that accompany them," notes Tal.

Each artifact Yad Vashem receives comes with a number of trying challenges. After it is donated, the item undergoes a long process of cataloging

to be complete by 2022, the Shapell Family Collections Center will comprise approximately 65,000 square feet of new conservation and storage spaces for Yad Vashem's unrivaled and invaluable growing collections of Holocaust-era art, artifacts and archival materials. The Collections Center will also provide optimal conditions for the dedicated professionals, conservationists and archivists taking care of these items each day, as well as designated work spaces for researchers. Tal continues, "It is important for us to fulfill to

and also to identify any common denominator with other items in our collection," Tal continues. "A single item can tell us not only about an individual or a family, but also how a group of items speak to each other, and thus shed new light on the *Shoah* overall.

"For example, we have about twenty chess sets, which come from widely varying people and places. It is probable, therefore, that there were or still are many more, which unfortunately did not survive. This sparked our curiosity: Was there was a particular relationship between chess and the Jewish world? We began researching, and soon concluded that this game was very popular at the time within the Jewish community, and that being easy to transport, it frequently accompanied the Jews in their flight from homes and communities. In spite of the fear and oppression they faced, they continued to play, which gave them a brief respite from their harsh reality."

Another unique phenomenon during the Holocaust were recipe books. Yad Vashem houses several copies that were written in ghettos and concentration camps. They give a glimpse into daily life in the camps and how they were used by prisoners to help deal with loneliness, to create friendships and to fight hunger by imagining that they were eating those foods. Michael Tal comments, "By researching these different recipe books, we were able to discover that, astonishingly, women prisoners created them in the camps, where they were literally starving to death. It was of course impossible for



Piano donated by Shlomo Margulies to Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum.

and research, and an extensive conservation process.

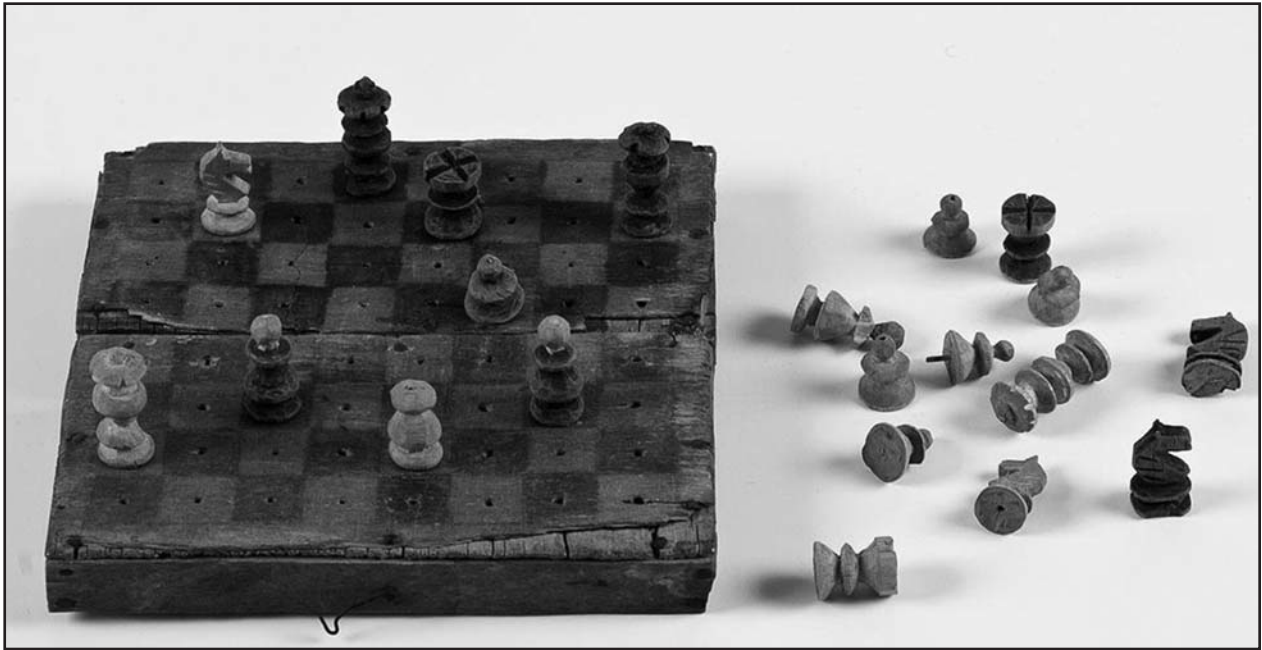
Yad Vashem receives items from all over the world, and the origin of each requires a team of researchers who specialize in the different regions in which the articles originate. "In order to understand the history of the family to which the item belonged, one must have a historical understanding of the place in which they lived," explains Tal. "For example, the history of the Jews of Greece is very different from that of Belarus."

Another challenge the department faces is the diversity of materials from which the artifacts are made. Items donated are manufactured from glass, wood, metal, fabric and more, each requiring specialized conservation techniques according to the material. Over the years, Yad Vashem has acquired experts with the required skills and know-how in order to conserve these unique and fragile items.

Furthermore, the department is also tasked with storing the items, which greatly vary in size and shape — from pendants and spoons to cradles and even pianos. Although space is currently limited, Yad Vashem plans to open a new facility in the coming years. With construction expected

our mission of commemorating the victims for future generations. The new Shapell Family Collections Center means we can preserve and investigate every authentic and relevant item we receive."

Tal and his team continue the important mission, instituted by former Artifacts Department Director Haviva Peled Carmeli,



Chess game that Julius Druckman carved in Transnistria.

z", to understand the artifact in its entirety — including any connection to similar items already housed at Yad Vashem.

"Our current approach is to try to understand the article in a general sense

them to actually create these recipes, but they wrote them down anyway from memory, as a way for them to remember their pre-Holocaust life. This very act paradoxically gave them strength."

THE FIRST MAJOR MASSACRE IN THE “HOLOCAUST BY BULLETS”

(Continued from page 4)

of what had happened at Babi Yar: Soviet prisoners of war were forced to exhume

Other monuments emerged in the years that followed, paying homage to massacred children, Roma, priests and

Holocaust victims. “This is the first time that we are going to have a museum showing what the site of a mass shooting looked like, alongside efforts to create a list of all of the victims’ names there in honor of their memory,” Father Desbois told *France 24*.

“We should also create a list of the killers’ names, because without that it’s almost as if it was Babi Yar that massacred Jews,” Father Desbois said. “We’ve got to restore the sense that this is the site of a horrific crime.”

Hopefully such a Babi Yar museum will raise public consciousness of the Holocaust by bullets, Father Desbois continued: “At Auschwitz, there is a camp with barbed wire — and people go there and remember what took place. But people don’t do the same at mass graves from mass shootings.”

That indignation at forgotten suffering also animated the renowned Soviet writer Vasily Grossman, most famous in the Anglophone world for his novel *Life and Fate*. A Jew from Ukraine, Grossman was reporting on the war for the Soviet defense ministry’s newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Red Star) when he learned of the massacres in his native region in the autumn of 1943.

In despair because he had no news from his mother, Grossman wrote in an article: “There are no Jews in Ukraine. [...] In



Velvele Valentin Pinkert (left) and Anna Glinberg, Jewish children killed during the mass execution at Babi Yar.

and cremate the corpses there. The Nazis then killed them, trying to remove all of the last witnesses.

There was no public recognition of the massacres at Babi Yar in the years after the Second World War. The ravine was used as an open-air rubbish dump. “The victims’ possessions would sometimes rise to the surface and people would take them for themselves,” Czerny said.

Soviet ideology refused to acknowledge the Nazis’ mass killings of Jews, because such massacres disproved the politically expedient notion that the USSR’s different nationalities and ethnic groups had suffered equally in the war against Germany.

In the early 1960s, the authorities even decided to fill the ravine with a mixture of water and mud, causing a disaster when a collapsed dike set off a landslide, killing dozens.

A monument was finally created at Babi Yar in 1976 — but it made no reference to the Holocaust, instead blandly paying homage to the “citizens of Kyiv and prisoners of war” murdered there between 1941 and 1943. Throughout the Soviet era, public commemorations at Babi Yar were “rare” and “vague about the identity of most victims,” Berkhoff noted.

But in September 1991, amid the collapse of the Soviet Union, the local Jewish community placed a sculpture of a menorah at Babi Yar to honor the memory of the Jews massacred there.

Ukrainian partisans. Many voices have called for a monument dedicated to Babi Yar’s Jewish victims over recent years — but several proposals were eventually dismissed as too controversial, notably Russian filmmaker Ilya Khrzhanovsky’s



Dina Pronicheva, a Jewish survivor of the Babi Yar massacre, testifies during a war crimes trial in Kiev.

idea to use video technology to allow visitors to engage in role-play as victims or perpetrators.

Now the Ukrainian government has launched a plan to build a museum by 2026, with a model showing what the massacre site looked like and archives remembering the victims. The group of academics guiding the project is led by Father Patrick Desbois, a French priest and co-founder of Yahad-In Unum, an organization dedicated to finding mass graves of Jewish

the big cities, in the hundreds of small towns, in the thousands of villages, you won’t see young girls’ black eyes filled with tears, you won’t hear an old woman’s voice racked with suffering, you won’t see a hungry baby’s dirty face. Everything is silent. Everything is peaceful. A whole people have been massacred.”

These human beings must be remembered.

BY STÉPHANIE TROUILLARD

SO MUCH KNOWLEDGE — AND YET SO MUCH STILL UNKNOWN

The memory of the Holocaust is a huge puzzle with many black holes. Each hole represents the personal stories of people — men, women and children — who were murdered simply because of the faith into which they were born. Yad Vashem continues to work alongside other Holocaust institutions to uncover these remaining missing pieces and safeguard them for all time.

Just recently, conservationists and researchers at the Auschwitz State Memorial uncovered documents found hidden inside a child's shoe — one of tens of thousands of shoes that are displayed at the site. Each belonged to a person — with hopes, dreams and families — who was cruelly murdered by the German Nazis at the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration and extermination camp. Miraculously, the documents hidden in the shoe survived, and now, with the help of Yad Vashem's vast archival holdings, they can tell us the story of its owner, six-year-old Amos Steinberg, and his mother, Ida.

On the eve of World War II, Ida and Ludwig Steinberg and their son Amos were living in Prague. On August 10, 1942, along with many of the Jews of the Czechoslovakian capital, the Steinberg family was forced to move to the nearby *Theresienstadt* ghetto. A little over a year later, on October 4, 1944, Ida and Amos Steinberg were deported to Auschwitz. Shortly after their arrival, they were sent to their death in the gas chambers. The documents found hidden in one the children's shoes at Auschwitz contained identification records as well as handwritten documentation. This discovery provided researchers with vital information used to reveal the owner of the shoe — Amos Steinberg.

Experts at Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research, which has been for the past decade cataloguing the deportations of Jews during the Holocaust, found the names of Ida and Amos on a transport list from *Theresienstadt* to Auschwitz. Of the approximately 1,500 Jews registered on this one particular transport, over 1,300 are counted among the 6 million murdered, including Ida and Amos.

Ludwig was deported on a later transport to Auschwitz and from there was taken to *Dachau*. In 1945, he was later liberated from the *Kaufering* concentration camp. After arriving in the newly established State of Israel in 1949 together with his new wife, Ludwig Steinberg changed his name to

Yehuda Shinan. In 1955, he filled out a Page of Testimony for Ida and their child, Amos. After the article appeared in the Israeli daily YNET, Yad Vashem spoke with the family of Yehuda Shinan about this unbelievable discovery.

Yehuda's children, Prof. Avigdor Shinan and his sister Leah Shinan Shamir, said:

"We were surprised to find out that it was the shoe of our brother. From now on, on his Hebrew *yahrzeit* [date of



Ludwig, Ida, and Amos Steinberg, circa 1940.

death], we will light a candle of remembrance and say *Kaddish* for their souls."

Leah Shinan Shamir continues:

"When I first saw this in the news, and saw the name Amos Steinberg, I could not believe my eyes. It is impossible to describe what I went through when I saw the photo of the shoe of Amos, and understood it belonged to my half-brother, who was murdered in Auschwitz together with his mother."

Leah and Avigdor both knew that their father was married and had a son before the war. However, like many survivors who lost their families in the Holocaust, he did not speak about it much in the house. Their mother, also a survivor who was also imprisoned in *Theresienstadt* during the Holocaust but was not deported to Auschwitz, spoke of the plaque at the site of the ghetto with the names of all the children who were interned there — Amos included.

Leah contemplates:

"Today, Amos would have been 82. Over the years, I have traveled a lot around the world, and everywhere I went

I would look in the phone book, hoping that he survived. For us, this marks the closing of an unknown circle."

For the past seven and a half decades since the end of World War II, a huge amount of research has been carried out on the Holocaust. Experts in genealogy and archives have been combing through millions of documents around the world, arduously working to restore the identities of the millions of Jewish and non-Jewish victims of Nazi persecution. Efforts to gather testimonies and documentation of the Holocaust began almost immediately after the liberation of the concentration and death camps. For seventy-five years, researchers have been working to piece together the puzzle of what — and whom — the German Nazis and their collaborators destroyed between 1933 and 1945.



Yad Vashem Archives Director Dr. Haim Gertner remarks:

"This discovery serves as a reminder to us that while the Holocaust took place so long ago, we are still experiencing the loss all these years later. We still have so much to learn about the history of the Holocaust. And, perhaps most importantly, we must continue to keep the memory of the Holocaust and its victims alive. We must ensure that what they endured never can happen again.

"Through its myriad activities and unrivaled collections of Holocaust-era documents, artifacts and artworks, Yad Vashem strives to restore the identities of the victims who were murdered in anonymity. We attempt to create as full an image of these people as we can, people like you and me. They were homemakers and professionals, religious and secular, comfortable and impoverished; they were also children with so much hope and possibility for their future. In this way they will not only be remembered as victims, but also as human beings.

"Yet despite all the information we have gathered over the decades, there still is so much to discover; like the shoe of Amos Steinberg, the missing pieces of a complex and scattered puzzle. Over a million names of Holocaust victims are still missing. We are now racing against the clock to gather the personal testimonies of Holocaust witnesses, the last of this generation. All these years later, our job remains far from finished."

BY SIMMY ALLEN



ZBOROWSKI Legacy Circle


The Legacy Circle, named in memory of Eli Zborowski, is open to anyone who includes ASYV/Yad Vashem in their estate plans.

This includes:

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

With your support, ASYV can strengthen the efforts of Yad Vashem as together we remember the past and shape the future.



The American Society for Yad Vashem, founded in 1981 by a group of visionary Holocaust survivors, was led by Eli Zborowski, z"l, until his passing in 2012.

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